

Social Work in the Heritage of Humanity: life story of a Sewellina Social Worker-Chile

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Abstract


The qualitative research on Mrs. Magali explores her trajectory in the historical context of Rancagua and the Sewell mining camp. Key categories such as motivation, professional decisions, challenges faced, and significant projects are analyzed using life history and content analysis. The results reveal how their social work, especially in periods of reconceptualization, impacted the policies and practices of their time. Category analysis highlights his influence on social transformation and historical conflicts that shaped his professional approach, demonstrating his crucial role in the evolution of social work.

Keywords: Social Work; Life history; Sewell; Social Work History; Reconceptualization.

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Trabajo Social en el patrimonio de la humanidad: historia de vida de una Asistente Social Sewellina-Chile

Resumen

La investigación cualitativa sobre la Sra. Magali, explora su trayectoria en el contexto histórico de Rancagua y el campamento minero de Sewell. Utilizando para ello la historia de vida y análisis de contenido, se analizan categorías clave como su motivación, decisiones profesionales, desafíos enfrentados y proyectos significativos. Los resultados revelan cómo su Trabajo Social, especialmente en períodos de reconceptualización impactó las políticas y prácticas de su tiempo. El análisis de categorías resalta su influencia en la transformación social y los conflictos históricos que modelaron su enfoque profesional demostrando su papel crucial en la evolución del Trabajo Social.

Palabras clave: Trabajo Social; Historia de vida; Sewell; Historia del Trabajo Social; Reconceptualización.

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Summary: 1. Introduction, 2. Methodology, 3. Findings, 3.1 Career path, motivations and decisions, 3.2 Challenges and conflicts of the time, 3.3 Significant experiences and projects, 3.4 Impact of social work in reconceptualization period, 4. Conclusions, 5. Bibliographic references.

1. Introduction

At the beginning of the 20th century, the town of Rancagua was far from what we know today as the thriving city, the regional capital of Libertador General Bernardo O'Higgins, whose territory includes 33 municipalities distributed in three provinces: Cachapoal, Colchagua, and Cardenal Caro.

At that time, Rancagua comprised only eight blocks from east to west and south to north, forming the central foundational checkerboard with the 64 blocks that comprised that village. In the center, the square with four cross-shaped exits, one of the few designed like this in the continent, eventually named Plaza de los Heroes in honor of the men and women who fought in the battles for independence between patriots and royalists on October 1st and 2nd, where the first ones suffered a fateful defeat remembered as "the disaster of Rancagua," in 1814. (Díaz, 2019).

In this context, in addition to the central checkerboard, the rest were rural settlements, among which we highlight Población Cuadra, Centenario, and, later, Poblacion Rubio, among others that were expanding the fields and farms of this valley (Cabrera, 2011).

However, for Miranda-Salas (1966), from the end of the last century until today, the area near the source is filled with rumors, people of work, and raise camps on what they call the installations, the machines, and that singular breath that moves the major companies. Small towns encrusted in the rock or on the shore of the vertebral river establish incessant movement in the extraction of copper and other important products (Miranda-Salas, 1966).

The base city began by undoing the colonial face and a human thread that comes and goes, configuring an air of Mediterranean port, in which foreign turns and the sparkling and, at times, the Criolla word intertwined to give a motley mosaic (Miranda-Salas, 1966).

However, the city changed its physiognomy with the cupriferous mine of *El Teniente* of the *Braden Copper Company*, a company dedicated to extracting copper ore. There is a world that gives a different tone to the agricultural valley, marked by evident contrasts. In that work site, it reaches its real power at the edge of the inevitable between the capital and the work to which ideologists, treatise writers, and theoretical systematizers tried to find, if not a solution, to the right balance (Miranda-Salas, 1966).

The importance of this industry has had a notable influence on the progress of the city and its expansion, in order to accommodate the human element that resides here,

and is in many ways decisive in the network of commerce and small industries that move near the central furnace (...) so that here modern houses were built that frame with singular color,

the basic perimeter created by Manso de Velasco. The gracious air of modernity is strengthened every day. (Miranda-Salas, 1966, p. 124)¹

In this way, the primary employment source for many workers coming from the length and breadth of the country was the Sewell mining camp, which was discovered in 1905 and, from then on, exploited by foreigners who invested in that company. The workers, farmers, and technicians arrived at that time in search of work and, consequently, a better quality of life for themselves and their families.

