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# The role of Social Psychology in Brazilian undergraduate and graduate education<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to contextualize the role played by Social Psychology in the framework of Brazilian undergraduate and graduate education. With respect to undergraduate degree programs, we analyzed the Degree Pedagogical Project (DPP). Regarding graduate degree programs, the organizational structure of Brazilian programs was analyzed. The study is divided into five parts. In the first part, we present a brief introduction on the status of higher education in Brazil. In the second part, we provide an equally brief overview of the status of undergraduate and graduate education in Psychology. Next, we approach the key topic of the paper, Social Psychology in undergraduate (third part) and graduate (fourth part) education. We conclude with some notes for discussion.

**Keywords:** undergraduate degree in Psychology; graduate degree in Psychology; Social Psychology; psychologist's education; Psychology in Brazil.

## Resumo

*O papel da Psicologia Social na formação brasileira pós-graduada e graduada.* O objetivo do presente texto é apresentar um quadro do lugar ocupado pela Psicologia Social na estrutura do ensino graduado e pós-graduado no Brasil. Quanto à graduação, analisamos os Projetos Pedagógicos dos Cursos (PPC); à pós-graduação, a estrutura organizativa dos Programas brasileiros. O trabalho está dividido em cinco partes. Na primeira, apresentamos uma breve introdução acerca da situação do ensino superior no Brasil. Na segunda, traçamos um quadro igualmente sumário da situação do ensino graduado e pós-graduado em Psicologia. Em seguida, abordamos o tema central do texto, a Psicologia Social no ensino graduado (terceira parte) e pós-graduado (quarta parte). Finalizamos com alguns apontamentos para a discussão.

**Palavras-chave:** graduação em Psicologia; pós-graduação em Psicologia; Psicologia Social; formação do psicólogo; Psicologia no Brasil.

Undergraduate-level degree programs in psychology emerged in the mid-XX century, with the establishment of the degree, in 1953, at Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro. The first graduate degree in psychology, at the masters level, was established at the same institution in 1966. In both cases, the pioneering degree programs preceded the regulations of undergraduate and graduate education.

In 1962, upon recognition of the profession by Law 4.119/62, the groundwork for structuring education was laid, and a national minimum curriculum (Report 403) was proposed for undergraduate degree programs in psychology, which then began to expand. Graduate education, provided by the Statute of Brazilian Universities in 1931, only became structured and strengthened from the mid-1960s, with Report 977/65.

The current framework of higher education is the result of a modernization process started during the civil-military

dictatorship established by the 1964 coup, which promoted the expansion of private school networks and reversed the previous ratio of vacancies, wherein public education widely prevailed. This tendency was strengthened from the 1990s forward as a result of the neoliberal process of "State reform" and its concept of "minimal State", with further cutbacks of the public system occurring due to decreased investment in the field of education and, conversely, an acceleration of the private school network's expansion. In terms of Lula da Silva's Labor Party government, the expansion of the private network received a significant boost; however, as a counterpoint, the recovery, albeit meager, of public education with the expansion of the federal system of higher education and an intense program of inland expansion should be noted.

The status of higher education in Brazil in 2010 with regard to higher education institutions (HEI) was as follows: of the

2,378 HEI, only 11.7% belonged to the public network, while the remaining 88.3% were part of the private network (Anísio Teixeira National Institute for Educational Studies and Research - INEP, 2012). Such institutions are unevenly distributed in Brazil. If we take into consideration the enrollment in 2010, we find that 42.1% of the HEIs were part of the public network in the southeast region, in contrast to only 7.4% in the midwest region and 8.3% in the northern region (INEP, 2012).

The graduate degree programs expanded similarly to undergraduate degree programs but with a key difference. Held mainly by university institutions, graduate degree programs are primarily linked to HEIs of the public network, resulting in an opposing relationship to that found in undergraduate education. Thus, of the 3,412 graduate programs recognized by CAPES (Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior [Brazilian Federal Agency for the Support and Evaluation of Graduate Education]) in 2010, 81.2% belonged to the public network and only 18.8% to the private network. The regional imbalance, however, is equivalent to undergraduate education because 46.7% of the programs were in the southeast region, in contrast to 5.2% in the northern region and 8.1% in the Midwest region.

### *Brazilian undergraduate and graduate education in Psychology*

The education model in Psychology, based on a national minimum curriculum, lasted nearly fifty years. With the approval of the 1996 LDB [The Law of Guidelines and Framework of National Education], graduate education in Psychology fell under the auspices of the Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais [National Curriculum Guidelines] (DCNs).

