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A Ghost in Search of a Machine: Perspectives of Portuguese Social Psychologists on Research and Social Change

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Master (MSc) in Psychology of Intercultural Relations

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CIÊNCIAS SOCIAIS
E HUMANAS

Department of Psychology

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Resumo

Este estudo teve como objetivo fornecer uma exploração aprofundada de como os pesquisadores(as) em psicologia social em Portugal entendem o impacto da sua pesquisa e como negociam o seu papel e o da disciplina na promoção de mudança social. Nove entrevistas foram realizadas com pesquisadoras(es) de várias universidades e estádios de carreira. Uma análise temática identificou cinco padrões centrais: (a) O Impacto é Indireto, (b) Potencial Inalcançado, (c) O Gap entre Pesquisa e Sociedade, (d) Demandas Ambivalentes de Responsabilização para a Disciplina, e (e) “Não é Possível Fazer Tudo.” Esta análise traz à luz os significados complexos, diversos e ocasionalmente contraditórios associados ao impacto da disciplina no contexto Português. Este estudo contribui assim para uma melhor compreensão das complexidades e desafios das relações entre a pesquisa em Psicologia Social e a mudança social, especificamente no contexto português.

Palavras-chave: Psicologia Social, Mudança Social, Academia Portuguesa, Responsabilização de Pesquisa, análise temática, Processos Sociais & Questões Sociais

Abstract

This study aimed to provide an in-depth exploration of how Social Psychology researchers in Portugal understand the impact of their research and how they negotiate their role and the discipline's in promoting social change. Nine interviews were conducted with researchers from various universities and career stages. A thematic analysis identified five central patterns: (a) The Impact is Indirect, (b) Unfulfilled Potential, (c) The Gap Between Research and Society, (d) Ambivalent Accountability Demands for the Discipline, and (e) "It's Not Possible to Do Everything." This analysis brings to light the complex, diverse and occasionally contradictory meanings associated with the discipline's impact within the Portuguese context. This study thus contributes to a better understanding of the complexities and challenges of the relationships between Social Psychology research and social change, specifically in the Portuguese context.

Keywords: Social Psychology, Social Change, Portuguese Academia, Research Accountability, Thematic Analysis, Social Processes & Social Issues

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Introduction

Psychological research is, at its base, focused on understanding real-world social phenomena and social issues (Dovidio & Esses, 2007). Thus, issues like prejudice (e.g., Pettigrew and Meertens, 1995), stereotypes (e.g., Bar-Tal, 1996), discrimination (e.g., Duckitt, 2010), sexism (e.g., Glick & Fiske, 1996), racism (e.g., Vala and Pereira, 2018), responses to climate change (e.g., Batel, et al. 2016), social change (e.g., Sweetman et al., 2013), and many others are common topics of varied social-psychological research.

As such, despite the substantive potential of Social Psychology not only for understanding those social problems, but also for addressing them (Dovidio & Esses, 2007), frustrations are increasingly pointed out by Social Psychology researchers both with the limited influence of their work and with the misinterpretations and misuse of their research and findings (Subasic et al., 2012). In fact, ‘classic’ social psychologists have become so, based on research that was, at least at its incept, supposedly conducted with the aim of understanding and addressing key social problems, such as those related with the Second World War, like obedience to authority, conformism and others (Smith & Haslam, 2017). So not only it seems safe to consider that Social Psychology as a discipline wants its research to have an impact (Subasic et al., 2012) but codes of ethical conduct are increasingly considering the relevance and original contribution of research, including in Social Psychology, to be ethical issues (e.g., ISCTE-University Institute of Lisbon, 2011, standard 3.3). Nevertheless, little research has focused so far on how social psychologists make sense of the impact of social psychological research on societies and social change. There is an emerging trend of metascientific studies that investigate the research habits and perspectives within psychology, and that have focused on psychology researchers as subjects, examining issues such as methods for predicting replication outcomes (Dreber et al., 2015), obstacles to data sharing (Houtkoop et al., 2018), perceptions of researchers when their results are not replicated (Ebersole et al., 2016), resistance to proposed reforms to research practices (Washburn et al., 2018), perceptions of the existence of a replication crisis (Baker, 2016), and academic psychologists’ perceptions of the state of the field (Miranda et al., 2022); however these studies are not focused on how do social psychologists experience and reflect about the impact of the research they conduct and of Social Psychology in general on social change, despite the increasing recognition and fostering – namely through national and international research funding agencies – of the importance of all research being developed with the aim of having applied impacts. In this master thesis, I focus on exploring

and understanding the frameworks and explanations offered by nine Social Psychology researchers interviewed in Portugal regarding the impact of social psychological research in promoting social change in the Portuguese context. As such, this study intends to investigate the following research questions (1) how do social psychologists in Portugal make sense of the impact of Social Psychology research in Portugal?; and (2) how social psychologists in Portugal negotiate the role of Social Psychology research and their own research in the promotion of Social Change?

