

Critical Feminist Psychology from the Semi-peripheral Southwest of Europe: The Intriguing Case of Portugal

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Abstract

In this text we aim to explore the developments in the field of critical feminist psychology in Portugal. Using a figure-ground narrative, we will contrast these developments with the hegemony of mainstream psychology in Portugal. In the first section we contextualize psychology in Portugal, historically and sociologically. In the second section, we explore what are considered to be the best practices in research in this field in Portugal, using some meta-analytical texts on psychological research carried out in the country. In the last section, we focus on critical feminist perspective and its developments, a particular development of critical psychology in the country. This text explores what means to do psychology in this specific context and deconstructs some of the assumptions of the scientification of Psychology. Therefore we tackle both the production of mainstream with a specific development of critical psychology, nurtured by feminist epistemologies. These approaches to psychology will be contextualized these practices in the semi-peripheral position Portugal occupies within psychological production.

Keywords: Critical Psychology, Feminism, Portugal, scientification.

Portugal: A Historical, Political and Sociological Characterization

Portugal has been a democracy for only 37 years. The passage from a dictatorial regime to a pluralist democratic regime overhangs the recent history of Portugal, a country that thus far spent more years under dictatorship (48 years) than under democracy. This context is central for the specificity of Psychology in Portugal and therefore the first target of our attention and reflection.

The proclamation of the Republic, on October 5, 1910 sought to take the democratic principles inherited from the previous century to the ultimate consequences, replacing a hereditary King at the peak of the political pyramid with a citizen-elected President. However, on May 28, 1926, a political coup established a dictatorship in Portugal. Consequently, in 1933, a new constitution brought about the formal foundation of the New State (Estado

Novo)¹ in which António de Oliveira Salazar, then Minister of Finance (before becoming President of the Council of Ministers), played the most prominent role in an authoritarian regime that held sway over the Portuguese population through to the mid-1970s.

This constitution reinforced an already authoritarian regime, prohibiting political parties and strikes and establishing both censorship and the political police (PIDE - International and State Defence Police). These measures embodied a repressive state, whose main tools of domination were fear and ignorance.

In 1961, the colonial wars began with military operations in Angola, immediately followed by others in Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau. These wars ended up prevailing over all other facets of political life. Over the years, the conflicts proved a cause of popular discontent, who saw their youths dying in a never-ending war, their living conditions impoverished due to the financial effort needed to support the conflict and very high levels of illiteracy in a closed and stagnant country (Barreto, 1996).

The restoration of democracy took place on April 25, 1974 with the so-called Carnation Revolution when a military movement toppled the dictatorship. Only after 1974, and for the first time in its history, did Portugal experience universal suffrage and free elections; freedom of speech was restored; and the world's oldest colonial empire ended.

During the 20 years following the revolution, the population aged like few others in Europe. The highest illiteracy rate in Europe practically disappeared, the welfare state (then barely existing) was universalised, society diversified, religious freedom became a reality and political parties and trade unions got organized. However, many situations remain of concern: an overly centralized state, excessive bureaucracy, weak civil society and strong social inequality. Nowadays, among all European countries, Portugal displays one of the greatest gaps between rich and poor (Barreto, 2000).

In 1976, while the country was rebuilding itself under a democratic regime, graduate degrees in Psychology were launched at three Portuguese state universities. Forty-eight years of fascism, in conjunction with its alliance with traditional Catholicism and the consequent colonial war, shaped Portuguese society conservatively, preventing it from accompanying the evolution experienced in other countries in Europe and around the world.

The entire framework sketched out above, concerning the revolution and the revolutionary period that followed it, might lead to the belief that Psychology would mirror the country in political terms with a clear leftwing ideological involvement. History, though, does not depict such a scenario.

Many people believe and say that the dictatorial government, which subjugated the country during 48 years, delayed the development of Psychology. Nevertheless, we agree with Jesuíno (1994) who believes the causes of the delay were more closely related to the country's prevailing economic conditions and the structural inertia of the system than to the dictatorship. Mainstream Psychology does not seem especially disruptive to totalitarian regimes.

