

Social psychology in Portugal

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Abstract. - The author presents a broad overview of the development of Social Psychology in Portugal. The main guideline ideas that underly the different approaches that exist in Portugal are identified. Some of the most important research programs are singled out for brief analysis. The Portuguese Social Psychology community is characterized as a whole, and some of its prospects for expansion are outlined.

I would like to give you a broad idea about social psychology in Portugal. I think we can distinguish two stages, or better said, two successive waves.

The first wave is constituted by the social psychologists that, as a rule, received their training and took their PhDs in foreign countries.

Psychology was a late comer in Portugal, and training at post-graduate level was not introduced before the revolution of 1974. Before that, training in psychology was restricted to a private Institute of Applied Psychology, much more oriented to practical applications, in education, business and health, than to research. Anyway it was partly there and partly following the french tradition of the «médecin-philosophes» that the first Portuguese psychologists were recruited.

In the sixties, France was still the most important source of cultural influence here and, maybe for that reason, the centers chosen for the portuguese psychologists were in Belgium, France and Switzerland, or to be more precise, Louvain-la-Neuve, Paris and Genève. Among these three centers it was however Louvain-la Neuve that most attracted and still attracts, now at a lesser extent, the Portuguese psychologists interested in acquiring a doctoral degree. Most of the Portuguese social psychologists of this first generation, took their PhD in Louvain-la-Neuve. Very few were those who have chosen other centers either in Europe or in the U. States.

Meanwhile, and starting in 1976, the course of Psychology was introduced in the three great and traditional public Portuguese universities, to wit Lisbon, Coimbra and Oporto. The growth of psychology since then was very fast. Psychology as a profession has been and still is very attractive and thus candidates usually exceed, by far, the «*numerus clausus*» – as an average one hundred in each university. Due to this rapid growth the number of psychologists in Portugal is now estimated as 4000 which, in terms of density (ratio per millions population), places Portugal above countries like France, Canada and United Kingdom, but below countries like Netherlands, Belgium and United States. Maybe more important is however the ratio of those that have research as their primary or secondary activity. In the most developed countries this ratio is around 10%, whereas in Portugal the ratio is half of that, but also increasing very fast. Just to give you an idea we have organized a national meeting in 1988 on research in psychology where 100 papers were presented.

Four years later, in 1992, the number of papers almost doubled, amounting to 170. And the growth is not only in quantity but also in quality, either in what concerns the actuality of models or the sophisticated methodologies used.

The second wave of social psychologists includes the great majority of those entirely or almost entirely prepared in Portugal and already or about to become doctors.

Although younger some of them are already well known to most of you, or at least to those that share the same research interests. I am talking about Lígia Amâncio, António Caetano, Garcia-Marques, Palma Oliveira, Adelino Gomes, most of them very active in the organization of this general meeting.

I can afford to cite names because our community is, as a matter of fact, still very small and we all know each other. But the situation will not certainly be the same in the coming years.

Although small this group has been influent at several vantage points. First because they occupy teaching and research positions in the various universities and departments where social psychology is taught. Second due to the dynamics of its initiatives both at the national and international level. And finally by their research agenda at a great extent along the lines bequeathed by Kurt Lewin, of combining action and research.

Let me quickly examine each one of these points.

The ISCTE, the school where we are now, although not having students of psychology, has been very active in the field of social and organizational psychology. It happened that most of us belonging to what I called the first wave of Portuguese social psychologists converged here to teach to undergraduate students of management and sociology.

Meanwhile the department has acquired its own momentum and ISCTE is becoming now also a school for undergraduate students of social and organizational

psychology. This is may be one of the first experiences of an autonomous academic career in social psychology, separated from the beginning of the mother discipline of general psychology.

Particularly important for giving visibility to social psychology was the initiative of Jorge Vala and Maria Benedicta Monteiro, at that time already in this school, of promoting a meeting in Lisbon, in 1980, gathering figures such as the late and always regretted Henri Tajfel, and also Jacques-Philippe Leyens, Wilhem Doise, and the French sociologist Michel Crozier.

For our tiny community this event acquired a rather symbolic meaning, putting us in contact with some of the founding fathers of the European Social Psychology.

This was only 13 years ago but for us it is already historic.

