
PROBLEMATIZING THE CONCEPTS OF VULNERABILITY AND SOCIAL RISK IN THE WORK ROUTINE OF THE SUAS (BRAZILIAN UNIFIED SOCIAL ASSISTANCE SYSTEM)¹

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ABSTRACT. This essay, composed from the author's reflections, aims to discuss the notions of vulnerability and social risk that integrate documents of the SUAS [*Sistema Unificado de Assistência Social* (Brazilian Unified Social Assistance System)], focusing on the effects that emerge from the use of such notions in the professionals' work routine, in their interventions with families. In this context, it discusses the risks present in these connections, which may make professionals vulnerable, and how the unawareness of them may impair the ability of the teams as well as the protagonism and autonomy of families. The risks are named as follows: risk of psychologization, risk of disqualification, risk of overloaded women and risk of resonance of vulnerabilities. We conclude that the biggest risk is the risk of life abuse, which is supported by actions that may cover moral practices and result in relations of tutelage and subjection, preventing relations of care that are established in the intersection, in the encounter between models and forces that allow the consolidation of the SUAS in a powerful way.

Keywords: Public policies; vulnerability; social intervention.

PROBLEMATIZANDO AS NOÇÕES DE VULNERABILIDADE E RISCO SOCIAL NO COTIDIANO DO SUAS

RESUMO. Este ensaio, elaborado a partir das reflexões da autora, tem como objetivo discutir as noções de vulnerabilidade e risco social que integram os documentos do Sistema Único de Assistência Social (SUAS), enfocando os efeitos que emergem do uso dessas noções no cotidiano dos profissionais em suas intervenções com as famílias. Nesse contexto, problematizam-se os riscos presentes nessas conexões que podem tornar os profissionais vulneráveis e cujo desconhecimento pode diminuir a capacidade das equipes e também o protagonismo e a autonomia das famílias. São eles o risco da psicologização, o risco da desqualificação, o risco da sobrecarga das mulheres e o risco da ressonância da vulnerabilidade. Conclui-se que o maior risco é o risco de maltrato à vida que se sustenta em atuações que podem encobrir práticas morais e resultar em relações de tutela e de assujeitamentos, impedindo relações de cuidado que se efetuem na intercessão, no encontro entre modelos e forças, permitindo a consolidação do SUAS de forma potente.

Palavras-chave: Políticas públicas; vulnerabilidade; intervenção social.

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CUESTIONANDO LOS CONCEPTOS DE VULNERABILIDAD Y RIESGO SOCIAL EN EL COTIDIANO DE SUAS

RESUMEN. Este ensayo, extraído de las reflexiones del autor, tiene como objetivo discutir los conceptos de vulnerabilidad y riesgo social que integran los documentos del Sistema Único de Asistencia Social (SUAS), se centra en los efectos que surgen de la utilización de estas nociones en el día a día de los profesionales en sus intervenciones con las familias. En este contexto, se discute los riesgos presentes en estas conexiones, que pueden convertir es trabajadores en vulnerables y su ignorancia puede poner en peligro la capacidad de los equipos, así como el papel y la autonomía de las familias. Ellos son: el riesgo de psicologización, el riesgo de descalificación, el riesgo de sobrecarga de la mujer y el riesgo de resonancia. Llegamos a la conclusión de que el mayor riesgo es el riesgo de maltrato a la vida que se sustenta en actuaciones que pueden encubrir prácticas morales y resultar en custodia y asujeitamientos que impiden las relaciones de cuidado que se realizan en la intersección, en la reunión entre los modelos y las fuerzas, que permitan la consolidación du SUAS de forma potente.

Palabras-clave: Políticas públicas; vulnerabilidad; intervención social.