I will next present the literature review, that in order to contextualize these research questions, will explore the crisis in Social Psychology, discussing its roots, implications, and some suggested responses in Europe; establish our understanding of social change for this study, considering how it's theorized in relation to Social Psychology; examine how the 'impact' of Social Psychology has been previously conceptualized and identified. I will then present the Methodology (Reflexive Thematic Analysis) and how it guided the analysis. Finally, the conclusions and discussion will be presented.

1. Literature Review

1.1 The Crisis in Social Psychology

In October 1976, the *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* hosted the views of over a dozen researchers about what became known as the crisis in Social Psychology and how to solve it. More specifically, conflicting epistemological understandings about the methods, real-world significance, subject matter, theoretical approach (Faye, 2012), and the very nature of social systems themselves (Sherif, 1977) that already permeated the literature were brought to the central stage. In this same volume, Clyde Hendrick (1976), the editor, contrasted the views of Social Psychology as a traditional or historical science to inconclusive results. Although the majority followed, even if reluctantly at times, the positivist conceptions of traditional science (Lewin, 1977), the heavy criticism installed by Kenneth Ring in 1967 (Rijsman & Stroebe, 1989) and cemented by the likes of Rosenthal and Rosnow (1969), Silverman (1971), Harré and Secord (1972) and Gergen (1973) developed roots, and loudly declared that the previously immovable foundations of Social Psychology were constructed over sand.

The hypothetic-deductive approach and the belief in internal causal mechanisms (psychological laws) that could be traced through narrowly defined rigorous laboratory experimentation were brought to the central stage (Rijsman & Stroebe, 1989). For Social Psychology to be a natural science, its concepts were defined as content-free and context-independent (Lewin, 1977). In this sense, the social context would constitute a contamination as any other, an external variable to be controlled. Allport (1924) famously argued that behavior could be better understood if systematically reduced to the individual level:

There is no psychology of groups that is not essentially and entirely a psychology of individuals. Social Psychology must not be placed in contradistinction to the psychology of the individual; it is part of the psychology of the individual, whose behavior it studies in relation to that sector of his environment comprised by his fellows (Allport, 1924, p. 4).

Beyond that, Allport stated that social behavior “is based on the same fundamental needs as our reactions towards all objects, social or non-social” (1924, p. 3). Therefore, following the logic of this classic author of Social Psychology, everything worth knowing about the social would be found within the boundaries of the individual.

This individualization of the social phenomena occurs both ways. The individualization of the social resulting in the desocialization of the individual as “Social” would solely refer to individuals stimulating another individuals (Gruaumann, 1986). Therefore, the end goal of Social Psychology lied within the behavior of the individual. Social Psychology became progressively restricted to the inquire of individual cognition, emotion, and behavior in relation to social stimuli (Greenwood, 2014). Consequently, the social world was also framed as a “psychological state”, or a “large-scale suggestion phenomenon” that would *influence* an individual (Graumann, 1986) rather than conceiving both, individual and context, as mutually constitutive and interdependent (Batel, et al. 2016). Later critiques accused Allport and his followers of rejecting social forms of cognition, behavior, and emotion because they would represent a potential risk to the traditional liberal principles of autonomy and rationality (Parker, 1989; Greenwood 2004, 2014).

The ever-increasing restrictiveness of the experimental conditions and the necessity to control each and every possible variable not only nullified any methodological space for the study of socially engaged forms of behavior, emotion and cognition (Greenwood, 2014), but it also promoted the attempt of developing a universally applicable theory about human beings disconnected from social and cultural structures (Pepitone, 1981). Furthermore, Rosenthal critically examined the relationship between participants and experimenters and demonstrated that the social nature of the experimental situation affected studies’ results (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1969).

This criticism culminated in one serious issue: external critics felt that Social Psychology (and other social sciences) had failed to be proven relevant (Faye, 2012). From inside of the field, critics denounced that the artificiality of the experimental situation substituted the normatively grounded characteristics of real-life social situations (Silverman, 1971; Gergen, 1973; Parker, 1989; Greenwood, 2004) and often risked simply recording the effects of the specific bizarre social situation of the experiment (Harré and Secord, 1972). Furthermore, the inherently political usage (explicit or not) of Social Psychology in establishing possibilities for action and control (Parker & Shotter, 2015) was highlighted.

Critics would denounce the base assumptions and categories employed by experimental and individualistic Social Psychology to be mostly involved in the maintenance of the status quo (Jacó-Vilela, 1999). By treating collective behavior as psychologically abnormal, Social Psychology was not only failing to correctly address the experiences of oppressed groups, but it was also enforcing the structures responsible for this same oppression. Plon (1974) argued that Social Psychology

labelled resistance to social order as pathological and unnatural. Therefore, restricting the social phenomena to the individual was as much of a political position as a theoretical one (Batel, et al. 2016).

