

THE IMPLICATION OF WORKERS IN THE BRAZILIAN SOCIAL ASSISTANCE POLICY

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ABSTRACT. This article analyses the institutionalization of Social Assistance in Brazil and the implication of social workers in this field. For this, we start from Maria's life narrative, which from religious experience, starts to militancy in social movements and institutionalizes its practice in the expansion of Social Assistance. Maria invests in practical knowledge that becomes the beginning for construction of an overimplication. Through theory and institutional analysis, the work contemplates the micropolitical field of a biographical path to reach socio-historical aspects of the constitution of the state in the country and the building of a peculiar sensitivity on the part of the workers. This sensitivity, built on experiences prior to social work and enhanced in the encounter with institutionalized politics, can make professionals sick and favors the precariousness of public policy when it feeds a personal commitment that refuses to see the complexity of what it means to maintain social security with competence and seriousness in the country.

Keywords: Social services; institutional analysis; subjectivity.

A IMPLICAÇÃO DOS TRABALHADORES NA POLÍTICA DE ASSISTÊNCIA SOCIAL BRASILEIRA

RESUMO. Esse artigo analisa a institucionalização da assistência social no Brasil e a implicação dos trabalhadores sociais neste campo. Partimos da narrativa de vida de Maria, que da experiência religiosa, parte para a militância nos movimentos sociais e institucionaliza sua prática na ampliação da assistência social do governo de Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva em 2004. Neste contexto de luta e paixões, Maria investe em um saber prático que se torna o ponto de partida para a construção de uma sobreimplicação. Pelo método de narrativas de vida e da análise institucional, o trabalho contempla o campo micropolítico de um percurso biográfico para chegar a aspectos sócio-históricos da constituição da pasta no país e a construção de uma sensibilidade peculiar por parte dos trabalhadores. Essa sensibilidade, construída nas experiências anteriores ao trabalho social e potencializada no encontro com a política institucionalizada, pode adoecer os profissionais e favorecer a precarização da política pública quando alimenta um compromisso pessoal que se nega a enxergar a complexidade do que seja manter a seguridade social com competência e seriedade no país.

Palavras-chave: Serviços sociais; análise institucional; subjetividade.

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LA IMPLICACIÓN DE LOS TRABAJADORES EN LA POLÍTICA BRASILEÑA DE ASISTENCIA SOCIAL

RESUMEN. Analizamos la institucionalización de la Asistencia Social en Brasil y la implicación de los trabajadores sociales en este campo. Para esto, partimos de la narrativa de la vida de María, que a partir de la experiencia religiosa, comienza a ser militante en los movimientos sociales e institucionaliza su práctica en la expansión de la Asistencia Social del gobierno de Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva en 2004. En este contexto de lucha y pasiones, María invierte en conocimiento práctico que se convierte en el punto de partida para la construcción de una sobreimplicación. A través de la metodología de la historia de la vida y el análisis institucional, el trabajo contempla el campo micropolítico de una ruta biográfica para llegar a los aspectos sociohistóricos de la constitución de la pasta en el país y la construcción de una sensibilidad peculiar por parte de los trabajadores. Esta sensibilidad, basada en experiencias previas al trabajo social y mejorada en el encuentro con la política institucionalizada, puede enfermar a los profesionales y favorece la precariedad de las políticas públicas cuando alimenta un compromiso personal que se niega a ver la complejidad de lo que significa mantener la seguridad social con competencia y seriedad en el país.

Palabras clave: Servicios sociales; análisis institucional; subjetividad.

Introduction

The Brazilian social assistance policy is marked by a history whose effects affect how this department has been institutionalized in Brazil. The construction of this path had the participation of social movements, party political initiatives of different scopes, the Catholic Church, and the knowledge of the university, but mainly the workers who, at distinct times, set out to establish a professionalization of charity and philanthropy in the country. We start from the first social welfare movements in the state, combined with a Catholic Church invested in charitable support, with intense investment in the creation of legislation, regulations, and technical devices, especially during the 2000s, which attempt to guarantee public policy definitively in the country.

Philanthropy in Brazil has had diverse movements, whose structuring axis was both the state's refusal to take on sufficient management, taking into account the social inequality that has always plagued the country and the insistence of religious movements in providing charity in the gap that should be occupied by public policies seeking social equality.

