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## TRENDS IN THE PRODUCTION OF SOCIAL WORK KNOWLEDGE IN PARAÍBA

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**Abstract:** This article discusses the production of knowledge in Social Work on Social Policy in Paraíba. It aims to analyze the Master's Dissertations linked to the area of Social Policy, defended at the PPGSS/UFPB from 2010 to 2019 from the theoretical-methodological trends derived from the legacy of Marxist critical-dialectical rationality and postmodern influences. It is characterized as a bibliographic and documentary research using state-of-the-art methodology to map current trends in knowledge production in the universe of 119 dissertations analyzed through bibliographic indicators: area of knowledge, themes, authors.

**Keywords:** Social Work; Social Policy; Knowledge Production.

## INTRODUCTION

This article derives from the research developed in the Master's Course of the Postgraduate Program in Social Work at the Federal University of Paraíba on the production of knowledge in Social Work on Social Policy. It aims to analyze the Master's dissertations linked to the area of Social Policy, defended at the PPGSS/UFPB from 2010 to 2019, based on the theoretical-methodological trends based on the legacy of Marxist critical-dialectical rationality and the emerging postmodern influences.

The socio-historical context of this research is the crisis of late bourgeois society and its impact on the production of Social Work knowledge on Social Policy.

The relationship between Social Work and Social Policy in Brazil expanded in the 1980s and 1990s, and was consolidated in the 21st century, having a major impact on a broad process of building knowledge about Social Policy within the profession, as one of the basic pillars in the consolidation of Social Work, recognized by Brazilian research and postgraduate development agencies as an area of knowledge in the Applied Social Sciences. (Mito; Nogueira, 2013)

The methodological path of the research developed qualifies as a bibliographic and documentary research using the state of the art to enable the analytical mapping of the trends that permeate the universe of 119 Master's Dissertations of the PPGSS/UFPB in the decade 2010/2019, linked to the area of Social Policy. Quantitative and qualitative instruments and techniques were used in the data collection and analysis phases. In operational terms, we opted for a state-of-the-art methodology using bibliographic indicators: areas of knowledge, themes and authors; as well as statistical resources through descriptive reading.

The theoretical-methodological foundation of the research was based on the historical-dialectical materialist method, based on an understanding of the contradictory social relations that permeate capitalist society, with a contextual focus on the crisis of late-bourgeois society.

In conclusion, 171 master's dissertations were defended at the PPGSS/UFPB in the 2010/2019 decade, predominantly in the area of Social Policy with 119 (70%), followed by the area of Theoretical-Practical Foundations of Social Work with 52 (30%).

In the analysis of these 119 dissertations on Social Policy, we found a prevalence of the theoretical-methodological direction of the Marxist legacy; a low incidence of post-modern formulations; the presence of theoretical eclecticism between the adoption of a critical and uncritical reading of authors from different theoretical paradigms; and the sidelining of scientific methodology in the formulation of research.

## **KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION AND ITS PARADIGMS: THE LEGACY OF MARXIST HISTORICAL-CRITICAL MODERNITY AND THE EMERGING POST-MODERN INFLECTIONS**

The production of knowledge involves a broad human process, as it is a historical act of human creation and the promotion of socio-cultural and scientific knowledge. Since the academy is predominantly the *locus* of scientific and technical knowledge, it is up to this institution to become the repository of this knowledge so as not to run the risk of losing it over time.

Knowledge is expressed in various forms: scientific, philosophical, religious and empirical. All this knowledge derives from and manifests itself in society and is permeated by historical transformations in the economy, politics, culture and geography.

Modern reason, based on Enlightenment thinking, emerged between the 18th and 19th centuries. It strove to demythologize and desacralize philosophical knowledge and the forms of social, artistic, political and cultural organization inspired by theocentrism (total and absolute power exercised by religion), predominant in the Middle Ages. It inaugurated scientific knowledge through the centrality of man as the bearer of reason and producer of knowledge; it decreed the end of the Ancien Régime (Absolutism); it favored and consolidated the bourgeois class and the capitalist mode of production; it constituted the bourgeois state and inspired major changes in the economy, culture and politics.