In this sense, Sewell distinguished itself as an extraordinary town due to its unique geographic and demographic characteristics for its time. From its precarious beginnings, it later offered free education, medical care, and high-quality housing. However, the population was firmly segregated between North Americans and Chileans and between married and single people. The community, isolated by its location, lived under the rules of the Department of Social Welfare, which maintained order and enforced dry law. This harmony was occasionally disrupted by labor conflicts and accidents, such as the fatal “tragedia del humo” [smoke tragedy] of 1945, which resulted in the asphyxiation of more than 355 workers due to carbon monoxide fumes during a fire in a forge near the mine (Castillo, 2000).

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At its peak in the 1960s, Sewell was home to more than 15,000 inhabitants. Before settling in, they had to pass through the Welfare Department in building 107, where administrative and social workers determined and enrolled the new residents and designated the apartments and buildings according to their marital status, work, and family rank. However, in 1967, with the beginning of the colonization of copper, the government acquired a large part of the *Braden Copper Company*. It began “Operation Valle” [Operation Valley], consisting of the gradual and permanent relocation of its residents to the city of Rancagua, facilitated by constructing a highway linking the two cities. With the ceasing of the railroad in 1976, Sewell began to depopulate gradually (Miranda-Salas, 1966).

Although Sewell operated after the seventies, today it leaves an indelible memory of those residents on the cusps of the mountains, where they grew up, developed their lives, and offered their work in the so-called salary of Chile, when in 1971 it was nationalized by the President of the Republic, Mr. Salvador Allende Gossens with the full support of Congress, called by him as the second independence of Chile, in this case economic, with a massive act in the Plaza de los Heroes in winter of the very same year (Memoriachilena, 2024).

While the city up there was depopulated, the same did not happen with its mining activities, which remained in the hands of the new Copper Corporation of Chile (hereinafter

¹ Translation by the authors.

CODELCO) through its *El Teniente* division, which is still in operation. Its workers take buses to perform their daily work through a shift system.

In 1998, the Sewell mining camp was declared a national monument. In July 2006, UNESCO recognized it as a World Heritage Site, highlighting it as an exceptional example of a 20th-century industrial city (Memoriachilena, 2024).

...After eight years of work, the Sewell mining camp, located in the Andes Mountains at an altitude of 2,140 meters and 150 kilometers from Santiago, was included by acclamation and amid applause, in the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

The Chilean ambassador to France and at UNESCO, Pilar Armanet, thanked the incorporation and emphasized that "it is an industrial and modern heritage property associated with the largest subway copper mine in the world, in full production. She added that we are very proud that the quality of the work and presentation have been expressly mentioned, which speaks well of the preparation and seriousness with which it was carried out. This results from the joint work between public organisms, CODELCO, and the local community. (CODELCO, 2024)²

Brief antecedents of social work in the 1960s and 1970s

At the city's peak, parallel to this milestone, the development of Social Work evolved, influenced by various theoretical and political frameworks that reflect its historical fabric and have delineated its multiple lines of action.

In context, as early as 1917, Mary E. Richmond published *Social Diagnosis*, a work that revolutionized the field by recognizing the vital importance of evidence, diagnosis, and social treatment. This landmark work profoundly impacted the specialized field and extended its influence to various professions that interact with independent and non-criminal individuals. Since then, care and moral support have marked a crucial shift in how social needs are addressed, supported by an amalgam of disciplines that are dedicated to providing help to those in need, strengthening the social support structure in modern society (Richmond, 2005).

Initially inspired by principles of charity, beneficence, mutualism, and philanthropy, practiced mainly by the more privileged classes of European societies and strongly influenced by Christianity, the profession has progressed towards humanistic approaches. These seek to approach individual and social needs more holistically, focusing on the person both in terms of their problems and their potential, marking a significant change in the practice of *Trabajo Social de Caso* [Casework], which focuses on working with the person and not just for the person (Meriño-Montero, 2013).

² Translation by the authors.