Introduction

Social security becomes more egalitarian and aimed at the entire population as of the Federal Constitution of 1988, a result of great social mobilization in Brazil. This document changes the current conception of social assistance which so far had been based on particularistic patronage, absence of universal parameters, lack of transparency in actions and of the civil society's participation. Despite changes in the constitutional charter, it was only after the first elections held when the military dictatorship came to an end, in December 1993, that the Organic Law of Social Assistance [*Lei Orgânica de Assistência Social*] (LOAS) was approved. This law sets forth the objectives and guidelines in this sphere, forms of organization and management, consolidating social assistance as a public policy, seeking to combat effectively social exclusion and guarantee basic rights for citizens.

However, the 1990s did not make institutional reforms possible, and the right to social security was not guaranteed, as pointed by Yamamoto and Oliveira (2010). Only ten years later, after the IV Social Assistance Conference held in December 2003, that, in 2004, the National Policy on Social Assistance [*Política Nacional de Assistência Social*] (PNAS) was approved. This policy is founded on the logic of territoriality and on the social-familial matrix, composing a set of services and programs based on the organization and hierarchy of network actions from the complexity levels of the system and under the universality criterion. With the reformulation of the PNAS in order to promote a greater effectiveness of its actions, we have the consolidation of the Brazilian Unified Social Assistance System [*Sistema Único de Assistência Social*] (SUAS) in 2005, an instrument for the unification of actions in the social assistance domain nationwide. Taking the Brazilian Unified Health System [*Sistema Único de Saúde*] (SUS) as reference, the SUAS defines in its guidelines political and administrative decentralization, service for those who need it and the community's involvement, causing, indeed, a break with the idea of social assistance as some kind of help or charity and kindness towards the poor and those devoid of citizenship, proposing a new management in this field. With these changes, social assistance users move from the condition of needy or underprivileged to the condition of people with social rights.

In this context, the PNAS aims at social surveillance, social and institutional defense and social protection. Social surveillance "... refers to the production, systematization of information, territorialized indicators and indices of situations of vulnerability, and personal and social risk" (Brasil, 2004, p. 39). On the other hand, social and institutional defense aims at the construction and intercession of policies towards guaranteeing and defending rights. Social protection, in turn, refers to "... actions, care, attention, benefits and aid offered by the SUAS to reduce and prevent the impact of social and natural

vicissitudes on the life cycle, on human dignity and on family as a basic nucleus of emotional, biological and relational support”(Brasil, 2004, p. 90).

At the base of the PNAS there is the strengthening of abilities of individuals and families for fighting vulnerability in order to protect them from situation of risks (Brasil, 2004). Thus, the concepts of “social vulnerability” and “risk” stand as structuring concepts of this policy, with assiduity in its documents and in its work routine, despite not always being well defined as to its norms and technical guidelines. Social vulnerability and risks are complex and multifaceted concepts, comprehending dimensions concerning the economy, the environment, health, rights, in addition to the individual and social sphere, which allow us to identify situations of vulnerabilities experienced by individuals, families or communities.

When going deeper into the conceptual framework of social vulnerability, Monteiro (2012) states that defining it “... is more than an intellectual exercise, it aims to understand the challenges and tensions that arise for social policies in order to make them effective from a proactive, preventive and protective perspective (p. 30)”. According to Bronzo (2009), vulnerability is usually associated with poverty, but is not reduced to it, consisting, in fact, of a sum of several vulnerabilities. In this association, low income, absence or precariousness of jobs, poor access to basic services and basic living conditions are vulnerability-producer aspects. These situations can also refer to the life cycle in situations that may be debilitating, such as the vulnerability of children, adolescents, the elderly and people with disabilities. Thus, this concept refers to given “unfavorable” conditions marking the objective dimensions of social exclusion.

