

Book Review

Professional Training of Psychologists: Dialogues of Cultural Psychology from Latin America to the World

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The study of how psychology has been taught and how curricula have been designed is not merely an exercise in academic archaeology or curriculum management. On the contrary, it is one of the most crucial topics for understanding how the identity of our profession has been constructed, legitimized, and transformed throughout the history of the discipline. The way in which a society decides to train its future psychologists ultimately defines the type of science that is produced and the nature of the interventions that are implemented with citizens.

The volume *Professional Training of Psychologists: Dialogues of Cultural Psychology from Latin America to the World* (Ossa, Jacó-Vilela & Cudina, 2025) addresses this challenge from a novel methodological perspective: that of analyzing training processes not as mere lists of conceptual contents or technical skills, but as an intricate network of sociocultural, institutional, and historical practices. In doing so, this collective work offers a new look at the evolution of psychologist training in Ibero-America, filling a historiographical gap that urgently needed to be addressed.

For decades, the hegemonic narrative on the institutionalization and development of psychology focused almost exclusively on figures, laboratories, and institutions in Europe and the United States. This traditional historiography tended to analyze the consolidation processes of science and the profession in those countries, considering them, explicitly or implicitly, as the undisputed "center" of our science. Based on that premise, it was simplistically assumed that in the rest of the world—the "periphery" according to the geographical metaphor we are using—institutionalization processes must have followed the same evolutionary dynamics as in Anglophone or Central European nations. Fortunately, contemporary historiography of psychology has progressively dismantled this linear view. This book draws on a growing current awareness that recognizes psychology as a truly international, plural, and "polycentric" phenomenon, whose national implementations have followed highly diverse and autonomous paths (Baker, 2012; Brock, 2006; Pickren & Rutherford, 2010; Tortosa et al., 2025).

The internal architecture of the volume stands out for its rigorous model of interdisciplinary dialogue. On one hand, the work is grounded in the critical methods of the history of psychology, embracing the contemporary impulse to investigate how, when, why, and through which human and institutional

agents, psychology was transformed into an independent academic degree and a professional practice regulated by the state in different nations. Throughout its chapters, a prominent group of scholars from the world of Ibero-American history and cultural psychology present detailed national case studies. The analyses cover a highly representative geographical and geopolitical landscape, including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Far from offering a simple chronicle of founding dates of university faculties and departments, these studies trace the institutionalization of university studies by examining ideological debates surrounding curricula, the direct influence of the changing and sometimes turbulent educational policies of each country, and the fundamental role of local intellectuals. Often after training abroad, these pioneers returned to their countries of origin to advance the profession—not through mimetic copying, but by adapting psychological knowledge to specific social agendas and local political and economic contexts. This historical perspective clearly demonstrates that current professional practices in each of the analyzed nations are neither accidental nor universal; rather, they are the direct result of tensions, power struggles, institutional negotiations, and an intricate historical interplay between science, the profession, and the demands of civil society.

On the other hand, it is worth noting that this book is not limited to traditional institutional or archival history but is conceptually nourished by the theoretical framework of cultural psychology (Bruner, 1990; Cole, 1996; Valsiner, 2007). From this approach, the various contributions transcend the mere record of the past to delve into a symbolic, semiotic, and deeply political dimension regarding how the social role of the future psychologist is planned through university curricula. The central premise underlying the entire work is clearly set forth by the editors in the introductory pages:

"In this work, we start from the premise that the historiographical approach to the professional training of the Latin American psychologist is necessarily framed within the notion of thinking of psychology as a situated discipline whose development and organization is based on the specificities of a temporal space that, in turn, presupposes the emergence of specific social and cultural contexts" (Cudina, Ossa & Jacó-Vilela, 2025, p. 2).

Under this lens, the different academic settings studied are revealed as dynamic cultural spaces where not only is cognitive knowledge transmitted, but also where a specific way of understanding the human mind, psychological suffering, the boundaries of legitimate intervention, and the relationship with the community is configured. The training of psychologists thus emerges as a process of identity and subject formation, imbued with ethical values, political ideologies, and power relations that must be subjected to continuous critical scrutiny. This conceptual framework helps us understand that the current diversity and fragmentation of global psychology should not be interpreted as a historical accident or a lack of scientific maturity, but as the logical and enriching result of these cultural training practices situated within specific geopolitical contexts.