Between 1964 and 1988, a phase of repression and authoritarianism in Brazil, philanthropy was organized around an authoritarian state that believed in technical rationalism, segregation, and hygiene. Community associations and non-governmental organizations that provided social welfare services were heavily monitored. Highlight, at this time, the movement of Basic Ecclesiastical Communities (CEBs), as mentioned by Iamamoto (2019), and pastoral work based on Catholic charisma, with a progressive aspect and strong support for marginalized groups.

From the Federal Constitution in 1988, Brazil reached 'Democratized Philanthropy'. Public policies and legal frameworks faithful to the text of the Federal Constitution begin to be created. In 1993, the Organic Social Assistance Law – LOAS (Lei nº 8,742, 1993) was

established so that, in the 2000s, the National Social Assistance Policy emerged (Brasil, 2004) and, consequently, the Unified Social Assistance System and the National Typification of Social Assistance Services (Brasil, 2009). In this context, universities have always been present. There was an increase in workers in the field with the start of various public tenders and temporary hiring. Currently, we are witnessing an almost complete extinction of this public policy, making the state's omission in the face of the visible need for social assistance actions bring it closer to an option for necropolitics, that is, letting die as a principle of economic organization in the management of inequalities today in the country, Mbembe (2019) and Marques, Roberto, Golçalves & Bernardes (2019).

With the rapprochement with the Catholic charisma and its charitable perspective, the professionalization of social assistance in Brazil is still a challenge. This article discusses how the Catholic tradition gains space in the professional construction of a worker and in encouraging assistance and personalism that insist on running through the implementation of public policy. We sought to point out the construction of macropolitical scenarios, and the challenges of institutionalizing regulations and principles, as well as the professional gestures of people involved in this story.

In the swing between moments of expansion and others of complete precariousness, individual interests, mainly originating from party policies, occupy and take over public policy. They hinder and make work precarious, causing the department to stagnate in various historical moments, but also favoring the overimplication of professionals based on a massive connection with labor, illnesses, professional paralysis, and the construction of joys and resistances when they find the power of the collective.

Theoretical-methodological paths

Seven people were interviewed as part of this research⁵. All participants built their professional careers first in serving vulnerable groups and then in the scope of the state's social assistance policy. They shared the historical period of growth of this public policy with the arrival of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in 2004 as President of the Republic. They shared their experience in the same field of activity, the city hall of the municipality of Betim, metropolitan region of Belo Horizonte, state of Minas Gerais, our field of study.

From these seven paths, we chose the life narrative of Maria⁶ to problematize the construction of social assistance in the country. A peculiar life for its density and her involvement with social movements, Catholic movements, and, later, the already institutionalized social assistance policy. The life path of Maria, the way she mobilized resources to build her religious life and her profession, reveal nuances of the history of the constitution of social security in Brazil and how it influences the job of the social worker even today.

Her story sheds light on the possibility of workers building a type of involvement with work that favors sensitivity before entering social policies, as well as the inventiveness of high militancy, persisting, among these affects, the normative ideology of professional practice that does not allow for a fundamental and blunt criticism - the political-partisan intention that often assumes the institutionalization of the department and the use of workers' bodies.

⁵ The project was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais - PUCMG – CAAE: 57346716.7.0000.5137.

⁶ The names used in the article are fictitious.

The theory of institutional analysis (Lourau, 2014) and the Life-Narrative method (Bertaux, 2010) are the main theoretical-methodological approaches that allowed us to arrive at the evaluations presented here. Regarding institutional analysis, this is dedicated to understanding the relationships that individuals or collectives maintain with the institution, based on the assumption that there is an institutional movement governed by antagonistic forces, called by René Lourau (2014) 'instituted' and 'instituting'. Together, these forces create an abstract scenario called institution and invest in expectations, the construction of social ties, work, life in society, and many other ways of constituting civilizational landmarks that guide and organize life in common.