The DCNs represent the “principles, grounds, offering conditions, and procedures for planning, implementation, and assessment of the degree” (Brazil, 2004, art. 2nd). The guidelines integrate academic and professional education in a unique education model and guide the structuring of degree programs on the following principles: (a) creation and development of scientific knowledge in Psychology, (b) multiple knowledge types for articulating psychological with biological and social phenomena, (c) complex and multidimensional analysis of the psychological phenomenon, (d) critical understanding of reality, (e) performance in different contexts, (f) ethical action, and (g) ongoing training. From the standpoint of the education process, the DCNs favor the development of skills and competencies, in contrast to education centralized in curriculum content, which is the predominant model for a minimum curriculum. These competencies are linked to curricular contents and organized around six structuring axes: A - epistemological and historical fundamentals; B - theoretical and methodological fundamentals; C - procedures for scientific research and professional practice; D - psychological phenomena and processes; E - interfaces with related fields of knowledge; and F-professional practices.

The requirements presented by the axes should, therefore, be present in the curriculum courses and be distributed in the core curriculum and curricular focus. The first stage addresses the broader issue of education, with a range of content in Psychology and related fields that are common to all students,

including competencies and skills. The curricular focus addresses the amount of education and aims to develop individual competencies and skills, along with content and techniques in research and intervention in a specific field of Psychology. The DCNs’ guidelines, therefore, should apply to all Psychology degree programs in the country.

According to the Ministério da Educação e Cultura [Department of Education and Culture] (MEC), Brazil currently has 460 Psychology degree programs, distributed among 27 Federation Units<sup>2</sup>. This distribution is not, however, balanced, reflecting the previously mentioned asymmetry (north, 6.7%; northeast, 16.7%; Midwest, 7.4%; southeast, 46.3%; south, 22.8%). Examining the situation within states, one finds a significant presence of degree programs in counties localized in the countryside (62.8%) relative to capitals (37.2%), indicating a high degree of penetration of undergraduate education in Psychology. This inland expansion has been the result of an exponential increase in the number of degree programs in Psychology in recent years. For example, in the last decade alone, 250 degree programs in Psychology were established in the country, which accounts for more than half of the currently existing degree programs.

Regarding the administrative division, Psychology education in the country is predominantly offered in private institutions (83.3%). This massive presence of private HEIs follows the aforementioned trends of Brazilian higher education in its capacity for private expansion, with strong impacts on the quality of education offered (Catani, Oliveira, & Dourado, 2001). Regarding academic distribution, there is a prevalence of universities (47.6%), followed by colleges (38.9%) and community colleges (13.5%). The offering of Psychology degrees at universities could be an indicator of educational quality because of the historical reputation that such institutions have as centers of excellence in teaching, research, and public outreach. However, the private nature of the degree programs ends up attenuating this quality indicator, considering that, in Brazil, the production and dissemination of scientific knowledge are predominantly performed in public institutions of higher education (Bastos, Gondim, Souza, & Souza, 2011; Yamamoto, 1996).

Regarding the number of vacancies, the MEC data indicate that, of the 460 degree programs, 45% provide more than 100 vacancies per year and almost 25% of the degree programs offer over 200 vacancies, with some reaching up to the impressive number of 1280 vacancies! They are offered, primarily, in night shifts (53%), with a few institutions providing a full-time education in Psychology (8%). Both the number of vacancies and the shift-work could be considered indicators of the democratization of access to higher education. However, the rapid expansion coupled with the largely private nature of the degree programs may represent, equally, a precarious offer of teaching and learning to students (Oliveira, Bittar, & Lemos, 2010). In summary, the Brazilian psychologist’s education is mostly received in private institutions located in the most economically developed regions, preferentially in the countryside during the night shift in university institutions.

The graduate degree program, in addition to previously

mentioned differences, is regulated by mechanisms that differ significantly from the undergraduate degree program. By the initial definition from Report 977/65 of the Federal Council on Education (Brazil, 1965), studies suggest that, *stricto sensu*, graduate master's and doctorate degree programs overlap with the undergraduate degree with the broad and in-depth aims of scientific and/or cultural education, following the North American model.

In the institutionalization process of the *stricto sensu* graduate degree in Brazil, the systematization of the evaluation practice of degree programs and institutions, under the responsibility of CAPES from the late 1970s, takes central stage. Since the beginning, CAPES used peer review as a central mechanism<sup>3</sup>, the results of which have been used to support the deliberations of the MEC, both with respect to recognition of degree programs in the operation and accreditation of new degree programs. From the 1970s to the present time, the evaluation system, as a whole, has already experienced some changes, with those performed in 1998 being the most substantial because they significantly altered the assumptions of the model itself (Aragón, 1998; Arruda, 1999; Cury, 2010; Horta, 2006; Horta & Moraes, 2005; Schmidt, 2011).