Since then the Portuguese social psychologists have joined their efforts in order to strengthen the links with their European colleagues, namely through our Association. In 1984 a summer school took place in Évora, where some of us had still the opportunity of studying with the late Jaspars. In 1986 another meeting was organized in Lisbon gathering social and environmental psychologists, two close families not always in good relations. An outcome of this meeting is the book where a new disciplinary field is proposed - the environmental social psychology. I am not sure of this new designation as being generally adopted but I think that it is now largely acknowledged that the environment is always loaded by social factors, and this is the orientation pursued by Portuguese psychologists such as Luís Soczka or Palma Oliveira.

On a more restrict level regular meetings were also organized gathering Spanish and Portuguese social psychologists. The first of these meetings took place in 1987, in Portugal, the second in 1989 in Spain, and the last one some months ago, again in Portugal.

Those meetings also have a certain symbolic flavour if we remember that the first one, in 87, was sponsored by the office of Naval Research, through the support given by William Crano, here present and at the time in its branch in London. Once again, and following the footsteps of John Lanzetta, an american colleague was contributing to straiten the links between european families of social psychologists.

Finally the circumstance that we were able to organize this general meeting in Lisbon, and in a position of presenting to this prestigious forum, some of the results of our research, is for us a reason of legitimate pride. Thirteen years ago, in 1980 we were listeners, attentive listeners, but only listeners. Now we have also something to say, and more importantly, we have the feeling of belongings to the community.

Another important avenue that has been actively opened and actively explored is the Erasmus program, enabling us to establish several networks for exchanging teachers and students. Thanks to this initiative we are at present linked to a broad

and extensive net of European centers which greatly contributed to enrich and diversify our teaching and curricula.

I would like to tell you now something about the characteristics and type of research that Portuguese social psychologists are carrying out.

I will be very brief. The papers presented at this meeting speak for themselves and they are certainly a good representative sample, at least of the European paradigm, by far the dominant one in the portuguese social psychology. When I mention the European paradigm I mean the current view of the emphasis put by figures such as Tajfel and Moscovici on the social dimension, epitomized by the well known dictum - a more social social psychology.

I am quite aware that this distinction of two kinds of approaches on both sides of the Atlantic tends nowadays to become more historical than actual. History in our turbulent times runs fast even in social psychology. American colleagues or at least a significant part of them, are now more open to more diversified trends but the Europeans, by its turn, are willingly espousing more molecular cognitivist approaches. But maybe rather than a mutual convergence into a common ground this may reflect the well known phenomenon of differentiation characteristic of our discipline. Instead of a vertical and cumulative growth the norm seems to be an horizontal spreading of topics never pursued to their ultimate consequences, but also never trully falsified.

As regards the Portuguese researchers I think it is possible to locate them in a continuum of level of analysis, established by the now classic model of Doise. At one extreme I would place some of the research made by Garcia-Marques from the University of Lisbon on social cognition. He has developed a model that permits to reconcile the apparent contradiction between the incongruence effects following the Hastie-Srull model, with the illusory correlation effects, posited by the Hamilton-Rose model. Excellent research, as you may evaluate by yourselves, if you have the chance of listening to him, but somewhat atypical of the traditional European research, or better said, of what we were used to consider as such.

We are here at the inner core of the cognitive social psychology hardly distinguishable of cognitive psychology as claimed, by Hastie and others. I have mentioned Garcia-Marques but other examples of similar approaches can be found in Palma Oliveira and Paulo Ventura, both from the same University, and both present at this meeting.

If you now turn to another well known social psychologist - José Marques, now at the University of Oporto, and consider his remarkable discovery of the «black sheep effect», you may see that the atmosphere has slightly changed, becoming more «European» if you allow me to insist, at least as long as pursuing the research tradition of the inter group relations, imitated by Henri Tajfel. Anyway it seems to me that Marques also enhances the cognitive processes and

also gives preference to the laboratory and contrived groups, which suggest that we are still at the intra-psychic level of the Doise hierarchic scale.

Maybe it is no accident that the cases so far examined come all of them from the more rarefied environment of academic laboratories.

If we now move to ISCTE, of which I already told you about, you can find broader and more eclectic concerns.