The concepts of implication and overimplication discussed here are also the result of institutional analysis. Implication is the set of relationships (libidinal, organizational, and ideological) that are established between subjects and institutions (Monceau, 2017). In this sense, it is not a choice, i.e., one is always implicated, and this relationship is constitutive and indicative of feelings, events, and perceptions that go through the processes of institutionalization and subjectivation (Londero & Soares, 2018).

Overimplication, when analyzed, takes us to what Lourau (1990) called the normative ideology of overwork, a blind spot in the subject's relationship with the institution, an excess that relies on implication to produce a beyond that is not necessarily linked to the well-being of those who produce the work. When discussing professional implication, Rougerie (2019) states that this relationship can derive from such an immersion in practice that it becomes difficult to process implication analyses and critical analysis of professional practice. Therefore, as we will try to illustrate, the overimplication points to the exploration of subjectivity, placing the subject in the exercise of self-management of their alienation (Lourau, 1990).

The life narrative methodology allowed us to investigate an individual biographical path to describe and analyze collective phenomena (Bertaux, 2010). Observing practices can lead to understanding the social contexts in which they are inscribed, accessing processes and 'social worlds'. The question "How does one become a social worker?" guided the fieldwork, making it possible to inquire about the social mechanisms that support intersubjective logic in this process of choice and professionalization.

A militant is born

Maria was born in the state of Mato Grosso, in 1968. The eldest daughter of a family made up of a father, a mother, and a brother, she started studying at the age of eight. After completing her fourth grade at a rural school, Maria found herself faced with the challenge of continuing her studies since, as a girl, she could not travel alone to school. With a strong relationship with the church, she continued the religiosity inherited from her parents and took upon herself, at the age of 12, the family goal of becoming a nun.

Given the difficulty in continuing her studies, being religious was a way of exercising her faith and continuing at school. Even though she was sad about being away from her parents, she went to an elite local Catholic school. As she would be a nun, her studies were paid for by the congregation that received her; however, in exchange for the support she received, she had to clean the school. She could not bear the suffering of dealing with so much work as a child and being away from her parents, so she asked the nuns to send her back home.

On a second attempt, she was received by the nuns in the city where she lived. Soon after, she was transferred to another private school, also elite, in a more distant city. At the

two private schools, Maria exchanged her work for the opportunity to study at the institution without paying. In addition to this, she had to maintain the objective of being religious to have her monthly fees financed by the congregation. For Maria, studying was linked to her religiosity and, consequently, to fulfilling the implicit task of being religious. She built bonds of solidarity and friendship with her classmates that meant that the work was, even if clandestinely, shared between them all and she could be better rested for her studies, which always took place in the early morning.

In Cuiabá, where she attended high school from 1983 to 1985, with Brazil under the dictatorship period and governed by General João Baptista Figueiredo, she studied at a public school, studied teaching, and continued to be linked to a religious congregation still with the intention of being a nun. At this time, and through her relationship with the Catholic Church, Maria encountered militancy for social causes. Among the hardliners of the dictatorial government, several social and community movements emerged and strengthened, fighting for democracy and the protection of people persecuted for their political positions. In Maria's case, her sensitivity brought her, at this time, closer to the Landless Rural Workers Movement, founded in 1984.

Years later, Maria went to a new convent where she lived for three years and dedicated herself to formation with dedication and conflicts. Understanding religious life as a complete dedication to the causes of the poorest while remaining linked, she questioned the institution's work in maintaining a high-quality school for the more advantaged classes. However, despite disagreements, she finished her formation, was recognized as a nun, and returned to her hometown, now as a nun.

Second moment: militancy intensifies

One event, in particular, produced important cohesion for Maria to combine social work and religious militancy. Upon returning to her city, in 1991, already a nun, she met with a movement of homeless people who were demanding land from the city council and who were involved in community construction projects. When they received the donation, from a joint effort, every weekend the families dedicated themselves to building their future homes together. Maria participated in this experience with the support of her religious congregation at the time.