... practice resides in action. Deciding what to do, how to do it, in what order and direction, with what means; knowing how to conform to a given approach and yet operate freely; being flexible and yet precise; serving both the client and the community, sparing no effort, but in an economical manner; these and other such questions beset the “casework” specialist on a daily basis. (Perlman, 1965, p. 80)³

Social work in Chile, since its beginnings as Social Visitors at the School of Social Service by Dr. Alejandro del Rio in 1925, has undergone several changes that shape the discipline today. In this way, the profession turned towards social assistance, changing the name of the discipline and the professionals to Social Assistants. Social casework is a complex, dynamic, and constantly evolving phenomenon. Its complexity stems from the diversity of knowledge that underpins it, the moral commitment that drives it, the conditions that influence its practice, the goals and aims that guide it, and the skill it demands (Perlman, 1965).

Afterward, and by historical dictate, today's professionals are recognized as Social Workers, appreciating a paradigmatic change in their methodology, epistemology, and ontology. Reference is made to the deployment that addresses the vicissitudes of life and the understanding of biopsychosocial factors of people and their methods of intervention. (Aylwin-Acuña & Solar, 2009).

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The university reform of the 1960s, called Sewell, was mainly by the School of Social Work of the Pontificia Universidad Católica, a pioneer in this area. It is true that in this historical period, other schools in the country joined in, among other reasons, due to the Cuban revolution, which invited them to (re)think about how their colleagues exercised their forms of action. (Aylwin-Acuña & Solar, 2009).

In this context, due to the diverse socio-political situations of the time, a marked performance arose, mainly due to the high rates of poverty, illiteracy, infant mortality, and rural-urban migration, among other aspects that reconfigured the Nation-State, which threatened the welfare of individuals, groups, and communities.

The issue of social inequality is fundamental in the profession, and its understanding has been approached from multiple perspectives. Therefore, the Reconceptualization Movement represented a significant rupture, so it is crucial to explore its roots and understand how this has impacted research and contemporary professional practice (Alayón & Molina-Molina, 2007). In this regard, reconceptualization should be understood as an ideological, theoretical, methodological, and operational process. It is inscribed within the margins of critical tendencies emerging from the social sciences, student, labor, and trade union movements, as well as from the social sciences (Ruz, 2016).

³ Translation by the authors.



In addition to the above, the United States was wary of the emergence of new organized popular movements that seemed to follow the Cuban example, which was viewed with suspicion and concern. As these movements gained strength, warning voices began to emerge about fast-paced changes driven by the influence of Cuban-American society. This situation was perceived as a latent threat to the American way of life, which led to the propagation of prejudices and stereotypes towards foreigners as a way of preserving the foundations of the established political and economic system (Miranda-Aranda, 2009; Verdugo, 2003).

Social workers embarked on a profound quest to redefine their professional identity, critically reflecting on their past. The 1960s and 1970s stood out as the high point of the reconceptualization movement, characterized by a drive towards the democratization of society. During this period, social workers revisited their traditional roles and questioned how they related to the community and how they could be more effective change agents (Miranda-Aranda, 2009).

This change marked a switch from a predominantly individualized approach to social work to a more activist and revolutionary one. It was recognized that many of the problems faced by the population had deep roots in the existing social structure. Therefore, the emphasis shifted to more strategic group and community interventions. The goal was to organize political and social forces to bring about a meaningful and lasting societal transformation (Ruz, 2016).

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This period redefined social work as a profession committed to social justice and established a legacy of collective action and community empowerment that continues to resonate in contemporary professional practice.

However, the 1973 civil and military coup completely changed professional work, devoid of the case readings resulting from its particular moment.

From the communitarian, Social Work saw the need to turn around its professional repertoires to attend to the delicate and aberrant period of the relatives of the disappeared, tortured, and exiled detainees, among so many other forms of violence in different expressions. That is to say, they should reorient their daily actions towards social casework (Del Villar-Tagle, 2018). On that, it is possible to refer that,

In response, professional action has been directed in two directions: either it becomes a blind and unidirectional execution, lacking reflexivity and critical sense, and with few possibilities of promoting mobilizing actions; or it becomes a disguised action that is opportunely disguised in response to the requirements of control, making contradictions invisible and favoring governmental complacency. (Berroeta-Torres, 2011, p. 40)⁴

⁴ Translation by the authors.



In this regard, the career moved towards a professional history as a historical and secular chronicle since the actions were focused on listening, welcoming, and assisting. In these institutions, the protagonism was mainly in the hands of laymen and women, who played crucial roles. This combination of professional commitment with deeply human values defined the work approach and highlighted the importance of the lay community's participation in building a more caring and compassionate environment (Del Villar-Tagle, 2018).

