

# Academic training in Social Psychology in Brazil and South America

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## Abstract

We analyze the social representations, theories, authors and metatheoretical assumptions more adopted on Social Psychology. 288 Social Psychology (SP) professors in South America participated; 149 were from Brazil. The results show a representation of SP objectified around four themes: the psychological SP (study of the interaction between individuals), the sociological SP (the study of socio-historical context), the SP of subjectivity (subjectivity studies) and SP of subjectification (studying the field of production of subjectivity). Regarding the theories and authors adopted in Brazil we have got a few responses; differently of the South American colleagues. These data indicate that a little clarity about the theoretical matrix of Social Psychology practice in Brazil. We discuss the results in their relation to the formation of SP in Brazil, arguing about the failure of the models that dichotomize the guidelines of Social Psychology in “psychological” vs. “sociological” assumptions.

**Keywords:** professors, Social Psychology, definitions, professional practices.

## Resumo

*A formação em Psicologia Social no Brasil e na América do Sul.* Analisamos as representações sociais da psicologia social, teorias, autores e orientação metateórica mais adotadas. Participaram 288 professores de psicologia social (PS) da América do Sul; sendo 149 do Brasil. Os resultados evidenciam uma representação da PS objetivada em torno de quatro temas: a PS psicológica (estudo da interação entre indivíduos), a PS sociológica (estudo do contexto sociohistórico), a PS da subjetividade (estuda a subjetividade) e a PS dos processos de subjetivação (estuda o campo de produção das subjetivações). Em relação às teorias e autores mais adotados obtivemos no Brasil poucas respostas, os que respondem mencionaram abordagens. Já os colegas da América do Sul citam mais teorias e autores. Esses dados indicam que praticamos uma psicologia social de pouca clareza quanto à matriz teórica. Discutimos os resultados na sua relação com a formação em PS no Brasil, afirmando a insuficiência dos modelos que dicotimizam as orientações da psicologia social em “psicológica” vs. “sociológica”.

**Palavras-chave:** professores, Psicologia Social, definições, práticas profissionais.

In 1908, Hermann Ebbinghaus, a German psychologist responsible for the first studies on memory, stated that psychology has a long past but a recent history (Farr, 1991). He was referring to the fact that while psychological theorizing has been in existence for as long as recorded thought, the formation of the first core clusters or scientific groups was recent, such as the Wundt Laboratory in 1879. In this perspective, in the mid-1880s, psychology was still not an independent academic discipline because it was on the roster of “human” and “moral” sciences, within philosophy (Luria, 1992).

The first formalized course in Psychology appeared in 1896, “Psychology: The Intellect”, and it was taught by Wundt at the University of Heidelberg (Germany). In 1920, Departments

of Psychology began to be established in the United States. In Brazil, the first course of psychology appeared at the University of São Paulo in 1958, four years before the profession regulation (Boarini, 2007).

The history of the training in Social Psychology follows a similar path. Although having long been a topic of interest in philosophy as well as a branch of the human and moral sciences, Social Psychology only became a unified independent field after the Second World War (Moscovici & Marková, 2006). The vast majority of chapters and articles on the history of Social Psychology were produced in the United States and recount a history marked by the influence of epistemological, cultural, and political factors and by a theoretical-methodological tension

between the American school and the European (Camino & Torres, 2011; Kalampalikis, Delouée, & Pétard, 2006).

In this paper we will analyze, based on the data from a study on Social Psychology professors in Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Venezuela, Chile, Peru, Paraguay and Uruguay, the relationships between the accepted definitions of Social Psychology, the authors and theories most often used, and the type of meta-theoretical orientation chosen in teaching and research. In this sense, we will give some consideration to the time spent by professors in teaching, research and extension activities. To this end, we will talk initially about the first courses of study in Social Psychology and the content taught. Then we will cover the dominant paradigms or orientations in Social Psychology in Brazil. Finally, we will present data from a study with a large sample of social psychologists and discuss these data.