The CAPES evaluation adopted a public policy nature regarding graduate degree programs, given the invested effort and the resultant effects in the last decade, and created a set of well-delineated defining rules. Together, with other measures implemented in the 1990s, CAPES established the terms according to which the scientific policy currently governing the field was developed.

The field of Psychology, after the first degree programs were established in the institutionalization process of graduate degrees, was accompanied by the exponential growth of the system, especially in the last two decades. Psychology is located in Greater Area of Humanities at CAPES, which includes 14% of the total 3,412 recommended programs. Thus, of the overall total, Psychology represents 2.1%.

Regarding the distribution of programs per administrative division and geographic region, 71% of the programs are linked to the public network, with 49.3% concentrated in the southeast region and 5.8% in the northern region. The imbalance becomes more pronounced when considering the programs offered at the master's and doctoral levels; 56.8% are concentrated in the southeast region, while the northern region has only 2.3%<sup>4</sup>.

In summary, the field of Psychology faithfully reflects the national graduate system's framework, complete with its virtues and its problems.

### *Brazilian graduate education in Social Psychology*

Social Psychology has been part of the curriculum in Brazilian graduate education since the early XX century. More precisely, it has been present from the 1930s, when the first Social Psychology courses appeared and Raul Briquet at the Free School of Sociology and Politics of São Paulo (Bonfim, 2004; Souza & Souza Filho, 2009) was credited with pioneering the program. The presence of Social Psychology in the different college degree programs helped spread and solidify Social Psychology as a credible field of research. In the following decades, the 1940s and

1950s, interest in the field grew and its academic consolidation increased due to the theoretical influence of both foreigners, from international missions during World War II, and Brazilian intellectuals, who were aligned with the developmentalist ideology that permeated Brazil (Antunes, 2004).

During the establishment of the first degree programs in Psychology in the country and the regulation of the profession in the 1950s and 1960s, Social Psychology was already consolidated as a significant field of research and action. It must be emphasized that the very model of minimum curriculum in Psychology included the obligation to offer the Social Psychology course in all Brazilian undergraduate degree programs in Psychology. That requirement meant that the field had fully established itself, becoming a significant theoretical and technical branch of Psychology and separating it from other branches of knowledge, including sociology and law (Bonfim, 2004).

After this period, the field of Social Psychology solidified itself in the education of psychologists as a central field of research and intervention, and as such, it began to gain strength beginning in the 1970s, during the period referred to as the "crisis of Social Psychology" (Sá, 2007). Guided by the discomfort with the restrictions of civil rights during the civil-military dictatorship (1964-1985) and the precarious condition of a significant proportion of Brazilian society, the country's Social Psychology transformed itself in an attempt to meet the demands of excluded social segments (Scarpato & Guareschi, 2007). Gradually, this "new" Social Psychology was incorporated into different curricula, such that it now occupies a significant place in the education of psychologists. Such significance lies not only in the transformation of Social Psychology into one of the foremost psychological specialties but also in its "view" of reality, which organizes a broader paradigm that ultimately defines Psychology from a more contemporary perspective (Doise, 2002; Silva, 2004).

To understand how Social Psychology is represented within the curricula of undergraduate degree programs in Psychology, we analyzed the Degree Pedagogical Projects (PPC) of 39 degree programs<sup>5</sup>. The participants of this survey are located, for the most part, in the southeast (41%) and in the capital cities (61.5%). They are also, for the most part, from public institutions (61.5%) organized as universities (74.4%) that offer 40 to 90 vacancies per year (57.9%) and operate on a full-time schedule (38.5%), with the greatest number of degree programs created in the 1970s (28.9%) and in 2000 (31.6%). This participant group configuration approaches, in almost all aspects, the wider picture of institutions that are responsible for the undergraduate education of psychologists.

A total of 130 courses linked to the field of Social Psychology were identified in the PPCs of the 39 degree programs distributed in the different curricular matrices, according to Table 1.

A total of 130 courses linked to the field of Social Psychology were identified in the 39 degree programs distributed in the different curricular matrices (Table 1).