Although the self-diagnosed epistemological crisis in the 70's represented a crucial landmark for Social Psychology, this was not the first time these issues were raised, nor it would be last. Many of these contentious issues have been present throughout the history of the field. In *Völkerpsychologie*, Wundt's primary foci were collective mental phenomena that could not be understood in individualistic terms, like language, religion and myths (Farr, 1986). The so-called "founding father" of experimental psychology due to his work in the laboratory of Leipzig maintained that the experiment had to be restricted to the most simple and basic phenomena of the individual and that what resulted from the interaction of many could not be explained by the characteristics of the individual mind alone (Graumann, 1986).

Despite Wundt's insistency on the complementarity of both experiments and historical inquiry, his followers generally disregarded the later and focused primarily on experimental psychology (Farr, 1986; Graumann, 1986). Allport helped to cement Social Psychology in the United States as a behavioral and experimental discipline in 1924. By 1927, Lewin stated that psychology was facing a crisis over epistemological issues (Lewin, 1977). In 1937, Britt proclaimed that Social Psychology was represented by one word: "empirical" (p.464). And empirical referred to three characteristics "the experimental method; the use of first-hand observation; and the employment of statistics" (Britt, 1937, p.464).

As such, the crisis of the 70's illustrates one peak of a long-standing tension between "sociological" and "psychological" visions of Social Psychology as a field. From this landmark, new attempts to redefine the meaning of research in Social Psychology emerged. Most relevant to our case, are the theoretical traditions that flourished in Europe and aspired towards a political and societal turn for the field of Social Psychology, particularly, Social Representation Theory, Social Identity Perspectives and Critical Social Psychology.

1.1.1 Social Representation Theory

Social Representation Theory emphasizes the collective nature of social cognition (Bauer, & Gaskell, 2008). According to Moscovici (1981), social representation englobes a body of concepts, images and explanations developed from interpersonal communication and interactions which

determine how a given phenomenon should be understood within society. More specifically, social representations constitute a system of knowledge regarding objects in the social environment particular to a group, social category, or culture (Rateau et al., 2011). Therefore, they are not the product of the whole society but arise from the very social groups that build such society (Rateau et al., 2011).

Social Representations guide individuals' and groups' positions regarding the objects, events, situations, and the communication concerning them (Jodelet, 1989). They enable individuals to orientate themselves within the social world and enable communication by providing a shared code to classify the shared experiences in the social world (Bauer, & Gaskell, 2008). Their purpose is "to make something familiar, or unfamiliarity itself, familiar (Moscovici, 1984, p. 24) by allowing the social environment to be commonly understood and interpreted, and by providing the ground for its evaluation (Rateau et al., 2011). Therefore, they constitute and enable shared social reality that affects social identities and behavior imposed in the social interaction (Sammut & Howarth, 2014).

In this conception, social representations are continuously renegotiated (Bauer, & Gaskell, 2008) and are transformed and produced by the process of anchoring and objectification (Sammut & Howarth, 2014). Anchoring refers to how novelty is integrated into prior knowledge through its insertion into an already existing conceptual frame that allows meaning to be ascribed, and the object to be instrumentalized, interpreted and compared to what is already known (Jodelet, 2008). Objectification refers to the process of projecting such new representation in the world (Sammut & Howarth, 2014).

Elcheroth et al. (2011) consider that social representations theory surpasses the duality between politics and psychology and emphasize its capacity to address conflict, political power and resistance. In this sense, people's views, regardless of how apolitical they seem, are inherently political. Therefore, it is the very political dimension that "becomes a *condition of intelligibility* for social phenomena" (Elcheroth et al., 2011). This view is further refined when we consider that the aim of Social Representation Theory is to understand social change and collective resistance and stability (Batel & Castro 2015; Elcheroth et al., 2011; Moscovici 1981). By understanding these processes, this theory is not just about the reproduction of social reality, but also about how society can be transformed (Elcheroth et al., 2011).

1.1.2 Social Identity Perspectives

Social identity perspectives in Social Psychology refer to a collection of theoretical frameworks that are centered around the concept of social identity. The most prominent among these are Social Identity Theory and Self-Categorization Theory.

Social Identity Theory (SIT) found its beginnings in the hands of Henri Tajfel at the University of Bristol. In opposition to the North American tradition of Social Psychology, its collaborators (Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) emphasized the social dimension of individual identity. More specifically, how the social context and group membership provide the basis for self-definition and behavior in social situations (Ellemers & Haslam, 2011). Central to their critiques of the North American Tradition in the post-war era were the overall neglect of the social context and the reduction of intergroup level interactions to the interpersonal level (Dumont & Louw, 2009).

The central assertion of Social Identity Perspectives is that in numerous social circumstances, individuals perceive themselves and others as members of a group rather than as distinct individuals. Tajfel (1974) defined social identity “that part of a person's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (p. 69). The theory proposes that social identity forms the basis for behavior between groups and consider this type of behavior to be fundamentally different from the behavior between individuals (Ellemers and Haslam, 2012).