### *The first courses and issues of Social Psychology in Brazil*

The research agenda and, consequently, the themes of academic training in Social Psychology have been changing over the years. In the classic and controversial chapter by Gordon Allport on the historical background of Social Psychology, published in the first edition of the Handbook of Social Psychology in 1954, the central themes of the discipline were philosophical issues: hedonism / egoism, rationalism/irrationalism, sympathy/imitation/suggestion, crowd psychology, and group mind (Allport, 1954). More than half a century later, in the fifth edition of the Handbook, the themes of research and training in Social Psychology are the result of phenomena such as television, media, virtual groups, terrorism, which promote theories in positive psychology, prejudices and stereotypes, social neuroscience and implicit attitudes (Ross, Lepper, & Ward, 2010).

In Brazil, Social Psychology as a discipline was already part of the psychology courses in the first curricula that appeared, even before the regulation of the profession of psychologist in 1962. From that time on, it remains present in all courses of study in psychology, as a compulsory topic (Souza, 2005). For this author, the process of defining the professional field of the social psychologist in Brazil began with the arrival of foreign psychologists in the decades of 1920/1930 to teach the first courses in the area.

According to Bomfim (2004), the four pioneering courses in Social Psychology in Brazil – taught by Raul Carlos Briquet at the Free School of Sociology and Politics of São Paulo in 1933, and by Donald Pierson at the same institution in 1940, by Arthur Ramos at the School of Economics and Law, Federal District University, Rio de Janeiro, in 1935, and by Nilton Campos, at the National Faculty of Economic Sciences, University of Brazil, in the 1950s – indicated a moment of emergence of the subject in Brazil, already marked by the diversity of approaches.

Indeed, if we follow the historical analysis by Bomfim (2004), we notice that, in Briquet's course, psychology was positioned as a middle ground between sociology and biology because the themes covered (e.g., instincts, habits, intelligence, suggestion, imitation, sympathy, social groups, social self, racial prejudice, public opinion, crowd psychology, among

others) pointed to that articulate tendency. Following the same perspective, Arthur Ramos proposed a Social Psychology that was positioned between psychology and sociology, a psychosociology according to Ramos himself. The topics chosen reflected that articulation: suggestion, imitation, sympathy, public opinion, marketing, groups, individual-group relationship. In this panorama, cultural psychology was emphasized, what approached Social Psychology and anthropology. Donald Pierson, in his turn, brought in the emerging Social Psychology of George Mead's symbolic interactionism, analyzing the human and social development of individuals through interaction processes and social relations. Finally, in his course, Nilton Campos examined phenomena such as cultural diversity, perception, cognition, personality, beliefs, attitudes, social group, imitation, customs, and styles.

Together these courses demonstrated a general vision of theoretical integration with the social and biological sciences. This was reflected in the plurality of methods suggested by its exponents, which ranged from the controlled experiments to observations and documental analysis (Bomfim, 2004). The relative abandonment of this articulate posture – that could be observed in the subsequent decades of development of the discipline in Brazil – may indicate a process of theoretical-methodological individualization of our discipline (Jacó-Vilela, 2008). It followed a trend that had already been expressed in Social Psychology in the United States which individualized classical concepts and theories such as those on attitudes and beliefs (Farr, 1993; Fraser, 1994; Jaspars & Fraser, 1984).

Hence, from the 1950s to the 1970s, the so-called “psychological Social Psychology” – which had a more individualistic theoretical and methodological inspiration (House, 1977) – was the dominant one. Indeed, as noted by Ferreira (2010), Aroldo Rodrigues' book, “Social Psychology”, first published in 1972, was one of the most widely adopted works in Social Psychology courses in Brazil. In the 11th edition of this textbook, which came out in 1986<sup>1</sup> in the chapter on the major psychosocial theories, 13 theories were listed, all by American authors and theoretically included in Gestalt, Neo-Behaviorism, or Cognitivism. It is important to point out that the decade of the 1980s was a period of effervescence in Social Psychology in Brazil, with the entry or spread of several European Social Psychology theories, such as the Theory of Social Representations, of Active Minorities, and of the Socio-historical Approach.

From the 1950s and 1960s, Social Psychology established itself as a field of research and instruction in Brazil, showing strong growth in the following decades. This could be easily observed in the data of a recent study that surveyed 130 psychology courses in the country indicate that 59% of them fill between 70 and 200 hours of their workload with Social Psychology material. The other 41% dedicate over 200 hours to that area of knowledge, which equates to more than 10% of the total academic training period in psychology (Yamamoto, Seixas, Costa, & Coelho-Lima, 2013).

