
The History of Psychology in Brazil

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Summary

Studies of the history of Brazilian psychology generally focus on the reception and circulation of Western psychological theories and techniques and their application in research and practice within the country. This approach must be complemented by studying the transformation and production of psychological knowledge originating in Brazilian culture, including its popular levels, and its interaction with imported ideas. There are at least four sources that participate in the formation of Brazilian culture: the native Indians' ideas on human nature and development; the contributions of African culture to the understanding of the psychological world brought by the Africans sold into slavery and transferred to Brazil between the 16th and the 19th centuries; European views received through the teaching of philosophical psychology, introduced into Catholic educational institutions in colonial times; and scientific psychology, introduced into public medical schools and teacher training institutions from the 19th century onward. The profession of psychologist, born of the confluence of the professions of physician and educator, was regulated in 1962. The tasks of the psychologist were then defined: psychological evaluation through mental tests and the diagnosis of mental and behavioral troubles, psychological guidance, and psychotherapy. The profession was primarily designed for the intellectual and social elites. From the 1990s onward, with the increasing numbers of graduates, the participation of psychologists in public health, education, and social services institutions expanded rapidly. In consequence, psychologists began to develop intervention practices and techniques more fitted to the demands of the low-income population, immersed in the beliefs and practices of Brazilian popular culture. This dialogue contributed to the construction of innovations in psychology, making it more sensitive to the worldviews arising from the cultures that compose the Brazilian cultural landscape and producing original contributions with a profound impact on modern psychology. Today, Brazilian psychology professionals constitute one of the largest communities of psychologists in the world, with a strong presence in mental health, educational, and social services networks. The work of psychologists, strongly influenced by theoretical perspectives that emphasize the relationship between sociocultural dynamics and psychological elaboration, is at present considered relevant in the realization of human rights ideals.

Keywords: history of psychology in Brazil, Brazilian culture, mental hygiene, education, profession of psychologist, psychology in public policies

Introduction—History of Psychology and the Cultural Context

Knowledge of the human psyche dates from long ago (Robinson, 2013). Human societies are composed of people who have the power of reflexivity (Morawski, 2020), thus producing reflections about themselves, their lives, thoughts, feelings, and actions, elaborating their own views about human nature and practices. Psychology as a field of knowledge can be viewed as “a socially embedded set of theories and practices that both reify and reflect the contexts from which they arise and to which they return” (Pickren & Rutherford, 2010, p. xvii). These ideas and practices related to the psychological dimension of human existence can be broadly included within the field of study of the history of psychological ideas (Massimi, 2020). They can be also considered as part of social history, when seen from an externalist historiographic perspective (Lakatos, 1989), focusing on their relationship to the social and cultural context in which they are produced or appropriated, in a process called “indigenization,” when they are combined with local ideas and demands (Danziger, 2006; Kelley, 2002). Moreover, knowledge produced by human beings about themselves can influence the way they live and interpret their own actions in society, a process described by Hacking (1999) as the “looping effect.” In this sense, the construction of psychological knowledge, understood as a set of views and interpretations of human thoughts, feelings, and actions, is deeply embedded in the social and cultural context in which it is invented, circulates, and is appropriated through human interaction. For this reason, psychological knowledge is strongly linked to its geographical and historical situation.

In this article, the history of psychology in Brazil is addressed. The word “psychology” is here understood as referring to the history of a field of cultural, philosophical, scientific, and professional knowledge and practices about human thoughts, feelings, and actions developing in the country since the beginning of the Portuguese colonization in 1500.

Historians of psychology usually describe the field of psychological thought in terms of ideas and explanations about human nature produced by human cultures and societies in different historical periods, from a cultural or philosophical standpoint, or as a field of scientific inquiry that is part of modern science. Psychological ideas can be traced back in the evolution of philosophy, emphasizing reflections on human nature and psychological structures explored by ancient thinkers, in an attempt to see continuity in the history of thought (e.g., Allport, 1968; Boring, 1950; among others). Other historians see a rupture in this history with the birth of modern science, from the 16th century onward, mainly since the 19th century, when the first laboratories of psychology were founded (Danziger, 2013; Hilgard, 1987; Reuchlin, 1999, among others). According to Brožek (1999, p. 179), “the term ‘psychologia’ appeared in the 16th century in Europe as a learned equivalent of the title of treatises traditionally labeled in Latin ‘De anima’ (On the Soul),” in the Aristotelian tradition. Vidal (2011) dates the 18th century as the period of institutionalization of the field of psychology in the modern era.

The history of psychology in Brazil can also be divided into periods, each of them dominated by cultural or philosophical views of human understanding or by scientific, empirical approaches to human minds, feelings, and behavior, beginning with the discovery, in 1500, by Portuguese navigators, of the territory in South America where the country is situated. These periods are: (1) The colonial period, between 1500 and 1822, when the region was colonized by the Portuguese and, briefly, by the Spanish empire, which dominated Portugal between

1580 and 1640 while colonizing the Central and South American regions. During that period, the country's population was formed, intermixing native Indians, Portuguese colonizers, foreign missionaries and traders arriving from other regions of the globe, and slaves brought from Africa. At that time, the composition of the population had a considerable impact on the development of psychological ideas. One can distinguish native Indians' views of human nature, Catholic priests' and missionaries' teachings of ideas about the psyche, deriving from Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophical knowledge, and African mythological and popular religious influences. As no universities were created in the country during the period, the white elites were mostly educated in Portugal, in the University of Coimbra, or in Jesuit colleges established in larger urban centers (Bahia, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo), where information in the classic philosophical European tradition circulated. (2) The imperial period, starting with the declaration of independence from Portugal in 1822 and ending with the proclamation of the Brazilian republic in 1889. During this period, philosophical and scientific approaches to the human psyche that originated in Europe circulated in recently created medical and law schools and contributed to the organization of hygienism and to the moral orientation of the population by physicians in contact with European universities, a movement that promoted greater circulation of modern science within the country. (3) The republican period, from 1889 onward, when the circulation and development of scientific psychology was initiated in newly established teachers' colleges, universities, and mental health institutions, promoting original productions in the field of scientific psychology and the expansion of psychological services. (4) From 1962 to the present, when the profession of psychologist was regulated, and the training of psychologists at the university level expanded and contributed to the formation of one of the largest communities of psychologists in the world, with a strong connection and dialogue with Brazilian culture (Antunes, 1999; Massimi, 1990). During this period one can also observe a steady institutionalization of research and graduate programs in the area, with an emphasis on the relationship between psychology and sociocultural processes (Bomfim, Carneiro, Campos, & Dias, 1995; Gomes & Fradkin, 2015).

In this article, the term "psychology" will be understood with different meanings according to the historical period considered. Reflections on human psyche and social practices related to emotions and to the moral domain during the colonial period will be understood as part of the history of psychological ideas. From the 19th century onward, with the establishment within the country of higher learning institutions in the areas of medicine and law, schools for the education of teachers, and the beginnings of a mental health system managed by physicians, the word "psychology" will refer to intellectual productions related to modern science.