¹ Fernando Rosas (1998) says the New State began in 1926 with the coup d'état and the imposition of dictatorship.

Due to the aforementioned historical-political factors, Psychology in Portugal, despite its initial impetus at the beginning of the century, as happened with other European countries (Jesuino, 1994),² was actually only institutionalised in academic terms after the April 25, 1974 revolution³.

In the pre-academic period, until 1975, the lead actors were essentially university professors, neurologists and psychiatrists, mainly from within medical schools with different theoretical and methodological orientations, but predominantly empiricist and experimentalist (Abreu, 2005).

After 1974, most of these professors (mostly psychiatrists of a Freudian psychoanalytical orientation) had returned to Portugal from France and Belgium and other countries where they had been exiled refugees having fled from PIDE⁴ and the colonial war. Professors from the first graduate degrees in psychology were important in the development of certain areas and epistemological positions within psychology but they did not resist the influences arriving from the United States. Thus, psychiatrists and psychoanalysts gradually started leaving the Universities and giving way to a new generation of psychology students (no longer doctors or psychiatrists), who embarked on university careers and that, through their PhDs, began introducing a specifically North American orientation. This conditioned the epistemological course of the subject in Portugal.

Despite the fact that Psychology emerged late in this country, we must highlight that it expanded quite quickly and in certain places in a way comparable to European levels. In 2002, 23 degrees in private and public higher education institutions were running with an intake of about 2,000 students every year (it is necessary to note that Portugal has a population of 10 million) (Pinto, 2002). In their majority, these graduate degrees have been guided by an epistemologically positivist orientation with some (brief) incursions by post-positivist methodologies like grounded-theory and narrative psychology, for example, but in not necessarily critical approaches.

The accelerated growth in the number of degrees drove an increase in professors and research (Jesuino, 1994) with a positivist orientation and an emphasis on quantitative research (Machado, Lourenço, Pinheiro & Silva, 2004). In terms of research, there has been a growing number of PhDs in Psychology (588 up until 2008 – GPEARI, 2009) reflecting a rising number of doctoral programs and schools offering higher education in Psychology. In Portugal, there is also a specific line of funding from the Portuguese Science Foundation (Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia- FCT) supporting psychological research and specific scholarships for PhD students and post-doctoral researchers.

In conclusion, one can verify that the Portuguese history of psychology was influenced by important socio-historical and political factors, which predetermined the late establishment of graduate courses as well as faculty in this field. This late development has supposedly been contradicted by the search for a strong, “scientific” and “new” direction found in the United

² In 1912, in the College of Letters of the University of Coimbra, the first laboratory of psychology was founded where the first experimental psychology and psychopedagogy studies were carried out. These studies did not have continuity.

³ The opening of the first official higher education degree in psychology only took place in 1976, after the April 1974 Revolution, with the opening of three faculties of psychology and of education sciences, in the universities of Lisbon, Porto and Coimbra, respectively. Subsequently, fifteen years later, in 1991, the degree was launched in the University of Minho.

⁴ The International and State Defense Police (PIDE).

States of America and in the American Psychological Association. This orientation seems to bestow scientific stability, make up for lost time and thus recovering from the so-called “delay”. It is not difficult to grasp why Feminist Critical Psychology is still incipient in Portugal and will most likely experience difficulties in developing. However, before presenting Feminist Critical Psychology, let us take a detour through other forms of psychological knowledge.

Hegemonic constructions of psychological knowledge or how to tame diversity

The process of scientification of Psychology, usually associated with a positivist epistemology and experimental methodology, has influenced research in all areas of psychology. The shortcomings of this approach are also linked to the methodolatry (Danziger, 1998) of experimental studies and to a narrow conception of a desired scientific approach to psychology. This narrow scientification is an epistemological cornerstone that underpins a deeply rooted positivist conception of the field. In this conception, several reductionisms are present: a) the individualization of psychological knowledge (widely discussed by Sampson, 1981); b) the focusing on intra-psychic processes (a Psychology of the subject, as Sampson (1981) noted); c) a conception of science based on neutrality and objectivity, apolitical and a-ideological; d) the rejection of (historical, cultural and sociological) context as a fundamental basis for understanding human action (Gergen, 1973); e) the neglect of discourse as an object of study; f) the emulation of natural sciences as a matrix for the production of knowledge.