### *Social Psychology paradigms in Brazil*

From the 1970s, there was a change in the paradigm of Social

Psychology. Kenneth Gergen, American social psychologist, was a leading figure in this movement.

It can be noticed a criticism which indicates that it is not possible to establish universal or trans-historical laws in Social Psychology, since the regularities found and the most important theoretical principles depend on the historical contexts of the studies, which, in its turn, is constructed and constitutes the Social Psychology itself, in a process of reflexivity, the history of that which it studies (Gergen, 1973). Beyond the epistemological criticism pointed out by Gergen, another powerful criticism concerns the irrelevance of the theoretical guidelines, often expressed in micro-theorizing, which characterized this discipline until then (Alvaro & Garrido, 2006; Kruglanski, 2001).

In this setting, it can be observed a perspective that supports the production of a contextualized, engaged and reflective knowledge toward transforming social reality. The main theoretical references stem from Marxist theories, from social-historical psychology, and from French culturalists and philosophers. As stated by Ferreira (2010), the publication of the book “*Psicologia social: O homem em movimento*”, by Silvia Lane and Wanderley Codo, in 1984, was the sign of a field of training and research on topics such as violence, exclusion, and power. In this Social Psychology, what predominates is qualitative research, a more sociologizing theoretical emphasis, or even a French-inspired post-structuralist approach. This is still the dominant approach in Social Psychology in Brazil today.

Indeed, a survey conducted by Ferreira (2010), in which were analyzed 636 Social Psychology articles published in six major Brazilian periodicals (rated as A1 or A2 in the CAPES QUALIS system) from 1997 to 2009, indicated that most of them embraced the theoretical approach of “critical Social Psychology” (46%), followed by “psychological Social Psychology” (38%), and “sociological Social Psychology” (16%). The themes addressed in these articles were: social practices (15%), social representations (15%), identities and subjectivities (14%) and social attitudes, beliefs, values and perceptions (13%). Empirical articles (67%) were predominant, particularly those which dealt with qualitative methods. Comparing these data with others obtained from 1980 to 1991, the author notes a reversal in the area of interest of Social Psychology, indicating a decline in more psychological approaches and a marked expansion of critical Social Psychology.

Souza and Souza Filho (2009) analyze training in Social Psychology in Brazil in a study involving professors of the discipline in public and private universities from all regions of the country. Dealing with data from the syllabuses, the programs and from interviews, the authors note that in their classes the professors use concepts and approaches to issues (e.g., social representations, attitudes, beliefs, social cognition, ideology, alienation, consciousness, etc.) more than discussion on the history, as well as the paradigms and methods of the area. The bibliographic analysis adopted by 51 professors surveyed indicated a predominance of the socio-historical, socio-constructivist and socio-cognitive approaches. Critical Social Psychology was associated with an emphasis on the socio-historical approach, which is the main tendency found in the programs of instruction and in the interviews with the

professors. The authors concluded by affirming the diversity of themes and approaches in these Social Psychology training programs in Brazil and the low importance given to research and intervention activities in these programs and syllabuses.

As our goal in this paper is to analyze Social Psychology training in Brazil, we will present data from our country and compare them with the data from other surveyed countries in South America (Argentina, Colombia, Venezuela, Chile, Peru, Paraguay, and Uruguay).

### *Our study*

In 2011 and 2012 we conducted – conjointly with a group of researchers from the Complutense University of Madrid and the Federal Universities of Sergipe, Bahia and Paraíba – a study on the activities of social psychologists in South and Central America, and Europe. Altogether, 545 social psychologists from various countries participated: 288 from South America and among them 149 came from Brazil, 172 from Europe and 85 from Central America. The participants of this study are colleagues who teach/taught at least one discipline in Social Psychology field.

Questionnaires were sent to psychology professors via e-mail and answered via internet. The data we will present refer to colleagues who teach at least one course of study in the area of Social Psychology. In Brazil, 53.7% of the participants were female. In other South American countries this percentage rose to 64.7%. The average ages were 41.2 years in Brazil and 42.7 in other countries. In this study, we will compare data from Brazil ( $n = 149$ ) with another countries from South America (Argentina, Colombia, Venezuela, Chile, Peru, Paraguay and Uruguay), ( $n = 139$ ).