Beginning in the second half of the 20th century, with the legal regulation of the profession of psychologist and the increased number of practitioners in the field, mostly women, the word will refer both to scientific production and to the application of psychological knowledge in educational, work, and mental health institutions, as well as in private practice. During this later period, a feature already observed in previous periods and recognized as an original contribution of psychology produced in Latin America and especially in Brazil (Campos, 2006; Jodelet, 2015)—the emphasis on the sociocultural dimension of human experience within the field of psychology, with a strong presence of social psychology in the education of psychologists in the region—will be explored and documented in the process of professionalization of Brazilian psychologists.

This article is based on a meta-theoretical reading of the literature already produced on the history of psychology in Brazil in recent years, since the establishment of the research group on the history of psychology within the Brazilian Association of Research and Graduate Studies in Psychology (Campos, Jacó-Vilela, & Massimi, 2010). Several works have explored original sources found in Brazilian historical archives (Antunes, 1999; Assis & Peres, 2016; Bomfim, 2003; Facchinetti & Jacó-Vilela, 2019; Massimi, 1990; Massimi & Guedes, 2004; Rocha, 2004; among others). Other studies have been produced, some with the support of the Federal Council of Psychology, established in 1971, documenting the history and recent developments of the profession of psychologist in the country (Bastos & Gondim, 2010; Bock, 1999; Campos, 2001; Conselho Federal de Psicologia, 1988, 1992, 1995; Yamamoto & Costa, 2010). Many of these studies document the interplay between the diversity of Brazilian social and cultural formation and the development of psychology in the country, be it as a field of philosophical and cultural thoughts, scientific inquiry, or professional practice.

Psychological Ideas in the Colonial Period (1500–1908)—Encounters and Contradictions Between Cultures

Brazilian culture, which started to be formed in 1500 with the discovery and colonization by the kingdom of Portugal of the immense South American territory, built up progressively from the intermixing of different peoples: the Indians, the native inhabitants of the territory; Africans brought to the country to work as slaves on the great plantations and in the urban environment between the 16th and 19th centuries; the Portuguese themselves, who developed economic, political, and cultural organizations during the long colonial period between the 16th century and the start of the 19th; in addition to travelers, traders, and immigrants from different parts of the world who settled in the country throughout its history (Azevedo, 1996; Ribeiro, 2015).

The contribution of these groups of diverse origin to the construction of the sociocultural strands that constitute the main characteristic in the formation of the Brazilian people resulted in encounters between different worldviews and forms of social life, accompanied by both empathy and conflict. To see this in action, the psychological and psychosocial characteristics of the Indigenous, European, and African contributions that formed this predominantly syncretic Brazilian culture will be briefly presented, all of them having left a deep impression throughout time. One of these, still present in Brazilian society today, is the extreme social and cultural inequality established in the country, with the traditional elites, the possessors of economic and political power, on one side, and the other ethnic groups living predominantly in poverty on the other (Skidmore, 2004; Souza, 2018). The participation of the latter in the distribution of wealth has always been limited, in spite of the great sophistication of the contributions they have incorporated into the diversified Brazilian social and cultural makeup.

Indigenous Culture

When the Portuguese colonizers disembarked for the first time onto the eastern portion of South America, they encountered the native inhabitants, the aboriginals, whom they called “the Indigenous peoples.” Approximately 1,000,000 Indians lived spread over the territory in

autonomous communities branching from a main trunk called Tupi-Guarani, which had inhabited the region for countless generations (Ribeiro, 2015). These traditional peoples were divided into tribes independent from each other, who lived under a regime described as “primitive communism” (Saviani, 2010), in communities that shared their means of subsistence. The tribes would eventually enter into conflict aiming at the exploitation of the better piece of land, or for other reasons. The history of the tribes and their culture was transmitted orally, within a social system based on family and community ties.

Information about the ways of life, the representations of the world, the beliefs and languages of the Indigenous peoples at the time of the discovery and during the colonial period are available only through the reports of travelers, colonists, and missionaries who happened to be in what is now Brazil at that time. These reports provide evidence of the differing viewpoints of the visitors regarding the psychological and psychosocial aspects of the aboriginal culture.

There are reports that describe Indigenous peoples living in a quasi-idyllic relation with nature, their families, children, and community, in line with the myth of Rousseau’s *bon sauvage*, which some authors consider to have been inspired by these ancestral peoples found in America (Dent, 1996). In these reports, the inhabitants of the land are perceived as pacific, and loving toward their children (Massimi, 1990).

Other reports, such as those produced by Manoel da Nóbrega, also a Jesuit, the first provincial leader of the Company of Jesus in Brazil, written between 1549 (date of the start of the Jesuit missions in the country) and 1561, provide a more pessimistic view of the relationship with the Indigenous peoples. In his reports of contact with the Indians, Nóbrega relates both positive experiences (the friendliness of the Indians on receiving the missionaries) as well as negative, when he encounters resistance to his evangelizing project caused by aboriginal beliefs and customs (Massimi, 1990; Nóbrega, 2006).

The anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (2007), describing the structure of an indigenous village in Brazil in the 1930s, perceived the following: the human being, for the natives, was not an autonomous individual, but a person, making up part of a sociological universe existing since time immemorial, within which his or her role had always been prescribed. This role was inscribed in the village structure itself, where the localization of the habitations and the rules for inhabiting them determined the social roles and the villagers’ vision of the world. This vision, generically denominated “perspectivism” in anthropology (Viveiros de Castro, 2002), sees the world as inhabited by different species of subjects (human and nonhuman), which apprehend it from different points of view. In this mosaic of perspectives, both humans and animals can look upon one another as people, endowed with spirit, and sometimes with intentionality. The universe would then be peopled with human and nonhuman intentionalities endowed with their own perspectives. This cosmology seems to express a certain fragility of the human before the natural forces.

European Culture

The colonization of the Brazilian territory by the Portuguese commenced in 1500 with its discovery by a Portuguese fleet descending the African coastline on its way to the so-called East Indies. According to Saviani (2010), the process was accomplished in three dimensions:

taking possession of and exploiting the land, which implied the subjugation of the local inhabitants (the original dwellers); their education in the sense of acculturation, that is, the inculcation of the colonized with the practices, techniques, symbols, and values of the colonizers; and the catechism, understood as the conversion of the colonized to the religion of the colonizers and its dissemination. In this sense, and as the Portuguese state was associated with the Catholic religion, the first missionaries linked to the Roman Catholic Church played an important role in the establishment of a first formatting of the psychological and psychosocial dimension of the human being in the colonial environment.

The Jesuits, guided directly by Inácio de Loyola and the Company of Jesus, founded by him with the objective of taking the Catholic religion to the inhabitants of the new colonial empires being formed in the New World and in Asia, founded several schools in the first Brazilian cities, where they implanted the educational method of the *Ratio Studiorum* and the teaching of philosophical psychology (Saviani, 2010).

The psychology taught in the cycle of higher studies in the Jesuits' schools was focused on the study of psychological processes as described in the philosophical matrix of Aristotle and Saint Thomas Aquinas, and on the reading of the treatises written in Coimbra, Portugal. These were used in the teaching of philosophy at the University of Coimbra, and came to Brazil in the bags of the missionaries from the 16th century on. They sought to reconcile classical philosophy with the issues of the day, for the priests to be able to transmit knowledge and values in their evangelizing mission (Massimi, 2020).

