



RETHINKING THE POWER OF SOCIAL WORK PROFESSIONALS

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ABSTRACT

Power is a fundamental part of social work insofar as it involves the network of social relationships that produce social intervention. Based on the approach proposed by Foucault, the power of the social work profession is addressed specifically, as well as how it is embedded in every day's practice. The thread is the knowledge-power binomial, which in professional terms is read as a discipline-exercise of the profession. From this, five dimensions are analyzed in which manifestations of social work's power can occur and that it are necessary to know how to manage. The analysis is finalized before the conclusions with a brief foray into how the negative sense of power can be reversed in the exercise of the social work profession.

Key words: power, relationships of power, profession, knowledge, social work.

*Power does not change people,
It only reveals who they are really.*

José Mujica (former president of Uruguay)

INTRODUCTION

This article wants to contribute to the deepening on the implications of the relationships of power in the social work practice. The reflection on power is a topic that has interested me for a long time. Although I do not want to repeat what is already written, I think it is necessary to start with a minimal contextualization on the frame of reference from which I understand power, especially with regard to social work, and that I have already shown in a previous article (PELEGRÍ, 2004)¹.

At that time I argued that the profession of social work obviated the idea of power or eluded to deal with it. Now, it is fair to admit that in the thirteen years that have elapsed since then, the debate and literature on this concept have greatly increased. Therefore, I would also like to highlight the contributions of the colleagues that have appeared in recent years, thus enriching the reflection and the debate with the theses that are defended.

As I said at that time, existing definitions of power are many and made from various perspectives. Among the many authors who have dealt with the subject, Michel Foucault is one of those who, in my opinion, offers a more adequate vision for the analysis of power in the field of social intervention and, especially, social work. In a synthetic way we can outline the main axioms of Foucault's conception of power in the following points²:

- Power is not absolute but relative; it is not possessed, but it is exercised according to the personal and institutional relationships that are established.
- All society is a network of 'relationships of power' because they arise and are inherent in all kinds of social relationships.

¹ However, it will be unavoidable to resume some of the previous article's premisses to prepare this new story that complements the previous one.

² For a more extensive explanation on these points and on other authors who made interesting contributions to the conception of power as adopted here, see Pelegrí (2004).

- Power is not static, it does not have a single origin, nor is it predetermined; in this sense it is not solely identifiable with the 'powerful'.
- Power does not have to be always negative (such as coercion or repression), but also, depending on how it is used, it can be beneficial and liberating.
- Where there are relationships of power there is resistance to this power: that is, it is not necessarily subjected to it, but rather forms of counter-power are activated.
- At the moment, power does not apply so much to the body, but to model the mind by means of the norms and, therefore, it uses symbolic instruments.

In that article I also disaggregated the power experienced by the professional of social work in four dimensions: 1) the experience that is passed on by the citizens/community, both from the private as well as from the social structure; 2) the relationship of help that is established and that forms an asymmetric relation; 3) the structure of the organization in which it works, according to its hierarchical level; and 4) the political-legal apparatus, that is, the three powers of the political system to which it is subjected to.

These four categories, in fact, are organized in two basic ways: the professional as a subject of power (subject performing acts of power) or as an object (the professional receives the effects of others' power). In each of these senses there would be many things to say; here, however, we will develop what makes them subject of power in relation with the citizens and, therefore, responsible for how they exercise it, how they manage it, in favor of who they use it, etc. We leave for another occasion the discussion on the interesting field of organizations, where the professional can be both object and subject of power.

Finally, it is also worth rescuing from the previous article a series of words that are in the orbit of power but are not always identified. We refer to concepts such as authority, influence, control, manipulation, etc. Equally key to the reflections we will make are the theses of Lukes that precise: 'Every relationship of power implies, ultimately, a conflict of interests' (whether explicit, latent or potential) and 'influence may or may not be a way of power depending on whether or not a conflict of interests occurs'.

KNOWLEDGE: MAIN SOURCE OF PROFESSIONAL POWER

Addressing power when it refers to an area of activity, especially if this activity requires certain esoteric knowledge -as it happens in social work-, it forces us to talk about both the discipline and the profession. Without these two aspects there is no explanation of the potential of a certain occupation to socially contribute and influence. Adopting the perspective of Michel Foucault, it is seen that the knowledge social work has been forging to intervene in social reality is a knowledge that confers a certain power. Knowledge is more associated to the discipline whereas power is associated to the practice of the profession. We do not want to fall into the false separation between theory and practice, but these two dimensions that are inseparable, can be used to differentiate the most specific of each field.