In this paper, we analyze data concerning discussions on Social Psychology definition, meta-theoretical orientation adopted, the most used theorists and theories and the time dedicated to research, teaching and extension.

## **Results and discussion**

In the psychology of intergroup relations we soon learned that people do not react or interact with other people but with the representations that they hold about them and about their groups. The Theory of Social Representations, on the other hand, teaches us that the representations not only reflect or restate reality, but also constitute it by defining the relations we will have with it (Moscovici, 1961; see Almeida, Santos, & Trindade, 2011, for a review). So that, understanding the ways in which Social Psychology is defined helps us understand how it is transformed into training practices in Brazil, since the definitions adopted for an area of knowledge are one criterion of inclusion and exclusion, of what enters and of what does not enter (Jahoda, 2007), a kind of “the keeper of the keys” that will indicate what and how it will be taught, researched and practiced in this area.

On this basis, we analyzed the definitions that psychologists in Brazil and South America gave to Social Psychology. The question asked was “Define in your own words what Social Psychology is.” The answers obtained were processed in the ALCESTE<sup>2</sup> (version 2010) program. We also considered as

variables of analysis the approach adopted (i.e., psychological, sociological, both or neither of them)<sup>3</sup> and the country of activity of the social psychologists (Brazil vs. South America). The results indicate an explanatory scenario consisting of four thematic core groups, with a minimum number of 10 E.C.U.s<sup>4</sup> to form a class. The descendent hierarchical analysis retained 52% of the E.C.U.s of the *corpus*, which structured the social psychologists' representation of Social Psychology. These core groups present aspects for understanding what Social Psychology is.

As we see (Figure 1), the corpus shows the first split into two thematic axes. Both were again split, giving rise to two structural axes, the first composed of the classes 1 and 4, and the second axis comprising classes 2 and 3. With regard to the context units and the number words analyzed, class 1 was the most extensive with 42% of the contents analyzed, followed by class 4 with 32% of the contents parsed, then by Class 2 with 14%, and by Class 3 with 12% of the contents analyzed. Therefore, from the 52% of content analyzed, 74% correspond to classes 1 and 4.

Regarding the content analysis of each axis, it is observed that class 1 combines the understanding of Social Psychology as an area that studies the intra and intergroup relations in the social, human and cultural context. This class may be exemplified in the following clip "It is the area in psychology that studies the phenomena, historical and cultural of groups which consider the environmental variables that affect groups, the relationships between groups and within groups of humans" (E.C.U. 94). Class 4, which together with class 1 comprises the first axis, mentioned the understanding of Social Psychology as a branch of science that studies the influence of social interaction on human thought. The class is exemplified by the following clip "It is the scientific study of the influence that the actual or implied presence of other people exerts on individual behavior" (E.C.U. 28). In this class we can suggest that there is an influence of the participants who have a background in which a psychological approach is emphasized. This axis indicates an understanding of Social Psychology grounded in its classical distinctions between sociological Social Psychology and psychological Social Psychology.

Regarding the second thematic axis, one may notice that class 2 aggregates the perception of Social Psychology as the discipline that studies the construction of the knowledge, subjectivity and intersubjectivity of social subjects. A remarkable example of this class is "A discipline of understanding the social nature of the psychological and the relational processes of an historical and cultural configuration of subjectivities and modes of intersubjective actions" (E.C.U. 83). One may note that this class has a greater influence on the social psychologists with a more philosophical approach in their academic background. On the other hand, class 3 considers the understanding of Social Psychology as a relational and subjectifying perspective. An example of the speech contained in this class is "A perspective and a field of research that places its object of study in the relationship between the social and subjective areas that are particularly understood as dimensions constructed and subject to historical change" (E.C.U. 145).

It should be noted that class 3 is mainly characterized and

produced by social psychologists from other South American countries who say they have a mixed psychological and sociological academic approach. In this axis, it is perceived a similarity between the ideas which composes these two classes, if we compare to the classes in the first axis.

As observed, the E.C.U.s and the words associated with classes 1 and 4 are related and organized based on the idea that Social Psychology studies the interaction between individuals and socio-historical context, while the E.C.U.s and words associated with classes 2 and 3 are organized more specifically based on the idea that Social Psychology studies subjectivity and intersubjectivity. In other words, it can be observed that the first axis is composed of two traditional approaches to Social Psychology (psychological and sociological) whilst the second axis is composed of the ideas that characterize the more alternative approaches that some authors denominate as postmodern psychology.