This psychology taught in the Jesuit schools was utilized by priests in the mass celebrated in the numerous parishes spread over the entire Brazilian territory. Thus, while the schools promoted an elite formation for the novices and the sons of the large landowners and civil servants of the state resident in the large cities dotted along the Brazilian coastline, basic education was given in the residences of the wealthier classes and in the parishes. In these parishes, preaching was delivered in the Sunday mass and other festivities; many of the famous sermons were later published. These sermons had an educative function, their objectives being to evangelize the population and to transmit the holy stories and their moral meaning. In this process, they held an important place in the transmission of Western Christian culture to the local population, both urban and rural (the latter being the majority) (Massimi, 2020).

African Culture

Another source of psychological knowledge and cultural syncretism can be found with African roots, which came to constitute part of Brazilian culture through the entry of enslaved workers, contributing to the production of wealth in the agriculture, cattle raising, and mining that made up the economic landscape of the colonial period from the middle of the 16th century. The individuals were traded as slaves to work on the large rural properties and, in the urban environment, in the homes of the more affluent families. Through this trade, Brazil received around 5 million Africans, 40% of the 12.5 million who embarked for the Americas over three and a half centuries. For this reason, the country has today the second largest Black population on the planet, behind only Nigeria. It was also, among the countries of the

New World, the one that delayed the longest to abolish the slave trade (interrupted in 1850) and the last to outlaw slavery itself, by means of the *Lei Áurea* (Golden Law) of 1888, which prohibited slave work in Brazilian territory definitively (Gomes, 2019).

The anthropologist Gilberto Freyre (1900–1987), who made in-depth studies of Brazilian social formation during the colonial period, states that, from 1532 on, this formation was based predominantly on the rural or semi-rural family, itself depending on agriculture and slavery, along with the intellectual influence of the Company of Jesus. The family would have been the colonizing factor par excellence, both as the economic matrix responsible for the productive farm lands—the plantations—as well as the political organization, ruled with an iron hand by the rural aristocracy, in addition to being a source of cultural standards. It was precisely the need for workers for the large plantations that promoted the trading of enslaved Africans brought across the Atlantic for three centuries. The Africans brought with them their beliefs and cultural standards, and little by little made their contribution to the formation of Brazilian culture. They belonged to several African peoples, especially the Bantu and Sudanese groups (Freyre, 1958).

The slave-owning system shows positive and negative influences on the Brazilian social formation. On the negative side, the psychological and psychosocial characteristics that slavery promotes cannot be denied: the social and political imbalance created between human beings (Schwarcz, 1993). The first tendency of the colonizers had been, of course, to try to enslave the natives, but this tendency faced the implacable resistance of the catechists, which led the landowners and traders to seek out the alternative of Black traffic, with all the problems and shortcomings that arose from that. Among these were especially the social separation of free from enslaved people and the not-very-humane habits that the situation provoked among those who were on the privileged side of the lord-slave relationship. This imbalance in power caused by slavery is what would have generated color prejudice in Brazilian culture (a biased and anti-ethical manner of justifying the enslavement of the Africans). It was also responsible for the presence of what the anthropologist Gilberto Freyre (1958) called sadomasochistic relationships, in addition to other forms of exacerbated and inhuman authoritarianism between whites and Blacks, in a destructive dialectic.

On the other hand, the presence of Africans brought cultural influences and practices with a strong impact on the popular mind and on the spontaneous organization of a communal system of succor and counseling in relation to psychological and psychosocial questions.

Religions of African origin were the source, for example, of the so-called *candomblé*, in Bahia, or *macumba*, in Rio de Janeiro, syncretic religions with roots in the colonial period that combine African, Amerindian, Catholic, and spiritualist influences into pantheistic religious systems of belief and practices with large followings among the popular classes in Brazil (Bastide, 2001).

The presence of religions and cults of African origin, therefore, such as *macumba* and *candomblé*, has marked Brazilian society since the colonial period. This presence has contributed to the dissemination of psychological knowledge and sociocultural practices among the poorer populations resulting from the mixture of elements of African, Amerindian, and Christian Western culture, with a strong impact on traditional Brazilian culture. From it emerge ways of conceiving psychological and psychosocial phenomena, and also the dissemination of an extensive network for considering the issues linked to human

development, to social coexistence, and to family life. These persisted in Brazilian society, and would be dealt with by the scientific and psychological knowledge that circulated in the country from the end of the 18th century, above all in the medical and educational areas.

19th Century—The Imperial Period and the Entry of Scientific Culture in Brazil

To understand how modern science entered Brazil, it is necessary to understand the transformations that occurred in the Portuguese and Brazilian educational system at the end of the 18th century. At that time a profound educational reform was initiated in Portugal, to try to overcome the classic influence of the Aristotelian-Thomist perspective in the teaching ministered by the Jesuits and other congregations and promote “the development of general culture, the increase of industry, progress in the arts and letters, scientific progress, (. . .) domestic and foreign trade, political peace, the elevation of the level of wealth and wellbeing” (Saviani, 2010, p. 81). In essence, the project of the Portuguese Crown (which included Brazil, its most important and largest colony) was clearly the promotion of the modernization of society through educational reforms that would make teaching more practical and compatible with modern science. The social reform included also the abolition of the privileges of the nobility, the expulsion of the Jesuits from Portuguese territory, and the linking of the church to the state (making it independent of Rome). The Jesuit schools, in the metropolis as in the Colonies, were closed, substituting the teaching administered by them to the elites with a system of “royal classes” maintained by the government. In this system, which took some years to be set up in the whole empire, professors paid by the Portuguese Crown were to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic, notions of Latin, Greek, rhetoric, and philosophy in schools called “lower.” At the same time an ample reform of university teaching was undertaken, administered in the University of Coimbra (the most important in the Portuguese empire, founded in 1290) and other institutions of higher learning existing in Portugal.

The creation of these first professional schools in Brazil was one of the consequences of the transfer of the capital of the Portuguese empire to Rio de Janeiro in 1808, and the institution, in 1816, of the United Kingdom, which brought together the territories of Portugal, Brazil, and the other Portuguese Colonies in Africa and Asia. The transfer of the court, resulting from Napoleon’s invasion of the Iberian peninsula, gave impulse to the creation, in 1808, of the School of Medicine and Surgery of Bahia, together with the school of Anatomy, Surgery and Medicine of Rio de Janeiro. Both of these were established together with the royal military hospitals in these cities, the largest Brazilian urban centers of the time.