The Project of Modernity and the modern paradigms of knowledge gained material concreteness: first with the rise of the capitalist mode of production, which led to the development of the liberal paradigm; and second with the Russian Revolution and the consolidation of the Soviet Union,

which favored the emergence of the socialist paradigm.

In this context, it can be said that Modernity expressed an inhomogeneous project: on the one hand, a celebration of liberalism and positivism and, on the other, criticism, dialectics, socialism and Marxism.

Despite all the optimism, the 20th century, marked by the great world wars, millions of deaths, concentration camps and nuclear bombs, put the Enlightenment project under suspicion for some theorists, such as Horkheimer and Adorno - both from the Frankfurt School - who defended the thesis that this project was doomed to turn against itself and, instead of leading humanity to emancipation, led it to a system of universal oppression. But it was with the crisis of the 1970s, the crisis of the Golden Age of Capitalism, added to the crisis of real socialism - the two greatest metanarratives of Modernity - that criticism of the Project of Modernity took shape, especially with the emergence of Post-Modernity. (Santos; Almeida; Pereira, 2022a, p. 5147)

The changes generated by the crisis of the Golden Age of Capitalism and intensified today have led to major transformations in socio-political, economic and cultural relations around the world. These transformations have also imposed an ideological movement, centered on the understanding that the contemporary period no longer contemplates the foundations laid down in the Project of Modernity, but in a set of historical innovations, postmodernity, which according to Lyotard (2011, p. xvi) consists of “incredulity in relation to the metarelates proper to Modernity.”

For Harvey (2016), the origins of the cultural and political change called postmodernity are manifested as a phenomenon with changes in the ways in which space and time are experienced in global capitalism. The meanings and uses of time and space have been transfigured by social, political, geographical and economic changes. The thesis defended by this author

argues that, since the 1970s, there has been a compression of space and time that has had an impact on political and economic practices, the balance of class power, social and cultural life with the transition from Fordism to what is known as “flexible accumulation”.

In short, the “crisis” of the Project of Modernity and the intensification of criticism of modern paradigms expanded more deeply in the process of the organic crisis of capital in the 1970s, weakening the Keynesian-Fordist arrangements and the modern class pact that materialized the *Welfare State*. According to its proponents, postmodernity consists of a new period that totally or partially breaks with Modernity, whose paradigms, especially Marxism, are not sufficient to explain the society that has emerged from the profound transformations resulting from the crisis of the 1970s.

It can thus be seen that the postmodern movement is heterogeneous, but has common characteristics: total or partial negation of modern paradigms, triumph of aesthetics over ethics, fragmentation, volatility, simulacrum, eclecticism and many others. Furthermore, as Marxist analysis shows, postmodernity is a historical condition that is expressed within capitalist Modernity, and acts as the cultural logic of post-crisis capitalism in the 1970s, which, despite bringing with it a set of extremely significant transformations, does not in itself bring about a break with the Modern Project, since there has been no change in the structural bases that make up capitalism, namely: private appropriation of the wealth produced by society as a whole, in a global market, the condition of wage-earning and alienation of the worker from the fruits of his labor, substitution of living labor for dead labor. (Santos; Almeida; Pereira, 2022a, p. 5163)

In the context of the 1970s, it places the process of producing knowledge in Social Work, which began with the creation of the first Postgraduate Programs in the area, theoretically and methodologically linked to the legacy of the Project of Modernity, predomi-

nantly from a critical-dialectical perspective on capitalism. Nowadays, however, the neo-conservative offensive of post-modern developments that are expressed in the production of Social Work, even if timidly, cannot be disregarded.