Maria and her story express a Brazilian tradition in the construction of social policies in Brazil. In a first moment, which still reveals its effects today, the Catholic Church took care of the poor classes through a series of charitable actions, whose benevolent character predominated amid a country with profound inequalities. Philanthropy was regulated by the church through public-private partnerships, which was later taken over by the state, but never completely to the point of becoming independent of these traditions that revolve around charitable, disciplinary, regulatory, and welfare actions. Thus, "[...] we can see phases and alliances in the Brazilian trajectory: from charitable philanthropy to hygienic, disciplinary, professional-pedagogical, supervised and clientele philanthropy" (Cruz & Guareschi, 2009, p. 17). In this scenario, the poor gradually became 'socially assisted', and needed to be supported by a state and a church that not only wanted to promote, but also control. Along this path, Serpa, Virginia and Cavalcanti (2015) highlight the importance of problematizing not only this connection with the state but also the change in the user's status from 'indigent' to 'subject of rights', which, certainly, brings tensions and the risk of disciplinary actions.

The historical period in which Maria became more enthusiastically involved in Catholic charisma and social work corresponds to the moment of strong political repression in the country (1964 to 1985). Times of a violent dictatorship in which assistance to the poor had a redistributive character, although it worked at full steam in favor of capitalist growth. From this scenario, 'technical rationalism' emerged to hide social ills. It will only be rethought based on Althusserian and Marxist reflections that began in the practice of social workers and social service programs. Confronting technical rationalism was one of the established forces against which social movements fought in their historical-conceptual genesis and whose struggle directly influenced the field of social assistance.

From this welfare and authoritarian state, the denial of the official discourse emerged via social movements, various militancies, and marginal activities that questioned the current system and pointed to a democratic horizon to be conquered. According to Cruz and Guareschi (2009), the period from 1975 to 1985 was political turmoil. Maria was not clear about the political complexity that was taking over the country but had already assumed a position that placed her at the heart of the progressive movements of the time. This significantly changed her life from then on, as well as her sensitivity towards social work, which became a fundamental support for her future professionalization.

The involvement of Maria in supporting the social movement in her city, which was fighting for housing, was so significant that she also gained a house to live in. However, despite wanting to live there at that time and continue the social work she had started, as she was linked to the religious congregation as a nun, she did not have the autonomy to take over the property without it being in the interest of her superiors to maintain the house as a place of evangelization. When she managed to get the congregation to take over the house as an institutional extension, she definitively combined social work and religious life and transformed her entire daily life into a real immersion, which strengthened her involvement with the cause of the poorest through the church's charisma.

In tune with her historical time, based on the sensitivity that linked her to working with the most vulnerable, the approach to the practice of the Basic Ecclesiastical Communities - CEBs that Maria wanted for her congregation, then conservative and rigid, was what was most audacious in the process of expansion of the Latin American Catholic Church at that time. Maria made the congregation, then centralized and conservative, adhere to the premises of the CEBs, even if in an improvised and unofficial way, transforming her house into a cell of liberation theology⁷, the main religious foundation of the CEBs.

The CEBs, in the history of Catholicism, were forces of a political-spiritual organization that spread across Brazil and Latin America, producing achievements both in the formation of people sensitive to social causes and who today work in social policies, like Maria and in the production of political and religious leaders who influenced the fight for social rights in the history of the country and Latin America.

Significant changes took place in the Catholic religious scene from the 1960s onwards, which promoted a turning point in the process of institutionalization of the Catholic Church and, especially, in Latin America, favoring the emergence of other forms of understanding the world and building, in our view, what we currently understand as social work in social welfare policy. After the Second Vatican Council, between 1962 and 1965, following the determination of Pope John XXIII, the church faced the need to create strategies to increase the number of believers worldwide. In Latin America, enhanced by the

⁷ Christian theological current that advocates evangelization based on the preferential option for the poor and involves the study of human and social sciences.

experience with violent dictatorships in several countries, the possibility of reconciling politics and religion based on liberation theology emerges.

Maria and many other people who sought to reconcile Catholic ethics with work with the poor began to attend CEBs and reflect on social problems based on the Freirean methodology of see-judge-act (Freire, 2019). In Maria's case, the CEBs to which she was linked operated within her home, and she was one of the coordinators. With the concept of praxis as its center, the proposed method promoted a dialectical and procedural process of reflection, which has in its nature the awakening of critical consciousness, the recognition of oppression, and the favoring of the liberation of oppressed peoples in the face of poverty imposed by the capitalist system, and by the holders of the means of production (Betto, 1981). The main action would be the liberation of consciousness that could generate social liberation by inviting the subject to see and act in everyday life to react and change the concrete conditions where they lived and that oppressed them. In this way, according to Paulo Freire (2019), there is no difference between theory and practice; therefore there is no word without action. A Catholicism appeared on the religious scene that preached salvation in the here and now through political formation and critical consciousness. It was no longer just the risk of dying and going to hell but of living under the command of oppressors and exploiters of the poor and marginalized people's workforce.