In 1822, the country became politically independent with the emperor Pedro I (1798–1834), son of the King of Portugal D. João VI (1767–1826), who had returned to the metropolis some years previously, assuming power. Independence promoted political, social, and cultural reorganization in the country, from a more pragmatic perspective. As in Portugal, the new ruling elite, led by intellectuals and professionals educated in Europe (Coimbra, France, Belgium), and inspired by mechanistic and sensualistic theories, took over the modernization project of the country. In this process, schools faculties, academies, scientific societies, and libraries were created. In 1832, the Faculties of Medicine and Law were effectively organized. The theses defended in these faculties of medicine constitute an important source for the

development of the first scientific approaches to psychology in the country. Studies already carried out on this body of work and on the medical practices of the period provide evidence that training in psychiatry, throughout the 19th century, was built up mainly under the influence of French medicine and, to a lesser degree of German and English schools. Medical professionals, in general a small number compared to the size of the population, were generalists, giving priority to so-called family medicine, and as such, treating members of the family group as clinicians, surgeons, or midwives, they also exercised the function of counselors, being consulted about domestic difficulties and problems in physical as well as mental health issues. They therefore had an important role not only as professionals of health but also as vehicles of transmission of scientific culture and in guiding the population in relation to habits of hygiene, physical or mental. Some of the theses, defended in both the Faculty of Medicine of Bahia and in Rio de Janeiro, dealt with the psychological and psychosocial aspects of health, and were situated in the sphere of social medicine from the perspective of the hygiene matrix. It was effectively a question of civilizing the population, considered rather ignorant of modern techniques of sanitation and hygiene, physical or mental. The ideas of psychism also reappear renewed, in these theses. The psychiatric approach with a more organicist character would prevail, principally after the foundation of the first psychiatric hospital in Brazil, the Hospício Pedro II, established in 1852 in Rio de Janeiro. From this time on, chairs of hygiene and clinical psychiatry and mental illness were set up, which, in association with the already existing chairs of forensic medicine, marked the beginning of the organization of the psychiatric area in both theoretical and practical terms. The main authors studied were the French psychiatrists Philippe Pinel (1745–1826), Jean-Étienne Dominique Esquirol (1772–1840), and Bénédict-Augustin Morel (1809–1873). These theoreticians, adepts of internment in hospices for individuals suffering from mental illness, considered insanity as having both physical as well as moral causes. The treatment they favored included the disciplining of the sick, precise routines in the hospitals, and activities to control emotions and feelings. Among the mentally sick were included the so-called idiots and mentally retarded. Esquirol's theory of degeneration postulated further that mental alienation would be caused by innate predispositions aggravated by environmental influences both physical (climate, unhygienic conditions in accommodation or nutrition) and moral (ignorance, fanaticism, disruption of customs). In this case the treatment would also include the changing of habits, a psychological issue (Jacó-Vilela, Esch, Coelho, & Rezende, 2004; Lourenço Filho, 2004; Pessotti, 1975; Rocha, 2004).

Other authors who exercised influence on Brazilian psychiatry more toward the end of the 19th century and the start of the 20th were Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920), the founder of the psychological laboratory of the University of Leipzig, Germany, in 1879, and known as the founder of scientific psychology, and Théodule Ribot (1839–1916), founder of the Physiological Psychology Society in France in 1885. Both Wundt and Ribot influenced the development of psychiatry in Brazil in seeking support for psychology in empirical studies, breaking with the tradition of philosophical speculations (Lourenço Filho, 2004)

These new theoretical sources, to the extent that they sought experimental definitions in psychopathology, were also important for their proposal of practical interventions in the management of human life in Brazilian cities, which were then initiating the process of expansion that would accelerate throughout the 20th century. These interventions were to align more direct contact of mental health professionals with the reality of Brazilian families,

above all those on the urban peripheries, suffering from the lack of educational opportunities and strongly affected by the beliefs of the traditional, Amerindian, or Afro-Brazilian cultures (Machado, Loureiro, Luz, & Muricy, 1978).

An interesting document that provides evidence of the level of information about European trends in scientific psychology that circulated in Brazil in the middle of the 19th century is the book published by Dr. Eduardo Ferreira França (1809–1857) in Bahia in 1854. França graduated with a degree in medicine from the University of Paris in 1834 and became a professor at the Bahia Medical School. While a student in Paris, he studied the works of the French philosopher Étienne Condillac (1714–1780), who defended that all ideas come from sensations and proposed a method to analyze ideas, reducing them to their simplest elements, and Maine de Biran (1766–1824), a spiritualist philosopher who proposed the analysis of consciousness through introspection; both authors were part of the history of psychology in France (Nicolas, 2001).

França's main work, *Investigações em Psychologia* (Investigations in Psychology, 1973), is presented in two volumes of 284 and 424 pages each. Considered by Rocha (2004) one of the first books written in the Americas that contains the word "Psychology" in its title, the work is organized in six sections, covering the following subjects: (a) consciousness and its faculties; (b) modifiability (sensibility, affectivity); (c) motility (movements); (d) intellectual faculties I (internal and external perception, relationships between their qualities and habits); (e) intellectual faculties II (cerebral sensibility, sleep, dream), consciousness, reason, memory, imagination, abstraction, composition, generalization, judgement, faculty of future, faculty of faith, idea), instincts (physical, intellectual, social and moral); and (f) will. The author refers to psychology as a moral science, and postulates that "there are in men two distinct orders of phenomena, the physiological and the psychological. The separation between physiology and psychology has a solid basis. (. . .) These two sciences clarify each other, but they are still distinct and today it is not lawful to confuse psychology and physiology without showing one's ignorance of what man is" (França, 1973, p. 45). In this book, written in 1854, França was certainly announcing the interest in scientific psychology that would be observed in the following years.

By the end of the 19th century, the influence of positivism strengthened the movement for the modernization of the country. For intellectuals and politicians, influenced by social Darwinism, "the strong presence of African descent and miscegenation became the main justification for the backwardness of the country. The transformation of biological difference into justification for social inequality—as proposed by the theory of degeneration in French Psychiatry—led to the conclusion that, with the type of population that inhabited Brazil, the goal of building a civilized nation like Europe was virtually impossible" (Facchinetti & Jacó-Vilela, 2019, p. 3). However, in the following years, new actions would be taken by Brazilian intellectuals to try to overcome the country's social problems.

Scientific Psychology and the Establishment of the First Laboratories and Mental Health Services

With the establishment of the republican regime (1889), there was a growing consciousness, among the Brazilian elites, of the need to expand and modernize the public educational and health systems. Several physicians and professors at the medical schools of Rio de Janeiro and Bahia, interested in the new science of psychology, among them Maurício de Medeiros (1885–1966) and Manoel Bomfim (1868–1932), visited European laboratories, such as the Psychology Laboratory of the Sorbonne Medical School, directed by Georges Dumas (1866–1946), and the Laboratory of Psychology linked to the Sorbonne École Pratique des Hautes Études, directed by Alfred Binet (1857–1911). They also knew of the University of Geneva Laboratory of Psychology, founded by Théodore Flournoy (1854–1920) and subsequently directed by Édouard Claparède (1873–1940). Returning to Brazil, these professionals established some of the first laboratories of psychology in the country, linked to mental health and educational institutions. Under the influence of positivism, they thought that science would be an important tool for solving social problems and promoting social and economic development. Their work helped to establish psychology as an academic discipline and as a field of application in Brazil. (Campos, 2006; Lourenço Filho, 2004; Olinto, 2004).

The establishment of the first laboratory of psychology occurred in Rio de Janeiro, in the Pedagogium, an institution created in 1890 with the purpose of offering courses and promoting the development of advanced pedagogical materials based on experimental works in the areas of physics and natural sciences, and publishing a periodical, the *Pedagogical Review*. In 1897, Medeiros de Albuquerque (1867–1934), director of public instruction in the Federal District (at the time, Rio de Janeiro, capital of the country) and who had studied with Dumas in Paris, promoted a series of conferences on the physiology of the nervous system at the Pedagogium. The conferences were given by Antonio Austregésilo (1876–1961), one of the first specialists in psychoanalysis in Brazil. At the same time, Maurício de Medeiros, interested in experimental studies in psychology (Medeiros, 1907), initiated the activities of a psychological laboratory that had been planned with the help of Alfred Binet, while Medeiros was studying in Paris. In 1906, Manoel Bomfim took over the direction of the Pedagogium and of the Laboratory of Psychology and expanded studies of psychology and education, and on the use of mental tests in schools (Antunes, 1999; Jacó-Vilela, 2014). This author opposed racist theories about the constitution of the Brazilian people and participated actively in the movement for advances in popular education, in his view the best way to develop the people's citizenship consciousness and democracy in the country (Bomfim, 1905).