These reductionisms, clearly identified in the Critical Psychology literature (Curt, 1994; Parker, 2007; Teo, 2009), however remain present and hegemonic inside Psychology despite several generations of researchers denouncing these practices not only as impoverishing the social impact of the subject but also, in some cases, exerting social control over the very populations whose conditions the field should aim to improve. Psychology is part of the late modern apparatuses of capitalism aiming to describe and define a set of laws based on “data” collected to understand how people think, feel and behave. Parker (2007) refers to those analyses as based on the premise: “fix the individual and you will solve social ills” (p.200).

Feminist psychologists have voiced their critique of mainstream psychology as malestream (Gergen, 2001; Clarke & Braun, 2009). Not only in terms of the majority of male scientists in high status academic positions, but also in terms of an internal critique of a subject focused on the psychological functioning of male subjects, usually psychology undergraduates. These critiques are visible in the outputs of feminist psychology. Despite the presence of such critical efforts, mainstream psychology largely ignores alternative epistemologies and is still bound to the modern idea of science.

To illustrate this argument, we make recourse to some published articles seeking to make sense of recent developments in the field in Portugal. Portuguese psychologists have mapped out the field, producing a cartography based on publications in Portuguese journals (Alferes, Bidarra, Lopes & Mónico, 2009; Machado, Lourenço, Pinheiro & Silva, 2004). However, such depictions are based only on these journals, altogether ignoring international publications, books, presentations and conferences. This is an area of concern, especially given the importance attributed to journals with an ISI Web of Knowledge database impact factor, which tends to take a higher profile than national publications in applications for university positions and research opportunities. Therefore, the literature produced on the cartography of Portuguese psychological research is limited in scope and outlook. Additionally, there have been other attempted portraits of Portuguese psychological research

based on presentations at the National Symposium for Psychological Research (Castro, Garrido, Mouro et al., 2004) Both methodologies and criteria of assessment assume Psychology to be a scientific field and intend to define the field using objective, measurable and precise data to achieve such classifications. Therefore, even these portraits are enmeshed into the dominant and hegemonic values of the discipline. To frame this analysis, we consider these papers not as representative of those shortcomings, but as particular versions of what are intended to represent best practices in Psychology.

In a 1980s text (Borges, 1986), we are surprised at the effort to politically contextualize Psychology within the wider framework of Portuguese society and politics. This text, devoted to analysis of the first schools and scientific societies, is very much committed to contextualization, which is surprising especially when compared to other texts (albeit more recent) that do not provide such a situated vision. Nevertheless, the text reiterates the scientific enterprise that psychology constitutes and stresses the importance of retaining a properly scientific view of the field. Analysing the status of Portuguese Psychology in the 1990s, Jesuino (1994) was more concerned about the tension between individualistic approaches to Psychology, namely those centred on individual processes and those focusing on social interactions and processes, without displaying any marked preference in epistemological terms. This view seemed to be substituted by a perspective less concerned with the level of analysis Psychology should address but with a very modernist anxiety about the scientific status of Psychology. The importance of this trope of scientific status is shared in other texts. That matrix of science, equated with empiricist and experimental values, is laid out as the most desirable and indeed necessary framework for Psychology. As Gonçalves (2007) states: “*I do believe that only a radical return to basic science can save psychology from vulgarity and disbelief*” (p. 1) and proposes that psychology should be “*an experimental branch of the natural sciences*” (p. 1). In fact, his text starts by quoting John Watson, thereby revealing a century-old anxiety about the scientific status of the field. This proposal of Psychology as scientific seems to imply that most research should be conducted inside labs and adopt experimental methodologies.