Consequently, it is worth asking: How was social work carried out in a unique world heritage site like the Sewell mining camp?

2. Methodology Approach

This article was developed using a qualitative methodology to understand the phenomena from the participants' perspective, interpreting how they construct meaning around their reality. This methodology allows the researcher to act as an "instrument of interpretation" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) by adapting to the particularities of each context and exploring the phenomena in their natural environment. In this way, we seek not only to collect information but also to capture the experiences, perceptions, and meanings that the participants give to their experiences.

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Participants

In order to rescue the life story in particular, a participant who lived and worked in the Sewell mining camp was asked to participate. In this way, it was possible to learn first-hand about the work she was engaged in professionally. While searching for other professionals, it was impossible to find them due to the passage of time, which made it difficult to have more contact with them.

Data production technique

According to McKernan (1999), the research design corresponded to life history. Complete life histories cover all significant aspects of an individual's life or career. On the other hand, thematic investigations concentrate on specific aspects, such as particular topics, relevant issues, or specific periods of the subject's life. These investigations delve deeply into the selected topic, offering a detailed and contextualized analysis that can illuminate specific aspects of human experience within a broader life or career framework. In summary, life history is used as a technique since it refers to research that generates descriptive and interpretative data, where individuals relate or document in their own words the observed behavior (Chárriez-Cordero, 2012).

Ethical considerations

As França-Tarragó (2005) states, ethical principles, in the Kantian way, do human reason justify categorical imperatives and are instituted as valid guidelines for all circumstances and at all times. Therefore, to ensure the optimal deployment of the study, the participant agreed to use her name openly, Mrs. Magali Caro Solís, 79 years old and retired, through informed consent, thus guaranteeing that the research would be carried out ethically.

3. Findings

In order to understand the personal and professional life history of Mrs. Caro Solís, four categories were used to back up her experiences, namely: Professional trajectory, motivations and decisions; challenges and conflicts of the time; experience and significant projects; and impact of social work in a period of reconceptualization.

3.1 Career path, motivations and decisions

The primary motivations for Ms. Magali's decision to study Social Work are mainly due to her personal and family concerns, which influenced her decision to study at the Dr. Alejandro del Río School of Social Service.

...As children of workers, we were immensely proud to be able to do practical work. Those of us who were starting a university career, whatever it was, were very proud to work because my father worked all his life in the electrical department.

...I applied for the summer jobs in the offices here in Rancagua. It was a job application. Depending on your background, they would select you as a student in the summer. Moreover, I do not know why the boss liked me because she called me every year there, and I knew I would be free in the summer. (Magali, personal communication, 2024)

The protagonist shows a strong sense of pride in her origin and in the work history of her father, who worked all his life in the electrical department. This pride is in her father and her ability to carry on a tradition of hard work and effort.

There is an appreciation of work and the opportunity to intern during the university stage. The importance of being able to apply for summer jobs suggests a recognition of work as a fundamental part of life and personal development. In addition, the sympathy with her boss, who called her every year to work in the summer, enhanced this commitment. This positive personal relationship is significant, as it assured her of a recurring job opportunity, which provided stability and a sense of belonging and value in the work environment.

...You are no longer lost. As a Roman Catholic, I was eager to become a nun. Help, solidarity. Everything that Jesus did, everything that help did. Humanly speaking, you did not care what kind of person you were helping, nor were there any bad names, I mean all political colors. There was more independence in those years. You could help your neighbor, and you could help others. (Magali, personal communication, 2024)

It highlights Christian values such as helpfulness, solidarity, and service to others, which are inspired by the teachings of Jesus. The mention of Jesus and his actions underlines the importance of these values in her life and her aspiration to emulate them.

She emphasizes that help and service do not discriminate according to social class or political color. This aspect highlights the universality of its compassion and solidarity, reflecting a deep commitment to human dignity and equality.

In this way, she reveals a person deeply influenced by her faith and committed to helpfulness and solidarity. He shows an openness, acceptance of human diversity, and willingness to serve others without prejudice. In addition, he reflects a continuous self-evaluation and a desire to live following his religious and ethical principles. Overall, the narrative offers a rich perspective on the importance of faith, selfless helpfulness, and personal integrity in the narrator's life.

