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## THE PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT SOCIAL POLICY IN THE AREA OF SOCIAL SERVICE: FROM MODERNITY AND THE EMERSION OF POST- MODERNITY

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**Abstract:** This article presents as an object of study the production of knowledge about Social Policy in the area of Social Service inserted in the context of the crisis of late-bourgeois society that reflects on the criticism of the societal project of the Modernity Program from the postmodern offensive. This is a bibliographic and documentary research, whose investigative material analyzed 53 Master's Dissertations defended in the Post-graduation Program in Social Service at the *Universidade Federal da Paraíba*, in the period from 2010 to 2014. The discussion of the results highlighted the significant prevalence of intellectual maturity of the area of Social Service, through the theoretical consolidation of a Marxist critical basis on Social Policy, even with the limits and challenges imposed on modern thinking by postmodern criticism. **Keywords:** Knowledge Production; Social service; Social Policy; Modernity and Post-Modernity.

## INTRODUCTION

This article aims to research the production of knowledge about Social Policy in the area of Social Service in the context of the crisis of late-bourgeois society and its inflections in the modern society project based on the postmodern onslaught. As it is configured as a theoretical research and documentary research was developed around the Master's Dissertations, linked to the area of Social Policy, defended in the Post-graduation Program in Social Service at the *Universidade Federal da Paraíba* (PPGSS/UFPB) in the period from 2010 to 2014.

To this end, this study was based on the theoretical-methodological perspective of a dialectical historical materialist nature as it enables the analysis of a certain social object based on the historical materiality of men's lives in capitalist society. Furthermore, the adoption of the Marxian and Marxist

investigative perspective is hegemonic in professional training, research and production of knowledge in the area of Brazilian Social Work.

As a methodology pertinent to the development of bibliographic and documentary research, the state of the art was adopted. In operational terms, the state-of-the-art methodology was processed in the light of two analytical indicators that, although intertwined, are: indicators of knowledge areas and authorial indicators.

The state-of-the-art methodology, according to Romanowski and Ens (2006, p. 39) refers to research that "[...] covers an entire area of knowledge, in the different aspects that generated productions".

Investigative studies developed using the state of the art allow "[...] a defined time frame, systematize a given field of knowledge, recognize the main research results, identify dominant and emerging themes and approaches, as well as gaps and open unexplored fields to future research." (HADDAD, 2000, p. 4)

To develop this research, we analyzed the universe of 53 (fifty-three) Master's Dissertations defended at PPGSS/UFPB, linked to the area of Social Policy, in the period from 2010 to 2014.

## MODERNITY VERSUS POST-MODERNITY: INFLECTIONS IN THE PRODUCTION OF SOCIAL SERVICE KNOWLEDGE

The Modernity Program means a societal project, built in historical time in which man, in the light of reason, frees himself from conceptions rooted in religious and mystical obscurantism through the adoption of a new conception of the world, called anthropocentric, in which gains centrality as a subject, inserted in the materiality of reality. The societal project of Modernity builds a new

sociability, replacing the lifestyle of the *Âncien Régime* (Absolutism), marked by the political regime of absolute power concentrated in the hands of monarchs, by the estate society and by the mercantilist economic system.

It is established as a corporate project of the bourgeois order, which was consolidated at the end of the 20th century. XVIII, consecrated by the Enlightenment, whose main characteristic was to defend the use of reason over the supremacy of faith to understand and solve the real problems of society.

The central proposal of Modernity is human emancipation by including all classes, even those outside the arc of privileges of the state society of Absolutism. However, as it is a construction of the bourgeoisie, the Modernity project was not fully realized, as the bourgeois class, upon coming to power, became a conservative class and abandoned the notion of human emancipation, guaranteeing at least political emancipation. Thus, over the years, several protests have exploded, promoted by emerging classes (workers and fractions) who, through social mobilizations and struggles, expose the antagonism and inequalities of bourgeois society.

Therefore, Modernity consists of a heterogeneous project, which is directed both towards celebration – liberalism and its surroundings – and toward criticism – dialectics, Marxism and socialism. Although it does not conform to a homogeneous project, Almeida states that (2011, p.44) “[...] modernity becomes hegemonic in the production of scientific knowledge, not only by supporting the ideas of the bourgeoisie – liberalism – but also by the interests of the proletariat – anarchism, socialism”.