Among the texts dedicated to the scientific production of Portuguese Psychology, the diagnosis put forward by Machado et al. (2004) denounces the so-called quasi-scientific character of Portuguese Psychology. This text entails a critique of the parochialism of Portuguese Psychology published in Portuguese journals as endogamic in terms of publications, with few international authors as contributors and with a majority of authors whose affiliations belong to the same university publishing the journal. In fact, this critique is based on the assumption that there is a lack of scientification in Portuguese outputs but without actually accounting for the context that produced such a “problem”. The second comment the authors make relates to the predominance of what they call Applied Psychology over research on basic processes. This is presented as troublesome because “it subverts not only the very constitution of psychology as a science associated to the creation of experimental labs, but the desirable path of a science” (Machado et al., 2004, p. 324). As we can see, this anxiety over the scientification of Psychology, relating it with the study of “basic processes”, labs and experiments, is very much present in texts evaluating Portuguese Psychology. This text also deems Psychology to be an experimental science and thus points to a need for more experimental studies, considered scarce within the panorama of Portugal academic production.

As Alferes and colleagues (2009) show, this predominance of applied issues over basic processes would still be identifiable in Portuguese journals some years later in conjunction

with a trend towards less empirical studies and especially those using experimental methodologies. However, the strict focus on Portuguese journals may account for these results, as there is an increasing tendency to publish in international psychology journals (GPEARI, 2010).

When looking at the distribution of presentations of the Portuguese Psychology Research Symposium, Castro and collaborators (2004) used a different methodology and focused on the keywords describing articles. This study therefore showed how the research presented was focused mainly on psychopathology, psychological evaluation, self-concept, diseases, education, cognition, health and prevention, psychotherapy, interpersonal relations, sports and methodology. This text uses a celebratory discourse to the diversity and variety of orientations in Portuguese Psychology without any consideration on the science status of the field as with the other texts. Inspecting the data presented in the above mentioned texts, we find, as Castro and collaborators (2004) describe, strong diversity in the field rather than any risk to the status of psychological knowledge as science.

This diversity may be accounted for by the context. The late emergence of psychology as a professional practice, as well as a scientific field within the Portuguese scenario, the need for specific studies on the Portuguese situation able to direct psychological interventions, the predominance of clinically trained professionals and a small labour market are some of the features contributing to explaining this diversity. This diversity cannot however be taken for granted as the hegemonic discourse of Psychology as a science continues to heavily impose some forms of knowledge over others, particularly by disqualifying them or making them less visible or important.

This call for scientification is akin to a process that the sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2003) calls the *lazy reason*. Bearing in mind that the organisation of scientific knowledge entails not only high culture processes and elite training, but also a wastage of the knowledge produced outside the canon. This scientific canon establishes what can be treated as truth and the criteria for producing such truth. This wastage of experience also connects with the subjugation of what is interpreted as a lesser form of knowledge production and the predominance of a rigorous knowledge monoculture. This subjugation actively renders other forms of knowledge as inexistent or as absences. Therefore, Sousa Santos (2003) insists on a sociology of absences, one that shows that what is deemed absent is in fact produced as non-existent. As we have seen from this analysis, other forms of psychological knowledge other than experiments or falling beyond the realm of basic processes seem to either be considered as less scientific or in fact serve to motivate analysis arguing for a more scientific psychology. Sousa Santos (2003) also identifies other logics connected with the issue of the wastage of experience, such as the monoculture of linear time, of social classification, of dominant scale and of capitalist productivity. We can find traces of such logics in these metanarratives of Portuguese Psychology and especially the monoculture of dominant scale and linear time. In fact, Portuguese Psychology seems to be described, especially in Machado et al (2004), as parochial, local and indeed belated. As opposed to what? No reference is put forward but one might accept North American psychology as a possible framework. However, given the specificities of the Portuguese context, it is not possible to make such a comparison for any given criteria.

Correspondingly, setting out this context is needed to understand that, despite such normative efforts, Portuguese Psychology is linked with the overall process of democratising and modernising Portuguese society and cannot be subsumed into any other referential

frameworks beyond the semi-peripheries of Europe, especially Spain, with which Portugal shares a long history including recent dictatorships and still more recent membership of the European Union. What is absent from these texts is the contextualization, situatedness and contingency of Portuguese Psychology, a surprisingly diverse field, precisely because of professionalization and the need for specific and local knowledges. These tropes miss in their analysis as they opt for a decontextualized knowledge which simply accounts for a description of the field without detaining themselves with a more societal inscription of the subject. Therefore, to understand Psychology in Portugal, one needs to develop situated knowledges (Haraway, 1988), making links with what these versions of what psychology should render absent (Santos, 2003) and insisting on the contingent foundations of such knowledge (Butler, 1991), based on history (Amâncio, 2003a) and location (Oliveira & Amâncio, 2006). Psychology, as with any other form of knowledge, is closely linked to the context of production and therefore should not be described only in terms of outputs, but in a more ecological way, drawing from historical and sociological contexts, from notable absences while keeping an eye on relations of power defining what should count as knowledge.