We see, from Freire (2019), the idea of a commitment that always requires concrete movement from those who see social inequality, aligned, now from the Catholic charisma, with the idea that it is necessary to act. This approach enlightens, as we will see later, about a type of work in Catholic pastorals that seems to reflect on the institutionalization of social policies today, especially social assistance and, even more so, the linking of workers to the profession.

The Catholic Church has been involved with Brazilian social assistance in various ways and at all times, making it a means of reaching believers and promoting charity and evangelization. In the case of liberation theology, an interesting point is the entry of lay people into the exercise of evangelization. This strategy promoted the expansion of the faithful, an objective determined by the council, but also favored the movement of people other than just religious people in pastoral work. From this influence arises a type of sensitivity and conception of what social work with vulnerable groups would be like that we see today in the work of social workers. Maria shows the effects of religious training on professional practice, making it difficult to recognize a professionalization that is not also limited to beliefs and affections that do not simply involve the rationalization and objectivity of the practice.

A little after that time, Maria, still living in the community and after political fights with the local city hall, was fired from the school where she worked. Mobilized by the struggles for housing, she decided, in 1995, to attend a law course in Belo Horizonte. Arriving in the new city, she became involved with the homeless population and spent a week living on the streets of the capital of Minas Gerais. Her fascination with work resulted in her being hired by Pastoral de Rua and the guarantee of some money to live in that new and unknown city.

Maria was already sailing with enthusiasm in seas favorable to militancy when she discovered the Social Service program at the Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais (PUC Minas). Soon after, in the 2000s, motivated by the beginning of robust financing of social policies in the country, she was approved in the public competition in the city of Betim, Minas Gerais. At this moment, decisive in her professional history, not only did she need to confront her historical militancy with the need to institutionalize it from the hard lines

of the state, but she also experienced the expansion and the attempt to institutionalize Brazilian social assistance with the interference of municipal party policies.

Third moment: militancy is institutionalized

Maria interestingly narrates her entry into Betim city hall in 2002. Along with the joy of gaining a stable job with a motivating salary, her first contact with work was opening a drawer with documents on 200 families at risk to be monitored and no methodology, structural resources, or technical support that could guide her. If she previously acted from the militancy's hand-to-hand and outside institutional environments, now she was faced with spreadsheets and forms to fill out, update, and report to.

She also faced the rapid advancement of regulations, guidelines, and investments in the country's social policies from 2004 onwards. Even with numerous challenges, she easily stood out among other workers due to her uninterrupted commitment to work, collecting leadership positions, and the beginning of discomfort with welfare that permeated everyone's work.

The city of Betim, with approximately 440,000 inhabitants, has an important industrial park, and alarming levels of inequality and violence. At this time, there was a mayor who, despite agreeing with the development of social policies, promoting financing and expansion of the technical team, also articulated, through social assistance, a strengthening of his supporters and the party, promoting assistance programs and actions motivated by political-partisan intentions.

Maria recalls that it was common to offer basic food parcels without social assistance criteria, persecution of workers with progressive positions and members of opposition parties, as well as many other ways of using the public machine to promote people and not services based on guidelines and laws. Many of these municipal policies were co-financed by the federal government, whose government agenda prioritized access to social rights, citizenship, and the fight against hunger.

For Fagnani (2011), 2004, the first year of the Lula government, was the time to ask ourselves whether we would see change or continuity, especially considering the state's role. In social assistance policy, the federal government initially proposed fighting hunger through the Zero Hunger Program, the main promise of the electoral campaign. The program offered a range of actions covering different aspects of food security, ranging from agrarian reform to the proposal for the construction of cisterns and community kitchens.