These conditions increase the likelihood of other events, other precarious conditions occurring. The more vulnerable a family is, the more it may expose itself to risks. Risks involve situations that can affect the wellbeing and health of individuals, families, groups and communities, which can be:

... a variety of situations that include natural hazards (such as earthquakes and other cataclysms), health risks (diseases, accidents, epidemics, disabilities), risks related to one's life cycle (birth, maternity, old age, death, family breakdown), social risks (crime, domestic violence, terrorism, gangs, social exclusion), economic risks (market shocks, financial risks), environmental risks (pollution, deforestation, nuclear disaster), political risks (discrimination, coups, riots), just as systematized by the World Bank's social protection unit (Bronzo, 2009, p.173).

The comprehension of the situation of risk is dressed with a subjective character in which individuals make up for vulnerability conditions and their possibilities and ability to face them, as Monteiro (2012) points out. That is, before one same objective situation of vulnerability, individuals are at higher or lower risk, depending on their subjective abilities to act and react to these events. It is worth remembering that although vulnerability is not synonymous with poverty the latter can aggravate it and increase risk. To be in a situation of social vulnerability means to have the power of response affected or decreased in face of situation of risks or natural embarrassments of life. In this way, the concepts of social vulnerability and risk refer to each other and are usually addressed together.

When analyzing the texts of the PNAS, of the Technical Guidelines on the Comprehensive Protection Service and Care for the Family [*Serviço de Proteção e Atendimento Integral à Família*] (PAIF) and of the Technical reference for the activity of psychologists at the Reference Center for Social Assistance [*Centro de Referência de Assistência Social*] (CRAS)/SUAS, in Santos, São Paulo, Roesch and Cruz (2014) show how these two expressions are treated differently in the documents, which, in our view, may cause some confusion among professionals. The PNAS claims that there is no distinction between them and that, on the contrary, they seem to complement each other. On the other hand, the “Technical Guidelines on the Comprehensive Protection Service and Care for the Family” deepen the concept of vulnerability, evidencing the articulation of the latter with the notion of risk. Vulnerability appears here as a condition of people and families related to the following elements: inclusion and stability in the labor market, the weakness of their social relations and, finally, the degree of regularity and quality of access to public services or other forms of social protection. They also have a relationship with risk, because situations of social vulnerability that are not prevented tend to become a situation of risk. This same articulation is found in the document “Social Work with Families of the Comprehensive Protection Service and Care for the Family – PAIF”, of 2012, associating risk with the

possibility of violation of rights. The “Technical reference for the activity of psychologists at the CRAS/SUAS” elaborated by the Federal Council of Psychology in 2008 follows the same logic; the activities of psychologists at the CRAS should be focused on attention and prevention to situations of risk, seeking to act in situations of vulnerability by strengthening family and community ties and by developing personal and collective capabilities and acquisitions. In this context, the psychologist's practice should be turned to the construction of protagonism and autonomy, ensuring rights towards overcoming conditions of social vulnerability and potential for risk.

Although vulnerability and risk are central to social assistance, it is worth remembering that social inequality is not discussed in the aforementioned documents, so these concepts might act in favor of a naturalization of misery for a portion of the population, without the capitalist logic being discussed, as highlighted by Oliveira and Heckert (2013). Thus, these concepts do not problematize the structural contradictions of capitalism as producers of social inequalities, vulnerabilities and risks, and do not unveil tensions in society. They are:

... driven by a hegemonic logic of concentration and expansion of relations fetishized by market and profit control, providing only the minimum conditions for maintaining individuals, contrary to the democratization of the wealth that is socially constructed by the group of workers which has social protection actions as a palliative field where social inequalities are reproduced (Monteiro, 2012, p. 38).