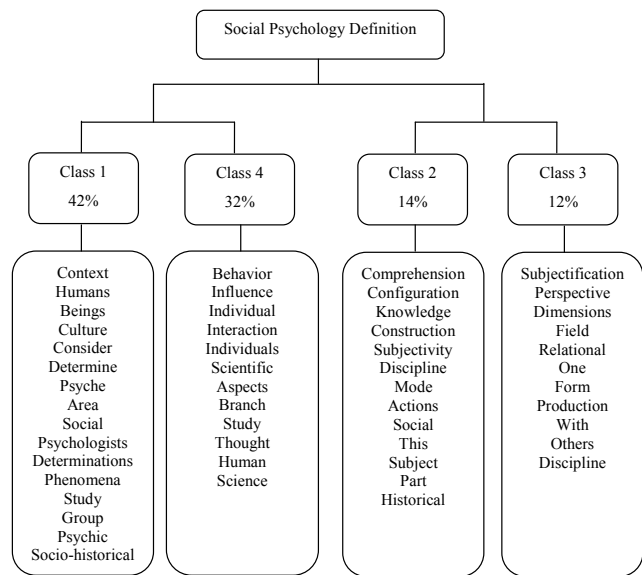


Figure 1

The most frequently used lexicon in the definition of Social Psychology by social psychologists.

ALCESTE allows us to analyze the significant absences in each lexicon which compose each class of discourse. In Figure 2 we can notice that, when it comes to the more sociological definition of Social Psychology (Class 1), the terms "behavior", "influence", "ways of knowledge" correspond to the significant absences. Hence, it is a way of understanding Social Psychology which emphasizes contexts, culture and history of psychological phenomena, avoiding the reduction to more individualizing analyses. On the other hand, the concept of sociological Social Psychology (Class 4), which understands Social Psychology as a field of scientific knowledge that studies the influence of interactions on behaviors, ignores in its lexicon terms such as "history", "culture" and "contexts", and it defines the field using the definite article "the", avoiding the perspective of Social Psychology as "one of the" areas.

In the discourse of Social Psychology as comprehension of subjectivity (Class 2), which emphasizes the discipline as

comprehension of subjectivity, configurations, actions, the significant absences are the meta-theoretical orientation of sociological Social Psychology (a structuring variable) and the notions of “behavior”, “interactions”, “group”, “context”, “individual” and “society”. In this sense, it refers to a way of Social Psychology without groups, contexts, interactions, society and individuals or, at least, a way of understanding the area in which these constructs do not have much relevance. Similarly, the other subjectivist version of Social Psychology, focused on ideas of production of relational subjectivities (Class 3), was predominant in Brazil (structuring variable), and it ignores “psychology”, “groups”, “culture” and “contexts”. We face a perspective of Social Psychology without groups, context, individual and psychology.

Although two of the most adopted definitions of Social Psychology have high correlations, they differ in the absences in

their lexical. Moreover, the study of individual behavior is central to the more psychologizing definition and a marking absence in the more sociologizing definition, which emphasizes the culture. Nevertheless, the definitions of Social Psychology focused on the notion of subjectivity or subjectivization are outstanding. They configure the representation of Social Psychology without groups and, concerning Brazilian social psychologists who adopt these definitions, without Psychology.

As Sá (2013) points out, the same way it is not possible to make use of Social Psychology only using psychology, likewise, it is not possible to make use of Social Psychology without Psychology. As well as Social Sciences, Philosophy, Literature and Linguistics are important to the construction of Social Psychology knowledge, Psychology is important as well. It seems that we have an anti-psychological Social Psychology in Brazil (Figure 2).