According to Table 1 data, we find that 59% of the degree programs dedicate between 70 h and 200 h of their course load to Social Psychology courses, and 41% reserve more than 200 h for that field. Because the minimal course load established by

the MEC is 4,000 h (Brazil, 2004) and most degree programs add few hours beyond the minimal requirement, we infer that degree programs are organized into two groups: one group that treats Social Psychology in a residual way, restricting course load to less than 200 hours, and another group that is concerned

with a greater dedication to that field and that devotes over 200 hours to courses in the field. By analyzing the number of Social Psychology courses offered, we may find a similar ratio in the numbers; 46.2% of degree programs offer one or two courses, while 53.8% offer three or more courses.

Table 1  
*Distribution and Course Load of Social Psychology Courses per Degree Program*

Dimension	Category	n	%
Number of courses per degree program	From 1 to 2	18	46.2
	From 3 to 4	11	28.2
	From 5 to 6	5	12.8
	From 7 to 8	5	12.8
Course load of curricula dedicated to courses in the field per degree program	From 70 h to 200 h	23	59.0
	From 201 h to 400 h	9	23.1
	From 401 h to 600 h	3	7.7
	From 601 h to 800 h	2	5.1
	Above 800 h	2	5.1

The location of courses identified in the curricular matrix, the stage of the degree, and the year in which it is found (Core Curriculum or Focus) are presented in Table 2.

There is a predominance of courses in the second and third years of the degree programs, and the number of recorded cases in the remaining periods is less significant. Furthermore, 73.8% of courses attended correspond to the core curriculum. The scheduling of these courses in the beginning of the degree programs sometimes coincides with the core curriculum, indicating that Psychology degree programs consider the knowledge acquired from Social Psychology as essential for the basic repertoire and necessary for the general and common education of psychologists. Conversely, Table 2 also indicates that some courses are present in the last two years, when there are internships and a greater curricular focus in the field. With respect to internships, 24 courses distributed among 10 different degree programs (26.6%) were identified, while with regards to the curricular focus, 11 degree programs (28.2%) are incorporated in this group.

Table 2  
*Distribution of Courses per Stage of the Degree and Curricular Year*

Dimension	Category	n	%
Stage of the degree	Core curriculum	96	73.8
	Curricular focus	34	26.2
Curricular year	1 <sup>st</sup> year	12	41.0
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	49	25.6
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	27	23.1
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	16	7.7
	5 <sup>th</sup> year	12	2.6

Considering the data, it is reasonable to assume that the focus on Social Psychology in almost one-third of the degree programs indicates recognition of the field's significance in the field of Psychology education in Brazil. This probable consideration can be explained by the diversity of themes and

possibilities of application of the knowledge generated in the field, which could be more consistent with a general education advocated by DCNs.

Assuming that curricular focus on Social Psychology indicates significance given to this field, we examined the relationship between focus in the field and the total course load of Social Psychology (Table 3).

Table 3  
*Relation Between Curricular Emphasis in Social Psychology and Course Load Dedicated to this Field*

		Focus on Social Psychology	
		Yes	No
Course load in social psychology	From 70 h to 200 h	3	20
	From 201 h to 400 h	2	7
	From 401 h to 600 h	2	1
	From 601 h to 800 h	2	0
	Above 800 h	2	0

Not surprisingly, Table 3 indicates that the degree programs that grant more hours to Social Psychology courses are also the programs that have a curricular focus in that field.

The data presented herein confirm the assertion of two distinct ways of organizing Social Psychology within curricular matrices: one method includes Social Psychology only in the core curriculum with a few courses, while the other distributes a greater number of Social Psychology courses in both the core curriculum and in the curricular focus. That is, degree programs can be divided into two groups according to the significance given to the teaching of Social Psychology courses in the education of psychologists.

How is this focus structured? From the analysis of the material, we note that the majority of the fields combine Social



Psychology – its worldview, techniques and tools, processes, and phenomena – with other fields of Psychology and its related topics. Thus, in the focus on social Psychology, there are also discussions of processes linked to the fields of Clinical Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Education, Institutional Psychology, Law, Public Health, and Public Policies. This heterogeneous association between Social Psychology and other fields (or themes) is, perhaps, a reflection of each degree program's setup, both in discussions conducted by their respective faculty and by the regional demands. The association of Social

Psychology with other fields in the curricular focus may indicate that the degree programs regard Social Psychology courses as a “lens” through which various phenomena of Psychology can be viewed as a whole, following the current trends reported in the literature (Doise, 2002; Silva, 2004).

The DCNs' structural axes in which the Social Psychology courses were incorporated are analyzed (Figure 1) here.