In conceptual terms, Modernity is defined by universalist and totalizing notions, understood as metanarratives. Although the two basic political metanarratives - anarchism, socialism - are not the only ones of Modernity, they were

the ones that had a concrete “social basis”.

Criticism of the Modern Capitalist Project was consolidated in the 19th century with the Hegelian left. Of this movement, Karl Marx, author of dialectical reason, is cited as the main pillar of his work, but dialectical reason is understood as a critique of bourgeois logic.

For Bezerra (2007, p.180-181)

Marx’s vision of modernity can be interpreted as carrying this origin, which at the same time expresses the perspectives of destruction and creation. Thus, it reveals an understanding of modernity as transformation, change, novelty, revolution, which causes old traditions, social relations, habits and precepts that were previously rigid and fixed to collapse.

With the expression everything that is solid melts into air, Marx will announce the meaning of modernity as a societal experience of desacralization of nature, social relations and institutions, where everything is profaned, and man, seen as a historical and social being, is, then, leave yourself to leave your mark on the world, creating a new order, through thought and social and political action.

At the beginning of the 1970s, the industrialized economies based on the Fordist/Keynesian pact showed the first signs of exhaustion, which undermined the growth pattern that, for almost three decades, supported the class pact expressed in the Welfare State, thus launching a profound crisis of capitalism that continues to this day.

Mota (1995, p. 56) explains that the responses given to overcome this crisis were implemented with “[...] a neoliberal cutting program, marked by the denial of state economic regulation, the abandonment of full employment policies and the reduction of social security mechanisms, in favor of regulation operated by the market”.

This period is marked by a productive restructuring, guided by the flexibility

of production and the microelectronic technological revolution “[...] aiming to enhance the extraction of relative surplus value, without prejudice to the extraction of absolute surplus value”. (SANTOS, 2007, p.19) It is also characterized by the globalization of the economy, which implies a change in the social and international division of labor relations, combined with the financialization of the economy; and, due to the change in the role of the State, which adopts neoliberal measures with a broad privatization strategy.

The changes resulting from this crisis that erupted in the 1970s and have intensified to this day, added to the crisis of real socialism, lead to transformations not only in the economy, but globally as they affect the political, social and cultural order.

These societal transformations also affected the ideological movement, based on the idea that the contemporary period would no longer have the bases founded on the Modernity Project, but on a set of new ideas - Postmodernity, understood as the “cultural logic of late capitalism”. (JAMESON, 2007).

According to Guerra, the crisis of paradigms in the Social Sciences defends the thesis (s/d, p.2) “[...] that the promise of autonomy and freedom of men contained in the Modernity Project was not made viable by any of the concrete forms by which this project was shaped: neither socialism nor capitalism came close to its realization”.

The thought that some authors call postmodern ideology, movement or culture is characterized, according to Wood (1999, p. 9), “[...] the emphasis on the fragmented human nature of the world and human knowledge”. And he asserts that,

The political implications of all this are quite clear: the human self is so fluid and fragmented (the “decentered subject”) and our identities so variable, uncertain and fragile that there can be no basis for solidarity and collective action based on

a “personal identity”, common social (a class), in a common experience, in common interests.

For Harvey (2009), Postmodernity is the time-space compression in the organization of capitalism. This time-space compression occurs with the crisis of rigid Fordism and the advent of what the author calls “flexible accumulation”. According to this author:

These flexible production systems have enabled an acceleration in the pace of product innovation, alongside the exploration of – and at the same time dependent on – small-scale, highly specialized niche markets. [...] Turnover time – which is always a key to profitability – has been dramatically reduced by the use of new production technologies [...] and new organizational forms. Flexible accumulation was accompanied at the consumption end, therefore, by much greater attention to fleeting fashions and by the mobilization of all the artifices for inducing needs and cultural transformation that this implies. (Harvey, 2009, p. 148).

On the other hand, postmodern authors deny the Marxist method of apprehending reality, because according to them there is no social theory capable of articulating all aspects of social life and giving a form or an explanation for the world. Therefore, these authors encourage the proliferation of hypotheses and theories, being against any standardization of critical thinking or development of the subject.

Social Work as a profession whose specificity is to intervene in the expressions of the “social issue”, is permeated by the developments of societal relations, both in its professional intervention and in the production of knowledge generated by the category.

The history of Brazilian Social Service, briefly presented in the introduction to this article, reveals that the process of knowledge production begins in the 1970s with the creation of the first Post-graduation Programs,

inspired theoretically and ideologically by the emancipatory legacy of the Modernity Project, both affirmation and criticism of capitalism.