Individuals derive a part of their self-concept from the social groups they belong to and are motivated to maintain or enhance the positive distinctiveness of these groups. For that, SIT outlines several strategies people use when interacting with other groups and has been used to investigate how members of minority groups react to their position of lower status or disadvantage within the societal structure based on the constructs of legitimacy, stability, and permeability (Reynolds et. al., 2017). When individuals perceive an opportunity to ascend from a lower-status group to a higher-status one, they engage in social mobility. This is more likely when group boundaries are seen as flexible, and the existing intergroup relationships are generally accepted. When the prospect of transitioning to a higher-status group is not feasible, yet the overarching system is still endorsed, group members aim to cast their collective identity in a positive light, thereby preserving the status quo without causing shifts in the group's societal standing, which is called social creativity. Lastly, social competition happens when the boundaries between groups are rigid and the current group relations are seen as unstable or unfair. This can lead lower-status groups to take actions aimed at

social change and is often seen in collective actions that aim to change existing social hierarchies (Ellemers and Haslam, 2012).

In the 1980s and early 1990s, Turner and his team aimed to further explore the cognitive processes that form the basis for group-focused concepts of self and others, as opposed to individual-focused ones (Ellemers and Haslam, 2012). These efforts culminated in the development of Self-Categorization Theory (SCT). SCT explores how individuals categorize themselves into various levels of inclusiveness or abstraction (e.g., Portuguese Citizen, European) and in varied criteria (e.g., as a man, as a Portuguese, as a psychologist). When explaining how individuals choose to define themselves in terms of a specific social identity over others, SCT underscores the significance of various contextual elements that make a particular social self-categorization more meaningful than the others (Ellemers and Haslam, 2012). Consequently, it emphasizes that the self is not a static entity but rather a dynamic and context-dependent construct (Reynolds et al., 2017).

Through SCT, Subasic et al. (2008) consider that the concept of social change can be understood through the interplay among three sociologically demarcated groups: the authority (the ruling leadership), the minority (the underprivileged group), and the majority (the remaining constituents of the system). Social stability or social change depends on whether the psychological links between the authority and majority, and between the majority and minority, are maintained or redefined. Change is most probable when the majority shifts its identification from the authority to the minority. This requires the majority to recognize its sub-group identity and support actions counter to the previously dominant group.

Social Identity Perspectives have been particularly influential in the development of social psychological knowledge (Dumont & Louw, 2009). They introduced a new intellectual movement within Social Psychology that led to the establishment of a framework for European Social Psychology capable of formulating concepts that openly address intergroup relations (Dumont & Louw, 2009).

1.1.3 Critical Social Psychology

Critical Social Psychology seeks to challenge and critique the positivist tradition that dominates social psychological research. It has its roots in various intellectual movements and developments in the mid to late 20th century, being informed by key European philosophical and sociological

perspectives, including Marxism, critical theory, structuralism, poststructuralism, and feminism, among others (Parker, 2015).

An essential aspect of Critical Social Psychology is its critique of the claims of objectivity often found in mainstream psychology (Parker, 2007), arguing that such claims often obscure underlying personal, institutional, and political influences that shape the research questions. Therefore, the position of the researcher would need to be closely scrutinized to understand better why they choose the specific questions they do in their studies (Parker, 2015).

Moreover, Critical Social Psychology fundamentally interrogates the division between those "inside" the academic or professional sphere of psychology and those deemed "outside" (Parker, 2007). It denounces how those outside the discipline are frequently misrepresented or deceived, advocating for a more integrative approach that encourages collaboration between academics, professionals, and service users (Gough & McFadden, 2001)). This necessitates challenging the assumed authority of researchers to dictate solely the course of research (Parker, 2015).

Furthermore, Critical Social Psychology rejects the notion that human behaviour can be meaningfully understood in isolation from its social and historical context. Instead, it emphasizes the need to understand individuals in relation to broader socio-cultural and political structures (Parker, 2007) and as active participants in their societies (Fox, Prilleltensky, & Austin, 2009). It openly challenges how natural sciences sought to quantify and generalize human behavior and cognition based on empirical data derived from experimental methodologies. Critical social psychologists consider them reductionist and decontextualized and argue that they often overlook the complexity and variability of human experience and social life (Hepburn, 2003). Consequently, it encourages psychologists to delve into the deeper, often overlooked aspects of contemporary life, fostering relationships that challenge harmful social norms and practices (Parker, 2015).

Lastly, at the heart of Critical Social Psychology, lies the commitment to social change, which is integrated into its ethical practice (Kagan, Burton, Duckett, Lawthom, & Siddiquee, 2011). Such a view encourages psychologists to become active reflexive agents, working in partnership with people outside the academic realm, and emphasizing the importance of mutual engagement, creativity, and a holistic understanding of human nature and our relationship with the wider ecosystem (Parker, 2015).