3.2 Challenges and conflicts of the time.

Although the challenges and conflicts of the time the interviewed person developed are not very different from what is addressed today in social work, these responses in Sewell were to other types of resources available to them, unlike other current devices. Due to the mining camp's socioeconomic characteristics, she explicitly references the contrast that many digital media are available today.

It may be having relatives, I don't know, but it's another era, but the issues are the same. Abuse, infidelity, lack of money, to tell you something. On the health issue. That was the most relevant. Thus, we listened but did not stay at the desk; we went and made those visits. So, what was necessary for me was done. At that time, I was very interested in a person's vision as it should be – basically, issues of abuse, infidelity, and socioeconomic issues. Health was the most important thing you saw.

...Whoever came to the office, male or female, was confronted with the reality of their home because being a social worker is not a desk job. And with a vocation. The honest social worker is the one who is in the field. Not on the internet. (Magali, personal communication, 2024)

The narrative mentions that the issues addressed are timeless: mistreatment, infidelity, lack of money, and health problems. This suggests that, despite changes in time or context, some human issues persist and remain relevant. It is emphasized that health problems were most

prevalent. This indicates a primary concern for people's physical and mental well-being, reflecting the importance of health as a central, integrated, critical factor in the quality of life.

In addition to the above, "confronting the home's reality" is emphasized, suggesting a deep understanding that problems cannot be fully understood from an office. Social work's genuine understanding and effectiveness are achieved through direct interaction with the people's environment, thus emphasizing case-based social work (Aylwin-Acuña & Solar, 2009).

3.3 Significant experiences and projects

We were critical from our point of view. We were always considered because we knew the people. It was not when the workers were alone there, but when I was forming a family and living in the building that belonged to my family because there were family buildings, bosses' buildings, bachelor's buildings, and others.

Throughout my career, I have always had plenty of resources. For me, my career was never frustrating. My career never left me with a taste of nothing. (Magali, personal communication, 2024)

Ms. Magali offers a personal reflection on the importance of the role in her career, the valuation of her opinion, and her professional satisfaction. First, she emphasizes that her opinion was critical and was always considered. This indicates recognition of her experience and knowledge, especially about the people she served. The difference to her opinion shows that her role was valued and respected within her professional field. Secondly, the fact that she knew the people she served highlights a deep connection and understanding of people's needs and circumstances. This knowledge likely enabled her to offer more effective and personalized support. Finally, the resources she refers to facilitate her management.

We came to Rancagua. To collaborate with the families that came down. There we did the work of adaptation to the new life. I had the opportunity to see people who came to the apartment taking their hens, their chickens to their apartment. Thank God, my professional work was always beautiful. (Magali, personal communication, 2024)

Her work was of utmost importance regarding "Operación Valle" And "Operation Valley", whose purpose was to adapt new living conditions for Sewellinos leaving the camp to move to Rancagua and designating, through the detailed diagnosis of each family, plus the opinions expressed by the workers, amalgamated a consensual work, valuing the collaborative work he carried out.

The abovementioned suggests a significant change in her quality of life and possibly in her career, which is marked by a move to a new city to support other people. In the same way, together with her team, she was engaged in adaptation work for incoming families. This implies

that her role included helping people adjust to a new environment from a global perspective, a crucial aspect of the case and community social work.

The whole process of the person, from the time they passed away until they were buried. When we went to the mine, we did social work because we had to deal with the issue of loss and mourning, everything was centralized in building 107. (Magali, personal communication, 2024)

As for the role of informing family members of the death of a worker, she was in charge of doing so and accompanying the process. As a social worker, she covered the entire process from when a person died until his or her burial. This suggests comprehensive work that includes emotional and practical support at a critical moment in the life of the people affected by the loss. Undoubtedly, it implies individualized and specific attention to each bereavement situation. This approach makes it possible to offer more personalized support tailored to the needs of each family or individual affected.

Focusing on the "loss issue of grief" highlights the importance of addressing the emotional and psychosocial aspects of death. Bereavement is a complex process, and social support can be crucial in helping people cope with and process their grief.

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The mention that everything was centralized in the Social Welfare's building N°107 suggests a specific place was designated to handle these cases. This centralization may have facilitated the coordination and provision of support services, ensuring that affected people knew where to seek help.

