

# Chapter 6

## Psychology in Brazil: The Trajectory of a Science and a Profession



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### Introduction

Broadly speaking, the history of psychology in Brazil does not greatly differ from the history of psychology in the other peripheral countries of Latin America, Asia, and Africa, as doubtlessly a comparison with the other texts in this book will show. A few ideas are implied in this assertion. The first is that (a) the emergence of “science,” originating from the processes that Europe went through starting in the fifteenth century, occurs in countries where there has been strong investment in the creation of universities and in the creation of the necessary conditions for research. This is clearly true, for example, in the case of psychology and other human and social sciences, which emerged throughout the nineteenth century mainly in countries such as Germany and France. This chapter does not propose to reiterate Basalla’s model (1967), but notes that “science” is clearly subordinated to the political and social processes that took place in Western Europe, notably the dismantling of the feudal regime, the centralization of monarchical power, the consolidation of capitalism, the loss of the Catholic Church’s hegemony due to the emergence of the Protestant Reformation, and the consolidation of colonial empires—all in few centuries that also witnessed the emergence of modern science and the world’s disillusionment. The second is that (b) psychology, specifically, emerges as a result of profound changes in cities, especially those related to the exponential increase of their populations, to the detriment of the rural population, and of technological advances, mainly in communications.

Based on these two aspects, the purpose of this chapter is to offer an overview of the emergence and development of psychology as a science and profession in Brazil, and to show that it was due to the country’s sociocultural, economic, and political situation. To do so, a few points will be discussed that may explain under what

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conditions these processes have been historicized from the nineteenth to the beginning of the twenty-first century. This data used in this chapter is based on different surveys carried out over the years, whose results have been widely published (see, for example, Sant'anna et al., 2018; Jacó-Vilela et al., 2017; Jacó-Vilela et al., 2016; Jacó-Vilela & Rocha, 2014; Jacó-Vilela & Rodrigues, 2014; Jacó-Vilela, 2014; Jacó-Vilela, 2012; Jacó-Vilela & Degani-Carneiro, 2012). For the history of Brazil, this chapter is guided by the existing historiography, especially Fausto (1999) and Schwarcz and Starling (2015).

## Brazil in the Nineteenth Century

The country that is now called Brazil was a large territory, covered by forests and rivers, with a great mountain barrier located on its shore bathed by the Atlantic Ocean, inhabited by something like eight million indigenous people of different ethnicities, the main ones among them being Tupi and Guarani.<sup>1</sup> Like any other people, the indigenous population had an understanding of what human beings are, their function in nature, and their relationships with other beings. However, as this chapter deals exclusively with the so-called scientific psychology, their knowledge is not dwelt on, but relevant information on this topic can be found in the work of Marina Massimi, an important investigator of the Jesuit treatises on indigenous peoples (Massimi, 2003, 2005, 2009, 2020).

Going back to the so-called discovery of Brazil in 1500, it is found that, unlike what happened in other Latin American countries, colonized by Spain, Brazil's Portuguese colonizers played an exclusively extractive role regarding the new land's riches (initially brazilwood, later sugar cane and its products, finally gold and precious stones), while not being interested in offering culture or education in return. Slave labor was crucial for the extractive project. Brought over from the other side of the Atlantic, enslaved Africans were a key factor in the colonization of the new territory, as they arrived during the first half of the sixteenth century to work on sugar cane plantations. Nonetheless, there are no psychological studies dedicated to slaves in this first phase, as has occurred with the indigenous population.

Thus, early in the nineteenth century, there were few cities in Brazil, almost all located on the Atlantic coast, because of the mountain range that made it difficult to penetrate further inland. These cities had narrow, dirty, and foul-smelling streets. The poor population was squeezed into tenements and other unhealthy places. Rio de Janeiro, which was then the capital, had 50,000 inhabitants.

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<sup>1</sup>In order to understand the harm caused by colonization, not only by exterminating the indigenous population, but also by attempting to "whiten" the population, one should take into account the fact that, according to the official Census of Brazil, carried out by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) in 2010, at the time less than one million Brazilians considered themselves to be Indians.

Everything changed with the arrival of the Portuguese Court in 1808.<sup>2</sup> Fleeing from the threat of invasion by Napoléon Bonaparte, due to his alliance with England, the Portuguese Court was moved to the Colony of Brazil by Prince Regent John (1767–1826, Prince Regent from 1792 to 1816; King of the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil, and Algarve from 1816 to 1822; King of the United Kingdom of Portugal and Algarve from 1822 to 1826). It is interesting to note that his first act, when he arrived in Salvador, the old capital, and into Rio de Janeiro, where he settled down, was to create Schools of Surgery and Obstetrics in both cities. Until then, all that existed in the Colony in terms of education were seminaries, a few religious schools, and engineering was taught at the Royal Academy of Artillery, Fortification and Design that Prince John transformed into the Royal Military Academy in 1810 (Macedo & Sapunaru, 2016). It was in the Schools of Surgery and Obstetrics that the psychological theories emerging in Europe began to circulate.

## Reception and Appropriation of Psychological Theories

The arrival of the Portuguese Court in Brazil brought the country into the Modern Age. Despite causing an initial negative reaction in the population, as the occupants of the city's houses were evicted from their homes to shelter the members of the Court, the population supported the measures taken. Prince John not only created the schools mentioned above, but also allowed printing activities—which were forbidden throughout the colonial period—and opened the Colony's ports “to the friendly nations,” that is, to England, which caused the need for another novelty to be allowed, the creation of non-Catholic temples (Degani-Carneiro, 2017). Other important public works, such as the Botanical Garden, a powder factory (the embryo for the industrialization that would take place in 1840), the Royal Theater, and the creation of Postal Services and of the Bank of Brazil (the first Brazilian bank), were the result of his administration of Brazil from 1808 to 1821, not to mention paving of the streets and renovating of the ports, and creating of the National Library, whose collection is made up in part by the Royal Library, which also came from Lisbon with the Portuguese Court.