Certainly, the approximation of professional training and knowledge production in Social Work to the Marxist and Marxist legacy brought a theoretical and political consolidation to the profession, which gives intellectual maturity to Brazilian Social Service.

In this sense, the postmodern offensive represents a threat to the constitutive elements of the Marxist bases that run through the production of knowledge in Social Work. These postmodern inflections, even if timidly, question the professional project of the profession in its theoretical-methodological, ethical-political, ideological-cultural and technical-operative dimensions. Given this finding, the following questions arise:

How is the production of knowledge generated by Master's Dissertations designed, contextualized in the spatiality of the Post-graduation Program in Social Service at UFPB and in the temporality of the 2000s? Is it possible to identify the production of knowledge based on the postmodern neoconservative perspective? Or is this production still based on the foundations of Marxist rationality, forged in the emancipatory societal project of the majority? Or both? (ALMEIDA, 2016, p. 3)

## **ANALYSIS OF ACADEMIC MASTER'S DISSERTATIONS IN THE AREA OF SOCIAL POLICY OF PPGSS/UFPB IN THE YEARS FROM 2010 TO 2014 IN THE LIGHT OF BIBLIOGRAPHIC INDICATORS**

The Post-graduation Program in Social Work at the ``Universidade Federal da Paraíba``, created in 1978, at the Academic Master's level, is the 5th oldest Program in the country and the 1st in the Northeast Region.

This Program underwent some structural reforms, in terms of lines of research, workload and subjects with respective syllabi. However, the two areas of PPGSS concentration, which are Social Policy and Theoretical-practical Foundation of Social Service, remained until 2016, when the PPGSS was restructured, approved through Resolution No. 01/2016 of CONSEPE/UFPB, which established the unification of the two areas of concentration called Social Service and Social Policy and concentrating the lines of research in two lines: Social Service, Work and Social Policy; and State, Social Rights and Social Protection.

In this article, the discussion around the Academic Master's Dissertations in the area of Social Policy at PPGSS/UFPB takes place over the years 2010 to 2014 and, methodologically, in the light of bibliographic indicators analyzing the state of the art of these productions.

The general data from the PPGSS/UFPB Academic Master's Dissertations in the years 2010 to 2014 are distributed between the two areas of concentration: Theoretical-Practical Foundation of Social Service and Social Policy. It totals a universe of 72 works with a significant prevalence in the area of concentration of Social Policy with 74% (53) dissertations defended compared to the area of Theoretical-practical Foundation of Social Service with 26% (19) works. This prevalence

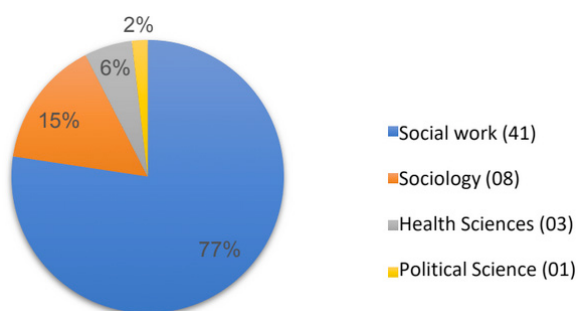
of Dissertations linked to the Social Policy concentration area at PPGSS/UFPB has been affirmed in the process of producing knowledge of Brazilian Social Work over the years.

Mota (2013, p. 19) asserts that “[...] productions aimed at formulating social policies have an undeniable importance for Social Service and are relevant to the contradictions in the process that marked and still mark its existence”.

The following presents a discussion of the 53 Dissertations defended in the area of Social Policy at PPGSS/UFPB between the years 2010 and 2014 in the light of Modernity and Postmodernity through the state-of-the-art methodology based on two bibliographic indicators., namely: the areas of knowledge and the authors (ALMEIDA, 2017).

## AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE INDICATOR

The analysis of the 53 Dissertations linked to the area of Social Policy according to the bibliographic indicator areas of knowledge is carried out through two variables: areas of knowledge and academic training of the authors.



Graph 1 – Areas of Knowledge of Master’s Dissertations in the Social Policy Area of PPGSS/UFPB. João Pessoa/PB, 2020 (N=53).