## **SOCIAL WORK AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION**

Among the areas evaluated by Capes, Social Work (area 32) currently has 36 *stricto sensu* postgraduate programs. The expansion of Postgraduate Programs in Social Work expresses the broadening of the process of critical academic and professional renewal that has taken place in Brazilian Social Work in recent decades. (Capes, 2022) Like the other areas, the production of knowledge in Social Work has greater representation in the research developed by the Postgraduate Programs.

Although in the political conjuncture of the Temer and Bolsonaro governments (2016-2018 and 2019-2022), there has been a process of dismantling public higher education. This dismantling has had the effect of disqualifying the production of scientific knowledge, especially in the areas of the Human Social Sciences, denying human and social rights, disrupting nature, among other political advances in Brazilian society under the aegis of the ultraconservative neoliberal offensive, notably under the Bolsonaro government.

In 2019, 11,800 scholarships were cut by Capes and new scholarships were suspended by the CNPq. In the wake of the attacks on graduate studies, in 2020 there were changes to the criteria for distributing master's and doctoral scholarships by Capes. This change triggered cuts in scholarships for graduate programs with grades 3, 4 and 5, reallocating them to programs with higher grades.

The impact of these changes on the field of Social Work was significant, since 27 (75%) postgraduate programs were rated 5, 4 or 3,

and these programs lost all or part of the scholarships granted by CAPES. Santana, Stampa and Carvalho (2020, p.76) point out that, “[...] the reduction in the supply of scholarships is likely to result in a lack of interest among young people in research and teaching careers, weakening the general framework of postgraduate studies in Brazil”.

The production of knowledge in the field of Social Work generated in the PPGSS indicates an intrinsic and prevalent relationship with Social Policy. Certainly, the institutionalization of Social Work as a profession in the world and in Brazil is boosted when the “social question” becomes the object of state intervention through Social Policies, making it the socio-occupational space for Social Work professionals. Historically, this reality has expanded and consolidated publications on Social Policy, published by postgraduate programs.

Furthermore, the prevalence of Social Work productions on Social Policies is justified by the areas of training of the Brazilian Postgraduate Programs, of which 66% (23) are in Social Work; 17% (06) in Social Policy; 9% (3) in Public Policies; and 8% (3) Social Work and Social Policy. It is also worth noting that of the 23 Postgraduate Programs in Social Work, 22 have areas of concentration linked to Social Policies (Santos; Almeida; Pereira, 2022b).

Despite the legislative and political progress made in the field of Social Policies and Social Security in Brazil, contradictorily, in the context of the 1990s, the neoliberal counter-reform project of the state was implemented in Brazil. In this process of privatist managerial reform with a reduction in the role and function of the regulatory state, two movements began to characterize social policies: commercialization and assistance. It is against this backdrop that the production of knowledge on Social Policy in the area of Social Work is inserted in the perspective of critical analysis based on the real historical movement of society. (Id., ib., p. 332)

The production of knowledge in Social Work on Social Policy focuses on critical analysis and the real movement of Brazilian society. As Mioto and Nogueira (2013, p.62) explain, the growth of production on Social Policy “[...] has not only meant an increase in the production of knowledge on the subject, but a growing qualification in terms of theoretical-methodological rigor and a sensitive deepening of the discussion of contemporary social processes”.

These productions on Social Policies and their respective sectorialities (health, education, social assistance, social security, employment and income, among others) analyze the effectiveness of the state’s responses in confronting the expressions of the social question, “[...] they were thus sectorially thought of [...] taken in their phenomenality, the expressions of the ‘social question’ are transmuted into different problems treated in isolation by the specializations of the socio-technical division of labour, including Social Work” (Santos, 2007, p. 65). This process of sectorialization leads to a syncretism of professional demands related to the conservative tendency of the profession and contributes to the echo of post-modern influences in the profession.