The city of Rio de Janeiro grew exponentially during his administration; it is possible to say that its population increased twofold. Doubtlessly an important part of this new population consisted of the Portuguese who came over along with the Court and stayed on. A shared life with the Portuguese Court and the opening of the ports acquainted the local population with foreign products and caused some of them to be imported. Many of these did not previously exist in the Colony, and some were entirely inadequate for the climate and conditions of the city, such as English cashmere for men's suits. Sewing machines were also among imported items, both

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<sup>2</sup>The royal fleet comprised 15 ships, accompanied by at least twice as many “private merchant ships [that] set sail on the wake of the royal fleet” (Schwarcz & Starling, 2015, p. 165), escorted by four British ships.

for domestic use and for the incipient industrialization. A “civilizational process” was put under way, the first great outbreak of modernization of Brazil, necessary if only for the adaptation of the Portuguese Court to its far-off, overlooked Colony where it was now forced to live. For this process, in addition to the initiatives of Prince John (and later, his son, Peter I),<sup>3</sup> the doctors trained by those schools played an especially important role. Their way of thinking is accessible to us through books and articles—the latter being more common in the twentieth century—but, mainly, through the theses that they presented at the end of their courses in order to receive the title of Doctor in Medicine.

The presentation of theses became mandatory in the 1830s, after the Schools were converted into the Faculties of Medicine of Bahia and Rio de Janeiro in 1832. Only two decades had passed after printing presses and the production of books had been allowed in Brazil. Thus, such theses can be considered the first authentically Brazilian books, not only in the sense of the nationality of its authors, but mainly in the sense of having been printed in Brazil and of representing the way of thinking of the Brazilian elite on several controversial topics under debate at the time. This way of thinking sought to emulate the fashionable ideas of European capitals, notably Paris.

The theses dealt with different psychological themes, like studies on childhood, women, educational processes and environment, psychotherapy, hypnosis, and environment of cities. Great European authors were cited, especially Wundt, but also Ribot and Janet. Medical doctors felt that they were supposed to reflect on the various issues that involved the population and to propose solutions for each of them. Consequently, a process of reception of these ideas and theories occurs, giving them meanings, and appropriating them according to the formations and needs of our authors (Gavroglu et al., 2008; Dagfal, 2004). On the other hand, some of the theories developed here were later received in the central countries, characterizing a broad circulation of knowledge.

Thus, the new perspectives of life sciences, which were then taking hold, are present in these theses. Gall, with the phrenology he proposed in 1825; Galton, lecturing on the heredity of intelligence in 1869; and especially Darwin, who, in 1859, removed living beings from the universe of Creation, were authors who gradually allowed the consolidation of a given biology. The free individual, equal to others (Dumont, 1992) of the French Revolution, could therefore also be perceived as different from others—a difference no longer centered in the communitarian and religious ties of tradition—but an individual who was part of nature. This primacy of biological knowledge in the nineteenth century allowed a concept to emerge, that

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<sup>3</sup>Prince Peter (1798–1834) was left behind in Brazil to ensure Portuguese sovereignty over what was now the United Kingdom. He was urged by political forces to proclaim the independence of Brazil from Portugal, even though he maintained the monarch’s central power. He proclaimed himself Emperor of Brazil, as Peter I, on September 7, 1822, a date that has been enshrined as that of the “Independence of Brazil.” Peter abdicated from the throne in 1832, in favor of his son, later Emperor Peter II, and returned to Portugal to wage war on his brother who had taken over the Portuguese throne.

of “race.” Added to the Darwinian theory of natural selection, this concept allowed a breeding ground to form that affirmed not only difference—as biologically determined—but also a hierarchy of the different races, a justification for the Western white man’s domination over “primitive peoples.”

The biological explanation appears in Brazil only because, during the nineteenth century, exchanges with other countries (which were prohibited during the Colonial period) became easier. If evolutionism, materialism, and the notion of progress formed the basis for the need to build a civilized nation, there were the theories of the field of psychiatry that helped to think about the racial issue. Thus, race becomes a matter. The strong presence of Afro-descendants in the population is the principal explanation for the delay of the country, the biggest obstacle for the country to reach the standard of civilized European nations. The transformation of biological difference in justification to social inequality led to the conclusion that with the kind of population that inhabited Brazil, the goal of building a civilized nation in the European manner was virtually impossible. This was a position advocated by several authors toward the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as demonstrated by the analyses carried out by Leite (1976). One exception was Manoel Bomfim, who gave the differences between Latin American and European countries with regard to the form of colonization performed (Bomfim, 1993).<sup>4</sup>

One of the great Brazilian authors to study Afro-descendants, their rites and customs in loco, would be Raimundo Nina Rodrigues,<sup>5</sup> whose main work is “Fetishism and animism among black people from Bahia,” from 1896, which discusses the hysterical character present in possession rituals. This perspective is conventionally named “scientific racism” to be contrasted with previous and subsequent forms of establishing relations with the Afro-descendants in Brazil.

Among other influential physicians with strong racist view, there is Henrique Roxo (1877–1969). He is responsible for the first work of experimental psychology produced in Brazil (in the sense that it was published and arrived at us), with many references to Wundt. Roxo had proved in his doctoral thesis that the reaction time (RT)—measured by Buccola’s psychrometer—of the interned in the National Hospital of Alienated was longer for the alienated Afro-descendants than that for Whites (Roxo, 1900). This result was interpreted as one more confirmation of the Brazilian elite thesis about the inferiority of the Afro-descendants. There was no doubt about it in his work. As he confirmed in a 1904 article, a delay in evolution made Afro-descendants susceptible to several mental illnesses. According to him,

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<sup>4</sup>Manoel Bomfim (1868–1932) graduated in medicine and focused on education. He attributed to scientific knowledge the role of a privileged tool to intervene and obtain the progress. He was the director of Pedagogium. He was professor of psychology at the Teachers’ School of Rio de Janeiro (the so-called Normal School). He was one of the founders of the Brazilian League of Mental Hygiene, the Brazilian Association of Educators, and the People’s University, which acted for a short period of the decade of the 1920s.