Class 1: Sociological social psychology		Class 4: Psychological social psychology		Class 2: Subjectivity Comprehension		Class 3: Subjectivity Production	
Word	$\chi^2$	Word	$\chi^2$	Word	$\chi^2$	Word	$\chi^2$
Behavior	-7	A/An	-12	Orientation in		Psychology	-7
Influence	-5	Of the	-8	psychological social	-8	Study	-5
Knowledge	-5	History	-8	Psychology	-5	Country_Brazil	-5
Part	-4	Culture	-7	Behavior	-5	The	-4
Form	-4	Discipline	-7	Interactions	-3	Of the	-2
Person	-4	Humans	-5	Group	-3	Group	-2
Configure	-4	Context	-5	Context	-3	Culture	-2
Relationship	-4	Perspective	-5	Individual	-3	Context	-2
Comprehension	-4			Society	-3	Individual	-2

Figure 2

Chart of significant absences in the lexical of definitions of Psychology.

When we asked about the time devoted to teaching, research and extension activities, on a scale ranging from 0% to 100%, we observed that Brazilian social psychologists dedicated more time to teaching than their South American colleagues,  $F(1, 149) = 6.47 p < 0.05$ . On the other hand, there is more time devoted to research,  $F(1, 143) = 5.42 p < 0.05$ , and, marginally, to extension,  $F(1, 124) = 3.18 p = 0.07$ , by these other social psychologists in South America. Thus, while Brazilian social psychologists spend more than half of their time teaching, their colleagues from other countries are more focused on research (Figure 3).

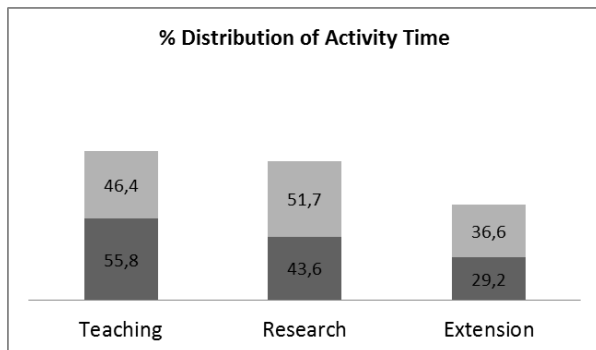


Figure 3

Percentage of time devoted to teaching, research, and extension by Social Psychology professors in Brazil (dark gray) and other South American countries (light gray).

Other activities (e.g., academic administration, bureaucracy, advocacy, ancillary, etc.) still occupy, in the evaluations of respondents in Brazil, 34.7% of their time and 36.9% for their South American colleagues. It should be noted that this is a subjective perception of the time spent on each activity, since the sum far exceeds a value of 100%.

According to Valle Cruces (2008), although the importance of research for the development of competent professionals in psychology begins to be recognized in recent times, it is an incipient phenomenon. Bastos and Gomide (1989) verify that only 3% of Brazilian psychologists worked on research. More than 60% of psychologists works in the clinical area. In such a way that: “we are not training professionals capable of constructing psychology but only of repeating it. In some cases, we could say that the student merely learns techniques and seeks clients in order to apply them (Bastos & Gomide, 1989, p. 7).

However, we know that research is fundamental to a proper education in psychology taking into consideration that, when we prepare good researchers, we are training professionals effectively able to evaluate, inquiry, observe and intervene in order to transform the social reality. Besides, it is research that allows the expansion of the area of expertise and the development of more critical and effective professional practices (Valle Cruces, 2008). Research training also creates a researcher attitude, that is, a professional who is not limited to reproduce knowledge, but who criticizes, analyzes, creates, reformulates

and thinks, in other words, who does not become into a mere technician applying of rote procedures (Carvalho & Sampaio, 1997).

Such an approach to psychology, with low emphasis on research training, also has consequences on adherence to the profession by its graduates. Bastos and Gomide (1989), in a large study with a sample of 2.448 psychologists from different regions of the country, noticed that psychologists recounted academic training that was deficient and too focused on the clinical area. In this sense, 95% of them sought additional training after their graduation. One fact that stands out is that over 13% of Brazilian psychologists, interviewed in the late 1980s, would like to change to another area, and over 25% would like to change jobs.

In our study, when we asked about the theories that they adopt in their teaching activities, social psychologists in Brazil, mostly, do not answer the question (96 of them - 64.5%). Among those who responded, what predominates are meta-theories or approaches, with emphasis on the socio-historical (8.4%), followed by critical Social Psychology (2.8%), social cognition (2.1%), social constructionism, discourse analysis, psychoanalysis, institutional analysis, sociological Social Psychology and historical-cultural psychology, each one with two references (1.4%).