As we can see, these two terms hide multi-determined situations with various sorts of intersections and involve the struggle against said intersections with the aid of strategies and actions by the SUAS professionals too. They also involve vulnerabilities concerning not only the users of this policy, but also the insertion and practice of psychologists within this domain, which, according to Macedo et al. (2011) and Yamamoto and Oliveira (2010), is still under construction. This is a field traditionally occupied by Social Service, and for Psychology it is still recent and with few studies and investigations, lacking even the understanding of the concepts discussed above and with which these professionals deal daily. In this context, we propose ourselves to think about the effects of these definitions on the daily routine of services, effects which cross interventions undertaken in situations that produce questions and destabilization among psychologists, who are required to intervene in cases of social vulnerability with personal and social risks. Such effects can make them vulnerable, and the unawareness of them can undermine a family's ability, protagonism and autonomy. We believe that in addition to vulnerability and social risk, subjectivity, not only of users, but of technicians as well, is another power that is updated in the relations that are established and that sustain practices in social assistance. We hope that the questions that follow can operate in this direction.

On risks and effects

In our view, the SUAS operates through the mainstreaming of the macro-political dimension and the micro-political dimension, of the forms and forces that constitute us as psychologists inserted in this context, and span our actions in social assistance. And it is in this exact mainstreaming that the SUAS is implemented by means of interventions with users, relationship between the technicians that compose the teams and between these teams and other sectors when dealing with bureaucracy matters and the work itself. To mainstream the everyday routine of social assistance is to incorporate it through its immanence pointed out by Deleuze and Guattari (1996), its hardening and crystallization, and its movements that can produce powerful and inventive actions emphasizing its field of effects. Throughout this process, the hardening operates through what is established and insists on over-codifying life according to established forms and models. This plan, which is essential but not sufficient, connects us to representational institutions, laws, plans, rules and prescriptions, besides organizing and standardizing the work in the SUAS. On the other hand, movements take place where that over-codification does not rule, within the micro-political dimension that can create new forms in connections

with unprecedented forces. Reproduction and invention, forms and forces standing together, coexisting in social protection practices.

Thus, the SUAS was constituted between what is produced within its territory by homogenization devices based on operational norms, programs, records, and what is mediated and causes shifts in this territory, singularizing relations and shifting instituted conditions. The macro-political operation, important and necessary, support itself on institutions and documents and establishes work routines, differences between professions, paces and tasks, ways of acting that give shape to practices. The micro-political dimension, on the other hand, constitutes itself in the way that technicians are squeezed by their own vulnerabilities and by life expansion connections in their different actions.

We propose then a dialogue that goes through this field of effects in an attempt to evidence the risks to which we as psychologists are exposed in the encounters that take place between documents, teams and families, pointing at more questions than actual answers. One cannot deny the importance of macro-political elements that cross the work of teams in social assistance. The conquests ensured from the moment the PNAS and the SUAS were made official led to the materialization of an assistance-oriented practice historically instituted to guarantee social rights and their promotion, although they have a short existence and still some indeterminations. In this sense, problematizing these risks in the micro-political dimension can effectively allow power to be exercised and psychology to be able to favor and share this event.

The risks listed in this text compose a critical path and have emerged in our researches, orientations and supervisions. These risks span the practices carried out in the SUAS with socially vulnerable families, and evidence the likelihood of us, the experts, being producing, without realizing, family groups unable to build their own survival strategies, as Siqueira and Lino (2013) warn us about, bypassing the very proposal of the PNAS. They are: the risk of psychologization, the risk of disqualification, the risk of overloaded women and the risk of resonance of vulnerabilities. It is necessary to stress that these risks do not concern individual difficulties and inabilities of each technician or a particular team, but emerge in everyday relations, erupt in the encounters of the teams with the families, promoting situations that sustain unwanted and generally unforeseen effects.

So let us see the first of these risks, the risk of **psychologization**, which is directly related to the accountability of the family and the dominant way of doing psychology. When examining the family's presence in the trajectory of the Brazilian social protection system, as a subject of rights and/or as a social protection agent, Teixeira (2010) reveals tensions in this association, since even after the 1988 Federal Constitution the basic contradiction between protecting the family and/or treating it as a source of social protection for its members remains. On one hand, this group is placed as the basis of society, therefore, must be protected by the State as the target of public policies, as bearer of rights, hence, as a subject of rights. On the other hand, it is also given responsibilities; in this way, the family is held accountable, together with society and the State, for protecting children, adolescents and the elderly. Thus, the author believes that the family is overloaded in the process and actually takes on the State's tasks.