Knowledge (or the truth, in Foucault's terminology) is what is identified with science, expert knowledge, **the discipline**, but taking into account not only the knowledge developed by the specialists but also the knowledge of the practitioners (ÁLVAREZ-URÍA, 2015: 47). The professional knowledge is obtained from a corpus of abstract knowledge that provides certain scientific legitimization to the autonomy of action, the hierarchical authority, but mainly to the professional power (GUILLÉN, 1990). According to Rodríguez and Guilén (1992: 13), only abstract knowledge can continuously redefine problems and professional tasks, and defend them from competitors. The substrate of every profession, therefore, is the possession of a scientific-technical knowledge with a degree of certain exclusivity. The more skilled knowledge has a discipline, the more power it will have on human behavior (AGUAYO, 2007).

According to Foucault, society sees in disciplines (also in social work) three elements of a process that has a lot to do with knowing: *hierarchical vigilance*, *normalizing sanctions* and **exam**. The hierarchical monitoring is based on the inspection and the control, often preventive, to avoid deviations or behaviors not socially accepted; the symbol is the *panoptic* of prisons or psychiatric wards. Currently, control does not require visibility and transcends physical barriers because in *extitucional* environments the information in the databases allows the permanent location of individuals without being aware of the surveillance, according to Tirado and Domènech (2001: 202).

The discipline also contributes extraordinarily to normalization, which means, on the one hand, the establishment of social norms in order to determine what does not conform to the prescribed rule and what must be sanctioned, and on the other, the possibility of establishing what should be considered normal and what is deviated. These *standards* of conduct often respond to the criteria of the hegemonic class and, nevertheless, the norm is generalized and only known by those who establish it being based on their own knowledge (ÁVILA-FUENMAYOR, 2006: 225).

The third stage is the exam, which makes it possible to describe the type, severity and persistence of the deviation of the norm, as well as to establish classifications of the examiners. This is achieved through diagnostic and nosological techniques applied specifically according to each discipline. Teresa Zamanillo, following Foucault (1994), links the three analyzed elements: 'In the professional relationship of social work, as in all relationships of help, the subject is subject to the professional's eye by means of the 'examination' under a normalizing look, a vigilance that makes it possible to qualify, classify and punish. It establishes on individuals a visibility through which they are differentiated and punished'. (2012: 168).

Based on these reflections, the question is pertinent: what is the knowledge of social work? One can not ignore that this knowledge has traditionally been (and in some way it still is) weaker than the knowledge associated to other scientific disciplines. Hence, the capacity for influence in social organization is smaller than classical disciplines such as Medicine or Law, among others³. It is not that the knowledge of social work is less relevant or that the benefits it produces have less impact on the quality of life of the population, but that society's perception places it closer to 'vulgar' knowledge (care, assistencialism and of a marked feminine character) and exclusively applicable to social sectors which are undervalued by themselves (poor, excluded and, now dependent people). It is important as well to be aware that between social work and other disciplines, even within social work, there are still symbolic struggles to build the meaning of concepts that have to become official. 'The official truth will be the dominant point of

³ Méndez defends that it is not true, at least not totally, that social work is subordinated by social sciences as an external power to the discipline itself, nor that it is a subsidiary discipline without any power over the power structures (MÉNDEZ, 2009).

view that is recognized as legitimate, but in fact, it will be collectively unknown and, nevertheless, collectively recognized and normalized' (IDARRETA, 2017: 62).

But despite the preponderance of scientific knowledge as a source of power, disciplines have undergone a process of generalizing⁴ knowledge. Increasingly, knowledge is no longer coated with its traditional signs of authority but it is less an exclusive product of experts and more the result of a social construction; it also 'has a greater awareness of its own limitations and of the fact that it is inevitably accompanied by a growing non-knowing' (INNERARITY, 2011: 2). In this sense, it is necessary to be aware that in the social field there is a wide variety of knowledge, or in other words interpretations of the social phenomena of social professions⁵. This requires us to change the way in which we can gain access to knowledge, to open the focus of the observation by incorporating other perspectives and gaining the knowledge from the protagonists themselves, turning them into a part of the shared learning. 'It is about learning under conditions of great uncertainty' (INNERARITY, 2011: 9), which involves sharing power in a collaborative way⁶.