Even symbolic interactionism, schizoanalysis, "understanding the differences", Marxism, Social Psychology of health, interpersonal relationships, cognitive transactional, observation, social perception, attitudes, psychosociology, learning, assignment/attribution, "Foucault" and no theory at all were mentioned once. Among the theories adopted were highlighted those of social representations, referred to five times (3.5%), and of social identity, with two references.

Even though South American colleagues are more responsive to the question of the theories adopted than Brazilians are, 65 of them (47%) did not answer that question. Again, meta-theories predominate, especially social constructionism with 13 references (9.1%), followed by social cognition and symbolic interactionism, each one with 3.5%.

Critical Social Psychology, libertarian psychology, Pichon-Rivi re's theory of the bond and social cognitive were each mentioned three times (2.1%). Socio-Analysis, River Plate psychology, group theory and communitarian had two citations, whilst behaviorism, post-structuralism, attribution/perception, human complexity, symmetric sociology, systemic, socio-historical, social networking, social theories of discourse and Marxist sociology were cited once. Among the theories mentioned, it can be highlighted those of social representations with seven references (4.9%), social identity with four citations (2.8%) and field theories and cognitive dissonance with two references. Ambivalent sexism was once mentioned. Instead of theories, some authors are also mentioned, such as Moscovici (twice) and Lewin and Vygotsky, once each one.

On a scale ranging from 1 (none) to four (very much) on importance, we noted that in Brazil the theories/approaches considered more important in this research were: historical-social approach ( $M = 2.67$ ), social representations ( $M = 2.61$ ), Vygotsky's socio-historical psychology ( $M = 2.54$ ), approaches focused on the notion of subjectivity ( $M = 2.46$ )

and communitarian psychology ( $M = 2.35$ ). For other social psychologists in South America five theories/approaches were widely mentioned: social constructionism ( $M = 3.16$ ), historical-social approach ( $M = 3.03$ ), social representations ( $M = 2.99$ ), approaches centered on the notion of subjectivity ( $M = 2.90$ ) and discursive Social Psychology ( $M = 2.85$ ). A comparison of media indicates that all the theories mentioned are more valued by colleagues from South America in their research than by social psychologists from Brazil<sup>5</sup>. However, the only exception is Vygotsky's social-historical psychology, whose average values are not different.

In the opinion of professors interviewed in Brazil, three most influential authors of Social Psychology were: S lvia Lane (14 times, seven as the first reference), Kurt Lewin (10 times, six as the first reference), Moscovici (16 times, with nine of them as third reference). Vygotsky also had ten citations (five as the first reference). It is noteworthy that 68% of the researchers did not report any author. In other countries of South America three authors were considered the most important to Social Psychology were: Kurt Lewin (11 references, with seven in first place), Serge Moscovici (14 references, with four in first place) and Kenneth Gergen (13 references, with two as the primary source). Pich n-Rivi re and Michel Foucault each had eight references. 61% did not answer this question.

## Concluding remarks

In this paper we discussed academic training in Social Psychology in Brazil, using historical and research data for this purpose. We have seen that Social Psychology begins in a perspective of psychosocial articulation, trying to incorporate the approaches of biology and psychology with sociological theories. In this regard, Arthur Ramos and Raul Briquet's contributions were outstanding. Besides the theoretical diversity that characterized the birth of Brazilian Social Psychology, the field also was plural and vast in methodological terms.

However, from the 1960s on, there was a retreat from the articulate perspective and a predominance of the psychological Social Psychology approach inspired in the U.S. We believe that the marketing success of the theories of attitudes and of attribution, which generated important means to achieve its ends and promises of a technological psychology, allied with the consolidation of developmental models with emphasis on individual success and meritocracy, collaborated toward the so-called individuation in Social Psychology, which, as we saw, did not only affect Brazilian Social Psychology.

In the 1980s, nevertheless, Brazilian Social Psychology was stimulated again, this time toward more sociologizing approaches. Gradually, the socio-historical and constructionism approaches gained strength to build in Brazil a more peculiar kind of critical Social Psychology, anti-psychological, in our view. Some of the studies we presented in this chapter show the strong relation between the socio-historical approach and critical Social Psychology in Brazil.