<sup>5</sup>Raimundo de Nina Rodrigues (1862–1906) was disciplinary restricted to the field of anthropology for almost all twentieth century. In the last few decades, he has been appropriated by social psychology, owing to the changes that have occurred in this area.

experimental psychology (in which he included psychological tests) should be used to support diagnostic hypotheses, indicating, in an objective manner, the difference between the healthy and the morbid and, later, distinguishing among several psychopathological manifestations (Roxo, 1904).

One of the strategies to solve the problem is the “whitening” of the population, by inviting White workers from other countries to immigrate to Brazil. For this reason, on the south of Brazil, a strong presence of European descendants can be found, mostly Germans and Italians.

But “whitening” alone is not enough. The reduction and/or elimination of illiteracy was considered the principal way to counteract the effects of biological difference, especially after the abolition of slavery in 1888. Accompanied by the proclamation of the Republic in the following year, the issue of the “civilization of the country” acquires new nuances.

The educational system was perceived as deficient, which meant it was archaic, artificial, and exaggeratedly based on memorization and physical punishment (Gondra, 2004). The political and intellectual elite tried to improve education. This happened after the proclamation of the Republic in 1889 and continued in the new century.

## **The Applicability of Knowledge: Psychological Tests in the Early Twentieth Century**

In the first 40 years of the Republic, there was an initial period of adaptation of the legislation and of political and social functioning to the new government model—it was at that time that the *Pedagogium* was created, a pedagogical museum where Brazil’s first Laboratory of Experimental Psychology was created, in 1906, directed by Manoel Bomfim.

It is the period in which the urban population and cities grew as the rural population decreased—both because the immigrants that were brought in for the local population’s “whitening” did not meet the expected conditions in rural areas, or because former slaves of African descent, newly freed, moved into cities in the hope of finding better living conditions.

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil’s showcase city, underwent a major urban intervention—the first of many—aimed at adapting it to modern living, giving it wide avenues and exquisite buildings, such as the Municipal Theater. São Paulo, the other big city, also experienced a beautification process through urban reform. In both cases, the exercise led to the removal of the poor to remote places. In the final stage of this first republican phase, the 1920s, countless popular revolts showed that the Republic was not moving in the right direction, toward solving the central problem, the inequality of Brazilian society. There were popular uprisings against government acts, sailors’ revolts, and strikes. Young army officers, who staged the lieutenants’ revolts (1922–1924), preached moralization of politics, decentralization of power

from the hands of the agrarian elite, and political freedoms. This movement had direct links with the Prestes Column (1925–1927).<sup>6</sup> However, this period was also marked by a search for transformation in art, with the Modern Art Week, which created the Brazilian modernist movement.<sup>7</sup> What all these movements have in common is an interest in the Brazilian reality and a desire of changing it in some way (Carvalho, 1991).

Up until then, medical doctors used European psychological theories as a basis for their own outlook on the subjects that interested them. However, they quickly became aware of psychological tests, and began to use them in their clinical practice, as a support for their diagnoses. Roxo quotes them frequently in his *Manual of Psychiatry* (1925), in particular Binet-Stanford test, for the evaluation of altered states of consciousness. The 1920s witnessed an intensive use of tests at the National Hospital for the Alienated, where the clinical practice of the Chair of Psychiatry of the Faculty of Medicine took place. There is even an account of the application of several tests on Brazilian Army soldiers hospitalized there (Saturnino, 1930).

The use of tests quickly spread into other spaces. Their presence was remarkable in the Brazilian League of Mental Hygiene, created in 1923. Its Laboratory of Psychology was dedicated to the validation and standardization of several tests in public schools (Leme Lopes, 1930, 1932). Other educational institutions in Rio de Janeiro also began to use tests, such as the Institute of Education. The same occurred in São Paulo, with Lourenço Filho,<sup>8</sup> in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais State, with the arrival of Helena Antipoff<sup>9</sup> in 1929, and in Recife, Pernambuco State, with Ulisses Pernambucano.<sup>10</sup>

In this way, psychology entered a new field, education. Future basic education teachers—which was the work space of middle and upper middle class women outside the domestic environment—were provided with a great deal of knowledge in

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<sup>6</sup>This social rebellion was named after its leader, Luís Carlos Prestes (1898–1990), who was an army captain and after the main figure in the Brazilian Communist Party. It mobilized over 2000 men, military personnel, and civilians, to cross the Brazilian hinterland, encouraging the population to revolt against the agrarian elites, to fight for compulsory primary education and the secret ballot, and, mainly, to end poverty in the country.

<sup>7</sup>One of the main products of this movement, the painting *Abaporu* by Tarsila do Amaral, is on show at the Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires (MALBA). *Abaporu* is an Indian word that means “the man who eats people,” and symbolizes one of the movement’s currents, Cannibalism.

<sup>8</sup>Manuel B. Lourenço Filho (1897–1970) was one of the main figures of the New School movement. Among his activities, he held the Psychology Chair in the National Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Brazil. He was the creator of the National Institute of Pedagogical Studies (INEP). He played a relevant role in the recognition of psychologists as professionals.

<sup>9</sup>Helena Antipoff (1892–1974), Russian by birth, studied with Binet and Simon in Paris and with Claparède in Geneva. She came to Brazil in the great movement of educational reform in Minas Gerais in the 1920s, to head the Psychology Laboratory of the School Improvement Teacher. Settling in Brazil, she was devoted to educational psychology and the exceptional child.

<sup>10</sup>Ulisses Pernambucano (1892–1943) was a physician who worked with the alienated and with children’s education. He was one of the first to seek a democratic treatment of the ill and of children, and to standardize psychological tests to be used in Northeastern Brazil.

psychology, especially that related to learning, motivation, and development, as well as training in the use of psychological tests. Testing would reach its peak in the next phase. However, it is necessary to point out at once that the connections with medicine and education, present in this first reception of psychology, will subsequently imply disputes of power and space.