THE POWER: CONSEQUENCE OF KNOWLEDGE AND OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES

The other element of the tandem on which the power of the profession is built is professional intervention. Power, like morality, is present in all professions; both are implicit attributes and inescapable qualities of any practice in which a service is provided. There is a multitude of elements that make evident the power of a profession. The fact that many of the users who deal with social work professionals do it voluntarily (except in specific cases, as in the field of justice) would not justify the intentions and actions of

⁴ Some authors talk about "democratization" but we should take into account the great inequality that still exists in access to knowledge, contradicting the term.

⁵ Foucault called "submissive knowledge" a set of knowledge that was disqualified, because this knowledge was considered as non-conceptual or as insufficiently elaborate; or 'people's knowledge', which are not a common but a particular, local, regional knowledge that is not unanimous (ÁVILA-FUENMAYOR, 2006: 220).

⁶ Ávila-Fuenmayor (2006) warns that these knowledges can be colonized by unique discourses in order to continue to control knowledge and power; and that we too can fall into the trap of using the obtained results for the benefit of this discourse considered as scientific.

coercion, imposition or violence⁷, which would be more in the category of abuse of power. In daily activity, however, two ways of using power can be distinguished, an implicit one and another explicit one, that we develop below.

At first, professions are defined as the representation of a group of people dedicated to the pursuit of a particular activity, who have managed to narrow down a segment of the labor market and kept the monopoly of the action based on the possession of legally recognized competences. This is the first goal of the structure of professional power. The same profession becomes an unequivocal source of **implicit** power because it holds the power to organize a certain field of action. The process of professionalization of occupations (GUILLÉN, 1990) is based precisely on making good use of this binomial of knowledge that entails power.

At the same time, the profession configures a certain identity to those who practice it, as it performs certain roles and occupies a status that comes from this professional practice. Abstract knowledge becomes a key mechanism for the maintenance of social positions of power and privilege (RODRÍGUEZ Y GUILÉN, 1992: 10). Sergio García analyzes how the persistent demand of professional identity in social work (often expressed with the complaint 'our technical criteria is not respected'), becomes a strategy to increase corporate power and 'consolidate our promotion in the social class structure' (2009: 115). Although the last statement may be a bit excessive, we agree to a large extent with the author's reflection that questions whether, sometimes, professionals seek their identity in the recognition of the bosses and therefore they are closer to the institution than to the people; that is, they identify themselves with the power instances rather than with the population with whom they work (GARCÍA, 2009: 118).

Another element of implicit power is the prestige that accompanies certain professions. Some argue that the theoretical knowledge is not the element that contributes the most to the power of a profession but its capacity for legitimization within the society. Celia Aguayo says: 'Professional status [...] is the result of a process of persuasion -exercise

⁷ Violence is another controversial term that often arises as a result of abuse of power, but due to its connotations it presents a complexity that exceeds the possibilities of this article. On violence and its types, see Jiménez (2002) and Idarreta (2017).

of power- driven by the same profession, rather than the effect of its qualities' (2007: 114). However, the fact that in professions there are significant differences in the legitimacy of their members depending on the sectors or areas of activity and on certain knowledges that are more socially valued than others, can not be overlooked.

On the **explicit** side, we find different manifestations of power associated with the professional functions to achieve the goals. It is necessary to remember what was already said at the beginning, that power should not be understood as something that is always negative but also can be productive and beneficial. Maribel Martin argues that professionals need power not only to perform the task with rigor, but also to defend the rights of citizens (MARTIN ESTALAYO, 2011: 32). What must be taken into account regarding power is its versatility as to the forms and versions that can be adopted within social relationships, which we will try to synthesize in the following section.

Before doing so, however, we must remember the axiom of Foucault from which we start: that every social relationship is also a relation of power (not only, certainly, but power will always be present). As social intervention is built basically from the relationships between people, it is inescapable that the agents of social intervention consider how these relationships become (consciously or not, willingly or not) power relations. Power is not a way of doing social intervention, it is not only given in an authoritative model of action, but is implicit in any action, regardless of the paradigm that it is based on. Alfonsa Rodríguez says: 'Is a power not used, through critical practices, when the necessary exercise of awareness is carried out?' (2007: 122).