The day-to-day of public policies can strengthen even more this accountability maintained by individualization, incremented by the very hegemonic way of doing psychology grounded on the logic of individualism and internalization in existence since the beginning of this science in Brazil. Analyzing the texts produced in the field of psychology in the mid-nineteenth century until the second half of the twentieth century, Duarte, Russo and Venâncio (2005) highlight the social processes present in the Brazilian society that operate in favor of "individualization" through the "internalization" of "psychologized" representations of the modern Western person. These processes relate to individualism and are supported by pieces of scientific knowledge aiming at inserting Brazil in individualistic values. This individual logic still persists in a way and does not fit, in our view, neither the works in the field of social assistance, nor families.

Examining the family with regard to its political dimension and in conjunction with the social dimension, Scheinvar (2006) draws attention to the danger of this group acting as a device of depoliticization of social relations and, even more, of individualization, thus affirming the private character of modern society. In this process, it is also possible to observe individualization movements that emerge through technical competence, efficiency and motivation as bases to social policy. With

this stance taken as support, the family is oftentimes regarded as the responsible, in a private manner, for much of the social and political problems in our country. When this happens the cases are individualized too much in the routine of public policies, as if the family was the only causer of the problems presented and the social problems we go through. According to the author, this conduct is founded on the need to control the family in order to change the socio-political framework. However, it is the social field's duty to analyze the productions around this group, as said field is a political device that has been favoring the privatization of the social.

Besides this individualization trend, Afonso, Vieira-Silva, Abade, Abrantes and Fadul (2012) stress that the absence of an integrated and articulated network of services increases the risk of psychologization of the social matter as to the support of families, since they favor an excessive emphasis on what families could change in their internal dynamics. In this sense, the forms, the models present in the difficulties of each sector articulate, prevent forces, appear gaining consistency and create subjections in the micro-political dimension, and the way out of it, for authors, is the approximation between citizenship and subjectivity.

In fact, the SUAS is crossed by several types of flow associating distinct disciplines, ideological representations and socio-political scenarios, in whose intersection the work with families in situations of vulnerability happens. Work which calls for interventions that do not sustain the individual versus social isolation nor the depoliticization of psychological practices. To dodge the risk of psychologizing problems and enhancing social exclusion mechanisms, it is also necessary to resize psychologists' academic training practices, which are mostly still elitist, seeking the construction of new foundations for the actions of these professionals. According to Romagnoli (2012), there is still a large gap between what psychologists learn during their training and what the field of public policy on Social Assistance requires. These requirements include interdisciplinarity and even transdisciplinarity, in addition to work with collective spheres and the need to consider the territory and the social and cultural contexts of communities.

Another risk we believe that should be taken into consideration is the **risk of disqualification** of the families with which we work, a risk maintained by the insistence on a ruling family model and lack of knowledge of operation forms of family arrangements in the lower classes. In this sense, we emphasize the importance of psychologists not using what they know or what they do not know to diminish the users of social assistance services. When studying the rise of knowledge in modernity, Michel Foucault states that the modern individual, shaped by disciplines, is constituted as a subject of knowledge and a result of relations of power. For Foucault (1996), power is an exercise and is constituted in relations by processes that fall upon subjectivity, not only repressing, but mainly producing realities grounded on scientific knowledge. This power, also called Biopower, is a power over life, directed to the production of subjectification forms, of subjected and oftentimes passive and guilty modes of existence. Supported on the proposal of this author we can cast a critical eye over the forms of subjugation of professionals and users of the SUAS, asking ourselves in what circumstances and under what exercises of power these relations are built. That is because "To assist is often to regulate life, bodies, is to try to fix deviations" (Oliveira & Herckert, 2013, p. 155). In this context, to what extent, as experts who have a knowledge that certainly has a power, are we not producing conservative regressions when dealing with socially vulnerable families that increase even more the pressure on the countless responsibilities that they should assume?