The Zero Hunger Program gave rise to the Family Allowance Program (PBF), whose acceptance and expansion increased over the next few years. Tackling poverty and its consequences in Brazil gained a new face and multiple understandings, placing economic growth, market development, and progress in tackling inequality in a conciliatory field.

The expansion of the PBF and the accompanying problematizations exemplify the beginning of an effort to transform the welfare tradition into government policies. Maria lived this moment in the effervescence of the city of Betim: from a social worker with her drawer that kept cases of 200 families in hunger and violence, she quickly became the coordinator of the public equipment she worked at. She then took on a technical advisory role at the municipality's Social Assistance Secretariat, an even more important position. Maria advanced because funding grew in numbers and varieties, services and programs arrived with impressive speed and positions multiplied more and more, causing the need for specialization, mainly in the professions of social worker and psychologist. Courses in these respective areas multiplied, university syllabi were changed to keep up with the new times,

and professional councils began to organize themselves to establish new guidelines and technical documents to guide action in the field.

In this context of the exponent growth of the department, Maria began to experience the clashes between her professional ethics and the various party-political intentions that permeated the institutionalization of public policy. She experienced episodes of illness and disappointment with her daily work routine. Far from shaking her overimplication, instead of distancing herself from the object of suffering, in this case, the work, she gathered energy, as in a fight or even in militancy, to continue and assert what she believed.

Sometimes in groups and sometimes individually, she hardly questioned at that time her excessive involvement and the consequences in her personal life. She did not feel like she had the right to give up or back down from what, for her, was a cause. At the end of the interviews, she revealed she had recently been dealing with suspected cancer. She believed that the disease was the result of concern about work, experiences of violence in cases, and the lack of institutional support to make her effort worthwhile.

At this subjective crossroads experienced by Maria and her colleagues, there was always fertile ground for a commitment that arises from experiences at work, inseparable from the trajectory of life, which seems to emerge in an institutional setting that is not very naive to this sensitivity, with characteristics to promote the strengthening of this militancy and, consequently, the gradual increase of overimplication, of hyper-involvement with the practice.

The life trajectory of professionals aligned with the needs of their work does not seem like a coincidence that can be trivialized to reflect on the achievements and failures of this public policy. With precarious institutional apparatus, most of the time, without adequate technical and methodological conditions, working in risky territories, with low wages, and in the case of contracted people, with few guarantees regarding their employment relationship, workers deal with a variety of human ills: various types of violence against children and adolescents (whether carried out by their own caregivers or third parties) and, including, sexual violence; constant deaths of people who are monitored by the programs; extreme situations of human existence (hunger, shelter, death threats, abandonment, and neglect) in which urgent measures must be taken and not always supported by the institution; home visits in territories at war over drug trafficking; an often deficient constitution of the social assistance network, which causes numerous difficulties in carrying out the referrals and dialogues necessary for the progress of cases; among many others.

From this perspective, a peculiar worker is necessary for this public policy. One that does not necessarily value their financial life; that does not relate the difficulties of daily work with institutional investment in their role as a worker; one that, even when questioning, from a political point of view, their place and function, does not break, that is, continues to be motivated by issues other than just salary gains; one who knows how to reconsider moments of tension and insists on building their work; someone who is motivated without necessarily needing good working conditions.

Prades and Rueff-Escoubes (2018) present the work of Gerard Mendel, an author who creates a dialogue between Marxism and psychoanalysis and reveals the tensions between the social and the psychic that refer to the place each class occupies in the social structure, the relationship with the means of production and the effects on their unconscious psychic determinations. In this interaction, there are some dimensions of the institutional relationship in which the politics can regress to the psychic level, favoring the establishment of solutions to the conflict based on their archaic beliefs, typical of family dimensions, and

abandoning the political game that will always require struggle and renunciation (Prades & Rueff-Escoubes, 2018).

According to Prades and Rueff-Escoubes (2018), Mendel points out that some individuals from the same social class cannot organize themselves as a demanding group, being able to develop their class consciousness in a given relationship. They join groups that do not allow the conflict to be debated in all its dimensions; they prevent the deep recognition of the multilateral conditions for the emergence and persistence of some differences.