## **The Administrative Centralization of the Vargas Administration**

In a politically tense environment, failure to comply with the agreement on the election of the next president of Brazil (a president would be from São Paulo State, the next from Minas Gerais State—producing states of what were the country's main riches, coffee and milk, respectively, the reason for this stage being known as the “coffee-with-milk policy”) led to an uprising of the Southern states, allowing Getúlio Vargas (1882–1954) to take power in 1930. His rule was long, comprising different phases (President of the Provisional Government, President-elect, finally dictator after coup d'état in 1937), ending in 1945, at the end of World War II.<sup>11</sup> This represented another stage in the modernization of Brazil, either because of a search for a rational organization of the state apparatus or because specific measures were taken, such as granting the right to vote to women in 1932, in response to the strong suffragist movement of the time. It was not by chance that the initial phase of Vargas' long administration was dedicated to elementary education—hitherto an exclusively female activity—providing support to advocates of the New School. For them, who proposed secular, free, public education, “as far as their natural skills will permit” (Azevedo et al., 1932), tests were an effective tool to evaluate the student's capacity and thus to arrange homogeneous classes, seen as leading to teaching and learning.

One of the main promoters of testing was Isaías Alves (1888–1968). He worked in Bahia State, where he owned a private school, and in Rio de Janeiro, at the invitation of one of the most important figures of Brazilian education, Anísio Teixeira (1900–1971), that appointed him as director of the Testing Services and School Measurements of the Federal District (1932–1935). Alves was the greatest name of the tests. He translated many of them and authored books about tests. In one of them, he commented about the results he had previously achieved in his testing in Bahia. In 1928, he was responsible for the testing service in public schools in Salvador (Bahia) and also tested the students of his own school, the Ipiranga High School. He explained that he had divided the students into three categories (Black, Mestizo, and White). The results had shown a low performance in the tests of

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<sup>11</sup> Brazil was the only Latin American country that fought alongside allied democratic forces in WWII. Thus, the end of the war configured a contradiction between fascism in the Brazilian Government and struggle against fascism in Europe.



students considered to be Afro-descendants (66.1), while the tests with best performance were the ones by the White students (86.6). Mestizos displayed an average performance (73.6). Alves (1933a) verified that the average IQ of the white students increased when the scores of students from private schools were added to those of the public schools (this was the case for the Ipiranga High School). But in his analyses, Alves did not make clear that the public schools received children from the poorest families, and, therefore, the students were more often Afro-descendants and Mestizos. The socio-economic situation cannot be neglected in the results and comparisons.

Alves also conducted a large-scale research on intelligence and instruction level, measured at Rio de Janeiro's public schools. The results were tragic. They indicated mental retardation in 50% of the students (Alves, 1932). After this, he recognized that the teachers had not been sufficiently trained to use the tests correctly (Pintner-Cunningham and ABC tests, both tests aimed at illiterates or children that are not yet literate), and the Binet-Simon test applied to literate children had not yet been adapted. Despite these facts, he considered the results valid, including the superiority of Whites toward the Afro-descendants regarding the level of intelligence and also the children in private schools compared with the ones of public schools. Thus, he concluded that these data induce "thoughts which lead sociologists, educators and eugenicists to direct more firmly our policy and economy" (Alves, 1933b, p. 70). So, we see that the racism present in the Brazilian society was scientifically proven. We continued, therefore, in a process of naturalization of difference, which was totally against the project of the New School, which sought an increasing number of children in the school system.

The racial issue, nevertheless, was still present. However, it was during this period that a culturalist approach would impose itself over the scientific and biological racism then in force. This occurred through the publication of Gilberto Freyre's classic book entitled *Casa Grande & Senzala* in 1936 (published in English translation as *The Masters and the Slaves*), in which the author pointed out how the close coexistence of Whites and enslaved blacks produced effects in Brazilian culture. His book is the basis on which the myth of Brazil as a paradise of "racial democracy," where differences are accepted and shared, was built (Freyre, 1964).

The Vargas administration stood out because of its centralized administration, achieved by creating different ministries and a specific agency to manage public administration, the Department of Public Service Administration (DASP). Another of its initiatives was to establish university charters. Until then, there was only one university in Brazil, the University of Rio de Janeiro, created in 1920 by joining different isolated faculties (among them, the Faculty of Medicine of Rio de Janeiro). In 1937, this university was made into the University of Brazil (UB). By 1934, the University of São Paulo (USP) had already been created.

Vargas also stimulated industrialization and, at the same time, some degree of worker protection through specific laws, such as the one creating the minimum wage. In this context of labor protection, testing found a new space. In this way,

Emilio Mira y López,<sup>12</sup> one of the most important psychologists at the time, who was in exile in Uruguay, was invited by a group of institutions (USP, Institute of Rational Organization of Labor—IDORT, National Industrial Apprenticeship Service—SENAI, and Sorocabana Railroad) to lecture and teach a course on Psychology Applied to Work in São Paulo, in May 1945. At the end of this year, he was invited by DASP to give courses for one year in Rio de Janeiro. Finally, in 1947, he was invited to organize and direct the Institute of Selection and Professional Guidance of the Getúlio Vargas Foundation (ISOP/FGV), which led him to move to Rio de Janeiro with his family.

Testing prevailed in all spaces interested in modernization, in transforming Brazil by using the most relevant scientific tools of the time. Consequently, another type of institution also demands testing: the judicial lunatic asylum, a mixture of prison and psychiatric hospital. Testing became a fundamental tool in ascertaining the inmates' legal incapacity as well as determining whether they were dangerous to society (Vasconcellos, 2017). Psychology, once again, revealed its social usefulness (Rose, 2008).