Based on a Foucauldian reading as well, Donzelot (1980) shows us that with modernity there is also the emergence of a sector which the author calls social sector, composed of social workers of the healthcare field, physicians, educators, and "psy" agents (psychologists, psychoanalysts, psychiatrists), and whose function is to establish a government through families. This sector, when it appeared, built new relationships between the public sphere and the private sphere, forming a new domain, whose means of action is the family. These professionals are experts qualified by scientific knowledge and rely on normative claims, which act as law, and on economic and moral components, which act as regulating and corrective mechanisms, to perform their activities. What happens, in fact, even if they do not realize, is the permanent surveillance of the family group, with regard to the definition of what is normal or pathological, and concerning the measures applied to remedy the problems they diagnose.

From this perspective, the psychologist's work in social assistance exposes itself to the likelihood of them working toward adapting the users to the current social model. In the case of families, we see that this social model is closely related to the nuclear family that still circulates as a reference, in both the training of professionals and in our social imaginary. As Teixeira (2010) reminds us, "The measures and policies that used to affect the family generally reproduced idealized conceptions of a standard, normal family, and the classic roles among its members, discriminating against other family organizations and keeping the irregular family/poverty association" (p. 540).

In this context, the denomination "dysfunctional families" appears very often when one deals with the arrangements of the family group that do not fit this pattern. The ignorance of the forms of organization of family models in lower classes reinforces this attitude, which finds support in the inability for families to create their own ways of living according to their own resources and possibilities. As also pointed out by Siqueira and Lino (2013) when problematizing the public policy on social assistance based on their own professional experience, as a social worker and a psychologist, these categorizations may be, in fact, a way of controlling life, an exercise of biopower, an action that seeks to blame families for not reproducing the nuclear family model, disqualifying survival strategies created by these groups. In this context, families should be instructed on how to be and act, being held accountable for much of the social ills, even for the misery in which they live. In this way, we run the risk of not considering the context in which the users' modes of living are produced and of continuing to make judgments that keep us ominously distant from the forces, from the instituting power, and prevent us from being intercessors in this process, leading us to repeat instituted models, as Romagnoli (2015) attests.

In the wake of the reproduction of what already exists, of the insistence on ruling forms, we are faced with another risk, which we call herein the **risk of overloaded women**, when we realize that care in the work routine of the SUAS is increasingly assigned to females. In the relation between power and knowledge another important point raised by Michel Foucault is the idea of naturalization, a process supported by the construction of immutable truths based on possession of knowledge. To sustain something as natural is to insist on truths, usually unquestionable, that total and equate the reality with which we work and in which we intervene, hiding the historical and social production and the relations of power inherent to this sustainment (Foucault, 1996).

In this direction, we observe that the practices in social assistance, as in other public policies, deal all the time with naturalized representations of family, man and woman, father and mother. As we have seen in the risk of disqualification examined above, the ideal family model still remains as a reference for the action of psychologists and social workers, although social assistance programs work with a more open conception of family, the latter being approached as an affective nucleus that ties its members not only by blood but also by alliances or affinity, assigning them mutual obligations defined according to generation and gender relations, as highlighted by Meyer, Klein and Fernandes (2012). In order to analyze the notions of family in three programs developed in the Greater Porto Alegre between 2005 and 2010 – namely Comprehensive Attention to the Family Program [Programa de Atenção Integral à Família] (PAIF, federal), Better Early Childhood [Primeira Infância Melhor] (PIM, state) and Social Education Street Service [Serviço de Educação Social de Rua] (SESRUA/Street Action, municipal) –, said authors find a big difference between what is written in the texts of the programs and what happens on the everyday practice of technicians who work in these programs. Thus, the notion of family "... varies greatly in relation not only to the different situations encountered, but also to the different experiences and the knowledge of these subjects about family and its relations." (Meyer et al., 2012, p. 439).