Faced with the omission of social assistance institutionalization processes, revealed through the continuous precariousness of public policy, the worker takes on the conflict, whether alone or in small groups, which increases their motivation towards work, even if such investment is not refractory on a collective level. In the case of Betim, especially, micropolitical movements were entangled with changes in the country's scene, overshadowing the interests of municipal party politics in the face of an effusive national scenario of support for social policies through federal government funding.

Being part of this process, the overimplicated social worker abandons the institutional scene when they do not make it a primary place for building resistance, but uses their body, affections, and archaic individual history to carry out the task. If they did the opposite, that is, collectivized suffering, they would create conflicts within the institutionalization processes, which could lead to a genuine reflection on its implications for work. When they deliberately insist on resolving what is at the institutional level in their solitude, the worker becomes ill without being able to name the psychic process that regresses to the physiological. This disposition is supported by an overimplication that, involved in a peculiar way with work, prevents the subject from critically analyzing the forces that permeate this relationship, as Lourau (1990) reminds us.

We observed not only in Maria but also in all the other interviewees that a life marked by institutions linked to religious doctrines, especially the Catholic one and its pastoral tradition, facilitates the existence of forms of attachment that reinforce the personal dimension more than necessarily the dialectic exteriority/interiority when it comes to establishing a lasting relationship with an institution. Just as other living conditions exercised, mainly in the family, such as the experience of poverty and the struggle for equality, for example, can provide subjective arrangements consistent with the institutional logic that prevails in social assistance, one in which the right is confused with charity, work is confused with a cause and professionalization is lost in the idea of a political fight for an ideal.

Interestingly, the majority of those interviewed spent most of their lives in social work, with little or no experience of other jobs that were not in the context of social policies. Almost everyone pointed to completing a master's and doctoral degree as a way of relieving themselves of the illnesses arising from working in social assistance, but they saw little chance of completing this project.

The institutions of family, church, and, more peripherally, progressive struggles are conditions that 'cross' Maria's subjectivation processes to interconnect life and work in a single temporality, which makes it difficult to distinguish her struggles from the impossible dimension of social work. When institutional processes operate through 'crossing', they aim at reproduction and are controlled by the instituted, the organized, and repetition. They generate the maintenance of heterogestive modes of exploration, domination, and mystification. When they mobilize through transversality, beyond reproductions and the search for connections, they aim at production and are commanded by instituting and

inventiveness. In this movement, they generate self-analytical, self-managing, and libertarian modes (Baremblyt, 1992).

For Baremblyt (1992), the recognition of work as a mode-individual and not a mode-collective, as discussed by Mendel (1973), causing the psychological expression of conflicts in social life, is a pathological symptom that points to immaturity at a political level. The institutional forces that support the regression from the political to the psychic intend to maintain the established forms, the hierarchy of power, the control of bodies, and discourses and favor the anesthetization of the instituting forces. In her narrative, Maria problematizes the incompetence of the group of workers to promote durable, dialogical collectives without hierarchies and barriers that would favor the gathering of everyone around the political issues of work. They had no unions representing them and had never gone on strike.

The subjectivity linked to the institutionalization of this public policy is one that, like a martyr, does not give up the fight and remains in defense of a cause that also concerns itself. Maria was dealing with her illnesses and the absence of her colleagues, some who were also ill, others on leave, and others who had asked for dismissal or transfer to the health department. In the current crisis in her relationship with work, she decided, for a while, to leave her coordination positions and invest in caring for families, believing that this could be more useful and, consequently, having her militancy and personal fulfillment fueled in the routine of care and direct contact with families.

When she took on her first case, that hope disappeared like magic. She followed a family in which two children were sexually abused by their stepfather. One died from internal injuries resulting from sexual intercourse; the other, when fleeing the attacks, ran into the street, was run over, and also died. Maria said that she had been vomiting for several days when she took on the case and discovered that there were no records of follow-up at the institution. She was again facing something common in social assistance policy: the fragility or lack of resources that should support work processes and guarantee professionals full conditions to act in situations of this severity.

One life, one job

Two institutions stand out in Maria's trajectory: initially, the family and its investment in her daughter's religiosity, leading her to plan a religious life as a nun, and the influence of the Catholic Church and its progressive movements in the construction of its religiosity. Later, this sensitivity emerges in Maria's connection to social work and how she conceives it.

