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Abstract

The objective of this work was to discuss the Social Psychology that has been developing in Brazil, placing it in the international theoretical-methodological setting. To achieve this goal, we initially present a brief historical account of the founding of the Brazilian Association of Social Psychology and the Latin American Association of Social Psychology, providing insight into the political struggle that surrounded the emergence of these two organizations and that, to a certain degree, is still present today. We then present the results of research conducted with 150 Brazilian social psychologists concerning the definition of social psychology, the academic training perspective, and the theories used in the conduct of research. The results point to the existence of several contradictions, since, among other matters, they highlight the fact that while most participants advocate research practices tied to a more sociological perspective, the definitions given indicate a more psychological view of social psychology.

Keywords: Social Psychology, sociological perspective, psychological perspective.

Resumo

A Psicologia Social brasileira no cenário internacional. O objetivo deste trabalho foi discutir a psicologia social que vem sendo desenvolvida no Brasil inserindo-a no cenário teórico-metodológico internacional. Para alcançar este objetivo, inicialmente apresentamos um breve relato histórico da fundação da Associação Brasileira de Psicologia Social e da Associação Latino Americana de Psicologia Social, fornecendo subsídios para o entendimento do embate político que envolveu o surgimento dessas duas organizações e que, de certa forma, ainda está presente na atualidade. Em seguida, apresentamos os resultados da pesquisa realizada com 150 psicólogos sociais brasileiros sobre a definição de psicologia social, sobre a perspectiva de formação e sobre as teorias utilizadas na atividade de pesquisa. Os resultados indicam a existência de algumas contradições, pois, dentre outros aspectos, destaca-se o fato que, embora a maioria dos participantes advogue uma prática de pesquisa ligada a uma perspectiva mais sociológica, as definições dadas apontam para uma visão mais psicológica da psicologia social.

Palavras-chave: Psicologia Social, perspectiva sociológica, perspectiva psicológica.

It may seem counterintuitive to open this work by proposing to discuss the possible definitions for Social Psychology. Nevertheless, we assume that Brazilian Social Psychology has certain peculiarities which, in order to discuss its place in the international arena, we need to ponder concerning what we, Brazilian social psychologists, believe this field of knowledge to be: its object, its method, and so on. Here it is important to clarify that although we are talking about object and method in the singular, we know in fact that, as regards social psychology in general and the Brazilian one in particular, the use of the singular is not the most appropriate.

By way of explanation for our foreign colleagues, the so-called crisis that Social Psychology went through between the years 1970-1980, worldwide, also occurred here. But because of the military dictatorship, it took on several unique characteristics that we present here briefly.

As quite well discussed in the chapter written by Graumann (1992) on the History of Social Psychology, the Social Psychology crisis in Europe called for a Social Psychology more "Social" which confronted, to a certain extent, the theoretical-methodological individualism of the Social Psychology that was being developed in the United States. As rightly argued by Tajfel (1981, p. 7) "social psychology can and must include in its theoretical and research preoccupations a direct concern with the relationship between human psychological functioning and the large-scale social processes and events which shape this functioning and are shaped by it." However, we must not forget that in Europe this clamor did not necessarily mean a break with the experimental method. In fact, studies conducted by Henri Tajfel, on stereotypes and social identity, and by

Serge Moscovici, on active minorities, are living examples that profoundly socially relevant issues can be studied experimentally without, however, having their relevance diminished.

In Brazil, the "crisis" also called for a social psychology more "social", politically engaged, committed to the policy changes so necessary in the 1970s. Thus, in this context, the Brazilian Association of Social Psychology (ABRAPSO) was officially founded in 1980. Here is not the place for us to detail the context of the founding of the ABRAPSO and its relationships with the ALAPSO (Latin American Association of Social Psychology). But we would emphasize that these relationships were, and to some extent still are, marked by conflicting views about the definition of the proper object of the discipline and its choice of methodology. In our view, at the risk of simplifying and reducing something that is multifaceted, perhaps what is at the heart of this debate is the very conception of science and its social functions.