Antón and Damiano (2014), following Norbert Elias, argue that the professional power we refer to refers to the way in which these social relationships are built, exercised, manifested, etc., based on interdependence professional-users. This mutual dependence tends to occur in a certain process of dynamic imbalances based on a superior capacity of one or the other to install and promote standard forms of action. Contrary to what is thought -that the relationship established between professionals and users is equal and reciprocal-, inequalities of power make it a clearly asymmetrical relationship (JIMÉNEZ BERTOMEU, 2002). In fact, if professionals exercise a certain power over users it is because their skills and the responsibility are recognised by the society and the target people they work with (DE ZAN, 2012).

It would also be necessary to differentiate the concept of **authority** from that of power in professional practice. It is understood that authority is the attribute of the legitimate power and legally granted to someone; '*authority is the right or the obligation to seek obedience, whereas power is the demonstrated ability to get things done*' (CARRIÓN, 2009). While authority is an interpersonal relationship that occurs between hierarchically bounded subjects, power goes further and radiates in all directions. In the relationship with customers or users, the professional does not have the power to force them to do what they do not want to do. We can not speak of authority stricto sensu; if anything, we can refer to what in colloquial language is often called 'moral authority'; that is to say the individual's ascendancy that causes the subject to be voluntarily put under others' will.

This acquiescence of whom is not formally bound (beyond the cases that are determinant in certain benefits dependency, as we shall see) leads us to a manifestation of soft power, that we usually call influence or persuasion. Influence shares a part with power but another different aspect is that there is no conflict of interests between the actors⁸. When we talk about influence as power, manipulation is used so that the other agrees in what interests the manipulator. Influence is also applied when, in the absence of interests, there is a bond of trust that allows to show and convince without affecting the free decision of the persuaded.

DAILY EVIDENCE OF PROFESSIONAL POWER

The concrete expressions of power employed by social work professionals as subject to power are many and here we can only aspire to make an approximation to those that are considered to be more outstanding. To do so without falling into a necessarily incomplete relationship, it has been decided to try to systematize five levels or dimensions that allow to fit, if not all, a large part of the exhibitions of power that occur in the practice of social work, under the condition that all are dimensions that are intimately related.

⁸ Violence is another controversial term that often arises as a result of abuse of power, but due to its connotations it presents a complexity that exceeds the possibilities of this article. On violence and its types, see Jiménez (2002) and Idarreta (2017).

Bureaucratic dimension

At the organizational level we find a first element that accompanies the professional's power: bureaucracy, that is the system of action that, to a greater or lesser extent, governs any organizational body in which the professional acts. Bureaucratization is subject to operating regulations that can often disfigure the same purposes that give meaning to action. It is not a condition created by professionals, rather they suffer the consequences and can not get rid of its influence. In any case, professional work must be subjected to the bureaucratic structure and, almost always this structure will affect the development of social intervention. The salarization or proletarianization of professions also leads to a more or less severe loss of control over the process and the product of professional work, and the expropriation of values or professional purpose. Work for someone else's in a bureaucratic environment causes a progressive deterioration of autonomy and a subordination to the requirements of production (RODRÍGUEZ Y GUILÉN, 1992).

It could be said that the bureaucratic organization pollutes the professional task in the same way that professional activity gets involved and self-protects itself with organizational bureaucracy. It is an element of power that is functional for both parts despite being an object of criticism. In fact, almost always the professional's prestige is reinforced (and magnified) by the prestige of the bureaucratic institution in which they work, as will try to do with the services of the most prestigious professionals.

Symbolic dimension

Power is also exhibited through a symbolic universe that accompanies the everyday elements that make up the professional activity. Some of these elements can be even unconscious and involuntary, as with the corporation of the professional when it comes in relation to the different mindsets of the attended people. For example, sexual identity (or class, ethnicity, age, etc.) of the social worker and the attire that adorn it, or the experience (and abilities or associated skills) can mean, in certain contexts, important differences of power. The body is never completely irrelevant when it comes to analyzing the power perceived by the user or client, because it refers to the hegemonic position that certain groups have within the social structure.

The symbols take multiple forms and go from the most general and grandiloquent (the buildings where you work) to the smallest and trivial details as the symbolic distances between the professional and the client. San Juan (2010), in a very illustrious text, speaks of 'offices' as the place where power relations are generated, with permission or the complicity of the institutions themselves: 'the *power of offices* allows decisions to be taken anonymously: it is difficult to know where, how and who decides' (SAN JUAN, 2010: 644). The office refers to the metaphor of the 'black box' where professionals interact with the citizen without external direct supervision, with total autonomy and 'playing at home' (not as a home visit). This opacity is essential to guarantee the confidentiality of the user's relationship with professionals. It also has the risk of exercising an omnipotent and institutionally ignored power, if it is acted with paternalistic or authoritarian attitudes.