As shown previously, the current scientific output in Portugal is an unequivocal reflection of the political history of the country. Portugal experienced an autocratic and dictatorial regime up until 1974 when, due to the intervention of the Armed Forces Movement (a group of rebel officers who opposed the regime), democracy was restored. During almost 50 years, the country was deprived of social and cultural development, suffering the strong influence of a fascist ideology that constrained the country's expansion and particularly its scientific growth. The *fascistisation* of science (Saraiva, 2009) proved to be one of the major effects of the dictatorship on science. In fact, although the Carnation Revolution or the April 25th Revolution of 1974 was a milestone in the accomplishment of Portuguese fundamental rights, the power of Salazar's dictatorship left indelible marks on Portuguese society in all sectors of public and private life, including science. Therefore, Psychology was very much influence by this belatedness and with the shortcomings of North-American paradigms in Psychology that were imported as the way of producing scientific and valid knowledge. In the next section we will show the impact of Portuguese context in the production of knowledge in the field of Critical Feminist Psychology.

Critical Feminist Psychology in Portugal

The country's political situation led to a tardy development of the social and human sciences, which hindered the access of feminisms to Portuguese universities (Oliveira, Neves, Nogueira & Koning, 2009; Neves, forthcoming). This situation had repercussions for Psychology⁵ (Azambuja, Nogueira & Saavedra, 2007; Nogueira, 2009; Saavedra, 2010). Even though Portugal underwent a sudden process of democratization and enacted egalitarian legislation for both men and women (equality has been a fundamental principle in the Portuguese Republican Constitution since 1976), as a result of those constraints, the implementation of effective equality has since been difficult to achieve, especially in terms of gender equality in science (Amâncio & Oliveira, 2006; Neves & Nogueira, 2010). As Ferreira (1998) pointed out, the official discourse of the Estado Novo ("New State") on the separation and complementarity of the sexes promoted a domestic focus for women's lives. The fascist regime was thus highly responsible for the propagation of discriminatory views against women, not only in the social domain, but also in the scientific field.

⁵ For further information on the relationships between feminisms and Psychology, please refer to Neves, (2008) and Saavedra & Nogueira, (2006).

While in Europe and in the United States, Psychology was involved in debates about issues related to the differences between men and women, and while it conceived mechanisms to differentiate the personality traits of each gender, Portugal lived under the influence of Catholicism, which nurtured ideas contrary to the emancipation and equality of women⁶ (Saavedra, 2010). Despite recent progress, attempts to affirm of Gender and Feminist Studies in Portugal have often been impeded for the same reason (Amâncio, 2003b; Nogueira, Saavedra & Neves, 2006; Azambuja, Nogueira & Saavedra, 2007; Neves, 2009; Oliveira & Nogueira, 2009; Saavedra, 2010).

It might be said that Feminist Psychology has a very recent past in Portugal having notched up only 14 years of existence. As regards the number of doctoral theses completed in this area of study (by scholars currently involved in teaching and research in Portuguese universities), seven dissertations have thus far been produced⁷.