According to with Aylwin-Acuña & Solar (2009), social workers have comparative advantages over other disciplines, given that they can understand social phenomena in the field and in the same spaces where people develop.

3.4 Impact of social work in the reconceptualization period

As was well mentioned, the reconceptualization period was advancing towards a new way of looking at and attending to social work based on a new conception characterized by critical community social work (Ruz, 2016), a moment in which the interviewed lived as a student and, later, as a worker.

...I used to ask the secretary so that I could have some topic and work on something. She would make me look for her, for example, to get Juan Gonzalez Zapata. Then she would say to me, look for Juan Gonzalez's file. I would look for the very heavy files. I remember that I will never forget it. Furthermore, that file was for each family or worker.

...To work well, and that is nothing new in terms of the fact that it is not that I find. The question that does not correspond, yes, but I was telling you, the essence of the human being does not change despite everything that exists now. (Magali, personal communication, 2024)

The text describes a specific experience in which the narrator searched for workers' or families' files in a physical archive. It is helpful to consider how social work practice has evolved and how this example relates to new conceptions of the profession to analyze this text in the context of the reconceptualization of social work. That context was developed based on Sewell's historical fabric and traditional methodology, which had as its enterprise the reliance on physical archives and eminently administrative tasks, which was far removed from the conflicts of the time.

It is observed that the period of reconceptualization of Social Work strongly emphasizes the importance of the relationship between the social worker and the social subject. Rather than focusing predominantly on file management, modern Social Work seeks to maximize time spent on direct intervention, emotional support, and planning helping strategies. The approach has evolved to prioritize relationship building and empathy rather than just administrative tasks (Ruz, 2016).

Ergo, in the context of the reconceptualization of social work, the transition to digitalization, the improvement of administrative efficiency, and the focus on the direct relationship with users represent significant changes. These allow social workers to devote more time to direct intervention, empathy, and active participation of users, improving the effectiveness and impact of their work.

...On September 11, 1973 I was in Santiago when it happened, but in 1973 I was still in Santiago because I went to work while El Teniente gave me an answer. I went to work at Ciudad del Niño. In a Defense Center. Unemployed people, health problems and delinquency were the issues most addressed.

...And that work (...) meant direct professional attention. I don't know if they still occupy cases, groups, and communities, but I mainly did casework then. Moreover, who did I attend to? The parents of the children attended because the Defense Center was attended by minors in an irregular social situation. That meant that they were children with family problems with their parents. (Magali, personal communication, 2024)

It should be noted that although the emphasis of the schools of Social Work was positioned within the group and community contact, they were confronted with the need to seek attention to the case in their disciplinary repertoire. In contrast, she mentions that September 11, 1973, was a significant historical date in Chile due to the coup that overthrew the government of President Salvador Allende. The mention of this event establishes a context of instability and political change, which probably impacted on the narrator's work and social environment (Del Villar-Tagle, 2018).

Consequently, her actions were reflected in the fact that her work meant “direct professional care”. This indicates a personalized and committed approach to the individual needs of children and their families. The use of methods such as “case, group, and community” (although it is not explicitly mentioned in the narrative whether this approach is still used) suggests a multifaceted approach to social work (Aylwin-Acuña & Solar, 2009)

At Sewell, you arrived at work, and you had to stick to the work program that was established at that time. Because of the years of work, that was a very orderly way. Because it was a camp, they had other values of life. The prevailing reality within the *El Teniente* mining society was that it was not at the speed directed by what was happening in Santiago. No.

Maybe the leaders of the unions. What I do know is that the presidents of the unions came to Santiago for meetings; they participated when the people went on strike because they wanted better treatment. (Magali, personal communication, 2024)

Given the copper company's geographic, demographic, and administrative characteristics, they were far from what was happening, particularly at the national level. The work responded to the *modus operandi*, which worked similarly as it did in its beginnings. That is to say, priority was given to the direct relationship with the clients and the holistic understanding of their situations and the valuation of the use of diverse methods and an integrative approach that considers the social, economic, and emotional context of the people, as opposed to the transformation of the superstructure (Ruz, 2016).

We did not work with politics; we worked with our work programs. We were able to meet at that trade association because there was a president, as all groups are.