We observe that most courses deal with content linked to the axes of theoretical and methodological fundamentals (72.3%), psychological phenomena and processes (43.1%),

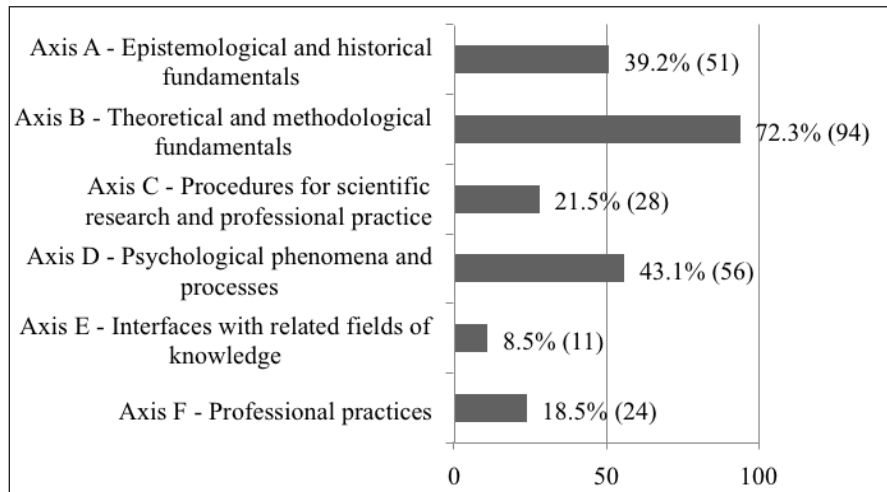


Figure 1

Layout of courses according to the DCN [National Curriculum Guidelines] structuring axes.

and epistemological and historical fundamentals (39.2%). This scenario basically depicts a set of courses that emphasize (a) the historical establishment of Social Psychology, (b) the main theoretical trends that have influenced that field, and (c) the main phenomena investigated by each course. The strong presence of Social Psychology courses in these three cited axes suggests a predominantly theoretical education. These axes are responsible for the abilities and skills closest to the traditional curriculum contents, that is, the academic field. This becomes further evident when considering that Social Psychology courses are, generally, offered at the beginning of the degree, periods usually aimed at the fundamentals of Psychology.

In contrast, the axes related to technical or intervention contents (axes C and F) are not often present, which strongly suggests that Social Psychology is not addressed in its practical character. Corroborating this finding, it appears that only 25% of the institutions offer curricular internships in Social Psychology. This configuration contradicts the position of authors such as Scarpato and Guareschi (2007) who advocate that education in this field of Psychology is directly articulated with practical experience in the context of social phenomena.

Next, we examined the overlap of lists for the different axes, i.e., whether courses belonging to one axis were simultaneously present in another axis. We found that more than 90% of the courses that belonged to axes A and D belonged simultaneously to axis B. Hence, the discussion on the theoretical fundamentals

of Social Psychology was accompanied by the historical debates of the field and the main phenomena and processes that are included within it. The combination of these factors within the same course may indicate a concern with the comprehensive education in Social Psychology regarding its theoretical character.

### *Social Psychology in graduate education*

The current organization of graduate programs and the result of the guidelines issued by the National Plans of Graduate Education and operated by CAPES consists of a vertical structure including the program itself, focus areas (FAs) and research lines (RLs), which are linked to curriculum structure and research activities. A program may include courses at various levels (master's and doctorate degrees) and modalities (academic and professional master's degrees).

The apparent clarity of the proposed organization, however, is not translated into reality. Rather, what is found in even a superficial examination of the system is a lack of consensus regarding the definition of each one of the hierarchical levels. There are overlaps and confusion regarding the proposals of graduate programs, as the program names, FAs, RLs, and projects merge with no pattern of more or less detail provided by the institutions.

Although this heterogeneity of interpretations hampers the horizontal comparison of the system, we believe it is possible to

address the role of Social Psychology in graduate education by analyzing its place in the structure of the programs<sup>6</sup>.

Thus, of the sets of programs recommended by CAPES in the field of Psychology, nine had the words Social Psychology in the title, 21 specialized in Social Psychology and 52 programs had the term Social Psychology in one of its RLs.

Table 4 outlines the relative presence of Social Psychology in the set of programs in the field. Although Social Psychology appears in the title of only 13% of the programs, we observe that its relative presence in FAs (27%) and RLs (33%) is impressive.