Critical Social Psychology could be seen as a fundamental discipline that has shaped the evolution of other "critical" psychologies by advocating for theories and methodologies that can

be applied in areas like health, educational, and clinical psychology. Nonetheless, the contributions of critical social psychologists are often distributed across various platforms, often appearing in niche conferences and books dedicated to subjects like Feminist Psychology, Qualitative Research, or Mental Health (Gough, 2017).

1.2 Social Change

The concept of social change is hard to define (de la Sablonnière, 2017; de Lemus & Stroebe, 2015; McGrath, 1983; Subašić et al., 2012; Sweetman et al., 2013). Furthermore, what some perceive to be a careless increase in usage has resulted in shallow assumptions, or even blatant disregard, for its definition (Blackwood et al., 2013). Therefore, I must clarify what aspects of Social Change are the focus of this work.

The world changes. Technological advances and cultural, economic, and political changes severely impact many aspects of human life. Broadly speaking, social change can encompass essentially anything that results in a change in the "social system" (Parsons, 1951). Social Psychology, however, often narrows the focus of social change down to changes in intergroup relations with emphasis on inequality (Sweetman et al., 2013).

Kessler and Harth (2009) define social change as "the change in the relative position of individuals and groups within a common society" (p. 244). Similarly, Louis (2009) defines it as "both formal policy change to benefit a group, and informal changes in their social value, status or power" (p. 727). De Lemus (2015) is more concise, defining social change as "a change in intergroup relations to reflect greater social equality" (p.442).

However, Sweetman et al. (2013) consider "reducing inequality" as a limited view of what constitutes social change. New forms of discrimination, conflict, hatred, or oppression also represent a change in intergroup relations. Thus, the authors define social change as "a change in the absolute or relative social value possessed by a group within a social system." (p.295). Social value refers to things, symbolic or material, people strive for (positive values) or attempt to avoid (negative values). Although we agree with his conclusions, the scope of our work addresses exclusively what he calls "progressive social change," i.e., an increase of positive social value and/or a decrease in negative social value to minority groups. Social value is a useful tool because it allows differentiation between positive and negative valences that should both be tackled.

Sweetman et al. (2013) stress in their definition that "symbolic and material things" constitute social values. This notion is further explained by Stroebe et al. (2015) when addressing what constitutes "inequality." According to Stroebe, inequality can be defined by two elements: structural (material) inequality and status inequality. Structural inequality refers to tangible outcomes and material conditions such as opportunities and resources; status inequality relates to attitudes, beliefs, and the disparity between perceived positions and values about groups of different statuses.

Another critical aspect of social change that is relevant to our work is human agency. We account for the existence and importance of social changes that lie outside of human control (de la Sablonnière, 2017), which can be exemplified by the SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19) pandemic. However, agency is a necessary condition when social change is understood as an end goal of Social Psychology. The social change to which we refer is an active result of human agency to affect society based on the gap between important social expectations and existing untenable social conditions through collective (Subašić et al., 2008) and individual (de Lemus & Stroebe, 2015) action.

Another facet of social change includes efforts to climate change mitigation. Social change involves substantial shifts in societal behaviors, beliefs, and norms, and addressing climate change serves as a quintessential instance of such a transformation. Mitigating the effects of climate change requires vast changes in societal perceptions and interactions with the environment (Gifford, 2011). Furthermore, preparing for the already apparent and future impacts of climate change, such as rising sea levels and increased heatwaves, demands alterations in urban planning, agricultural practices, and societal norms (Adger et al., 2013). Therefore, addressing climate change embodies the essence of social change as it requires a reimagining and restructuring of societal systems and behaviors towards environmental sustainability in the face of the current neoliberal, capitalist societies (Batel, et al., 2016).

For the purpose of this research, we understand that the concept of "social change" is only as good as its shared definition. However, the lack of such a shared definition and even of a satisfying one within Social Psychology (de Lemus & Stroebe, 2015) forces us to use such a polysemic term with care and employ a broad operational definition. Therefore, for the scope of this work, social change is understood as: the result of human agency (Subašić et al., 2012a) directed towards the

reduction of structural and status inequality (de Lemus & Stroebe, 2015; Stroebe et al., 2015) and climate change mitigation (Gifford, 2011).

1.3 Impact of Social Psychology

Marshall and Rossman (2015) described that a scientific study might have significance for knowledge, for practical and policy problems, and for action. For Social Psychology, its impact is intertwined with its definition and its explicit and implicit goals (Yamamoto, 2012). G. Allport (1968) defines Social Psychology as "an attempt of understanding and explaining how the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of individuals are influenced by the real, imaginary or implicit presence of other individuals" (p.3); Sherif (1970) states that "a Social Psychology that is relevant must do much more than conduct research on significant social problems after they have already become an urgent business to administrators, policymakers, and a general public alarmed by them." (p.144). On the same note, Lewin (1946) famously said that "research that produces nothing but books will not suffice" (p. 35); and Martín-Baró goes further towards the route of political engagement when defending that the main objective of the social psychologist must be the enlightenment of people and groups, as means to develop a critical knowledge about themselves and their reality, allowing them to control their existence (1996).