Post-modernity as the cultural logic of late capitalism is reflected in various aspects of social life, including in the field of knowledge production and in everyday professional life and social policies. This influence is gaining ground in the Social Sciences as a result of the questioning of the rigidity and totalitarianism of modern analytical paradigms. This is the so-called “crisis of paradigms” in the Social Sciences, spreading to other areas of knowledge.

The syncretic conservative tendency of Social Work, as a constitutive element of the profession, although attuned to bourgeois Modernity, has ideological elements of anti-modern conservatism that are close to post-modern influences. In addition to criticizing

modern paradigms, post-modernity favors combining different matrices of thought to understand the complex reality of post-crisis relations in 1970.

This trend of post-modernity is similar to the syncretic tendency of Social Work, which “[...] in the course of professional development, its agents eclectically incorporate ‘new’ theories to subsidize not only professional practice, but also theoretical production” (Santos, 2007, p.59).

Faced with the fragile appropriation of the critical-dialectical method, conservative and syncretic tendencies have led to postmodern inflections in Social Work in two segments: rejection of Marxism and affirmation of the conservative stance of the foundations of the profession in opposition to the Ethical-Pedagogical Project (PEP); and adoption of Marxism, although it argues that there are gaps that the Marxist method does not address, and therefore it is necessary to approach other perspectives to account for these gaps, post-modernity being this possibility. (Lima, 2018; Santos, 2007).

The analysis of the production of knowledge in Social Work on Social Policies through the Master’s Dissertations defended at the PPGSS/UFPB in the last decade (2010 to 2019) considered the context in which these productions were generated, marked by the crisis of late-bourgeois society in order to verify the inflections of this crisis in the hegemony of the Project of Modernity and in the postmodern offensive.

## **TRENDS IN THE PRODUCTION OF SOCIAL WORK KNOWLEDGE AT THE PPGSS/ UFPB**

The Graduate Program in Social Work at the Federal University of Paraíba was set up in 1978, with the creation of the Master’s course by Resolution No. 202/77 of the University Council (CONSUNI). It was the first Master’s Degree in Social Work in the Northeast and the fifth in the country, behind only PUC-SP and PUC-RIO (1971), UFRJ (1976) and PUC-Porto Alegre (1977). The creation of the MSS/UFPB meant the possibility of training the pent-up demand for professionals in Social Work and other areas of the Human and Social Sciences in the North and Northeast regions of Brazil.

According to the PPGSS/UFPB Master’s Dissertations Catalog -1982/2020, 29 dissertations were defended in the 1980s (1983-1989), 66 in the 1990s, 113 between 2000 and 2009 and 190 between 2010 and 2020, totaling 398 dissertations defended. It is worth noting the increasing quantitative growth of these productions between the periods, especially the years 2010 to 2020 with 190 dissertations defended.

When analyzing the dissertations defended at the PPGSS/UFPB, there is a greater incidence of the area of Social Policy in relation to the area of Theoretical and Practical Foundations of Social Work. The comparative balance between these two areas of concentration shows that, in the 1980s, the area of Social Policy had 18 dissertations, while the area of Fundamentals had 11; in the 1990s, 51 dissertations were linked to Social Policy and the area of Fundamentals had 15; in the 2000s there were 91 dissertations linked to the area of Social Policy and 22 to the area of Fundamentals; from 2010 to 2020, this trend continues with the predominance of the area of Social Policy with 130 and the area of Fundamentals with 60 defended works.

In this article, the discussion of the research results centers around the dissertations defended at the PPGSS/UFPB, from 2010 to 2019, which presented a universe of 171 works, of which 119 (70%) were linked to the area of Social Policy and 52 (30%) to the area of Theoretical-Practical Foundations of Social Work.

The following data refers to the methodological aspects of scientific research and the analytical indicators of the 119 dissertations defended in the area of Social Policy.