Source: PPGSS/UFPB Collection, 2010-2014.  
Self-elaboration

The areas of knowledge adopted are based on the division established in the Knowledge Area Table, created by the Foundation Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES) and were identified based on information collected in the authors’ Lattes CVs.

As shown in Graph 01, the Areas of Knowledge defined in the Dissertations are grouped into four groups of knowledge: Social Work, Sociology, Health Sciences and Political Science. “The interlocution of Social Work with other knowledge starts from the contextualization in which the research is inserted, especially when this interrelationship is processed through social policies.” (MENDES; ALMEIDA, 2014, p. 654)

With greater incidence, the area of Social Service stands out with 77% (41) of Dissertations defended. Because the research area is the Post-graduation Program in Social Work, it justifies the significant incidence in relation to the others.

[...] by constituting an area of knowledge, it deepens its intervention in reality through the construction of a professional culture, of a theoretical – critical methodological nature, redefining its intellectual and social representation until then characterized, primarily, by professional practice, in which the interventional dimension took precedence over the intellectual and theoretical status of the profession. (MOTA, 2013, p. 18)

Similar to Mota’s explanatory logic, Mendes and Almeida (2014, p.253-254) state,

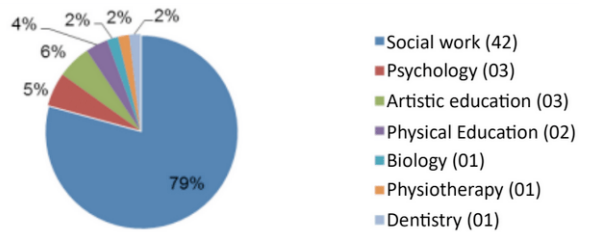
Social Service is one of the areas of knowledge that works directly with the different expressions of social issues and also has a qualified field of direct action. It is characterized as a profession that works directly in interdisciplinarity, thus contributing to the collective construction of knowledge within the set of social and human sciences.

Studies carried out in the area of knowledge in Social Service address research, primarily, on sectoral social policies and users of protective programs, such as: health, social assistance, education, children and adolescents, youth, elderly people, etc., as well as themes on gender relations, the world of work, social control, among others. As mentioned by Mendes and Almeida (2014), the interdisciplinary dimension of the profession and its contribution to the production of knowledge for the Social and Human Sciences as a whole is indisputable.

The area of knowledge in Sociology is the second in incidence with 15% (08) of the Dissertations defended which deal with investigative studies relating to the world of work, gender relations, social policies, analyzes of historical circumstances, among others. Next, the area of Health Sciences is highlighted, with 6% (03) dissertations defended. Investigative analyzes in the area of Health address issues surrounding Health Policy in general and, specifically, Women's Health, Health Program Evaluation, Mental Health, Labor Relations, and others.

Finally, the area of Political Science with the lowest incidence of only 2 (2%) dissertations defended, but without clearly identifying the investigative theme.

Social Service, according to Netto (1996, p. 12) “[...] as a profession, it is not a science nor does it have its own theory [...], but by acting in social reality, they dialogue with other areas of knowledge and produce knowledge [...] of a theoretical nature, which can be incorporated by social and human sciences”. This explains the dialogue with these four areas of knowledge in the Dissertations defended at PPGSS/UFPB. Furthermore, dialogue with these areas of knowledge is also justified by the presence of professionals from other areas to study the Academic Master's Degree in Social Service at UFPB. (SANTOS, 2017).



Graph 2 - Academic background of authors of Master's Dissertations in the Social Policy area of PPGSS/UFPB. João Pessoa/PB, 2020. (N=53).

Source: PPGSS/UFPB Collection, 2010 – 2014.

Self-elaboration

The results in Graph 02 deal with the academic training of the authors (masters) of the Master's Dissertations in the Social Policy area of the PPGSS/UFPB, which indicate a prevalence of 79% (42) of authors who are social workers, which proves that Social Service is both a profession as an area of knowledge, recognized in the academic field.

The area of Psychology presents 5% (03), as it constitutes a “partner” profession of Social Work in various occupational spaces, such as Health and Social Assistance Policies; followed by the areas of Artistic Education with 6% (03), Physical Education with 4% (02), and with a lower incidence the areas of Biology, Physiotherapy, Dentistry with 2% (01) each.