A second Laboratory of Psychology (initially named the Laboratory of Experimental Pedagogy) was initiated in 1913 at the São Paulo Teacher's Training School, under the direction of Ugo Pizzoli (1863–1934), an Italian specialist trained in Modena, Italy. Research on children's reasoning, graphism, memory, kinetics, intellectual types, and association of ideas was performed at this laboratory. The courses given by Pizzoli dealt with physical, anthropological, physiological, and psychological examinations (Centofanti & Tomasini, 2014). After Pizzoli returned to Italy, professors Lourenço Filho (1897–1970) and Noemy Silveira (1902–1988) took over the direction of the laboratory, and promoted research on tests of mental development, inquiries about play, reading, the influence of films on children, and measures about children's learning. A new test to assess maturity for learning to read and write—the ABC—was then

developed by the couple, for the use in elementary schools. This test consisted of a short adaptation of the Binet-Simon intelligence scale and was widely used in Brazilian schools throughout the 20th century. At the same time, Lourenço Filho developed experimental studies of psychological processes and published a well-known paper on the experimental study of habits, defined as the constancy of a given reaction to the same stimulus. The curve obtained in several essays with his students at the São Paulo Teachers' College was considered by the author a prototype of the human learning curve, with "a high practical value for pedagogical applications, as well as a fundamental theoretical value for the interpretation of human behavior, conscious or automatic" (Lourenço Filho, 1971, p. 32). The historian of psychology Isaías Pessotti considered this curve as an anticipation of the learning curve obtained by B. F. Skinner (1904–1990) some years later in his studies with learning processes (Pessotti, 1975).

During the 1920s and 1930s, Lourenço Filho became one of the most relevant leaders of the New School¹ movement in Brazil. In 1929, he published a classical survey on the relationship of this movement to the science of education, the *Introduction to the Study of the New School*, revised and reprinted 14 times (Lourenço Filho, 2002). In this book, scientific psychology is presented as an essential knowledge for educators, its contributions being: the study of psychological variations with age, the differentiation between children's and adults' psychological features, the description of human similarities and individual differences, and the building of a genetic-functional model for the explanation of psychological development. The work done by these pioneer psychologists provided for the first time in the country scientific observations concerning the psychological and psychosocial characteristics of the Brazilian people. Cultural differences were observed and their impact considered on cognitive and social development in the assessment of school failure or personality troubles.

Interest in specific aspects of Brazilian culture was also aroused among doctors receiving Brazilian students in France. Between 1901 and 1905, French physicians visited Brazil to study tropical diseases. The interest of the French government in strengthening the representation of French culture in Latin America led to the establishment, in 1908, of the "Grouping of universities and grandes écoles in France for relations with Latin America," directed by the psychiatrist Georges Dumas, chair of psychology at the Collège de France, professor at the Sorbonne since 1902, and one of the founders of the French Society of Psychology. Between 1908 and 1947 this grouping promoted several conferences in Brazil by French university professors of psychology, among them the psychiatrists Henri Wallon (1879–1962), Pierre Janet (1859–1947), Théodore Simon (1873–1961), and Henri Piéron (1881–1964) (Melo & Campos, 2014). Wallon and Janet were professors of psychiatry at the Sorbonne, while Simon and Piéron were specialists in applied psychology and mental tests. Simon was the partner of Alfred Binet in the invention of intelligence tests and became the head of the Psychology Laboratory at the Sorbonne after Binet's death, in 1911. Piéron was the founder of the Paris Institute of Psychology in 1920, who in 1928 created the National Institute of Professional Guidance in France, a strong advocate of applied psychology (Melo & Campos, 2014; Reuchlin, 1999).

The conferences of Georges Dumas addressed mainly the field of pathological psychology, with scientific explanations for the phenomena of spiritualism mysticism and possession observed in popular religions in Brazil, comparing them to pathological manifestations observed in France in the Middle Ages. Brazilian psychiatrists were interested in Dumas's

studies because of their experience with similar troubles among followers of the spiritualism of Alain Kardec (very popular in Brazil at the time) and popular religions of African origin (Melo, 2016). The Brazilian Penal Code of 1890 had attempted to outlaw “the practice of Spiritism, magic and its spells” (. . .) that played on people’s “credulity,” with imprisonment and fines, as part of an attempt to civilize the urban population and free them from mystical and fetishist superstitions (Brasil, 1890). At the same time, psychiatrists were promoting the legitimation of scientific psychology. Dumas was also responsible for the organization of the French group of scientists that established the areas of study of psychology, anthropology, and social sciences at the Universities of Brazil, in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, founded in 1920 and in 1934, respectively, two of the first Brazilian universities (Cunha, 2007; Melo & Campos, 2014).

At that time, most professors and practitioners of psychology came from the areas of medicine, education, and law. The *Biographical Dictionary of Brazilian Psychology—Pioneers* (Campos, 2001) lists 200 figures considered as having initiated studies and practices in psychology in Brazil since the 16th century. While in the first three centuries (16th, 17th, and 18th) eighteen pioneers were identified, the majority in the areas of theology and philosophy (the ancient missionaries and professors in the Jesuit and other colleges), in the 19th century they were graduates from the areas of medicine (36) and law (16), interested in psychiatry and legal medicine. During the first half of the 20th century, the majority of professionals and scholars specializing in the area of psychology were graduates in medicine (28, 25 men and 3 women) and education (38, 10 men and 28 women). The *Dictionary* presents 20 specialists with specific training in psychology or psychoanalysis obtained in other countries where these specializations were available (France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, United States, Canada). The majority of graduates in education and psychology were women, a trend that will continue to prevail in the profession after its legal regulation (Bastos & Gondim, 2010; Yamamoto & Costa, 2010).

Psychology Taught in Higher Learning Institutions and Its Applications in Education, Mental Health, and Work Institutions

During the 1920s, the teaching of psychology began as an independent discipline in institutions of higher learning in the area of education, such as the Belo Horizonte Teachers’ Improvement College, in the state of Minas Gerais, in 1929, and at the São Paulo Pedagogical Institute, in 1931. These schools offered training in the sciences of education, both theoretical and practical, with the purpose of promoting the rationalization of school administration, inspired by progressivism (Campos, 2012a; Lourenço Filho, 2004). Psychological services were then established, linked to educational institutions. Among these services was the Laboratory of Psychology installed at the Belo Horizonte Teachers Improvement College in 1929, with the presence of the French psychiatrist Théodore Simon (1873–1961), then visiting Brazil for a series of conferences on the use of mental tests for the organization of elementary schooling and professional guidance. The laboratory was subsequently directed by two of Claparède’s former students and assistants at the Rousseau Institute in Geneva, the first higher learning and research institution in Europe dedicated to the sciences of education at the university level (Hofstetter, 2010): Léon Walther (1889–1963), and Helena Antipoff (1892–

1974). An Applied Psychology Service (subsequently named Educational Psychology Laboratory), linked to the Education General Directorship, in São Paulo, was installed in 1931 under the direction of Noemi Silveira Rudolfer (1902–1988) with similar purposes.