Everything was in the guild, but it was always with us in all the issues and work done. We were all apolitical. (Magali, personal communication, 2024)

Finally, neither the workers nor the company adopted a discussion that had been going on for decades, showing themselves to be neutral in the face of these phenomena of paradigmatic, epistemological, and operational change in Social Work.

Paradigmatic change fundamentally alters the theories, practices, and approaches defining a field or industry. In the context of Social Work or any sector, this may involve transitioning to new methodologies, approaches, or philosophies that challenge the *status quo* (Ruz, 2016). As such, the absence of an active response to operational changes demonstrates an unwillingness to modernize and optimize internal processes. This can result in an obsolescence of working methods, decreased service quality, and a lack of competitiveness in the sector.

Neutrality can lead to a disconnect between the practices of the time and the emerging needs of users or the operating environment. Change can be visualized as decreased professional effectiveness and an inability to address demands and expectations adequately. Consequently, workers involved in discussing these changes could eventually find their ability to contribute

effectively to the evolution of the field impaired. A company that does not adopt new approaches or technologies may face challenges in maintaining its market position and offering services that live up to current expectations.

4. Conclusions

The life story provided reveals a complex professional context in which Ms. Magali Caro Solís studied, developed her professional practices, and worked in an environment characterized by significant challenges, especially during the coup in Chile in 1973. This period marked many people's lives and profoundly affected the professional practice of disciplines such as Social Work, in which professionals had to adapt to new demands and an oppressive socio-political environment (Castañeda-Meneses & Salame-Coulon, 2019).

In the case of Ms. Caro, her work in a Juvenile Defense Center reflects the adversities of a time when human rights violations and repression were a constant (Castañeda-Meneses & Salame-Coulon, 2019). The experience reveals how the contexts of conflict and repression forced social workers to face adverse conditions, often without the necessary tools or support to respond effectively. In this sense, the analysis of their history underscores the importance of committed and resilient Social Work in the face of significant historical changes, such as those that occurred during the dictatorship (Del Villar-Tagle, 2018).

In addition, the narrative exposes a work environment anchored in traditional methods, where manual information management and a bureaucratic approach were standard practices at the time. This reflects a time when Social Work was oriented more toward case management and physical file management than toward active and preventive intervention in contexts of vulnerability. As Castañeda-Meneses and Salame-Coulon (2019) point out, professional practice during that time tended to be tied to formal and rigid methods, limiting the possibilities for innovation or adaptation in the face of accelerated changes. For Ms. Caro, working under these circumstances represented a challenge in terms of efficiency and a barrier to implementing a more humanized approach, which could better respond to the needs of people in critical contexts.

The evolution in the field of Social Work has led, in recent decades, to a significant reconceptualization of the profession. This transformation is based on transitioning from bureaucratic practices to more humanized, inclusive methods focused on communities' integral well-being. Adopting new technologies, diversifying approaches, and recognizing the importance of the sociocultural contexts in which one intervenes are key components of this evolution (Castañeda-Meneses & Salame-Coulon, 2019). Ms. Caro's experience illustrates how resistance or neutrality in the face of these changes can limit the effectiveness of interventions, resulting in practices that, while they may meet formal requirements, fail to profoundly and positively impact the individuals and communities served.

Inaction or neutrality in the face of these changes is not innocuous. The lack of adaptation, both in the historical context of the narrator and in the conceptual evolution of Social Work, highlights the need for an active response to new socio-political and economic realities. According to Ramírez-Marchant (2016), when social workers and institutions fail to adapt to these changes, there is a risk of maintaining outdated practices that are no longer relevant or effective for current needs. This has broad repercussions, as it impacts not only the development and sustainability of organizations but also the working conditions, social cohesion, and integral well-being of workers immersed in an environment that is constantly changing, transforming, and full of challenges (González & Caffarena, 2023).

In conclusion, Ms. Caro's life story, together with the analysis of the evolution in the field of Social Work, shows how continuous adaptation and openness to change are essential to maintain the relevance and effectiveness of the profession. The reconceptualization of professional practices, integrating paradigmatic, epistemological, and technological changes, is fundamental to facing emerging challenges and ensuring relevant and ethical social intervention. As stated by Aylwin-Acuña & Solar (2009), only through constant evolution can Social Work respond adequately to the demands of contemporary realities and maintain its commitment to social justice and the welfare of communities.

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