Contextualizing quickly the foundation of the two associations, the ALAPSO was created at a conference of the Interamerican Society of Psychology in Montevideo. Its foundation was proposed by Professor Aroldo Rodrigues, who was its first president. However, very quickly the role of the ALAPSO began to be questioned in several Latin American countries, and, in many of them, national associations began to emerge, such as in Venezuela. At the core of the discomfort with the role of the ALAPSO was the effort, advocated by many Latin American psychologists, to construct a social psychology separated from American individualism, and deeply committed to the most disadvantaged groups from the countries that were at that time called the "third world". This positioning led to the development of diverse perspectives, many basically Marxist. Here is perhaps one of the aspects most divergent between the European crisis and the Latin American one, because, in addition to the crisis of the importance of the social for social psychology, in Latin America we also had a break with the very definition of "social", which here was associated with the neediest communities. As a consequence of this rupture, we also went through the distancing from the experimental method, there being a clear choice at the time for participative research.

Currently, more than 30 years since the founding of the ABRAPSO and more than 25 years since the end of the military dictatorship, Brazilian Social Psychology can be defined with a single expression: theoretical-methodological diversity To give an example, the last ABRAPSO Congress, held in 2011, had as main themes: Media, communication, language, and the arts; Health; Politics, democracy, and social movements; Histories, methodologies, and theories; Ethics, violence, and human rights; Education and training; Work; Gender, sexuality, race, age, and existential territories.

However, we do not think that Brazilian Social Psychology is fully connected to, and/or represented in, the ABRAPSO.

Social Psychology in Brazil: some data

The search in the Lattes Platform, a database of the National Research Council (CNPq) that collects information on Brazilian researchers, using the search phrase "social psychology" and restricting the search only to PhDs, resulted in more than a thousand entries with scores above 69%, which is the indicator of the relative frequency of the search terms found in the CVs. That is, in over a thousand curricula of PhDs somehow linked to the research and teaching institutions in Brazil, "Social Psychology" appears in about 69% of the keywords used. Of this universe, 212 did their doctorate in Social Psychology (Table 1). Looking more closely at these researchers, it is noted that they mostly did their doctorate in Brazil (Table 2), and, of those with a post-doctorate in Social Psychology, the majority (Table 3) also did this in Brazil.

Table 1
Characterization of Researchers Using the Words "Social Psychology" in the Lattes Database

Researcher's profile	*n*
Researchers with a doctorate in social psychology	212
Researchers also with a post-doctorate in social psychology	24
Researchers only with post-doctorate in social psychology	8

Table 2
Doctoral Degree Country

Country	*n*
Brazil	193
Spain	8
Belgium	2
USA	2
France	2
England	2
Canada	1
Italy	1
Portugal	1
Total	**212**

Table 3
Postdoctoral Research Country

Country	*n*
Brazil	18
Spain	6
USA	3
Belgium	1
France	1
England	1
Portugal	1
Total	**32**

Taken together, Tables 1, 2, and 3 show that, at least as regards academic training, there is a strong preference to choose Brazil for further studies. Of course various hypotheses can be raised to explain these data, such as the reduced number of grants for full doctoral programs abroad, many having a doctorate in "psychology" or in other areas, etc.

The next step was to investigate the internationalization of the publications of these researchers (Table 4). Considering the thousand Lattes curricula researched, we found that in the last five years, only 76 articles were published in foreign journals, which means that, in general, the dissemination abroad of

Table 4
Total International Publications in the Last Five Years

Type of publication	*n*
Articles	76
Chapters in books	32
Books	10

research conducted in Brazil is still minimal.

Analyzing the journals in which these articles are published, we have a large dispersion in relation to the countries of origin. However, there is a concentration of Latin American journals (13 journals cited) and European ones (11 journals cited).

Summarizing what has been seen so far, we can say that Brazilian social psychology is marked by a profound theoretical-methodological diversity (see Pereira & Álvaro, in this symposium) and a minimal international visibility, at least from the indices we used.

On Social Psychology in the view of Brazilian social psychologists

It was precisely from the observation both of the theoretical-methodological diversity and the low internationalization of Social Psychology in Brazil that a group of Brazilian, Spanish, and Portuguese social psychologists[1] began, nearly two years ago, developing the research on the profile of the social psychologist in Latin America and on the Iberian Peninsula. The results that will be presented, starting here, refer to the 150 Brazilian participants who are professors and researchers at universities in Brazil.

The first question we are interested in discussing refers to how the participants define social psychology. For this purpose, the first step was to do an initial reading of all 58 responses to the question, aiming at content analysis, as suggested by (Bardin, 2009/1977). In the second step, categories were defined, responses being coded by theme, which were the recording units of the analysis. In the third step, they were subjected to a test of agreement of two judges, by looking for consensus between them. From that point, frequencies and percentages were obtained using SPSS.