Helena Antipoff and Noemi Rudolfer were examples of the new educational leaders in the country who promoted the role of psychology as the most important among the sciences of education, since it would provide educators with knowledge about their main subject: the child, the adolescent, the boy, or girl for whom education was intended. Their work introduced innovations in research and in the practice of psychology in education. Antipoff had worked as a psychologist in the Soviet Union, between 1917 and 1924, in public institutions designed to host abandoned children and youths who had lost their families during those years of war and social unrest, and also as Claparède's assistant at the University of Geneva between 1926 and 1929 (Campos, 2012b). When she assumed the direction of the Belo Horizonte Teachers Improvement College Psychological Laboratory, she promoted a thorough study of the level of mental development of schoolchildren and observed the strong relationship between social and economic status and the results of IQ tests. To explain the issue, she proposed her own definition for the intelligence measured by the tests as "civilized intelligence," that is, "intelligence as revealed by tests is less a natural intelligence (as Binet would argue) than a civilized intelligence (. . .) polished by the action of society" (Antipoff, 1931, pp. 131–132). Noemi Rudolfer, Lourenço Filho's student at the São Paulo Teachers' Training School, studied with John Dewey and other progressivists at the Columbia University Teachers' College, in New York. Their links with the New Education movement in Europe and progressivism in the United States and their commitment to the public education system in Brazil led them to argue for the need to advance knowledge about child and adolescent development and individual differences for better educational planning. With this purpose in mind, they directed, in Minas Gerais and in São Paulo, research in educational psychology during the 1930s and 1940s, focusing on the mental development, aptitudes, and interests of school-age children, and promoting the organization of homogeneous classrooms in schools and children's psychological treatments in child guidance clinics (Antipoff, 1931; Rudolfer, 1931). The theoretical foundations of these studies provide evidence of the thought of the two leaders: Helena Antipoff's genetic-functional and sociocultural perspectives stemming from Genevan and Soviet psychology and Noemi Rudolfer's pragmatic and functional perspectives inspired by the work of University of Columbia intellectuals. Their laboratories of psychology were at the same time research institutions whose work would continue the trend already observed of producing new knowledge about the psychological and psychosocial characteristics of Brazilian urban children and youth, and services offering psychological advice to their families. The meaning of the expression "laboratory of psychology" encompassed both these elements. (Campos, 2006)

Medical-pedagogical stations, where psychological services were offered by psychiatrists and educators, were then established in several Brazilian states. In Recife, Pernambuco, in 1925, the psychiatrist Ulisses Pernambucano (1892–1943) established a public service dedicated to psychological guidance and professional selection where original research was performed on the adaptation of mental and aptitude tests for the Brazilian population, the study of school-age children's vocabulary, the development of projective techniques, and other experimental studies. A *School for Abnormal Children* was then established, linked to the local teachers

training school, and at the local mental health hospital, Pernambucano led the epidemiological study of mental diseases prevalent in the Black and mestizo population (Antunes, 1999; Campos, 2006; Medeiros, 2001; Pernambucano & Campos, 1932).

Other psychological services were installed in the mid-twenties. In Salvador, Bahia. Isaías Alves (1898–1968), who had studied with Edward Thorndike (1874–1949) and obtained a master of arts in psychology at the Columbia University Teachers' College, taught educational psychology at the local Teachers' Training School and oriented primary school teachers in the use of mental tests. He was responsible for the first adaptation of the Binet-Simon intelligence scale (Cyril Burt version) for the Brazilian population and studied the psychological evolution of his own children. A few years later Alves moved to Rio de Janeiro and assumed the directorship of the Tests and Measurement Service linked to the local Teachers' Training School, then renamed the Institute of Education, under the leadership of Anísio Teixeira, another prominent New School leader (Alves, 1930; Antunes, 1999).

In Rio de Janeiro, in 1934, Artur Ramos (1903–1949), a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst educated at the Bahia Medical School, created a Section of Orthophrenics and Mental Hygiene at the local Institute of Educational Research, for the diagnosis and treatment of educational and psychological problems in children. In 1939, he published a book entitled *The Problem Child—Mental Hygiene in the Elementary School* (Ramos, 1947), in which educational troubles in children and youth are approached from an environmentalist, culturalist perspective. Ramos's emphasis on the action of cultural environment in child and adolescent development contributed to the building of an alternative explanation for children's learning difficulties opposed to the "biological fatality" explanations based on eugenics prevalent among psychiatrists at the time (Campos, 1991).

The encounter between psychiatrists and educators was replete with tensions and exchange of procedures for dealing with the problems faced by these newly established psychological services. These difficulties are described by Antipoff (1937, p. 42) with some irony, as follows: "educators and psychologists were certain that children's improvement lay in medicine; the doctors, on the contrary, gave credit mainly to education and psychotherapy. Psychoanalysis, in particular, presented itself to those servants of Aesculapīus as the true lifeline. There was such a divergence in the variety and complexity of cases that filled the services (. . .) that educators were ready to prescribe vermifuges, mercury ointments and iodine, and doctors thought it necessary to recommend pedagogical care to parents, teaching them the art of forming moral habits."

The synthesis stemming from the work of those pioneers in applied psychology was then followed, from the 1940s onward, by the creation of courses and positions in psychology at Brazilian universities. From the joint work of educators and psychiatrists in educational and mental health institutions, the profession of psychologist began to crystallize. Psychiatrists contributed with the knowledge of mental diseases, from a psychopathological standpoint. They also knew, as Antipoff points out, the works of Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) that had been circulating in Brazil since the end of the 19th century. The "talking cure" proposed by psychoanalysis was highly valued among both psychiatrists and educators. On the other hand, educators contributed to the treatment of psychological troubles in children using educational and counseling techniques. Applied psychology was then a combination of medical diagnoses, treatment, and educational procedures aimed at promoting the adaptation of children with

cognitive and emotional difficulties to the family, school, and social environments. In the process of doing their case studies and large surveys, specialists in psychology were expanding their knowledge of the psychological and psychosocial characteristics of the Brazilian population, especially the urban population, and finding new ways of addressing their problems of adaptation to an increasingly complex and unequal society (Borges & Campos, 2012; Campos, 2012a; Jacó-Vilela, 2014).

It is interesting to observe that the first doctoral dissertations and studies presented in the area of psychology at the University of São Paulo (USP) focused on psychological and psychosocial aspects of cultural and racial differences in Brazil. Carolina Bori (1924–2004), professor at USP and important leader in the promotion of scientific psychology in Brazil, published studies on popular beliefs in rural and urban communities (Bori, 1969). Dante Moreira Leite (1927–1954), author of the first doctoral dissertation in psychology at the same university, studied the psychological characteristics attributed to Brazilians under the ideology of the supposed existence of a general “Brazilian national character” (Leite, 1959). He concluded that this ideology supported preconceptions and social expectations that undermined awareness of the contradictions present in Brazilian society. Aniela Ginsberg (1902–1986), professor of social psychology at the Catholic University of São Paulo, studied the interests of children and teenagers of different social levels, discussing the social bias of traditional intelligence tests toward different ethnic groups (Bomfim, 2003; Ginsberg, 1966).