In the discussion of methodological aspects, the most common types of research were: documental with 28 (23.5%), 27 (22.7%) exploratory, 22 (18.4%) bibliographical, 21 (17.7%) field research and 5 (4.2%) other. Attention should be drawn to the fact that 16 (13.5%) of the dissertations did not describe the type of research. With regard to the methodological approach adopted in the dissertations surveyed, it was found that 46.2% (55) defined them as mixed approach research, i.e. quantitative-qualitative research, 32% (38) as qualitative research, 15 (12.6%) as quantitative research and 9.2% (11) did not describe the approach.

With regard to the method, 64 (53.7%) of the dissertations adopted the dialectical-historical-materialist method, referred to in some of the dissertations as the Marxist method; 20 (16.8%) others; and 35 (29.5%) did not describe the method adopted in the research.

These results show that even with the accumulation and theoretical-methodological maturing of the area of Social Work since 1990 at a national level, the PPGSS/UFPB still has a fragile appropriation of the method, since 35 (29.5%) of the dissertations did not show the method adopted; and a seconding of the scientific methodology of the research, marked by the incidence of 11 (9.2%) dissertations that did not describe the research approach and 16 (13.5%) that did not identify the type of research.

It is important to stress that the Marxist theoretical-methodological direction is still hegemonic in the professional category, in the academic field and in the political and organizational field of the profession, despite the growth of post-modern influence and the conservative substrata of the profession.

The discussion of the main results based on the bibliographic indicators of the 119 dissertations defended in the area of Social Policy at the PPGSS/UFPB between 2010 and 2019 was based on the indicators of the area of knowledge; thematic indicators and authorial indicators (Almeida, 2017).

The indicators of the areas of knowledge express the adoption of a certain set of intellectual knowledge necessary to define, contextualize and understand the object of study based on three dimensions: Major Areas of Knowledge according to Capes and CNPq (national research promotion agencies), Areas of Knowledge (which are level 1 and 2 in the systematization done by Capes/CNPq) and Author Training.

The dissertations defended at the PPGSS/UFPB were based on two major areas of knowledge: Applied Social Sciences with 104 (87%) and Human Sciences with 15 (13%). As for the Areas of Knowledge dimension, the one with the highest incidence was Social Work with 104 (87%), corresponding to the alignment of the same 104 dissertations based on the Major Area of Applied Social Sciences. The prevalent incidence of 104 from the Applied Social Sciences stands out in relation to the Human Sciences, since it is in this Major Area that the Social Work Area of Knowledge falls. The Major Area of the Humanities and its areas of knowledge are presented in the dissertations of the PPGSS/UFPB, whose objects of study were close to the accumulation of Social Work, such as the social question and Social Policy, the field of professional practice of the social worker and the construction of knowledge.

The Author's Education dimension indicates that 97 (81%) of the postgraduate authors who defended master's dissertations between 2010 and 2019 have a degree in Social Work. This is a relevant finding that demonstrates the intellectual advancement of Social Work in the field of research and knowledge production.

This was followed by Psychology with 4 (03%) and Law with 3 (03%) dissertations defended. These are two areas of knowledge that have a great deal to do with Social Work in both the academic and professional fields.

These are areas of knowledge that are very close to Social Work, especially in terms of the professional field. For this reason, there has been a search for professionals from these areas in the Postgraduate Programs in Social Work. Another reason for the search for PPGSS by students from other areas of knowledge is that the category has been building up significant literature and acquiring expertise in the field of Social Policies based on critical Marxist thinking, often not explored by other areas of knowledge.

In analyzing the thematic indicators, the analytical references focused on the thematic and theoretical categories that permeate the objects of studies in the area of Social Policy. These thematic indicators were analyzed through three dimensions: Social Policy, Thematic Category, Keywords.

In the Social Policy dimension, the Social Policy most investigated was Social Assistance, with 31 (26%). This is one of the policies that employs the most Social Work professionals, either as social workers or in coordination and management.