The authors also denounce a certain "naturalization" of the absence of a male parent in poorer family nuclei, and, above all, the failure to hold him accountable for the lives of the children that integrate it, making a significant part of the duties previously defined as "paternal" (especially those linked to household provision) merge with the already established "maternal duties." Our studies in social assistance also confirm this finding, since we have observed in almost all activities of the CRAS, equipment we have researched, a majority presence of women, leading to the propagation of the belief that the father is unable or unfit to care for his child/children. Although public policies adopt the family as being the focus of their actions, they effectively call women-mothers to be their partner, as stated by

Meyer et al. (2012). These women-mothers are constantly taught by many instances to take responsibility for her children, denoting an exercise of control over both maternity and paternity.

When denouncing that the fight against part of social risks have turned itself to the family aiming at social protection in our country, Teixeira (2010) emphasizes that:

... the ability to deal with risks is unevenly distributed between sexes, family types, lifecycle stage, number of dependent members, time devoted to housework, and the existence of female headship as an indicator of a dual role of income and care provider. In general, this overloads women, who are traditionally responsible for housework, and makes poorer families vulnerable, especially those headed by women (p. 545).

We can then think about to what extent we are unwittingly maintaining forms of managing and leading the life of the population and to what extent this would not be increasing social vulnerability by overloading these women. Vulnerability which reverberates in certain attitudes of the teams, which often feel insecure, discouraged and resentful when dealing with families in social assistance, and which leads to what I call here **risk of resonance of vulnerabilities**. This coupling keeps the “inability” mark and prevents inventive connections that escape this precariousness, these weakening encounters. In this context, we must summon forces so that families and the team empower themselves and so that, indeed, the social promotion of families and the acceptance of the difference by the team may occur. In our understanding, a necessary, though not enough, element for that, is the comprehension of our vulnerabilities, as professionals.

When studying the relationship of the team of a CRAS of the metropolitan area of Belo Horizonte with families assisted by the Basic Social Protection service, Romagnoli (2016) points at the work overload that professionals experience and at a certain vulnerabilization of the team. This process itself is contradictory in the context of a public policy that seeks to strengthen the capabilities of users and guarantee their rights, without, however, providing the latter for the technicians. Discussing on the field of Social Assistance, Raichelis (2010) examines professional insertion in the SUAS, highlighting this precariousness trend of the conditions of this work, which is based on alienation processes, on restriction of technical autonomy and on increased amount of tasks. The universe of contemporary work, with globalization and production systems supported on technological development, undoubtedly changes organization and management processes in addition to labor relations and ties, also affecting the professionals of the SUAS, who often find themselves weakened, impoverished and deprived of rights and collective organization, since much of the teams in the field of social assistance are composed of outsourced and temporary workers. Thus, aspects such as precarious hiring forms which generate job insecurity, low wages, lack of expectations of progression and advancement in the career, intensification of work under pressure due to a need for increased productivity and immediate results, lack of policies on professional qualification and training are part of the routine of the teams and interfere with the activities performed.

Not only Raichelis (2010) attests to these working conditions, but also Macedo et al. (2011) when specifically studying the insertion of psychologists in the SUAS, unveiling the historical mark of the deprofessionalization that have sustained for a long time eventual and unsystematic practices in this field. In this sense, Yamamoto and Oliveira (2010) state that despite the insertion of psychologists in the SUAS not being recent, they see little progress in the consolidation of working conditions to maintain qualified and trained professionals. Said authors, when making a comparison with the insertion of psychologists in the healthcare field, emphasize that this difficulty exists also because this is a “poor” policy targeting the lower social strata. In the relations of power between public policies, the PNAS is still considered by many as smaller in relation to the public health policy, which served as a model for its system and its protection levels. In the same direction, Motta and Scarpato (2013) point out that the PNAS and the professionals who integrate it have not yet effectively acquired a good status, being devalued before these policies. In this way, we witness already established historical forms and relations of power undermining the forces that would enable one to inhabit this territory with intensity and power.