Table 4

*Relative Presence of Social Psychology in the Titles of the Programs, Focus Areas, and Research Lines in Contrast to the Whole Field of Psychology.*

	Psychology (n)	Social Psychology (n)
Programs	69	9
Focus areas	82	22
Research lines	226	75

Having established the role of Social Psychology in graduate programs, we analyze the framework's temporal development, which enables us to discuss trends (Tables 5 and 6).

Table 5

*Year of Establishment of the Programs, Master's Level, and the Number of Programs in the Psychology and Social Psychology Fields (title, FA and RL) (n)*

Decade	Psychology	Social Psychology		
		Title	FAs	RLs
1960s	1	-	-	1
1970s	12	3	4	7
1980s	6	-	1	4
1990s	12	3	9	9
2000s	31	3	9	25
2010s	7	-	2	6

Table 5 indicates that the first master's programs in Psychology were established in the 1970s by PUC-SP (Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo) (in 1972), USP (University of São Paulo), and UFPB (Federal University of Paraíba) (both in 1976). In that decade, there were already four master's programs where the study of Social Psychology was among the FAs, which represents one-third of the Psychology programs in existence during this period, indicating the excitement that Social Psychology as a field of study was generating at the time.

Another finding concerns the role that these degree programs currently play. While only 10% of the master's programs in Psychology created in the new century are called Social Psychology, 60% have a focus in this subfield. This leads to an understanding that there has been a decentralizing movement in Social Psychology; thus, it is no longer considered a single specific program, but rather, it is embedded in programs of other FAs.

With respect to the master's degree programs, although the early degree programs already included Social Psychology in their RLs, the numeric proportion of master's programs in Psychology with specific RLs in Social Psychology increased.

While in the 1970s, the programs with RLs in Social Psychology represented 58% of the master's degree programs, that number jumped to 82% of those developed after 2000. In other words, the trend of creating RLs in Social Psychology is greater today than in previous decades.

Table 6

*Year of Establishment of the Programs, PhD Level, and the Number of Programs in the Fields of Psychology and Social Psychology (title, FA and RL) (n)*

Decade	Psychology	Social Psychology		
		Title	FA	RLs
1970s	2	-	-	1
1980s	7	2	2	4
1990s	10	1	2	7
2000s	18	2	6	12
2010s	3	1	3	3

This phenomenon also occurs when considering the year a doctoral program is established, albeit in a smaller proportion. Of doctorate programs created in the 1970s, 50% had a RL in Social Psychology, while for those created since the 2000s, 71% had an RL in Social Psychology, as shown in Table 6.

Unlike master's programs, doctoral programs under the name of Social Psychology only began to evolve after 1980, while half of the current doctoral programs under the name of Social Psychology were created before the 2000s. In a more accurate analysis of these degree programs when compared to the total number of doctoral programs in Psychology, one realizes that fewer such degree programs (21%) were created after the turn of the century, while 42% were created before 2000. The same phenomenon applies to focus areas because only 23% of the doctoral programs created since the 2000s have any FA in Social Psychology.

Another finding that becomes relevant in this analysis is that there are currently more programs exclusively offered at the masters level with RLs in Social Psychology (86%) than there are programs offering master's and doctoral degrees (68%). However, while 58% of the Psychology programs apparently offer both levels of education, this percentage reaches 67% of the programs titled Social Psychology. The significance of considering the status of Social Psychology at the doctoral level relates to the programs' scientific production characteristics, as the original contribution that impacts its field of knowledge is expected to come from doctoral research.

It should be noted that only 17 (or 25%) of the 69 current Psychology programs have no RL related to Social Psychology.

Graduate programs in Psychology were also characterized regarding their geographic locations, as shown in Figure 2:

The first noteworthy finding is the role of Social Psychology in graduate programs in the country's northern region. That is, Social Psychology programs are nonexistent, although three of the four programs in the region do have RLs in this subfield.

Regarding the FAs, half of the programs in the southern region have some FA in Social Psychology, as do 40% of the programs in the northeast region and 25% of the programs in the southern and the northern regions. The Midwest region