In the analysis of this policy, we came across the adoption of post-modern terms in the construction of the documents that legalize and design the Social Assistance Policy, such as the terms "risk", "entrepreneurship", "familism", "social vulnerability" and others,

but according to Miguel's (2013) analysis, it was possible to observe that the productions that study this Policy seek to understand the contradictions of reality and the implementation of the Social Assistance Policy, its advances, potentialities and regressions.

However, it is worth noting that in the universe of 31 dissertations studying the Social Assistance Policy, only 14 indicated the use of the critical Marxist method, while the other 17 did not provide a theoretical-methodological basis, despite the use of authors from the Marxist tradition, as will be highlighted in the analysis of authorial indicators.

Health Policy, with 18 (15%) occurrences, is the second most researched social policy at the PPGSS/UFPB; the third most studied social policy is the Policy for the Defense and Protection of Children and Adolescents, with 14 (12%) of the dissertations defended between 2010 and 2019.

There were 12 (10%) dissertations on labor policies. These dissertations investigated relations in the world of work, focusing on thematic categories such as: informality, gender relations, precariousness, etc. These analyses were predominantly based on Marxian and Marxist readings, the latter contextualized in terms of labor relations in mature capitalism.

It is unquestionable that the production of knowledge generated by the PPGSS/UFPB has made fruitful contributions to unveiling the concreteness of reality, by analyzing social policies from the perspective of capitalism's relations of reproduction and production. However, there are also weaknesses in the methodological aspects of the research, as previously mentioned, as well as the adoption, albeit fragile, of post-modern terms and authors, without due critical analysis.

The Social Policies with low incidence in the production generated at the PPGSS/UFPB between 2010 and 2019 are identified as policies aimed at the LGBTQIA+ population and



racial equality policies. This lack of research on these topics shows that the PPGSS/UFPB is out of step with studies on emerging topics that are included in the production of knowledge in the Social Sciences and Humanities, including in recent Social Work literature.

Furthermore, the Social Policies and their respective thematic categories investigated at the PPGSS/UFPB are more diversified and sectorialized. The sectoriality of social policies and their respective themes are mediations of the totality of reality that are presented as the object of professional action by social workers and other professionals, who demand interventions and professional capacity for understanding and analysis. "This is why the production of knowledge contributes to understanding these realities, in order to subsidize the professional's perspective in their intervention" (Santos, 2017, p.14).

Contradictorily, the successive approaches to post-modernity in Social Work show up in Social Policies, especially in the production of knowledge about Health and Social Assistance Policies, with increasingly fragmented discussions (Galdino, 2016).

With regard to the Thematic Category, it was identified that the most studied are: Gender, Work, Intersectorality. The gender category had 10 (9%) occurrences, with a focus on studies on the condition of women, such as the sexual division of labor, sexuality, women's health and policies to protect women.

Cantalice (2013), in her doctoral research, found that productions on gender and feminism are able to distinguish the different theoretical and political currents adopted, notably between Marxism and post-modern strands. This tendency was also revealed in the PPGSS/UFPB dissertations that studied the subject of gender in the light of postmodern influence, especially in studies based on the Theory of Social Representations, which centers its analysis around the symbolic and representations of gender. Nevertheless, the

Marxist perspective still prevails in the research carried out, which focuses on the analysis of the sexual division of labor in the theoretical conception of political economy.

The category of Work had 9 (8%) occurrences, which is an important category for the profession in its theoretical-methodological and ideo-political aspects, hegemonically understood in the profession "[...] as fundamental to social being and central to deciphering capitalist society and the class struggle" (Cantalice, 2013, p.157).

The theme of intersectorality had 8 (7%) occurrences, making it the third most studied and demonstrating a significant growth in research on the subject. Intersectorality is understood as intervention in networks to,

[...] as a mechanism to reduce costs, make production and circulation processes more flexible, increase company profits, and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of social policies. It is clear that the logic of flexibilization has been applied in various sectors of life since the 1970s, and in the field of postmodernity, there is a defense of the flexibilization of theories, methods of modern reason in the area of knowledge production and professional activities, etc. (Santos; Almeida; Pereira, 2022b, p. 330)

Among the findings of this research, the low incidence of studies on the Social Question stands out, with only 3 (3%) frequencies, considering that "[...] this theoretical category is one of the main theoretical axes in the formation of Social Work" (Santos et al., 2021, p. 517).