During the 1950s and 1960s, an impressive number of translations of reference books and textbooks in psychology published in the United States were made in Brazil under the supervision of university professors of psychology working in Rio de Janeiro (then the capital of the country) and São Paulo, the most important industrial state. At that time, the circulation of North American productions in psychology and social psychology predominated in the country, having taken over some of the space of the previously dominant European theories (Bomfim, 2003).

The shift from Europe to North America promoted the circulation of behavioral theories, and strengthened social psychology as a field that would better account for social inequalities and the conflicts of Brazilian society, which were to become more visible with the accelerated urbanization that accompanied the development of the industrial and service sectors in large cities. At the same time, better qualifications of workers were needed because of the greater complexity of industries and services. Applied psychology services were expanded in urban centers, and psychological techniques of intervention in human relations in work, educational and mental health institutions grew steadily (Bomfim, 2003).

Psychology Becomes a Profession

In 1953, a group of professionals already working in the area of psychology (among them Lourenço Filho and Mira y Lopez [1896–1964]) sent a message to the minister of education arguing for the regulation of the profession of psychologist. They justified their request by referring to the increasing demands for the application of psychological knowledge related to the spread of maladjustment problems in modern societies, because of rapid social changes. The message was followed by a proposal for the establishment of university degrees in psychology (a bachelor’s degree and a license in psychology), with studies in connected areas

such as biology, sociology, cultural anthropology, and mental hygiene, and in strictly psychological scientific areas such as developmental, differential, personality, and social psychology. The programs were also recommended to include studies in statistics and the practice of tests and measurements (Author Unknown, 1954).

The Cuban-Spanish psychiatrist Emilio Mira y Lopez participated actively in the movement for the regulation of the profession. Exiled from Spain in 1939, after the Civil War, he immigrated to Brazil in 1945, when he was invited to give courses on psychology applied to work in São Paulo (at the University of São Paulo Institute for the Rational Organization of Work—IDORT), and in Rio de Janeiro, at the Institute for Professional Selection and Orientation—ISOP, created in 1947 and directed by Mira y Lopez from 1947 until 1964. These two institutions were very important for the specialization in professional selection and training in Brazilian public and private institutions. Mira y Lopez was a strong advocate for the application of psychological techniques in the areas of justice, health, education, work organizations, industries, national security, diplomacy, and the army. In his view, “the state is an apparatus within the national body that each day is more obliged to interfere in the lives of individuals who make up the nation, in diversified aspects: the defense of their health, the education of their spirit, to allow a rational organization of production, to guide them in the defense of their national heritage against strangers, to give them, finally, a social guidance. (. . .) In the public administration sector, applied psychology should be the more important science” (Mira y Lopez, 1955, p. 116).

In 1962, after ten years of debates within the National Congress, Law 4.119 was approved (Brasil, 1962), and the profession of psychologist was established. This institutionalization was not made without conflict: psychiatrists opposed the practice of psychotherapy by psychologists, Catholic humanists and philosophers thought that psychological phenomena should not be treated scientifically. Despite those criticisms, the regulation of the profession was successful, and psychologists were then authorized to use psychological methods and techniques for the making of psychological diagnoses, providing professional selection and guidance and psycho-pedagogical advice, and to work for the solution to adjustment problems experienced by children, adolescents, and adults. The direction of psychological services in public and private institutions was also assigned to university trained psychologists, as well as the teaching of psychology at the various levels of the educational system and the supervision of professionals and students in psychological services. Psychologists were also allowed to work as technical consultants in public and private institutions, as experts in psychological subjects (Pereira & Neto, 2003).

Law 4.119 promoted the establishment of several university programmes for the training of psychologists in the country, and the number of graduates grew rapidly, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of Registered Psychologists in Brazil in Relation to the Population—1971–2020

Year	Number of registered psychologists	Brazilian population (millions)	Number of psychologists relative to the population (psychologists/inhabitants)
1971	4,248	97.48	1/22,947
1981	26,662	123.6	1/5,454
1991	120,000	151.6	1/1,263
2001	148,000	177.2	1/1,197
2016	272,214	206.2	1/751
2020	360,577	209.0 (projected)	1/579

Source: Conselho Federal de Psicologia (Federal Council of Psychology) (2020); Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística - IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) (2020).

At present there are nearly 500 university programs for the training of psychologists in the country, granting the diploma of psychologist after a five-year course of studies in the areas of history and systems of psychology, experimental psychology, developmental, social, and clinical psychology, and professional selection and guidance. Also required are practical activities in the fields of clinical, educational, organizational, and community psychology. Psychoanalysis is studied profoundly in these programs, mainly under the interpretation of Jacques Lacan (1901–1981), the French psychoanalyst who proposed a psychosocial reading of Freud’s concepts (Roudinesco, 2011). Other psychological theories with a strong presence in the training of psychologists are Skinner’s experimental behavioral analysis (Miranda, Torres, Alves, & Cirino, 2020), the historical-cultural approach to human cognition, the cognitive approach, and the humanist, person-centered approach proposed by Carl Rogers (1902–1987). Social psychology from a historical-cultural perspective, with a deep commitment to participative practices for the development of social consciousness and empowerment of low-income communities, and the study of minority Brazilian groups also feature quite prominently in the curriculum (Hutz, McCarthy, & Gomes, 2004).

The legal organization of the profession of psychologist in Brazil was completed with the establishment of the Federal Council of Psychology by Law 5.766, of December 20, 1971 (Brasil, 1971). The main role of the new agency has been defined as the “orientation, disciplining and control of the exercise of the profession” in the country. An Ethics Code for the profession was approved by the Council in 1975, and subsequently modified in 1978, 1987, and 2005. The last version of the Code emphasizes the commitment of the professionals with society, and with values contrary to social exclusion and discrimination (Amendola, 2014).

In the following years, a growing number of postgraduate programs in psychology were established in leading Brazilian universities, thus promoting the development of research on psychological issues and the professionalization of researchers in the field of psychology, especially in the areas of social, work psychology, and public policies (33%); mental health (18%); human development and educational psychology (16%); psychological evaluation, clinical psychology, and psychoanalysis (16%); psychobiology, basic psychological processes, behavioral analysis, the neurosciences, the cognitive processes (14%); and other areas such as juridical psychology, gerontology, environmental psychology, and family psychology (3%). In these postgraduate programs, the study of the psychological and psychosocial characteristics of the Brazilian population continues to occur, along with experimental studies exploring basic psychological processes, in dialogue with foreign centers (Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior, 2020). An Association of Graduate Programmes in Psychology, established in 1983, promotes the dialogue and the organization of interinstitutional research groups, with a strong influence on political directions for the area at the academic level (Gomes & Fradkin, 2015).

In 1987, 25 years after the regulation of the profession, the Federal Council of Psychology promoted a survey of Brazilian psychologists: Who were they? Where were they working? What theoretical and practical references guided their work? The results of the survey showed that at that time there were 58,277 psychologists active professionally in the country, of which 75% were working mainly in the larger urban centers situated in the Southeastern region (Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Belo Horizonte). The survey provided evidence that 86% of psychologists were women, aged between 22 and 39, the majority married, working part-time

in clinical or social services, in which “helping others” was the most valued feature. However, the authors observe that this trend was directed predominantly to the individual, not to the social group. Interviewees pointed to ease of relationship, being a good listener, the solution of personal problems, and offering advice as relevant characteristics of psychologists. Concern for the individual living in a troubled situation is a valued aspect of behavior in dispensing help. The focus on clinical psychology as the dominant role for psychologists was considered a limitation for the professional, and the profession was seen as elitist. Other roles such as the work in schools, communities, or social organizations were undervalued, and psychologists tended to see individual problems as isolated from the social context. On the other hand, 52% of the interviewees regretted knowing little about the social role of the psychologist (Conselho Federal de Psicologia, 1988).