Table 5 shows that Social Psychology was defined by the majority as being the study of some aspect of the individual, and social is seen as being the "presence", real or symbolic, of others. This result leads us persuasively to the definitions found in psychological social psychology textbooks that reproduce, with some variations, the now famous definition given by F. Allport in 1924 (p. 12): "Social psychology is the science that studies the behavior of the individual considered as a stimulus to other individuals, or considered as a result of the stimuli of the behavior of other individuals." Certainly, the current definitions do not refer exclusively to the individual's behavior and include cognitive aspects, such as defined by Myers (2000, p. 3): "Social psychology is the scientific study of how people think, influence one another, and relate to each other." The central idea in this category is that the individual would be formed / influenced in and by interpersonal interactions. The second most frequent category, while it sees Social Psychology as the study of individual-society relationships, does not mention the social and political context in which these relationships occur. In third place, as equal frequencies, we have two categories: one that, although it discusses the historical context in which the individual belongs, places emphasis on the individual aspects (cognition, behavior, subjectivity) that would be the objects of Social Psychology; the other category defines Social Psychology by its area of activity (e.g. community) or by the themes it studies (e.g. subjectivity). Taken together, slightly more than half of the participant responses (56.9%) define psychology as being the study of the individual (categories 1 and 3).

This result is apparently contradictory to what the

Table 5
Percentages for the Categories of Responses on the Definition of Social Psychology.

Categories	%
1. Speaks of Social Psychology as being the study of interpersonal relationships and / or interpersonal interactions in general; emphasis is given to aspects of the individual (behavior, cognitive processes, subjectivity) that are generated and / or influenced by interpersonal relationships.	41.4
2. Speaks of individual-society or individual-group relationships; Social Psychology would be the study of these relationships; emphasizes group or collective aspects.	27.6
3. Speaks of Social Psychology as being the study of the constitution of the subject in a socio-historical and political context. However, though it speaks of a broad context, emphasis is on individual processes.	15.5
4. Speaks of Social Psychology as being an area of intervention; the definition is based on themes and / or area of activity.	15.5
Total	**100.0**

Table 6
Percentages of the Basic Academic Training Perspective

Perspective of basic academic training	%
Psychological Social Psychology	13
Sociological Social Psychology	59.3
Both equally	27.8
Total	**100**

participants claim to be their basic academic training (Table 6): a little over half (59.3%) say they were trained in the sociological perspective of Social Psychology.

To analyze the degree of association between the definitional categories of Social Psychology and the basic academic training perspective, the chi-square test was performed, and the result was not significant ($\chi^2 = 9.81$, ns). This result indicates that

the definition of Social Psychology is independent of the basic academic training perspective of the participants.

Equally important, we also analyzed the degree of association between the basic academic training perspective and the degree of importance attached to a set of theories for research activity developed by the participants (Table 7). For this purpose, different single factor analyses of variance were calculated, but

Table 7

Mean Degree of Importance Attached to Research Activity for the Theories Shown (scale ranging from 1 to 4, with a higher mean, greater importance)

Theory	Average importance attached
Social-historical approach	2.67
Social representations	2.61
Approaches centered on the notion of subjectivity	2.46
Social-historical psychology of Vygotski	2.54
Community Psychology	2.35
Theory of social identity and self-categorization	2.31
Discursive Social Psychology	2.24
Frankfurt School (Adorno, Habermas, etc.)	2.18
Social constructionism	2.09
Symbolic interactionism	2.09
Martín-Baró's Liberation psychology	2.06
Social cognition	2.00
Group dynamics	1.98
Classic Social Psychology (field theory, cognitive dissonance, etc.)	1.91
Evolutionary Psychology	1.67
Rhetoric approach	1.46

none was significant. Put another way, there is no association between the basic academic training perspective and the theories considered important for research activity.

Following this same logic, it is symptomatic that, when asked about the authors who have most influenced their work, the participants cite authors who are considered names in psychological Social Psychology (e.g. F. Allport, F. Heider, K. Lewin, etc.) and only a single author, G. H. Mead, in sociological Social Psychology. What draws our attention, however, is the fact that in sociological Social Psychology textbooks, the authors most cited together with G. H. Mead are E. Goffman, R. Turner, P. Berger, H. Blumer, A. Strauss, G. Simmel, and A. Schutz, among others (Collier, Minton, & Reynolds, 1996), and none of them is cited as a reference in the work of the social psychologists who claim to have the sociological orientation as basic academic training.