The choice to study the Master's Degree in Social Service by professionals from other areas of knowledge (such as Health and Education) derives from the interest in the area of concentration in Social Policy and the recognition that Social Service has theoretical and analytical depth, arising from the vast scientific production (bibliographic and technical) on Brazilian social policies, whose relevant authors are social workers. In the words of Mota (2013, p. 18),

[...] there is a significant increase in demand from professionals from other areas for post-graduation courses in Social Work, both at master's level [...] motivated by the search

for critical knowledge in the field of human and social sciences, without this demand being characterized by a relationship of qualification for the professional practice of Social Service, but by an interlocution with the area of knowledge, by the recognition of the qualifications of its teachers, in addition to the theoretical-methodological references and the research lines of the programs.

The percentage predominance of Social Work in the two analytical variables - area of knowledge and academic training of the authors - affirms the intellectual maturity of the area, especially the theoretical consolidation with a Marxist critical basis. It is clear that, in a hegemonic way, Social Work imposes itself on the production of knowledge and investigative analyzes on Social Policies based on the critical-dialectic method, today. This proof indicates adherence to the legacy of the Modernity Program, from the perspective of dialectical criticism, even though some of the investigative themes present post-modern traits, as they contemplate objects of fragmented studies and from the perspective of the subject displaced from his insertion in the social class.

## AUTHOR INDICATORS

The discussion of this indicator attempts to analyze the authors who were cited and their respective reference works. Regarding access to bibliographical references of the defended dissertations, 48 were analyzed out of a universe of 53 Dissertations.

In this study, the number of authors referenced in the Dissertations occurred from the following scale: from 69 (the maximum number of citations by the same author) to the minimum of 10 (ten). This way, 29 authors were listed, as shown in Table 01 below.

Most cited authors	N	%
Karl Marx	69	10.2
José Paulo Netto	52	7.7
Ivanete Boschetti	51	7.6
Elaine Behring	46	6.8
Aldaíza Sposati	42	6.2
Marilda Villela Iamamoto	36	5.3
Ricardo Antunes	35	5.2
Maria Cecilia Minayo	28	4.1
Potyara Amazoneida Pereira	28	4.1
Heleieth Saffiotti	25	3.7
Maria Carmelita Yazbek	23	3.4
Maria Augusta Tavares	17	2.5
Vicente de Paula Faleiros	17	2.5
Maria Inês Bravo	16	2.3
Sergio Lessa	16	2.3
Paul Singer	15	2.2
Giovanni Alves	14	2.0
Antonio Carlos Gil	14	2.0
Carlos Montaña	13	1.9
Robert Castel	13	1.9
Raquel Raichelis	13	1.9
Maria do Carmo Brant de Carvalho	12	1.7
Irene Rizzini	12	1.7
Sonia Fleury	12	1.7
Istvan Mészáros	11	1.6
Marcelo Braz	11	1.6
Maria Lúcia Werneck Vianna	10	1.4
David Harvey	10	1.4
Augusto Nivaldo Silva Trivinhôs	10	1.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>671</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1: Authors 10 times more cited in Master's Dissertations linked to the Social Policy area of PPGSS/UFPB. João Pessoa/PB, 2020. (N= 671).

Source: PPGSS/UFPB Collection, 2010 – 2014. Self-elaboration.

The results in Table 01 confirmed 29 most referenced authors in the 48 Dissertations researched. As can be seen, the six most cited authors were: Karl Marx 10.2% (69) linked to Social and Human Sciences; and the others José Paulo Netto 7.7% (52); Ivanete Boschetti 7.6% (51); Elaine Behring 6.8% (46); Aldaíza



Sposati 6.2% (42); Marilda Villela Iamamoto 5.3% (36) belong to the Brazilian Social Service area of knowledge.

It is still clear that these most frequent authors are linked to the thought of the Modernity Project of a dialectical-critical nature, with Karl Marx himself having the highest incidence (10.2%); following from the authors of Social Service knowledge production who analyze Social Policies through the adoption of dialectical historical materialism.

Furthermore, it was found that of the universe of 29 most referenced authors in the 48 Dissertations researched, 15 authors are from the area of Social Service, namely: José Paulo Netto 7.7% (52); Ivanete Boschetti 7.6% (51); Elaine Behring 6.8% (46); Aldaíza Sposati 6.2% (42); Marilda Villela Iamamoto 5.3% (36); Potyara Amazoneide Pereira 4.1% (28); Maria Carmelita Yasbek 3.7% (25); Maria Augusta Tavares 2.5% (17); Vicente de Paula Faleiros 2.5% (17); Maria Inês Bravo 2.3% (16); Carlos Montañó 1.9% (13); Raquel Raichelis 1.9% (13); Maria do Carmo Brant de Carvalho 1.7% (12); Irene Rizzini 1.7% (12); and Marcelo Braz 1.6% (11). This prevalence confirms the advancement of knowledge production in Brazilian Social Services and the theoretical-analytical development of its intellectuals in the area of Social Policies.