Communication dimension

In professions focused on helping -where social work is included-, communication plays a central role. In fact, social relations have in communication the channels that make them possible. As Watzlawick postulated, it is impossible not to communicate in one way or another; therefore, it is not surprising that demonstrations of power can be found by the professionals in the communication itself. We refer to communication in general, both formal and informal, verbal and non-verbal, private, public, oral, written, etc. In addition, as it has been said, we communicate with the whole body and, therefore, with the outfit and the ornaments, with the positions and the gestures, with the glance and the active listening. It is increasingly important to take into account communicative possibilities provided by the new information and communication technologies (ICT), some of which are already being introduced in professional practice although they may not always show sufficiently awareness and respect for the people who is left out -due to a lack of knowledge or lack of resources-, thus becoming a new risk of imposition from the one who has the power.

However, words are still the most valid means of communication for interactions established by professionals. The discourse (the truth) generated by communicative practices is a structure of knowledge about a part of the reality. Language, terminology and professional jargon as an expression of speech are also a concrete expressions of

power that separates and shows the asymmetry between actors. When one is accustomed to using disciplinary truth, one may fall into the danger of not knowing how to send it to the different partners according to their characteristics. It is a sign of power that uses technical nomenclature, full of meaning for the guilds, but void of significance for the profane.

Also, the truth -as opposed to the lie- should be a sacred attribute, inherent at all times in the discourse of the professional, and never at the service of the interests of a power other than the client's interest. If not so, we would be facing a flagrant abuse of power because when the word is put to the service of deception, half truths and concealment of information shows one of the most indecent faces that can be adopted by the professionals' power in front of the citizen who has trusted them.

Procedural dimension

We reach the stage of action, facts that constitute everyday practice through more or less standardized procedures. In some way, power is the ability to undertake certain actions with the presumption that they will exert a positive influence on the behavior of people. Therefore, it would be in the face of a type of power that some authors have typified as 'power for', which refers to the idea of action with a certain objective and not as much as dominance over people ('power on').

Nevertheless, intervention techniques may also have aspects of power that clutter or condition the free will of users. In these situations, instead of exercising the expert and referent power, which makes available capabilities to accompany the autonomous evolution of the person (which would be 'power with'), it would turn into adopting a power based on constraint or in a reward or penalty game. Without reaching that far, Zamanillo finds it almost impossible 'that social workers are not recognized as professionals of power, at least, in two professional acts par excellence: at the time of the interview and in the diagnosis' (2012: 169). In all these aspects it is necessary to seek strategies to avoid acting as control professionals and rather become professionals of emancipation (GARCÍA MARTÍN, 2012).

We should always consider, however, that accompanying people's everyday life makes it possible 'to approach the way people place themselves in power relations; how they build,

negotiate and resist them" (SILVA, SACRAMENTO AND MENDONÇA, 2015: 31). Therefore, the prerogative of users to offer resistance to professional power should not be disregarded. We must also bear in mind 'those who oppose it, forming a kind of informal critical dissent that prepares the ground for opposition, although only sometimes it is manifested in groups and in an organized way, in many cases by fear of punishment' (SAN JUAN , 2010: 645). The examples of opposition organized in citizen movements that offer resistance to social policies, and at the same time, challenge the professionals when they exercise certain roles of power happen often. We can think that, on several occasions, the popular initiative has already exceeded the same professionals in their function of empowerment, while professionals and administrations have often failed to manage the power conflict that has generated. Méndez recalls that "it is with our professional practice that we show that the victims of power are actually actors and, as such, they can be those who exercise the power" (MÉNDEZ: 2009: 126).

Attitude dimension

Finally, the most personal and concealed environment that can contribute to show the difference in power between the professional and the user is that of the attitudes with which each professional treats the users. The attitude expresses a certain disposition of spirit, correlated with the underlying emotion, the manifested behavior and the associated thoughts. Without a doubt, it is the most difficult dimension to assess and it is difficult for the professional to control the signifiers it emits; this does not happen with the citizen, who receives the attitudinal influences and quickly subdivides them subjectively. Incompatibility of impressions can be the source of a string of recriminations that introduces certain vices in the interrelation, such as mistrust, prejudices and, especially, subjugation.