We observe in our studies that, not rarely, these institutional and political aspects of the macro-political dimension are experienced as individual issues by technicians, transforming social and political processes into “individualization” processes through the “internalization” of “psychologized” representations of subjectivity previously denounced when we addressed the risk of psychologization. Thus, without realizing it, we, psychologists, with a so great emphasis on the individual present in our training, may also be helping to maintain this depoliticization, turning the relationships that emerge between professionals, the working process, the families and the socio-political and institutional into personal and depoliticized complaints. We need to rid ourselves of this attitude, especially now that we are witnessing a number of public tenders in the social assistance field in our country. We have no doubt that the insertion of these new technicians promotes impacts and tensions in a field until recently dominated by outsourced professionals; however, we believe that the rise of professionals hired through public tender to work with this public policy is important and necessary to ensure advances in this domain and contribute to the consolidation of the SUAS.

Final considerations

We have seen some of the risks that come together with interventions with families defined as socially vulnerable, and in this overview we can say that such interventions happen not without a big pressure on the psychologists that work with the social assistance policy. A pressure which usually sickens, distresses, hardens, debilitates life in its ability to move towards invention, towards promoting the autonomy of not only users but also of professionals who serve this population. In a way, the SUAS is still a new field, supported by a recent policy, presenting major challenges for the relationships between its teams and members. Although its model is democratic and fruitful on paper, the professionals working day-by-day are those who make it viable or not; in this way, we emphasize the importance of discussing on the concepts that base their actions, but also, and above all, on the effects of using these concepts in the work routine of these professionals, who are just as vulnerable in a field under construction. Among the risks we have presented, we believe that the main one of all of them is the risk of life abuse in whatever forms it presents itself. This abuse can take place in discourses and actions that cover moral practices, and result in relations of tutelage and in the subjection of people with whom we deal, of family groups with which we work. However, in the relations established in the routine of assistance services one can also see affection and encounters that may not refer to abuse, but to care for life and for the difference. Care which is materialized in the intersection, in the encounter between forms, models and forces, an experimentation that emerges from said encounters, in order to access the intensive dimension of life.

We believe that the criticisms present in the problematization we have presented are essential, as they guarantee certain militancy in the sense attributed by Vasconcelos and Paulon (2014), and may contribute to the emergence of new practices in the field in question. Examining not the SUAS but the process of institutionalization of the Psychiatric Reform, said authors point out that militancy is not about the denial or the discrediting of institutions and their processes. In our case, militancy does not refer to the denial of the progress made in this domain, but, on the contrary, it has to do with the belief in the instituting power and its search, with the trust in the SUAS as a pro-life device, since institutions are not given but rather built by ourselves through our insertions and actions. It is precisely for this daily construction that we can participate in its implementation and in its changes that are made in the interface between the forms that operate for its preservation and the forces that seek its expansion.

In this sense, we hope that the discussion developed herein allows for a militant deviation towards the empowerment of teams and users, with some clues that may lead them through this experimentation. We understand that the frequent exercise of embracing the difference, the knowledge of how the families with which we work function and the critical attention to the arts of governing are necessary clues, but that in no way they guarantee the actual empowerment of these families, because this process happens in the uniqueness of each case, in the mapping of each situation, in the affections

of each encounter. The teamwork and the activities with the families help us let go of known forms, dare to use collective connections that can move us, move groups and make the SUAS move. To break with our hardened ego every day is a huge challenge, as it requires trust in the power of subjectivity, the belief in relations sustaining other ways of being in the world. Working with the forces of life without abusing them takes courage, confidence in what they may come to be and what no one knows yet what it is, allowing the consolidation of the SUAS in a collective and powerful way.

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