The most frequent keywords were: Social Assistance Policy, with 13 frequencies; SUAS with 8 occurrences, followed by Social Protection (7) and Public Policies (6). These are the most frequent keywords that relate to the two previous dimensions (social policy and thematic category). The fact that Social Assistance Policy is the most frequent keyword coincides with the fact that it is the most researched Social Policy in the PPGSS/UFPB.

With regard to authorial indicators, two dimensions were analyzed: most cited authors and most recurrent supervisors. In order to investigate the most frequent authors, an exhaustive survey was carried out of the authors cited in the PPGSS dissertations, from 2010 to 2019, in about a thousand references listed in the 119 master's dissertations researched. In this inventory process, 167 of the most cited authors were listed.

In order to synthesize the analysis of the data collected from these 167 authors, we chose a sample of the 15 most cited authors, 11 of whom are from the field of Social Work: José Paulo Netto with 123 (11%) citations, Aldaíza Sposati with 111 occurrences (9%), Ivaneete Boschetti, 109 frequencies (9%), Elaine Behring - 96 (8%), Marilda Iamamoto - 77 (7%), Maria Carmelita Yazbek - 64 (6%), Ana Elizabete Mota - 64 (6%), Potyara Amazoneida Pereira - 60 (5%), Vicente de Paula Faleiros - 51 (4%), Maria Inês Bravo - 48 (4%), Berenice Rojas Couto - 44 (4%). These percentages reaffirm the intellectual recognition of the field of Social Work and its theoretical production.

It is worth noting that of the 11 authors listed, 9 are linked to bibliographical references on Social Policies, with the exception of José Paulo Netto and Marilda Iamamoto who are authors referenced in the area of Theoretical and Methodological Foundations of Social Work; and Maria Carmelita Yazbek who writes about Social Policies and Foundations.

According to Santos (2007), among the Social Work authors of reference, Vicente de Paula Faleiros is the only one with post-modern affiliations. According to this author, Faleiros is in the second group<sup>1</sup> of authors who bring Social Work closer to postmodernity. This group is characterized by criticism of certain aspects based on Marxism, but recommends the adoption of postmodern paradigms to overcome

the shortcomings of Marxism. Therefore, it expresses “[...] the syncretic discursive maintenance of the point of view of totality added to the defense of methodological pluralism” (Santos, 2007, p.98). In other words, this group has appropriated the Marxist theoretical-methodological direction, but justifies eclecticism so as not to be locked into determinism

The other 4 most referenced authors are: Karl Marx with 143 citations (12%), as the most frequent author; followed by Ricardo Antunes with 85 (7%), the sixth most mentioned author; Maria Cecilia Minayo with 62 (5%) frequencies 05%, due to her works in the area of Social Research; and Friedrich Engels, with 40 (3%).

With regard to the incidence of other contemporary authors cited, who are not from the field of Social Work and are linked to different theoretical lines, including post-modern ones, the following are listed: Robert Castel with 36 (28%); Norberto Bobbio with 17 (13%); Michel Foucault with 13 (10%); Boaventura de Sousa Santos with 9 (7%) and Zygmunt Bauman with 5 (3%).

In the case of the author Boaventura de Sousa Santos, he is considered an opposition postmodernist (Santos, 2007), as he argues that Marxism still has a contribution to make to the world and can contribute to a postmodern alternative, since the promises of Modernity have not been fulfilled and nor can they be fulfilled by modern paradigms. For this reason, the author advocates a paradigmatic transition. Zygmunt Bauman also stands out, who although he has a slight incidence of citations in the dissertations researched, his numerous works translated into Portuguese must be considered, whose analyses indicate the existence of a new type of society “[...] postulating liquidity, the destitution of totality by the fragmentation of reality” (Lima, 2018, p.142).