The inaugural journey of Feminist Psychology in Portugal began with the first doctoral thesis in the field in 1997, authored by Conceição Nogueira and supervised by Lúcia Amâncio, which launched the field of gender studies in Social Psychology in Portugal in the 1990's. In her work, *A new glance at gender social relations: a feminist critical perspective on social psychology*, which was published in book form in 2001, Nogueira puts forth new theoretical, epistemological and methodological approaches within Social Psychology, associating them with a critical and realistic positioning of political engagement. The author thus challenges the precepts of a more traditional, positivist and essentialist Social Psychology as far as gender issues are concerned. This PhD thesis was referred to by Lúcia Amâncio (2002) as the first feminist PhD in Psychology in Portugal. Other PhD thesis followed, focusing in other issues, but rooted in this framework. We focused on these because they are based on a knowledge production that is validated by the universities, through the viva voce, which in Portugal, is a public event with at least five professors that have to grade and approve the thesis (or not). Therefore, these are an important indicator of the validation and of the vitality of a scientific field.

In 2001, Luísa Saavedra (2001), showed how gender categories are intersected by other social categories such as social class, influencing the presumed academic success achieved by the female gender. Girls from lower classes with high academic achievements are sporadic cases resulting from very particular family milieus. Sofia Neves (2005) used feminist methodologies to contextualize gender violence from a critical perspective, offering an insight into gender as a social relationship (Oliveira, 2008). At ISCTE-IUL, Lisbon, António Marques (2007) and João Manuel de Oliveira (2009) used critical feminist psychology in their theses. Marques (2007) analysed several professional domains dominated by men using discourse analysis. Oliveira (2009) examines how the meanings and discourses on the topic of abortion are constructed and how they relate to totally disparate ideas about Portugal, Portuguese society and political ideologies, through applying post-structuralist feminist frameworks and critical feminist psychology. In 2007, at the university of Porto, Carneiro (2007) focused on the hegemonic structure and functioning of contemporary societies regarding sexuality connecting sexual orientation and public participation. In the field of

⁶ For a deeper understanding of the History of Psychology in Portugal, see: Gonçalves & Almeida (1995a; 1995b), Gonçalves, O. F. & Almeida, L. S. (1995) and Nogueira, Saavedra & Neves (2006) Nogueira, C., Saavedra, L. & Neves, S. (2006).

⁷ We have not included here other doctoral theses (ongoing or complete) written by people with professional careers outside academia.

masculinities, Santos (2009) analysed how emotions are framed by hegemonic constructions of masculinities. These studies use mostly discourse analysis and qualitative data.

In addition to these doctoral theses, other activities have contributed to the development of Feminist Psychology in Portugal. In 2006, and for the first time in Portugal, the VI National Symposium on Psychological Research, held at the University of Évora and organised by the Portuguese Association of Psychology, had two panels dedicated to Feminist Psychology, coordinated by João Manuel de Oliveira and Conceição Nogueira. Among theoretical contributions, research activities and intervention projects, twelve paper presentations were produced in this area (Saavedra, 2010; Neves, 2011).

The Feminist Congress 2008, held at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon under the auspices of the Women's Union Alternative and Response (UMAR), also marks an important moment of affirmation for feminist science in Portugal, in general, and feminist psychology in particular. This congress was attended by approximately 500 people and was a forum devoted to the presentation and discussion of contributions made by hundreds of male and female researchers and activists.

In December 2009, the Interdisciplinary Seminar on Gender and Social Sciences was held at the Higher Institute of Maia (ISMAI) with the aim of promoting reflection on the current state of the social sciences in the field of Gender Studies, Feminist Studies and Queer and LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) Studies (see Neves, 2011). The presence of researchers from the Feminist Psychology field was an important participation at this Seminar.

In 2010, the University of Minho hosted the VII National Symposium on Research in Psychology. This event clearly defined the importance of Gender Studies, Feminist Studies and Queer and LGBT Studies in the field of Portuguese Psychology. Similarly to 2006, there were two Feminist Psychology panels, within the scope of which ten paper presentations were shared. A symposium on Critical Psychology and Queer Feminism(s) (five presentations) and another on Gender and Masculinities (six presentations) also took place.

In 2010, within the scope of the VII Ibero-American Congress of Psychology in Oviedo (Spain), a group of Portuguese female researchers, coordinated by Sofia Neves and Luisa Saavedra, organised a symposium on Feminist Psychology, during which five papers were presented.