The arrogant and inquisitive attitude of the professional, the negative categorization of the users, the cold, distant or insensitive treatment to the realities they experience, unwarranted episodes of discrimination, the paternalistic sense of the attention given, the negation or the little attention given to the participation of the affected ones, etc., are attitudinal forms that lead to create more dependence on the attended people in relation to the professional. Unconsciously, and even without a malicious intention, these are strategies that serve professionals to vindicate their power, to feed it and to make it

obvious in front of other actors. Zamanillo pleads for 'renouncing to the attitude of 'saving power' that is in the core of social work [with which] professionals will be able to free themselves from the swings that disorient them so much: from the oscillation of the omnipotence (power over everything) to impotence and vice versa' (ZAMANILLO, 2012: 166).

THE POLITICAL DIMENSION OF THE PROFESSION OF SOCIAL WORK

The last approach that should be made to professional power is that linked to the political role. Currently, professions do not only carry out a technical or scientific role, but also play an eminently political role that is inseparable from their classical role. This political dimension adopts two possible channels of action: when expert knowledge is devoted to political advice and when professional practice adopts a clear political intent in the sense of causing transformations. In the first case, it is the role that can be achieved by professional who are experts in political decision-making, a role that is rather scarce in terms of social work and is limited to professionals who reach the few positions of management, close to the political power of the institutions. In this case, it should be emphasized that the thesis saying that power is subordinate to knowledge is not at all frequent, but instead we see quite often that the opposite happens, that 'expert knowledge is instrumentalised by power in order to justify previously adopted political decisions' (INNERARITY , 2011).

The second case interests us the most because in social work there is a line of thought that has worked and disseminated this thesis. From this perspective, every professional is a politician of the action, and as such they are placed to participate in or influence the power. It should not be limited to disciplinary knowledge because social action is political and can not be diverted from the game of interests that are played in. Therefore 'the exercise of power must be either assumed ethically or influence its distribution' (AGUAYO, 2007: 80).

Also Martín Estalayo pleads for 'recovering and naming the political dimension of the discipline and recovering the desire to exercise political influence with our professional acts' (2011: 36). It is from this position that social work can be reconciled with power. Professionals, as subjects of power, no longer direct it to someone but make it available to society, no longer speculate with power games but rather confront it, being fully

aware, to the interests of the elites. The proposal to recover the political dimension also points to the element of identity and the way of exercising the profession today. It is an invitation to recognize the power of social work, claiming that community work is the most genuinely political one that can be carried out (ZAMANILLO AND MARTÍN, 2011: 111).

This is why a process of professional empowerment and citizenship must first be done. We will not go deep into dealing with empowerment, which requires an article in itself, but we can not ignore the need for professionals to be aware that they have more power (alone but above all collectively) than they are using. Eburne Aranguren (2014: 140) formulates the hypothesis that, although empowerment is a central axis in the discipline of social work, the profession experiences great difficulties for its personal, professional and also, intellectual empowerment. Also Alfonsa Rodríguez points out that with the creation of other types of professional scenarios, besides being positive for citizens to regain power, it may result in professionals recovering a type of power that 'bring to our social interventions a potential to promote change among citizens, institutions, social reality and in ourselves' (2007: 123).

CONCLUSION

I do not think it is too strenuous to say that social work practitioners, by sociological profile and also ideologically, tend to be quite refractory of power. Here, however, we have wanted to insist in the idea that professional power is inevitable, it is inherent in the profession itself because it is part of any social relationship and, even more, in those relationships that imply an asymmetrical interaction, in which someone attends because they need the help or services of another one.

As a result, it has been tried to show that if someone wants to become an excellent social work professional, one cannot forget this attribute added to the profession, both in terms of construction of knowledge (discipline) and in the practice itself (professional practice). It has also been attempted to defend the idea that if one recognizes the power that is possessed, there is only one consistent logical alternative: the management of this power. This means, first of all, trying to avoid abuse of power that is filtered into professional practice, even unconsciously; and, second, to be aware of the need to

become personally and professionally empowered to develop a positive power that, in tune with an empowered population, allows to achieve real changes in social reality.

Finally, it should be emphasized that acts of real power in professional practice belong to the individual sphere and each person is personally responsible for their control; although the disciplinary level has been formed transgenerationally and has been collectively created. This implies that the order of resolving progression is inverted, that is, we must begin to manage and overcome the faults that affect the own power in the exercise of the profession in order to transform the power that comes from the discipline' knowledge and that affects professionals' identity.

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