Due to the kind of teaching activity herein developed, social psychologists were almost forced to work on an interdisciplinary basis, having to dialogue with their colleagues in sociology, anthropology and management. Well, although I am not sure that our best friends are on those disciplinary fields I think that at one this distance, we all agree that the experience has been positive and rewarding, and maybe one of our, most distinctive features.

In ISCTE several research projects were initiated within this interdisciplinary framework, mostly with sociologists but also with economists, anthropologists and management scientists. One immediate outcome of this cooperation was a greater concern with the social context, which does not necessarily imply a «flight from the laboratory». On the contrary, laboratory and field are both considered as necessary steps of a more encompassing research, complementing and reinforcing each other. Several examples of this kind of investigation are given in this meeting but, as a rule, they only show relatively minor aspects of much more broader research programs.

Starting with myself I have made a first approach articulating leadership with social influence in group decision making, both in field and laboratory. Those studies have laterly evolved in collaboration with Gouveia Pereira, on leadership under stress in marines and professional groups. I also have been involved in several projects of cross-cultural research, an area not always duly valued by the mainstream social psychology. More recently and jointly with Jorge Vala, Lígia Amâncio and other colleagues from sociology, we have initiated the study of expectations, representations and values of the Portuguese Scientific Community.

Jorge Vala, Maria Benedicta Monteiro e Luísa Lima, although each one of them with their own idiosyncratic preferences, form a very prolific troika, and as such have succeeded in finding very robust results in the field of inter-group relations, no more with contrived hut rather with intact groups, operating within structured contexts, such as formal organizations.

Of particular interest is their contribution to enrich the Tajfel model with variables and processes such as group asymmetries, group conflict history and relative deprivation.

On theoretical terms Jorge Vala is developing an ambitious attempt of articulating the social identity theory and social representations, the two main topics

of European social psychology. Here again the dialogue with sociologists, namely political sociologists, may have contributed to his conceptual framework.

On the same vein Lígia Amâncio, well known by her work on gender representations, is now focusing on contextual variables and also working in interdisciplinary terms. The paper she presents in this meeting clearly illustrates this new trend that she is developing.

Other examples of the importance given to content and context in order to better understand the processes, are given by interesting and important lines of research developed by Luísa Lima on risk perception, and António Caetano on impression formation. In this last case, Caetano applies the recent theories on social judgeability, discovered in Louvain-la-Neuve, to situations where judges occupy hierarchical positions.

Elizabeth Sousa, now teaching at ISPA - where most of the first generation psychologists gave their first steps, is still a further example of a multifarious activity in social psychology and of strategy where the laboratory and the field are kept in balance.

Equally worth of note is the line of research developed by Félix Neto, now at the University of Oporto who has been studying emotional and cognitive processes within the migration context.

But socio-cognitivism, although the dominant paradigm, is not the only one that can be traced in the Portuguese social psychology. Authors such as Pina Prata, at the University of Lisbon, has been developing a line of research and consulting on organizational pathology, using the family therapeutic models.

Another example, Gouveia Pereira, at the Department of Economy of the New University of Lisbon, has been applying the model of Di Giacomo and Silvestri predictive of interpersonal logrolling behaviour, also in clinical and counseling situations. Gouveia Pereira who jointly with Pina Prata, were the first to teach social psychology in Portugal, has also introduced the Economic Psychology, giving rise to an important line of research on decision theory, now pursued mainly by Jorge Ribeiro.

This is obviously a rather scanty account of the research under way and I apologize to my colleagues for the omissions that this portrait may present.

Notwithstanding the omissions or some bias on evaluation, I believe that this may give you a picture of the vitality and main trends of our small community. The research we make is not revolutionary, only normal science. Some of us try to solve problems or enrich mainstream models, others try to not lose sight of the context, but all of us are aware and confident about the critical role of our discipline for a better understanding of the complex and changing world where we live.

I thank you for your attention and wish you a nice stay and fruitful work in Lisbon.

Resumo. - O autor apresenta uma panorâmica geral do desenvolvimento da Psicologia Social em Portugal. Os principais conceitos orientadores que subjazem às diferentes abordagens existentes em Portugal são identificados. Alguns dos mais importantes programas de pesquisa são destacados e brevemente analisados. A comunidade portuguesa de Psicologia Social é caracterizada no seu conjunto, e algumas das vias para a sua evolução são traçadas.