Since 1997, a long road has been travelled by Portuguese academia in terms of feminist psychological research. This research aims to reflect the particular experiences of women or men as well as research methodologies and methods of gathering mostly qualitative data within which special attention has been given to Discourse Analysis (Saavedra, 2010). There are, however, increasingly divergent approaches within Portuguese Feminist Psychology. We would highlight that epistemological and methodological pluralism is what best contributes to the contemporary Feminist Psychology project. It should be noted that in recent times profound conceptual changes have forced us to rethink the way gender is construed and performed socially, which in Portugal also had unexpected consequences for feminist theory (Oliveira & Nogueira, 2009).

In educational and vocational psychology, work has been oriented towards uncovering the difficulties experienced by young women in typically male dominated fields (Ferreira,

Saavedra & Taveira, 2008) and areas where the family-work conflict correlates with social class (Saavedra & Taveira, 2006). Further analyses focus on the way teenage magazines encourage a heteronormative sexuality linked to a double sexual standard, which has had particularly negative effects on girls (Magalhães, Saavedra & Nogueira, 2008). The project *Women in Science, Engineering and Technologies: The leaky pipeline effect*, financed by the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) and coordinated by Luísa Saavedra is currently ongoing. It studies the numerical representation of women enrolled in higher education courses in the areas of Science, Technology and Engineering in Portugal. Incidentally, other discourses also translate a set of conflicts and difficulties in building a positive female image in areas where hegemonic masculinity prevails.

Rosa Cabecinhas has also directed projects on issues surrounding the production and reception of images of the 'feminine' and the 'masculine' in the written press, on television and in cyberspace (Cerqueira, Ribeiro & Cabecinhas, 2009; Cabecinhas & Wolf, 2010). She is lead researcher for the ongoing project entitled *Focus on gender: social representations in generalist Portuguese magazines*, funded by the FCT. This project originates from a flaw in scientific research concerning the analysis and understanding of gender representations that permeates the contents and editorial guidelines of this means of communication within the Portuguese context.

Studies on migration (Topa, Nogueira & Neves, 2010; Silva) and gender violence⁸ have also proliferated in the Portuguese field of Feminist Psychology (Neves & Nogueira, 2003; Neves & Nogueira, 2004; Neves & Nogueira, 2010; Neves & Fávero, 2010; Neves, 2010a, 2010b; Nogueira & Neves, 2010), with both fields clearly evolving.

Queer feminist studies have also carved out a niche in research, as demonstrated by the publication of the Special Feature of the Journal of the Portuguese Association of Women's Studies, *Ex-Aequo, Doing gender: performativities and queer approaches*, coordinated by João Manuel de Oliveira and Conceição Nogueira in 2009. The research project funded by the FCT and led by Conceição Nogueira and entitled the *Sexual citizenship of lesbian women in Portugal: experiences* as well as the project *Study on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity based discrimination*, coordinated by Conceição Nogueira (Nogueira & Oliveira, 2010), and funded by the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (Comissão para a Cidadania e Igualdade de Género - CIG) all attest to the importance of this field of study in Portugal. In recent years, feminist critical psychology has grown both in profile and in terms of research as this section has demonstrated.

Conclusion - the semi-peripheries of knowledge

Portuguese Psychology has a very recent history and an impressive level of diversity. Of course, it is perhaps a diversity marked by hegemonies, specifically the hegemony of scientification. There are, however, clusters of resistance to this campaign for normalization. The disdain and contempt some texts show for what they call the applied conception of psychology rely on a concept of applying the effort necessary for the scientification of psychology, produced inside an Academia usually (in terms of this scientific field) marked by a culture of wastage of experience (Santos, 2003). Inspired by this theoretical framework, we link such a conception to the general diagnosis of belatedness that is used to describe the

⁸ In this context, we should also mention the opening of a curricular unit in Feminist Psychology and Intervention with Victims in the Postgraduate Course in the Prevention of Gender Violence in School and in the Family, sponsored by the School of Psychology and Educational Sciences at the University of Porto and taught by Sofia Neves.

semi-peripheries *vis à vis* the epistemological referent of psychology in some countries (the center). Therefore, the concept of semi-periphery proves rather useful in understanding the tensional field of Psychology in Portugal.