The research was part of a movement of psychologists that began during the 1980s with the establishment of the first work organizations of psychologists in unions, along with the expansion of their participation in social welfare organizations, and the ensuing re-democratization of the country’s political institutions, in a period characterized, in Brazil, by the demise of a military regime that had dominated the country between 1964 and 1984 (Bock, 1999). A new constitution was adopted in 1988, expanding the public welfare system in the areas of education, health, and social services, aimed at promoting inclusion and better quality of life for the population as a whole (Brasil, 1988; Carvalho, 2008).

During the 1990s, the growing consciousness of the need to face the problem of social and cultural inequalities in Brazilian society led to the development, among psychologists, of a political program aimed at strengthening the “social commitment” of professionals. The “social commitment” was defined as a priority given to resolving the problems faced by the majority of the population, and the extension of psychological services to larger sections of the people historically excluded from the benefits of the welfare state—the poor, the black, the marginalized, and oppressed groups (Bock, 1999). At the same time, the opening of positions in public services for a growing number of psychologists forced the development of new approaches in applied psychology. In the context of the expansion of public policies designed for the care and promotion of a better quality of life for the poor, psychologists began to be seen as technicians whose role was fundamental for the enforcement of those policies (Conselho Federal de Psicologia, 1992; Yamamoto & Costa, 2010). Psychologists linked to social movements and professional associations who founded, in 1986, the National Federation of Psychologists assumed the defense of the democratization of psychological services offered to the population.

In the following years, professionals elected to the directorship of the Federal Council of Psychologists adhered to the “social commitment” movement. The Council assumed more and more the role of orienting the practice of psychologists in public institutions in the areas of mental health, education, and caring for the marginalized and at-risk groups such as street children and youth, people living in low-income communities, and *favelas*, the elderly, and so forth. Guidelines for the practice of psychologists in public welfare institutions were issued by the Federal Council to guide their work. In 2006 the CREPOP (Reference Center for the Practice of Psychologists in Public Policies) was created as a department at the Federal Council of Psychology, with the purpose of promoting a better qualification of the work of psychologists in public institutions dealing with the implementation of public policies. Besides its technical role, the CREPOP assumed an ethical and political direction, aiming at the

promotion of the psychologist as a professional committed to the guarantee of human rights and social transformation. Since then, several reference documents for the practice of psychologists in public policies have been published in the areas of public and workers' health, family jurisdictions, sports, drug addiction, education, traffic, rural workers, race relations, and traditional communities (Bock, 1999; Conselho Federal de Psicologia, 1992; CREPOP [Centro de Referência em Psicologia e Políticas Públicas], 2020; Ferreri, 2011). A recent survey of the work of psychologists in Brazil (Bastos & Gondim, 2010) showed trends toward a better distribution of professionals in the various regions of the country and an increase of their presence in the public sector and in non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Nearly a third of psychologists find their first job after graduation in the public sector, within the network of institutions in the areas of health, education, and social services (Malvezzi, Souza, & Zanelli, 2010).

The recent transformations of the profession may be promoting the development of new intervention practices and techniques more fitted to the demands of the low-income population, steeped in the beliefs and practices of Brazilian popular culture. The dialogue with different aspects of the strongly syncretic Brazilian culture seems to contribute to the construction of innovations in the area of psychology, making it more sensitive to the several worldviews and social identities that compose it and producing original contributions with a profound impact on the profession. This trend can be surveyed in the publications of the periodical *Psicologia: Ciência e Profissão* (Psychology: Science and Profession), edited by the Federal Council of Psychology since 1982 and one of the leading periodicals in the area of psychology in Brazil since then. A review of the publication analyzed the contents of the issues from 1979 until 2004, and observed that “the periodical reveals Brazilian psychologists as professionals who listen to the society they live in and who create relevant practices for this society. Along these 25 years, the review registered the building of a new identity for Brazilian Psychology, stemming from the discussion about its various fields of application and from the production of different views on these fields as well, showing how the profession moved from an elitist position to another one, based on a compromise to enlarge the offering of psychological services to wider parcels of the Brazilian population, thus increasing the social relevance of the profession” (Campos & Bernardes, 2005, p. 508). Recent issues of the periodical focus on research and proposals on how to deal with psychological and psychosocial issues related to Indigenous and traditional peoples (Pizzinato, Guimarães, & Leite, 2019), subjectivity in urban low income communities (Hüning, Bernardes, & Reis, 2019), and sexual orientations and gender identities (Cavalcanti, Bicalho, & Sposito, 2019). These are issues currently much debated among Brazilian psychologists and social scientists, from different standpoints. The research production shown in these recent editions provides evidence of the trend toward the hearing and empowerment of the peoples and communities concerned (Alves & Delmondez, 2015; Ferreira, 2009).

Conclusion

In this article, the development and circulation of psychological knowledge in Brazil since the colonial times was followed, emphasizing its relationship with the social and cultural context. Brazilian culture was displayed as the result of the interaction of different peoples—the original inhabitants of the region, the Indians, and the peoples who migrated to and colonized the country—the Portuguese and the Africans, forming a diverse and unequal society. It was

argued that this diversified composition of the population had a great impact on the organization of the field of psychology in the country, mostly in the more recent period. Conflicts between cultures and the need to understand this diversified composition of the population and to organize it in common cultural patterns became a concern and a focus for psychological investigations and practices. These concerns contributed to shape psychological knowledge in the country and the organization of the profession of psychologist, in dialogue with psychology produced in Europe and North America.

During the colonial period, the introduction of psychological concepts in the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition by missionaries had the purpose of educating the population and integrating it with European culture. During the 19th century, this role was partially transferred to specialists who taught psychology in medical and law schools. In the 20th century, psychology became an important subject in the education of teachers, and the profession of psychologist was born as a result of the collaboration between psychiatrists and educators. The legal regulation and expansion of the profession of psychologist, during the second half of the 20th century, brought new challenges, and research and practices in psychology were directed to the building of knowledge for dealing with the subjectivity of the Brazilian culturally diversified population.

Today, psychology professionals in Brazil constitute one of the largest communities of psychologists in the world. Their work is perceived as heavily influenced by theoretical perspectives that emphasize the relationship between sociocultural dynamics and the psychological elaboration, seen by many as a powerful tool in the realization of human rights ideals. However, lower investments in public services, liberal proposals, or conflicts over social policies may harm this perspective. New research must be done to follow the development of these trends in the years coming, a theme for future historians of psychology.

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Notes

1. The movement known as New Education or *Éducation Nouvelle* in Europe, and Progressivism in the US, was labelled as New School movement in Brazil. Led by educators and school reformers, its aim was to transform and modernize educational institutions in directions suggested by the new education sciences (Hofstetter, 2010; Lourenço Filho, 2002).

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