According to Subašić et al. (2012), the most prominent interrelated ways of having an impact through Social Psychology are: *communicating* our ideas beyond the discipline so that our findings are helpful for those with practical intentions; through *direct engagement* with political and social activism; and better *understanding* the psychological aspects of social change itself.

Policymaking, however, usually lacks much objective appraisal of research evidence (Brown et al., 2012). As a result, many laws fall short of their goal or have unintended consequences (Roots, 2004), and opportunities for social psychologists to communicate our findings outside of the discipline are limited and often unfruitful (Dovidio & Esses, 2007). Nevertheless, psychology (as a field) has an enormous potential for addressing social problems and guiding public policy (Dovidio & Esses, 2007).

Challenges in communicating Social Psychology research findings do not take away from the importance of those efforts if we want our ideas to benefit outside audiences and promote social change. There are indeed barriers to the communication of social psychological research beyond the discipline that need to be tackled (Dovidio & Esses, 2007). Still, undoubtedly, decision and

policymakers tasked with addressing social problems studied by social psychologists should be armed with the best advice and evidence available. However, as Subašić et al. (2012) note, "the most relevant, veridical, clearly communicated, and applicable insights will be ignored, questioned, and opposed depending on how they are seen to 'fit' particular political objectives and agendas" (p.63).

The dilemma of "actively participating" versus assuming a "neutral" stance in Social Psychology is a false one. We are inescapably political (Sawaia, 2014). Rather than categorizing professional actions as socially compromised or not, a better effort may be to identify what political project they facilitate (Yamamoto, 2012). Therefore, the result of a lack of proactive engagement in our work is not due to "neutrality"; it benefits those who hold power in our society (Subašić et al., 2012).

Direct engagement embraces this notion of actively participating to the fullest and often twists the power dynamics between academia and the general public. By recognizing that psychology has much to learn from those who directly experience injustice, psychologists are agents of social change that work *alongside* those people (Sawaia, 2014) to challenge oppression. Therefore, people who are affected by systematic oppression may be part of the solution, being included in the planning, execution, and evaluation of research and interventions (Macedo & Dimenstein, 2012; Montenegro, 2001; Freitas, 2007; Yamamoto, 2007).

Research impact assessment is typically based on reach and significance (Bornmann, 2013; Penfield et al., 2014). Reach refers to the extent and diversity of influence the research has on the beneficiaries of said impact. Significance refers to the degree to which the impact has potentially enabled, enriched, informed, influenced, or changed policies, practices, understandings, well-being, or awareness within the scope of its reach (Greenhalgh et al., 2016). Both these criteria are crucial in determining the overall impact of research and are increasingly used to inform decision-making in research funding and policy.

As noted, the impact is often discussed within Social Psychology to the point where some consider the field to suffer from a crisis of confidence. Whether related to that or not, Social Psychology journals have been expanding their efforts towards increasing the quality of research – as seen in the rapid spread of preregistration (Sarafoglou et al., 2022) – and its reach – for example, mandatory relevance statements and dissemination materials (e.g., Vezzali & Muldoon, 2021). For social sciences and humanities (SSH), demonstrating the impact of research is a complex endeavor

not only due to the challenge of finding adequate measures and unraveling the degree to which given research findings were substantial contributors to an effect but also due to how their organizational and epistemic characteristics and their type of outcomes differ from STEM disciplines (Reale et al., 2018). Furthermore, some researchers argue that while social sciences and humanities research is characterized by a dedication to developing research that benefits society, scholars often prioritize influencing and guiding society, preserving cultural heritage, and fostering self-understanding in various contexts (Nussbaum 2010; Small 2013), rather than producing 'usable' results (Benneworth, 2015). Consequently, it's underscored by these scholars that the impact of SSH cannot be measured simply as a 'return on investment' (Weingart & Schwechheimer, 2007).

When focusing on the impact of Social Psychology, previous defenses of the field's specific goals - like Allport (1968), Lewin (1946), and Martin-Baró (1996) - although emblematic and influential works of giants of the field, are defenses of principles, not an exploration of experiences. Our desk research did not identify literature that explored how social psychologists in Portugal make sense of the impact of their research *from* data. Thus, we believe qualitative methods may offer better answers to our research question. More specifically, as an adequate theoretical foundation is lacking in this area, methods for discovering central themes and analysis of core concerns may be more prolific than quantitative methods (Barbour, 2013).

This study intends to address this gap in the literature by utilizing Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2022) to investigate social psychologists' experiences and perceptions about how Social Psychology research impacts the Portuguese society and what is the role of the field in promoting social change.