According to Santos (2018), the authorial framework changed during the 1980s/2000s. In the 1980s, the production of authors in the area of Social Service was still not very significant. From the 1990s and 2000s onwards, this situation began to change, mainly due to research carried out in Brazilian Post-graduation Programs in Social Work, whose theses and dissertations were published in the form of books, book chapters and articles in periodicals. In the area, in addition to complete works published in the annals of scientific events.

The other authors have significant relevance on themes that permeate Social Policies, in which the Fundamentals of Social Policies are articulated in the areas of Health, Social Assistance, Education, Protection of the Elderly, Protection of Women, Protection of Persons with Disabilities, Protection of Child and Adolescent, and many others, which analyze the role of social workers in Social Policies and Social Policies themselves through the theoretical-methodological adoption of dialectical historical materialism.

Of the 29 authors in total, it was proven that 11 are from the area of knowledge of Social and Human Sciences, such as Karl Marx 10.2% (69); Ricardo Antunes 5.2% (35); Heleieth Saffiotti 3.7% (25); Sergio Lessa 2.3% (16); Paul Singer 2.2% (15); Giovanni Alves 2% (14); Robert Castel 1.9% (13); Sônia Fleury 1.7% (12); Istvan Meszaros 1.6% (11); Maria Lúcia Werneck Viana 1.4% (10); David Harvey 1.4% (10).

As previously mentioned, the greatest incidence falls on Karl Marx, German philosopher (1818 – 1883). The Marxian and Marxist influence became hegemonic in Social Work from the 1980s onwards, adopted in Brazilian professional training with the Curricular Reform of 1982. This is the process of renewing Social Work in its phase of attempting to break away from conservatism (NETTO, 2015), through the adoption of the critical-dialectic legacy.

In 1996, another curricular review would take place, promoted by ABESS, which would consolidate the Marxian and Marxist legacy, later materialized in the National Curricular Guidelines for Bachelor's Degree Courses in Social Service, in accordance with the Resolution of the National Education Council, in 2002. The most referenced works of Karl Marx in the production of knowledge about Social Policies, are: Capital (book 1), The Manifesto of the Communist Party and the

Economic-philosophical Manuscripts of 1844.

Apart from the author Karl Marx, the other 10 authors from the Social and Human Sciences referenced in the Dissertations researched are Marxists or influenced by this author's thoughts. Of these 11 authors, 7 are Brazilian and, therefore, 4 are international authors: Karl Marx, Robert Castel, Istvan Meszaros and David Harvey.

The other 3 authors referenced in the Dissertations researched belong to the area of Scientific Research Methodology, namely: Maria Cecilia Minayo 4.1% (28); Antônio Carlos Gil 2% (14); Augusto Nivaldo Silva Triviños 1.4% (10).

## CONCLUSION

Much progress has been made in the trajectory of knowledge production in Social Work in its theoretical-methodological, ethical-political and technical-operative dimensions in the light of modern critical thinking of the Marxist tradition. These advances do not extinguish the existence of conservatism in formal modern thought nor do they prevent the neoconservative inflections of postmodern thought.

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According to Galdino (2016, p. 101) “[...] the production of knowledge is configured as a space of resistance and work that deepens the analysis of the subaltern classes and Brazilian reality in the light of critical thinking, in which Social Services has made numerous contributions and reveals a significant thematic richness”.

These analyzes attest to the intellectual maturity of Social Work in the production of knowledge, mainly in the knowledge produced within the scope of Social Policies, being the field of activity of Social Work in which professional materiality takes place. Although discussions about Social Policies predominate over a given specific policy, it is noted that the analyzes permeate the entirety of late-bourgeois society and its challenges in contemporary times.

It is concluded that Social Service expands its professional role in society, mainly through “[...] active participation in the formation of a critical mass on the left” (MOTA, 2013, p. 19), whose dimensions are responsible for forming an accumulation of critical knowledge that materializes against the spread of postmodern inflections in social thought, presenting itself as a field of political-ideological resistance.

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