## The Great Modernization of the 1950s

Getúlio Vargas resigned the presidency in 1945. In 1950, he was reelected. His new administration was democratic in character, carrying on the strong investment in what was called “basic industries”—steel, oil, etc. However, its national developmentalism displeased conservatives who, along with the press, explored news of corruption, of disorder. Threatened with deposition, Vargas committed suicide in 1954, leaving a Testament Letter stating that the agenda of “international groups has aligned itself with that of national groups to block labor legislation and developmentalism” (Schwarcz & Starling, 2015, p. 413). His death changed the distribution of forces: “Stunned, people would leave their houses, look at each other and cry. Gradually, however, the population changed, and in several cities (...) a bitter, angry and outraged crowd began to walk the streets armed with sticks, stones and fury” (Schwarcz & Starling, 2015, p. 412). The people thus secured democracy and prevented a coup, which would only take place ten years later.

Be that as it may, industrialization continued at a fast rate during the Juscelino Kubitschek administration (1902–1976, in office 1956–1961), which allowed the creation of a working-class elite via the transformation of cities in the area

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<sup>12</sup>Emilio Mira y López (1896–1964), a Spanish born in Cuba, obtained a degree in medicine from the University of Barcelona, in whose medical clinic he worked as full professor. He also was Head of the Institute of Professional Guidance, becoming an important figure in psychotechnic early in the century. As a socialist, he was the head of the Psychiatric Service of the Republican Army during the Spanish Civil War. With Franco's victory, he went into exile in France, which was followed by journeys around different countries until he settled in Brazil in 1947, where he lived until his death.

surrounding São Paulo into an industrial park. Kubitschek was also responsible for transferring the capital of Brazil to Brasília, a city built on the country's arid Central Plateau, aiming to populate and develop the west of Brazil. Although the move took place in 1960, it was many years before this process was finally consolidated. Conversely, Rio de Janeiro gradually lost its political power, remaining, however, as the "cultural capital" of Brazil. The "Goals Plan" of Kubitschek's administration brought growing urbanization and strong industrial and communicational development—in the same way that Vargas encouraged the radio, the Kubitschek administration brought in television—which sharpened the inequality between the rural and urban worlds.

In the 1950s, in the larger cities, mainly state capitals, people—principally women—were to be found that had different training, but mainly backgrounds in education and philosophy, who were interested in furthering their studies in psychology, usually in a self-taught way or through short courses. They complemented their practical training in internships and practiced in public service institutions, largely aimed at schools, where they performed psychodiagnoses. This emphasis has not changed in institutions dedicated to professional selection and guidance, such as ISOP, which had several branches spread throughout Brazil. Nor did it change when a clinical approach first emerged with several Child Guidance Clinics. The profession's initial trademark was psychodiagnosis based on psychological tests. Vintage photos and biographies show that white, middle, or upper middle class women applied tests. There were few men in the professional context and, when there were any, they usually held the position of administrators.

In a country of continental dimensions such as Brazil, it is important to make it clear that psychology, at that time, was a subject in Normal Schools (that trained basic education teachers) and in the Faculties of Philosophy existing in some state capitals. However, strange as it may seem, it had also been taught since the end of the 1940s at the National School of Physical Education (Carvalho, 2012). Nonetheless, as a full professional career—especially when people began to call themselves, and to be called, "psychologists" or "psychotechnics"—it was restricted to Rio de Janeiro and to the states of São Paulo, Pernambuco, Rio Grande do Sul, and Minas Gerais.

The first psychology associations were created late in the 1940s, in São Paulo (Psychology Society of São Paulo) and in Rio de Janeiro (Brazilian Association of Psychotechnics). Both issued periodicals, the first ones devoted to psychology in Brazil, which are still published to this day. In 1954, the Brazilian Archives of Psychotechnics published a "Preliminary draft of a minimum curriculum for the Psychology Course," prepared by the Brazilian Association of Psychotechnics.<sup>13</sup> The project was severely criticized by the other associations existing at the time, mainly by the Brazilian Association of Psychologists and the Psychology Society of São Paulo. The criticism was due to the project's dichotomous nature, which

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<sup>13</sup>The Association and the Archives were indissolubly connected to ISOP, that is to say, to Emilio Mira y López.

separated theory (to be carried out in universities) and practice (to be offered by specialized institutes). In any case, the project no doubt served as a trigger for discussions that led to the drafting of new guidelines until the process was concluded in 1962.

Another point to emphasize is that the Catholic Church in Brazil—and elsewhere—had been openly against what it called “materialistic psychology.” In this sense, the Church was partially responsible for closing the Institute of Psychology, created in 1932 with the intention of offering a training course for “professional psychologists” (Centofanti, 1982). However, gradually the Church came to understand that it was better to have that body of new knowledge under its control. It was a long road from the Jesuit discussion on whether or not the natives had souls to the realization that “it would be ridiculous to try to bring the faculties of the soul to the analysis of apparatuses” (Lourenço Filho, 2004, p. 74) to the opposition to the creation of a training course in psychology in 1932. In the 1950s, the Church’s intellectual leadership began to consider, mostly with the help of Italian psychology, with Agostinho Gemelli (1878–1959), the possibility of a psychology that would not move away from their assumptions (Ferraz, 2014).

It was in this vein that, in March 1953, the first higher education course devoted to granting degrees in psychology was created in Brazil, at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio). Additionally, three other courses were created before the profession was recognized, in Catholic institutions at, namely, the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul (PUC-RS), the Catholic University of Minas Gerais (now PUC-MG), and the Catholic University of Pernambuco (Unicap). In addition to those, only one course was created in a public institution, the University of São Paulo (USP). It emerged from the Chair of Psychology at the Faculty of Philosophy, Sciences and Letters as proposed by Annita Cabral (1911–1991), and was strongly opposed by Noemy Rudolfer (1902–1988), who held the Chair of Educational Psychology and advocated that psychology should remain under the tutelage of education.

Therefore, along with the Catholic opposition, there was also tension with the educators. Moreover, the latter also fought against the private use of psychological tests by psychologists, one of the points in the draft under discussion, which led to granting educational advisors permission to apply tests as well—interest, aptitude, and intelligence tests, while the application of personality tests remained restricted to psychologists.