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants

In qualitative research situated within qualitative paradigms, the primary goal of the study and participant selection is typically to embrace a variety of meanings within the "population," rather than offering a numerical representation of it (Braun and Clarke, 2021). Instead, it focuses on those most informative about the issue (Flick, 2018). The aim is to enable a thorough examination of the research questions in a way that maximizes the potential for "transferability" of the findings to other contexts (Spencer et al., 2003). In the present study, the participants comprised nine Social Psychology researchers. The population was conceptualized around the following parameters: either currently affiliated with or had previously been affiliated with a research institution in Portugal for a minimum of five years, diversity of career stages and currently or having a history of conducting research involving topics closely connected to social change goals, such as intergroup relations, climate change, racism, sexism, and other related themes. By focusing on this group of experts, the study aimed to gain valuable insights into their perspectives and experiences, exploring how they understand the Social Psychology research's contribution to the promotion of social change within the Portuguese context. For the scope of this work, we apply Bogner et al. (2009) definition of experts as people who have "technical, process, and interpretative knowledge that refers to a specific field of action by virtue of the fact that the expert acts in a relevant way." (p. 54). In other words, social psychologists are considered experts because their knowledge affects the practice of the field to a significant degree.

The sampling strategy employed was purposive sampling, which entails the intentional selection of "information-rich" cases (Patton, 2015) that hold the capacity to enhance comprehension of the phenomena being studied. In other words, this study aimed to include participants whose perspectives on the impact of Social Psychology in society would be most informative for the analysis and development of the tentative themes. As an extension of it, this study employed diversity-sampling (Patton, 1990). To achieve this, participants were selected based on the diversity of research subjects they were engaged in, as well as the explicit or implicit theoretical assumptions present in their work. This approach, also known as maximum variation sampling, ensured that the sample encompassed a wide range of viewpoints, experiences, and expertise, thereby enriching the

analysis and facilitating a deeper understanding of the diverse perspectives Social Psychology researchers have regarding how Social Psychology contributes to societal change.

The total number of nine interviews was deemed less than ideal, however, due to the specificity of the dataset and the time constraints associated with a master's thesis, it was challenging to increase the number of participants in the study. The focused nature of the research topic and the limited time available for data collection and analysis required striking a balance between obtaining rich and diverse insights from the participants while ensuring that the scope of the project remained manageable within the given time frame. This is particularly felt in the low representation of non-positivistic perspectives in the dataset.

2.2 Procedure

Ethical approval for the study was granted by ISCTE's Ethic Committee. Each participant was initially reached through their institutional email and interviewed individually, either face-to-face or online, following COVID-19 regulations, participant's preference, or feasibility due to distance. All the interviews were conducted in Portuguese because it was the first language of all participants in this study. Qualitative interviews are a way to collect detailed data from a carefully chosen group of participants who have experienced or are agents of a given phenomenon. This method helps researchers obtain a deeper understanding about the nature of the phenomenon and how it is seen, understood, and experienced by the participants. (Connelly & Peltzer, 2016). A semi-structured interview design was chosen as it allows for a dynamic data collection process, accommodating in-depth personal stories and producing potentially rich qualitative data (Willig, 2013). The interview guide (Annex A) utilized a series of open-ended questions designed to prompt detailed responses from participants, specifically targeting their experiences and perspectives regarding the role and effectiveness of Social Psychology. For example, one question asks, "What is the impact that Social Psychology research has in Portugal?" intending to elicit participant's perceptions about the current state of affairs. Another question delves into the realm of responsibility, asking "Where does the responsibility of researchers start and end?", encouraging the interviewees to contemplate and articulate their understanding of researcher obligations and boundaries. Given the semi-structured nature of the interviews, the structure wasn't rigid. In response to the evolving dialogue, additional questions were asked or existing ones were adapted to follow the flow of the interview.

The interviews conducted for this study lasted between 30 min and 1h30 min. After obtaining informed consent, the interviews were audio-recorded and securely stored in an encrypted folder to ensure data confidentiality. Following the recording process, the interviews were transcribed verbatim, and a separate transcription copy was created where names were substituted with pseudonyms to protect the participants' identities. This anonymized version of the transcript was utilized for data analysis. Access to the data was strictly limited to the researcher and their supervisor, ensuring participant's privacy.

2.3 Analysis

Data were thematically analyzed following Braun and Clarke's (2022) reflexive approach to Thematic Analysis (RTA), which emphasizes the researcher's active participation in the process of knowledge production (Braun and Clarke, 2022). In this approach, codes represent the researcher's interpretation of recurring patterns of meaning throughout the dataset. Reflexive thematic analysis is regarded as a product of the researcher's interpretive analysis of the data, which occurs at the intersection of three factors: (1) the dataset itself; (2) the underlying theoretical assumptions of the analysis; and (3) the analytical expertise and resources available to the researcher (Braun and Clarke, 2022).