1. With regard to post-modern approaches to the profession, Santos (2007) lists two paths: 1 - the conservative critique that rejects Marxism and syncretically absorbs post-modern propositions; 2 - the critique that claims Marxism in some respects, but recommends adopting post-modern paradigms to overcome Marxism's shortcomings.

The adoption of authors from different currents of thought is important for scientific research, even for the dialectical method that works by considering contradictions. However, the use of these authors must respect the theoretical-methodological rigor of the analysis, which is necessary to avoid falling into syncretism. For

Certainly, the analysis of this data has made it possible to attest to the occurrence of syncretism in the dissertations researched, through the adoption of authors from various currents of thought without due critical and interpretative analysis.

In the analytical dimension of the most recurrent supervisors of the dissertations researched, the following stand out: Prof. Dr. Marinalva Conserva with 17 (14.2%) incidences, leader of the Research Group Núcleo de Estudos e Pesquisas em Políticas Sociais (NEPPS); then Prof. Dr. Maria Lourdes Soares with 16 (13.2%) incidences, leader of the Sector Estudos e Pesquisas sobre Questões Socioculturais do Nordeste (SEQSONE); and Prof. Dr. Maria Lourdes Soares with 16 (13.2%) incidences, leader of the Sector for Studies and Research on Sociocultural Issues in the Northeast (SEQSONE); and Prof. Dr. Maria do Socorro Souza Vieira with 15 (12.6%), leader of the Group for Studies and Research on Children, Adolescents, Families and Social Protection (GEPAC). The prevalence of these three supervisors who are leaders of research groups linked to the PPGSS/UFPB's "State, Social Rights and Social Protection" line of research explains the significant incidence of dissertations researched on the Social Assistance Policy and the Child and Adolescent Protection Policy.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The results discussed in this article confirm the intellectual accumulation of knowledge production in Social Work in its theoretical-methodological, ethical-political and technical-operative dimensions, predominantly aligned with the modern thinking of the Marxist tradition. However, it was also found that this accumulation "[...] does not extinguish the existence of conservatism or prevent the inflections of postmodern thought" (Santos, 2018, p.96).

We conclude that these results confirm the intellectual maturity of Social Work in the production of knowledge, materialized in dissertations on Social Policies, in the particularity of the PPGSS/UFPB. Brazilian Social Work, as a field of knowledge, has a large body of knowledge on Social Policies, which is recognized by other fields of knowledge. Analyzing the dissertations defended at the PPGSS/UFPB made it possible to observe the breadth of this production in quantitative and qualitative terms.

In addition, it was found that these PPGSS/UFPB productions, although the investigative studies on Social Policies predominated on a specific policy, the analyses were predominantly carried out from the analytical perspective of the totality of late bourgeois society and the respective challenges in contemporary times .

In conclusion, it is considered that Social Work has expanded its professional activity in society, especially through "[...] active participation in the formation of a critical mass on the left" (Mota, 2013, p.19), which is directly and indirectly responsible for forming an accumulation of critical knowledge of a Marxist bias that materializes against the dispersion of postmodern ideology in social thought, thus becoming a field of political-ideological resistance.

In the case of the PPGSS/UFPB, it was noted that the dissertations have been following the analytical trend of adherence to the ABEPSS Guidelines in terms of adherence to the Project of Modernity from the perspective of dialectical reason. However, weaknesses were also identified in the methodological aspects of the research carried out, with the method and scientific methodology becoming

secondary; and an incidence, albeit still fragile, of fragmented analytical aspects stemming from post-modernity, without the necessary theoretical mediations of the totality of the social fabric and theoretical-methodological eclecticism expressed in uncritical citations and references to authors from different matrices of social thought.

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