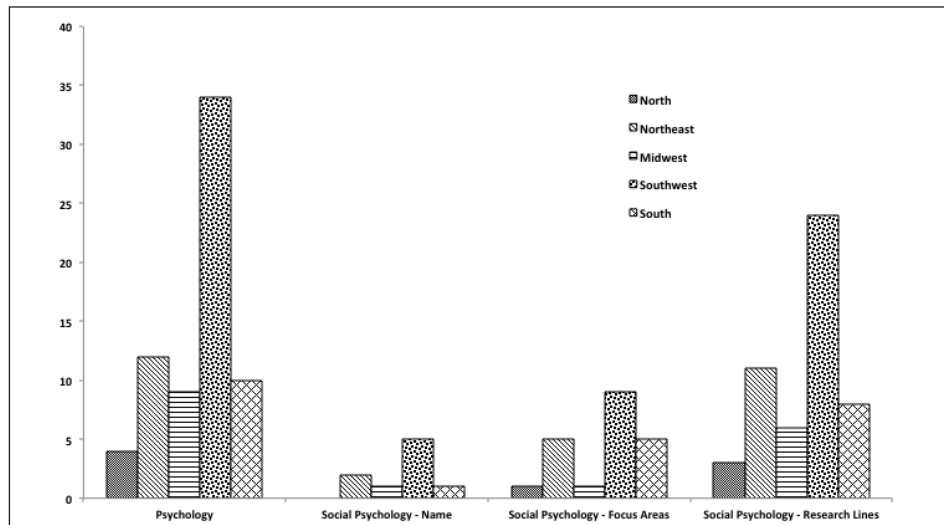


Figure 2

Regional distribution of Psychology and Social Psychology programs (title, focus areas, and research lines).

stands out, with only 10% of the programs displaying this trait. However, with respect to this region, the data show that among the country's current Psychology programs without RLs in Social Psychology, one-third are located in the Midwest.

This context becomes more complex when analyzing programs by geographic region. While the southeast region offers the most programs with some RL in Social Psychology by the total numbers (24 out of 52 identified), the northeast region proportionally offers the most RLs in Social Psychology among the programs located there. In this region, programs with RLs in Social Psychology are present in 11 of the 12 programs, at a 92% rate, while in the southeast, this figure is 70%.

We previously stated that more than 70% of the field's programs are found in public network HEIs. For programs with Social Psychology in their name, this finding is even more

pronounced. Out of the nine identified, only one is based in a private HEI. In relation to focus areas, Social Psychology programs replicate the same rate as Psychology as a whole. Analyzing the research lines, however, the following aspect stands out. The proportion of programs offering RLs in Social Psychology is the same in public programs and private institutions at 75%. Another significant difference becomes evident when considering only public programs. That is, while 86% of the federal university programs have some RLs in Social Psychology, only 46% of the state university programs have one (Table 7).

One last important aspect of graduate programs in Social Psychology concerns the CAPES evaluation. We analyzed the concepts assigned to the CAPES evaluation in the last available triennium (2007 to 2009) (Figure 3).

Table 7

*Distribution of Psychology and Social Psychology Programs (title, focus areas and research lines) per Administrative Division*

	Psychology	Social Psychology - Title	Social Psychology - FA	Social Psychology - RL
State	13	2	4	6
Federal	36	6	11	31
Private	20	1	6	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>09</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>52</b>

Programs that received grades of 6 or 7, that is, they were considered to be excellent by international standards according to the rating agency, are the exception in Psychology, accounting for only 5% of the 69 programs currently offered. No program titled Social Psychology is found among them. Social Psychology programs converge among the programs that received grades of 4 and 5 (seven of nine identified, or 78%), which exceeds the average of all Psychology programs (42 of 69 existing, equivalent to 61%).

Considering the Psychology programs that received a grade of 5 from CAPES, 40% have FAs in Social Psychology. Connecting this finding to the fact that there are more programs with RLs in Social Psychology with grade 3 (37%) than with

grades 4 or 5 (33 and 27%, respectively), we realize that the field of Social Psychology has had a greater impact on programs that are not the most prestigious in Psychology. Conversely, one cannot overlook that of the three programs that received a grade of 7, RLs in Social Psychology appear in two of them.

#### *Notes for discussion: the role of Social Psychology in undergraduate and graduate education*

Our aim with this paper was to systematize the data regarding Social Psychology courses in Brazilian undergraduate and graduate education in Psychology, specifically, the role Social Psychology courses play in the two education levels. If the analysis performed does not allow us to draw firm conclusions,