On the other hand, medical doctors disagreed with the possibility of psychologists performing psychotherapy and used their corporate power to bar this proposition. The compromise was to remove this item from the proposed legislation and, instead, to include a mention to “solving adjustment problems.”

Thus, to become a legalized profession, and a university career, psychology clashed with the Catholic Church in the 1930s and in the 1950s, with other professional categories, the educators and the medical doctors. It also faced an internal clash between “theoreticians” and “practitioners.” With all these debates, led by the psychology associations of the time and closely followed by the existing professional body—predominantly women—Law 4119/62 was passed on August 27,

1962, (Brazil, 1962) by the President of the Republic of Brazil, João Goulart (1919–1976), regulating the profession of psychologist and psychology courses in Brazil.

## **The Military Dictatorship, Technological Modernization, and Its Effects**

After psychology was regulated as a profession and university course, and following the 1964 coup, a large number of psychology courses were created, especially in private educational institutions. This coup deposed President João Goulart and gave rise to a long 21-year night under a military dictatorship. In the Brazilian case, the dictatorship maintained some aspects of legality, unlike what happened later in other Latin American countries, such as Bolivia (1966), Chile and Uruguay (1973), and Argentina (1976).

Thus, after demolishing the judicial system, by forcing the retirement of judges and ministers of the Supreme Federal Court, as well as the political system, by revoking the term of office of representatives and senators, and by closing down political parties,<sup>14</sup> the dictatorship promoted the election of the presidents it chose, voted by the expurgated National Congress. After a selection process among the highest ranks of the Armed Forces, the appointed generals had their name endorsed by the Congress and occupied the presidency for the regular presidential term. The political contest, therefore, took place within the Armed Forces.

In addition, the dictatorship went through different phases. The first, which should be temporary, “cleaned out” labor unions, political parties (notably the Brazilian Communist Party, which had been driven underground by the end of the 1940s), and universities. In 1968, there was a so-called coup within the coup, after which there was no longer any concern with keeping up appearances, so that censorship and repression became part of the population’s daily life—a time when armed resistance was organized. A period of “détente” and “openness” followed until the indirect election of a civilian president in 1984. Elected, Tancredo Neves (1810–1985) died before his inauguration. His vice president, José Sarney,<sup>15</sup> a leader of the Arena Party, took office, beginning a period of democratization in Brazil, with a new Constitution approved by the Constituent Assembly in 1988.

The dictatorship invested heavily in pharaonic public works, such as the Rio-Niterói Bridge, the Trans-Amazonian Highway, and the nuclear power plants in Angra dos Reis. Nevertheless, it also invested in technological modernization, bringing color television, a new model of postal services, and telephone

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<sup>14</sup>Only two parties were allowed: ARENA (National Renovation Alliance), the ruling party, and MDB (Brazilian Democratic Movement), the consenting opposition party.

<sup>15</sup>Sarney’s election shows how the conservative Brazilian elite can keep afloat in every kind of situation.

communication into Brazil. It is also important to emphasize that the number of postgraduate courses increased in Brazil during this period, probably owing to the nationalism of a large portion of the Armed Forces.

Already legalized as a profession, psychology's first 20 years were spent under the rule of the dictatorship, which surely produced its effects. Teachers were forced to retire; students were prevented from continuing their courses for 3 years, as dictated by Decree 477 of 1969. Students and psychology professionals joined the armed resistance, and many were killed (Souza & Jacó-Vilela, 2017), such as Idalísio Aranha Filho (1947–1972), my college buddy, in the Araguaia Guerrilla.

Psychology courses, in turn, remained within the limits of the minimal curriculum, centered on the psychological processes investigated by experimental psychology, its social psychology being derived from the studies of North American cognitive experimental psychology, clearly ethnocentric and individualizing (Krüger, 1986), while psychological practice was devoted mainly to “psychological counseling” and “professional selection and guidance.” A partial justification for this situation is the limited Brazilian publishing market of the time. To study psychology, one was restricted almost entirely to imported books, owing to the absence of published material in Brazil, either translated works or domestically produced ones. In the 1930s, Lourenço Filho created a “Library of Education” for a local publishing house, Editora Melhoramentos, that printed translations of relevant psychology texts, even though always focusing on education. For example, Claparède's “The School and Experimental Psychology” (1928) and “Tests for the Measurement of the Development of Children's Intelligence” by Binet and Simon (1929) are part of this collection. Many were able to turn to Argentinean publishers, especially Paidós and Kapelus. The situation began to change only in the late 1960s, when there was already a fair number of publishers focused on the academic public. At around this time, Dante Moreira Leite (1927–1976) and Carolina Bori (1924–2004) began to publish collections of translated works (Leite, psychology in general; Bori, experimental analysis of behavior), which were used as the textbooks for the new psychology courses.

Conversely, new psychologists, who were interested in clinical work, did not accept being restricted to counseling, which was usually based on Carl Rogers' propositions, and began investing in psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis was established in the 1950s, with the creation of societies affiliated to the International Association of Psychoanalysis (IPA). In the 1970s, it was fully assimilated by the culture of the urban middle classes who, barred from participating in politics, sought self-knowledge—perhaps the main effect of the dictatorship in the construction of subjectivities. The concepts and explanatory possibilities of psychoanalysis were part of everyday life, to the point that a prominent anthropologist, Gilberto Velho, produced a fundamental text, in which he analyzed how “two categories of accusation” of Brazilian society of that moment, drug addicts and subversives, were seen as the result of the “de-structuring of the family” (Velho, 1985). The fragmented family was seen as responsible for the deviations of each of its members from the prevailing order. A new specialized look—that of the psychologist—was directed

toward the parent-child relationship. At the time, drug addicts and militants were not connected to the political moment, but to the “crisis of the family.”