Added to this fruitful dialogue between cultural psychology and the history of psychology is another methodological innovation that also deserves to be highlighted. The work is not presented as a disconnected sequence of isolated national chapters; rather, it is deliberately conceived as a transnational dialogue in which the old asymmetric logic of "center-periphery" completely disappears. To achieve this, each main chapter dedicated to a specific Ibero-American context is immediately followed by a critical commentary written by European or North American specialists. These experts place local studies in dialogue with international research and cross-cultural dynamics. This dialogical structure enriches the reader's perspective, creating a symmetrical space for international conversation that overcomes the isolation of local microhistories and places them on a shared, global intellectual map.

As is natural in any collective work of this magnitude and complexity, the book presents some limitations and areas for improvement that the critical reader with historiographical training will be able to identify. In the first place, the intended integration between the rigor of historical methodology and the concepts of cultural psychology presents occasional discrepancies depending on the chapter. From a strictly historiographical point of view, some national contributions would have benefited from more systematic work with primary and archival sources, as well as more explicit theoretical reflection on the historical method employed. At certain points, this limits the analytical depth of interregional comparative studies. Secondly, and closely linked to the book's own proposal to study sociocultural practices in their entirety, the explicit inclusion of the voices and narratives of other essential groups actively participating in this training process—i.e., university students and professional psychologists—would have been highly desirable. Their experiences would have provided a valuable perspective "from below" and "from within" the processes of institutionalization and curricular reform, complementing the classical historiographical vision based exclusively on archival sources (official documents, course syllabi, etc.), which historically formed the foundation of a narrative of "great heroes" in the discipline. Nevertheless, these minor omissions do not detract in the least from the indisputable overall quality, interpretative rigor, and methodological coherence of the works presented.

Beyond these critical observations, the relevance of *Professional Training of Psychologists: Dialogues of Cultural Psychology from Latin America to the World* for the Ibero-American professional community, and particularly for the readers of *Papeles del Psicólogo*, is evident. The fundamental value of this book

transcends the walls of pure academia or historical erudition to stand as a powerful tool for ethical, deontological, and political reflection for our professional community. In a historical moment like the present, characterized by profound social and health transformations in which the professional profiles of psychologists, the necessary cross-cutting competencies, and the social adequacy of our interventions are continuously being debated and redefined, this book provides a highly valuable theoretical scaffolding. It helps us understand that these debates are not mere technical or bureaucratic disputes, but deeply cultural, ideological, and ethical processes regarding the type of persons we wish to foster in our societies. Furthermore, by making the rich local histories of the region visible, the work brings a core issue to the foreground; the relationship between the university training offered in a country and the type of social and professional practice developed there cannot be understood if analyzed in isolation from the cultural, institutional, and political dynamics of the studied settings. Forgetting or ignoring this fact would prevent us from fully understanding how psychology has become the multifaceted, complex, and socially committed profession that it is today.

What concrete uses, therefore, does reading this work offer to the different specialists in our discipline? For the clinical and health psychologist, for example, the book invites an exercise in reflexivity and epistemic humility, directly questioning the cultural and historical assumptions that underlie their daily diagnostic tools, nosological classifications, and therapeutic strategies. For the educational or community psychologist, the text offers highly valuable interpretative keys to understand their professional role in specific, dynamic institutional contexts that are frequently marked by social inequality. For the teacher and university trainer, the volume constitutes a wake-up call urging them to critically review their habitual pedagogical practice, reminding them of the need to go far beyond the mere transmission of standardized theoretical and technical content. For professionals in general, regardless of their area, the book provides them with solid conceptual arguments to promote strategic and constructive debates on the future of our professional endeavors in each of the areas of intervention.

In conclusion, *Professional Training of Psychologists: Dialogues of Cultural Psychology from Latin America to the World* is much more than an excellent academic compendium of well-documented historical and cultural studies. It is, in essence, a rigorous manifesto in favor of a psychology that is more aware of its own history, humbler in its claims of abstract universality, and more grounded in the human realities it intends to address. The book's notable methodological innovations, by intertwining the voices of Ibero-American experts with the critical comments of international colleagues, constitute the exact type of global, respectful, and bias-free conversation that our discipline urgently needs in the 21st century.

However, the reader should not look in these pages for a closed manual of recipes or a simplistic list of answers to the complex problems facing the contemporary professional training of psychologists. What they will truly find are many of the uncomfortable and necessary questions that must serve as a compass and inspiration for the constant reinvention of our profession in the coming decades. For all these reasons, careful reading of this book is a priority recommendation for any psychologist who wishes to understand in depth the historical

foundations of their daily work and aspires to contribute actively to the construction of a socially relevant, ethically irreproachable psychology committed to the complex world in which we live.

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