Conclusions

Taken together, the results presented up to this point can lead us to several conclusions. First, the internationalization of research produced by Brazilian social psychologists is still low, at least according to the indices used in this work.

Second, the majority of the definitions of Social Psychology

that Brazilian social psychologists adopt can be included within the classic definitions found in the textbooks of psychological Social Psychology, which have as their object of study "the individual", be it in behavioral, cognitive, emotional, subjective, etc. terms.

Third, although roughly half of the participants (59.3%) state that their basic academic training can be considered as being within the sociological Social Psychology perspective, this does not seem to exert any influence on how they define Social Psychology, on the attribution of importance of the theories for their research activity, nor even on the authors they consider as influencing their research activity. We can raise a possible explanation for this apparent contradiction: there may be a confusion taking place between what we, the authors of the study, meant by "sociological social psychology" and by "psychological social psychology" and what the participants understood. While the sociological perspective is understood by Latin American social psychologists as included in the communitarian context and as a psychology of liberation (Alvaro & Garrido, 2007a), for us, sociological Social Psychology would have been formed from the traditions of sociological thought, such as exchange theories, symbolic interactionism, role theories, and studies on social structure and personality, among others (Alvaro, Garrido, Schweiger, & Torregrosa, 2007), and would have as objects of study both the social action and the social interaction in

which both individual and collective experiences are formed, and the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes of both the individual and of the groups, social movements, and social institutions that organize the social structure (Torregrosa, 1998). Yet psychological Social Psychology would have originated in the traditions of psychological thought, and its object of study is defined as being "the study of individuals" and how they are influenced by the actual or imagined presence of other individuals. Put another way, in the first, the sociological, the "social" would be the noun, while for the second, the social would be the adjective that would describe, in a general way, the study of intra- and inter-individual processes (see Álvaro & Garrido, 2007a; Álvaro & Garrido, 2007b; Álvaro, Garrido, Schweiger, & Torregrosa, 2007 for a review). To sum up, what would differentiate the two branches of Social Psychology would be the perspective to be taken rather than the scope of application of the knowledge that could be applied both to the individual and to groups or communities.

One way to interpret this confusion, if our explanation is plausible, is to return to a topic presented at the beginning of this paper, when we referred to the idiosyncratic forms that the crisis of Social Psychology took in Brazil. As previously noted, here this crisis took on shapes much more political, in the strict sense of the word, than in other countries. The search for a Social Psychology that was politically engaged, critical, revolutionary,

and aligned with the social minorities became the goal of most of those who were already social psychologists in the years 1970-1980. Not that this has changed. We speak in the past tense only to emphasize the historical origins of this thinking. This struggle shaped the profile of Social Psychology that is matured in Brazil today. So much so that, when asked if the crisis had any impact on Social Psychology in Brazil, 78.1% of the participants answered yes. When asked to say which aspects were influenced by the crisis (Table 8), a little over a third (35.3%) of the responses speak of the importance of the broader social context for the study of individual aspects, and almost a third (32.5%) speak of the political engagement of Social Psychology.

Given these results, we are not surprised when 62% of the responses given by the participants state that their research contributes to the formation of ethical professionals who strive in their activities to be critical and show concern for the citizenry. The rest (38%) speak of contributions more connected to the social relevance of the topics investigated, which in a certain way makes the two categories closely related.

These results, together with the work presented by Pereira and Álvaro, also in this symposium, on the methodology in social psychology, offer clear support for the idea expressed by Moscovici (1972, p. 32) forty years ago: "social psychology can not be described as a unitary body of interests, a systematic framework of criteria, a coherent body of knowledge, or a set

Table 8

Percentages of Responses on the Aspects Influenced by the Crisis in Social Psychology.

Categories	%
Emphasize the importance of the socio-historical, political, and cultural context in understanding the individual and their interpersonal relationships.	35.3
Speak of the development of a critical social psychology, focused on working together with social minorities.	32.5
Relate the crisis in social psychology with the broader crisis of the social sciences; speak of the theoretical-methodological aspect in a generic way.	26.5
Speak of the search for socially relevant objects of study and the methodological break with the individualism of American social psychology.	5.9
Total	**100**

of perspectives shared by those who practice it." This is clearly evident in the case of Brazil.

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