Accordingly, the constituent elements of a psychological culture were established: technological modernization, individualization/fragmentation, and “psychologization.” Psychological knowledge about the individual builds this same individual as an autonomous subject, interested in his/her interiority, since the public space—that of political action—was forbidden to him/her. The psychologist was thus able to represent himself/herself not as an agent of the norm, for he/she could become one of the caretakers of this mode of subjectivation where intimacy—the space of inner freedom—prevailed.

In the 1970s, psychologists were influenced by Argentinean psychoanalysts, such as, initially, Enrique Pichon-Rivière (1907–1977), José Bleger (1922–1972), and Arminda Aberastury (1910–1972) because of the interest of psychoanalytic societies in their technical contributions. When the Argentinean dictatorship began to exile its psychologists, Gregorio Baremlitt, Emilio Rodríguez, Osvaldo Saidon, and others came to Brazil, where they gained disciples, creating a Brazilian version of institutionalism.

Thus, psychoanalysis was present in the psychologists’ imagination as a possibility of no longer being the “agents of order,” an accusation that permeated the 1970s.<sup>16</sup> There were two major branches. One was institutionalism, a minority movement at that time, but increasingly consolidated, that opened itself up over the years to the contributions of Foucault and Deleuze, making its presence strong in the psychology of the twenty-first century. Another was Lacanianism, which attracted a considerable number of psychologists who, unable to join IPA-affiliated societies, started to create their own institutions, preparing themselves to occupy important spaces in higher education institutions in the twenty-first century.

It is interesting to note, in this context, how the profile of the “pioneers” of psychology in the different Brazilian states changed. If, in the states of the south-eastern and southern regions of Brazil, the first psychologists worked in educational institutions, or in professional selection, or in the Traffic Department (Detran),<sup>17</sup> as early as the 1990s many of the earliest psychologists in a given region, before there were psychology courses, were to be found in societies of psychoanalysis, as is the case of the State of Maranhão (Araújo, 2005).

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<sup>16</sup>For this view, the famous text by Cecília Coimbra, “Guardiães da ordem” (Coimbra, 1995), a result of her PhD thesis, is exemplary.

<sup>17</sup>With a fully developing car industry after the Kubitschek government, it was necessary to reformulate the National Traffic Code. The second one, of 1966, included the requirement of approval in a “psychotechnic exam” in order to obtain a driver’s license for automotive vehicles. It is thought that this was due to a great impact of the PMK test, created by Emilio Mira y López, used by ISOP for the evaluation of drivers (not only of automotive vehicles, but also of trains). This created a large market for psychologists and allowed the creation of clinics devoted to applying the “psychotechnic exam” to drivers all over Brazil.

## The Great Turnaround of the 1980s

In the 1970s, an economic crisis and the decline of the military regime led the middle class to fight for the end of the dictatorship, a struggle that continued into the 1980s, providing a moment of hope for the “direct-now” (direct elections now) movement. Psychologists who, as representatives of the social strata to which they belonged, the so-called urban middle classes, had hitherto failed to engage themselves in the movement and had remained uninterested in the dictatorial processes joined the struggle now.

An exception in this context is community work, which, on the one hand, emerged in connection with Liberation Theology and Paulo Freire’s Popular Education project. This occurred in São Paulo, with Silvia Lane (1933–2006) and Father Abib Andery (1930–2016), who, together with others, founded the Brazilian Association of Social Psychology (Abrapso)<sup>18</sup> in 1980. On the other hand, community work was also the result of different types of training, including in the United States, of researchers who got together to create one of the first postgraduate programs in Brazil, the Master’s Degree Course in Community Psychology, in the Northeast, at João Pessoa, the capital of the State of Paraíba. This is important to note because community work connected itself to poor urban populations. In the Northeast, in the 1950s and until the 1964 coup, the Peasants’ League movement acted strongly in favor of agrarian reform and of rural populations’ rights. They were eliminated because of the coup, although peasant conflicts had not been pacified. It is interesting to observe the creation of this master’s course in the mid-1970s, precisely in a region with this kind of history, suggesting that psychology could contribute to an understanding of the problems of peasant workers. Also in the same period, a third group, from Belo Horizonte, State of Minas Gerais, based on French psychosociology, proposed important changes in the curriculum and in community action.

Nevertheless, not only did social psychology change. We have already pointed out that the clinic had already been interested in new techniques and approaches, especially in the general hospital, owing to the Argentinean influence. Education founded on the works of Maria Helena Souza Patto, starting with her “Psychology and ideology: a critical introduction to school psychology” (Patto, 1984), allowed a new look to be directed to the work of psychologists in the school environment. The harmful effects of an excessive use of tests were highlighted and it was shown that homogeneous classes reinforced the exclusion of children belonging to the social segments considered as inferior—namely the poor, who were largely Afro-descendants.

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<sup>18</sup>Within the perspective that “all psychology is social,” Abrapso’s first bylaws refer only to “psychology,” not “social psychology.” The understanding in Brazil, now, is that Abrapso’s position is founded on the concept that psychology cannot be separated from its historic, social, and political context of situation.



Thus, psychology sought, at the end of the dictatorship and in the early stages after its end, to re-establish itself, in a manner adequate to the new times. Understanding that Brazilian society was extremely unequal, it was up to the psychologist to be a professional whose work supported civil rights, aiming at transforming social reality and, consequently, ensuring better mental health for the population. To that end, curricular changes began to be introduced. At this time, the minimum curriculum of 1962 was still in force; changes implied details such as a reduction in the number of required subjects and an increase in optional subjects, an emphasis on practical activities—internships—linked to the theory, and a reformulation of course syllabi.

Two different factors enabled such transformations: the more incisive action of the Federal Council of Psychology<sup>19</sup> and the multiplication of graduate programs. The first master's degree in psychology was created in 1964 at the University of Brasilia. However, the military dictatorship carried out a major offensive against this university, leading to the dismissal or retirement of a substantial number of professors, which led to this first master's degree course to end. The second master's degree course was created in 1967 at PUC-Rio—the same institution where the first undergraduate course was created. A few new MA programs were created in the following decade, mainly in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. There was a boom in the 1980s, but it still centered in the Southeast and South regions of Brazil. In the twenty-first century, different government initiatives allowed the poorer regions of Brazil (North, Northeast, and Center-West) to create their own MA programs. In the case of psychology, a total of 99 postgraduate programs are currently members of the National Research and Postgraduate Association (ANPEPP), of which 40 have only the master's level, and the others awarding master's and doctoral degrees.