“Semi-peripheral societies are intermediate societies in the double sense of presenting intermediate stages of development and of fulfilling functions of intermediation in the management of conflict between central and peripheral societies” (Santos, 1985, p. 871).

Semi-peripheral countries such as Portugal in the context of Europe and globalization have contextual specificities that cannot be ignored in terms of the development of scientific knowledge and professional practices. For instance, the founding of the Portuguese psychological association, Ordem dos Psicólogos (Order of Psychologists) only took place in 2008. Issues relating to professional regulation are being drafted by the Order as well as the terms for the recognition of scientific and professional qualifications for acting as a psychologist. In 2011, a deontological code was publicly discussed and critical psychologists, including ourselves and others (Nuno Santos Carneiro and Susana Batel), circulated a petition calling for the integration of issues such as discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender inclusive language and issues related with the diversity of psychology. 74 psychologists signed the petition and the code now more comprehensively includes the aforementioned issues. However, this merely demonstrates the importance of actions undertaken by critical psychologists to promote a more democratic and diverse application of psychological knowledge and practice.

Another issue relates to the development of university Psychology degree courses. These degrees are very much focused on mainstream Psychology and display a clear epistemological option for mainstream positivist psychology, albeit under discussion. Another strand of our work has involved making visible some areas of psychology, such as liberation psychology (Oliveira, Neves, Nogueira & Koning, 2009), critical history of psychology (Saavedra & Nogueira, 2006), LGBT and queer psychologies (Carneiro, 2009; Oliveira, Pena & Nogueira, 2011; Nogueira & Oliveira, 2010; Oliveira, Pinto, Pena & Costa, 2009). Such works create alternative ways of constructing more visible knowledge and were designed to be used as pedagogical alternatives to mainstream psychology.

Mainstream Psychology in Portugal might be described as being clearly inspired by a narrow conception of Psychology that ignores all knowledges not complying with publishable papers in international circulation peer reviewed ISI journals with high impact factors. This campaign for scientification has hampered academic production in the field and led to a normalization of psychology, narrowing it down at the expense of the subject's social relevance. At a time when Portugal is facing financial crisis and external loans from the International Monetary Fund and the European Union, disguised with the philanthropic trope of “help”, such a psychology cannot foster the production of emancipatory knowledges, raising awareness and engaging in strategies of social change. As just another instrument of capitalism, traditional psychology is more interested in adaptation and compliance with the social order. Therefore, the work of politically engaged psychology, marked by values of social transformation and inspired by coalitions with diverse activist groups, such as the global left, feminism, queer, anti-racists, anti-precariousness groups, trade unions, among others, seems to us a far stronger and more convincing approach to producing transformative knowledges that in fact aim to promote consciousness about discrimination, social justice and equality.

The commitment of Critical Feminist Psychology is not to a neutral and objective Psychology. In fact, we do think such a belief makes mainstream Psychology more prone to serving as a vessel for neo-liberalism especially in terms of its focus on adapting to adverse economic situations and its claim to a supposed neutrality that is nonetheless compliant with the social order.

Critical Feminist Psychology especially when carried out from a place like Portugal, a south in the north, must critically engage with groups that foster social change and that aim to transform the existent social conditions into other possibilities. Another world should be possible (as the slogan for the World Social Forum goes) and Psychology should by now have such an agenda instead of trying to appear as neutral and objective.

As Martin-Baró (1997) once said “*It’s not about asking what each one wants to do with psychology...but rather [to question] the objective effect that the psychological activity produces in a given society*” (p. 13). Coming from the semi-periphery of South West Europe, we cannot say that Psychology has been influential in changing Portuguese society. Importing referents from the center of the Empire has progressively led to an individualistic psychology that seems driven by interests other than social change. Portugal has been a good student of the Empire of mainstream psychology and is certainly committed to continue doing so. However, the semi-peripheral situation of Portugal has been instrumental to having a very diverse psychology, despite a majority of quantitative studies applying a positivist framework. Nevertheless, such diversity is useful and helps to promote different ways of doing psychology instead of merely accepting the narrow version propounded by some. In this semi-periphery, some opportunities for resistance are possible and Critical Feminist Psychology continues to seek them out.

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