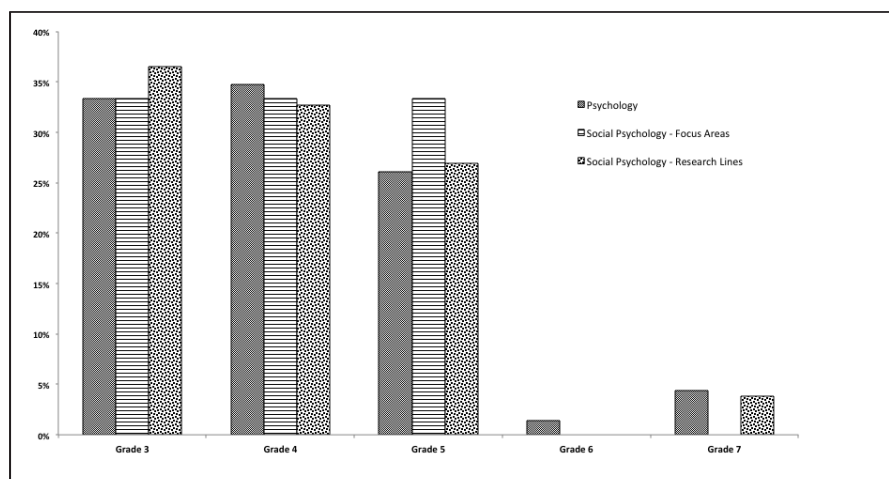


Figure 3

Distribution of Psychology and Social Psychology programs (title, focus areas, and research lines) per concept in the 2007-2009 triennial assessment.

some considerations can be proposed.

With regard to undergraduate education, both in the minimum curriculum-based structure and the current National Curriculum Guidelines, Social Psychology receives special attention. The greater flexibility afforded by the DCN-based curricular proposals differentiate the previous and current structure. Thus, the analyzed data allow two considerations. First, the degree programs can be grouped into two sets, using as criteria the significance given to the field of Social Psychology and represented by the course load, the number of courses, and the FA inclusion. Second, the presence of Social Psychology courses at the beginning of the degree program in the core curriculum and its eminently theoretical and comprehensive nature may indicate that degree programs regard Social Psychology, beyond an agglomeration of topics and subjects, as a possible paradigmatic view of Psychology.

With regard to graduate education, Social Psychology may be the most represented subarea in Psychology. There are programs fully dedicated to its study and programs that extensively include Social Psychology in their FAs and RLs. The increased presence of Social Psychology as part of a larger structure is understandable given the field's graduate structure. Normally organized in units devoted to undergraduate education that are, therefore, heterogeneous, HEIs have made a considerable effort to develop their graduate programs based on this structure. This has translated into a tendency to create general programs, such as Psychology, to the detriment of other more specialized or thematic programs. Therefore, far from representing a decline in the subarea's significance, the growth trend of Social Psychology in the general programs' substructures indicates its vigor and strength.

There are, however, some issues suggested by the data. The greater proportional presence of master's programs in relation to doctoral programs may be an indicator of this growth trend (which could explain the prevalence of lower grades). However, the observation we made that the doctoral level is expected to have an original production of higher quality and possible

contribution to deepening knowledge in the field does not seem negligible. In addition, no Social Psychology program is found among the programs that are considered excellent, although there are many programs that are quite consolidated. Because CAPES's definitions of excellence relate to internationalization, this issue deserves the field researchers' attention.

The data shown regarding both undergraduate and graduate levels suggest challenges for this field and raise issues for discussion. However, if we may extract any conclusion from the previous analyses, it is certainly related to the significance of Social Psychology, which is perhaps the most currently significant Psychology field in Brazil.

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## Footnotes

1. The paper was presented at the round table “Social Psychology Education in Brazil” of the Second International Symposium of Social Psychology, UnB (University of Brasilia), Brasilia, October 2012.
2. e-MEC [Department of Education and Culture] database, available at <http://emec.mec.gov.br>.
3. Although widely recognized in the academic and scientific world, numerous criticisms of this evaluation mechanism have been made, and its use has been discussed extensively. To name a few, Alfonso, 2010; Davyt and Velho, 2000; Spier, 2002.
4. The set analyzed here refers to the currently active programs, according to information from CAPES ([www.capes.gov.br](http://www.capes.gov.br)), except for programs now inexistent that are still on the list.
5. This material comes from the research study “O lugar das Políticas Sociais na formação do psicólogo no Brasil” [“The role of Social Policies in the education of psychologists in Brazil”] (CNPq – Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico [National Counsel of Technological and Scientific Development], Process 473487/2011-0) which requested from 276 institutions – considering only one degree per HEI in the country – their PPCs.
6. For the classification of programs belonging to the field of social psychology, we examined the presence of keywords in the name and titles of programs in FAs and RLs. For this purpose, we used the keyword “social psychology”, its variations (psychosocial, psychology, and society) and the presence of the term “social” and its correlates (collective, community/ communal, public, institution/ institutional, citizenship, society, Brazilian reality, historicity).

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