As a background for all these changes, one must undoubtedly mention the promulgation of a new Constitution in 1988 the so-called “Citizen Constitution,” because it emphasizes the rights of Brazilians, resulted from a constituent process with substantial popular participation. One of the achievements of this Constitution was the creation of Professional Councils in which, along with government representatives, different representatives of civil society are present, involved in debating public policies. In this sense, it is important to note that psychology, through the Federal Council of Psychology (CFP), is active in over 30 of these councils, such as Social Assistance; Drugs and Human Rights; Peoples and Traditional Communities; Prevention of and Combating Torture; Rights to Work, Protection and Social Security; Women's Rights; Abortion; Rights of Children and Adolescents; Combating Discrimination and Promotion of LGBT Rights; and Health, Human Resources and Labor Relations.

The numerous councils in which CFP participates are evidence not only of the entity's protagonism but also of the scope and diversity of the situations in which psychologists are immersed today. As was the case at the beginning of

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<sup>19</sup>The entity, in charge of “guiding and supervising this professional class,” was created by Decree 79,822 of 17 June 1977. At the time, its activities were strictly bureaucratic, but gradually it became an important social actor, congregating psychologists in an organic manner.

professionalization, in the 1940s and 1950s, the largest job market for psychologists is again to be found mostly in public institutions, especially in the Unified Health System.

### **In the Twenty-First Century: Nature vs. Culture? Or Soul?**

Thus, psychology entered the twenty-first century as a well-developed area of knowledge and practice, holding its own place in society, where it sought to contribute to fulfilling social needs. It is to such needs that much of the training of psychologists is geared to, with something like 400 undergraduate courses and graduate programs amounting to almost 100 at this time. Furthermore, a substantial number of academic journals is at the disposal of scientific practice and production. There are around 140 Brazilian journals exclusively dedicated to psychology, a considerable number, especially taking into consideration the fact that part of the scientific production is published in foreign journals.

These numbers, and the variety of areas presented in the previous section, attest to psychology's vigor in Brazil. However, problems must also be mentioned. The low quality of many undergraduate courses, especially those offered by isolated institutions of higher education, mainly private ones, is one of them. Another is the fact that most of the best undergraduate and postgraduate courses are in the South and Southeast regions of Brazil. Finally, there is a weak editorial market for academic books—a drawback that is partly offset by the boom in the publication of scientific journals. In addition, it must be recognized that professionals still have a greater interest in working in private clinics, although they work mainly in public institutions.

As we said, the 1980s and 1990s were the phase of social psychology, which proposed a new psychology that used qualitative methodologies and encompassed topics as diverse as gender and sexuality, ethnicity, rural populations, work, human rights, etc. In this sense, the work done in the 1950s on the racial issue in the country, known as the “Unesco Project,” began to be recovered. This project, arising from the impact of the Nazi Holocaust, aimed to investigate race relations in different countries, with Brazil having been chosen based on its image as a “racial democracy” (Maio, 2011). Social scientists and psychologists participated in this project, whose results destroyed the idyllic image of the country, demonstrating the existence of structural racism in Brazilian society. The recovery of this project, together with the strengthening of the black movement and the creation of racial quotas in public universities, made psychology more interested in the issue of race and its effects on the constitution of subjectivity, whether black or White.

The beginning of the twenty-first century is witnessing an increasingly powerful presence of neuropsychology. This is accompanied by cognitive-behavioral therapy, evolutionary psychology, and a return of psychological tests—in the shape of

psychological evaluation<sup>20</sup>—stemming mainly from the United States and adapted to the Brazilian reality.

Initially, the impression of psychology in Brazil—and in other places—was going through a new stage of the nineteenth-century question: How to explain man? By nature? By culture? How to envision a symbiosis between these two constituent factors, without one of them becoming hegemonic? The notion of brain plasticity seemed to offer a solution.

However, since the late twentieth century, another trend was gaining space in psychology. It was created by fundamentalist evangelicals who admitted a psychology based on the Bible. Their first activity to attract attention was a proposal to reverse homosexual orientation, believing that homosexuals were egodystonic and would return to heterosexual orientation after therapy.

In 1999, the Federal Council of Psychology—based on the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10) of the World Health Organization, published in 1990, that removed homosexuality from the list of mental disorders—promulgated a resolution prohibiting psychologists from performing treatment for the reversion of homosexuality (Resolution 001/99). Since then, this resolution has been under attack by evangelical, fundamentalist psychologists. They have organized a movement seeking to win the elections for the Federal Council of Psychology with a corporate and highly moralizing proposal. Today, this is one of the main challenges of psychology in Brazil.<sup>21</sup>

## Conclusions

This text has aimed at building a narrative about the history of psychology in Brazil, as theory and practice, merged with the main aspects of the country's history, notably economic development and urbanization. In this sense, some Brazilian cases have been described, from the nineteenth century up to the present day, in an attempt to indicate how they relate to what comprises psychology at each specific moment.

However, today's situation leads to a crucial question: Is the colonial, patrimonialist structure based on slavery still present in the Brazilian reality and in the psychology that is developed in the country? If the answer is yes, then more than ever it is necessary to invent new types of education and professional training that allow for the formation of critical thinking that can inform a socially directed practice.

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<sup>20</sup>One of the highest-ranking postgraduate programs in psychology is devoted exclusively to psychological evaluation, although the area is also present in other programs as a line of research.

<sup>21</sup>In November 2018, retired captain Jair Bolsonaro was elected President of Brazil. He is Catholic, but also baptized into one of the evangelical denominations, and often makes homophobic statements, which doubtlessly has strengthened this group.

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