However, there is something very contradictory in that association. Critical Social Psychology is the epistemological child of constructionism. As some authors point out (e.g., Jost

& Hardin, 1996; Weinberg, 2008), the philosophical heart of constructionism, namely its founding idea that external reality is unknowable, is a legacy of the right wing, from the idealism and skepticism of Berkeley, Descartes, Hume, Kant and Hegel, as opposed to Marxist ideas. Reconciling Marxism and constructionism remains an open question in this psychology.

We have also seen that the definitions of psychology reflect the separation of approaches more psychological from others more sociological, adding to this division the angle of critical Social Psychology with an emphasis on the ideas of subjectivization and social action. However, what stands out is the fact that 64% of Brazil's social psychologists did not respond questions concerning theories that they adopt. Moreover, the few that did respond that question, mentioned approaches, meta-theories or orientations, with emphasis on the socio-historical approach rather than referring to theories. On the other hand, colleagues in other South American countries responded much more to that question and referred to many more theories in their answers.

We also noted that Social Psychology mainstream in Brazil, which is dominant in Brazilian Social Psychology Association, understands the discipline as a way of analysis in processes of subjectivization, which is defined in opposition to psychology, groups, culture and contexts. Therefore, it is a way of understanding Social Psychology, which achieved 26% of the answers and does not imply in none of both meta-theories proposed by Robert Farr (1991): psychological Social Psychology and sociological Social Psychology. Furthermore, the assumed dichotomy between those meta-theories does not seem to exist in our data; there is, in fact, an approach between them in opposition to versions more subjectivists. Sá (2013) enlarges the spectrum of social psychologies, which is perhaps a more adequate approach in order to understand Brazil's context.

The greater importance assigned by the colleagues from South America to the theories is evident in the closed question we asked. All the averages of the five most important theories adopted were lower in Brazil than there and very close to the semantic field of "little importance". This may lead us to think that many of us practice a Social Psychology without clearly defined theoretical frameworks and even the a-theoretical sometimes. Indeed, although the most used approach by colleagues surveyed in Brazil was the social-historical, and Vygotsky's socio-historical approach came in the third place, when we asked for the most influential authors we saw that Vygotsky occupied merely the fourth position, having been referred to rarely. In Brazil there is a Marxist historical approach, based on second-hand references, such as Sylvia Lane. In contrast, the constructionism referred to by the colleagues from the other countries surveyed cites, more often, authors such as Gergen and Foucault, leading figures in this movement.

One explanation for the lesser importance given to theory by Brazilian social psychologists who participated in this study may be in the excess of teaching activities. As we saw, we (Brazilians) devote more time to teaching and less time to research and extension than do the South American colleagues. Research and extension are the two essential *loci* of adoption theory. This relative lack of emphasis on research, also found

in other studies referred to in this chapter, is the crucial point of the main problems in academic training in Social Psychology in Brazil, which our study allows us to infer that they exist.

More than theoretical diversity, what seems to happen is some theoretical dilettantism and even theoretical neglecting, perhaps motivated by an anti-psychologism which does not yet know how to construct something to put in place the "dead king". Lack of theoretical approach is a problem that has significant impacts on the academic formation of our students and on psychological practice in general.

As stated by Gergen (1978), our theories fail in lack of generative power, that is, they show no capacity to challenge prevalent beliefs about social life or are unable to offer alternatives to contemporary standards of conduct. We believe that the expansion of research activities itself, as a way of knowledge production, and of extension, as a form of critical application and reformulation of that knowledge, can fill the theoretical gap in the academic formation of Brazilian Social Psychology.

Thus, we feel that opportunities like these, at the II International Symposium of Social Psychology, have to become more common and frequent because they are essential to broadening the debate on the education of our students and researchers, enhancing criticisms and alternatives towards the construction of a Social Psychology on a par with Brazilian society's demands<sup>6</sup>.

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## Footnotes

1. In 2005, the book had already reached its 23rd edition.
2. ALCESTE is a tool used for analysis of textual data which can quantify a text to extract the most significant lexical structures.
3. The question asked was: “Which theoretical orientation are you identified with: Psychological Social Psychology, Sociological Social Psychology or both equally?”
4. Context Elementary Unity.
5. Fs (1, 112 - 120) 3.17 – 34.75, ps ≤ 0.07.
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