About the relationship with institutions, it is worth thinking about how the Catholic Church, faced with its expansion based on the proposal of progressive movements with the participation of lay people, forged within its midst a militant group that, later, like Maria, could study and find a way to trace their professional life within their pastoral experiences, using the skills they built there and reconciling them with their emotional affinities. Doimo (1984) makes two important considerations: that the church profoundly influenced, especially by CEBs, the constitution of social movements, be they workers, from rural areas, or housing struggles; and that there are no studies that show, in a compelling way, the effects of the church's influence on the sociopolitical context. Silva (2006), in one of the few studies that correlate Catholic charisma and social assistance, will point out that the idea of 'charity', reinforced above all by the experience of CEBs, is definitive in the work of pastoral leaders, a lay group of the church that maintains work volunteers or philanthropies within the scope

of evangelization and philanthropy actions. One of the effects of this dialogue would be a moralism that persists in the reading of social issues (Silva, 2015).

When the National Social Assistance Policy began to intensify the production of documents and regulations to professionalize and standardize the performance of professionals in institutions, Maria was surprised and invested in a study that, until then, was new in her career in social work. It was not just a matter of understanding the regulations and trying to operationalize them in the face of the challenge of the incompleteness of the documents. It was necessary to systematize its practice and consider established parameters to which it would have to respond. It would have to permanently reconcile practical, intuitive, and militant knowledge with the rigidity and regulation brought by public policy based on its documents.

On an ethics marked by action directed towards the other, whose nature is based on the praxis of emergency, charity, and donation, aligned with the founding welfare of social work in Brazil, Maria, through her trajectory, reveals to us that the meaning of the social worker's practice takes place as part of a swing movement. On the one hand, party political interests permeate and make work precarious, causing public policy to stagnate and regress. At the same time, individual and sometimes collective involvement can envision growth, build critical knowledge, and possibly the state responsibility for breaking inequality in the country. Captured in this balancing hope, the involvement of workers is sustained by an overimplication that believes in change and a body for action, at the same time that it is run over by illnesses and disappointments.

(In) Conclusions

A análise da trajetória de Maria revela uma sensibilidade para o trabalho social que não é construída, necessariamente, no encontro com o ofício, mas que pode ser mapeada em experiências de vida com a família, com a igreja ou com as lutas políticas do campo progressista.

The analysis of Maria's trajectory reveals a sensitivity toward social work that is not necessarily constructed in the encounter with the profession but can be mapped in life experiences with the family, the church, or the political struggles of the progressive field.

Through observation of how the worker is involved in public policy, her performance is marked by priesthood characteristics, as it is independent of the structural, theoretical, methodological, financial conditions, and labor legislation so that she can dedicate herself to the maximum. In this implication, there is a blind spot that prevents the individual from remaining at the level of the collective, making this place a space of resistance, demands, and the possibility of thinking about their actions to turn to archaic, individual issues that marked their professional choice. Feeding the individual way to the detriment of the collective way of relating, the worker builds an overimplication that fits into the forms of institutionalization of Brazilian social assistance policy and contributes to its precariousness, always fueled by the arbitrary actions of public managers.

The pendular movement of institutionalization that captures the 'martyr' subjectivity of the social worker sometimes establishes a horizon of possibilities, competence, and growth by favoring creativity, militancy, and the group's capacity for autonomy, and sometimes it is linked to the interests of party politics, by impoverishing and disempowering professional work.

Only when workers move away from the direct implementation of social assistance can they think about their implications and the personal losses that the work entails. In the tensions of work, marked mainly by party-political interference and its personalistic aspects in the department management, the affections of workers are captured in a way that increases the overimplication in favor of overt militancy and the precariousness of politics.

Nevertheless, when organized in a collective, they can look beyond individual issues and everyday work, giving way to a critical way of thinking about themselves and their professional work. Self-care for social workers, therefore, depends on a less omnipotent connection with professional doing, recognizing political and personal limits in the commitment to a less sickening and inventive professional life.

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Received: Aug. 08, 2020
Approved: May 29, 2021