In this sense, in reflexive TA, researcher subjectivity is the main instrument used; rather than being an issue to be regulated or constrained, subjectivity is regarded as a valuable resource for research (Gough & Madill, 2012) and the process of generating knowledge is considered to be intrinsically subjective and context-dependent (Braun and Clarke, 2021).

I used RTA to produce themes as patterns of meaning across the dataset, each anchored by a common idea or central organizing concept (Braun and Clarke, 2021). TA's flexibility offered the possibility for an inductively-developed analysis, which captured both semantic and latent meanings, and offered both descriptive and interpretative accounts of the data. The theoretical flexibility of TA meant it could be informed by a critical realist framework to locate and make sense of Social Psychology researcher's descriptions.

Critical realism integrates aspects of both realist and constructionist perspectives by recognizing the contextual and situated nature of knowledge (Bhaskar, 1978; Braun and Clarke, 2022). It posits that an independent truth exists and delimits what is possible, but it remains unattainable due to the unique situatedness and viewpoints of each person. In other words, this means that the data

collected do not offer a straightforward and direct representation of reality. Instead, the data provide an indirect, mediated reflection of the reality being studied (Braun and Clarke, 2022). Grounded in an objective "truth," critical realism has gained popularity in social sciences as it lends credibility to the notion of "injustice" as a real phenomenon. This recognition facilitates a more straightforward justification for and path towards social change (Hepburn, 2003). By adopting a critical realist perspective, the study acknowledges the existence of an objective reality while simultaneously recognizing that access to it is situated on participants' subjective experiences and interpretations in understanding the impact of Social Psychology in Portugal.

2.3.1 Coding and Developing of Themes

I immersed myself in the data by reviewing the transcripts multiple times and making rough notes. Since data collection occurred over an extended period, coding of transcribed interviews began before the entire dataset was available. As the interviews were revised over time, these codes were also revised and expanded upon.

Initial coding was made utilizing the software NVivo. Once initial coding was complete, I engaged in the process of identifying features of the data relevant to the research questions in order to construct tentative themes. Simultaneously, I acknowledged my role as a researcher in the co-creation of themes (Braun and Clarke, 2022).

Given the aforementioned complexity of the term "social change", this study operates on the assumption that Social Psychology research focusing on topics intrinsically related to social change recognizes it as the ultimate goal of its contributions. Thus, evaluations of "impact" within this study are understood as impact "for social change," in accordance with how the concept was operationalized.

The process of coding and generating themes was designed to incorporate both descriptive and interpretive aspects, as defined by Braun and Clarke (2022). The descriptive component aimed to capture the participants' statements, while the interpretive aspect relied on my subjectivity to explore less obvious patterns. I employed the method outlined by Braun and Clarke (2022) called "using codes as building blocks" (p. 96), organizing my codes into topic areas. By visually mapping and consistently engaging with the data, I generated and fine-tuned a collection of 10 potential themes.

At this stage, the original research questions: (1) how do social psychologists in Portugal perceive the impact of Social Psychology research in promoting social change in Portugal?; and (2) what do social psychologists in Portugal believe to be the most efficient strategies for Social Psychology to elicit tangible social change? Were refined to (1) how do social psychologists in Portugal make sense of the impact of Social Psychology research in Portugal?; and (2) How social psychologists in Portugal negotiate the role of Social Psychology research and their own research in the promotion of Social Change?

My process of revising and defining themes started with manually exporting all codes and themes from NVivo to Google Sheets. I made this choice because I considered NVivo suboptimal for online discussions with my supervisor and because I found its interface too restrictive for a macro view of the themes and subthemes and their respective codes and excerpts. The Google Sheets included columns indicating the theme, subtheme, code, excerpt, source, and (my) commentaries. Through this, I examined all the excerpts associated with each specific theme and sub-theme, enabling me to refine and define new potential themes into a comprehensive thematic analysis that served as the foundation for the writing phase.

At this stage, the analysis consisted of 5 themes and 15 subthemes, which varied in several ways from the original candidate themes. Upon examining the gathered data, I observed that some themes over relied on a topical structure, which is not optimal for RTA (Braun and Clarke, 2022). For example, the theme “Strategies” compiled a simple compilation of strategies described by participants without a proper analytic input. Furthermore, some boundaries between the original themes were not sufficiently defined. For example, the themes “Causes” and “Strategies” shared some redundancy, as what could be defined as a “strategy” often implied an underline “cause”. In this example, the codes in “Strategies” and “Causes” were reanalyzed and understood to be part of a central organizing concept later entitled “The Gap Between Research and Society” that included facets of other (then) themes like “Portuguese Social Context”. Lastly, some themes that were not merely topic summaries, but carried a topical “name”, were renamed according to Braun and Clarke’s (2022) notion that the name of a theme should capture its essence and scope. For example, the theme “Agency” was renamed to “It’s Not Possible to Do Everything.”

While writing the initial draft of my analysis, I gained a deeper understanding of which themes and sub-themes were seamlessly integrating into the overall analysis and which ones did not fit as effectively. This process helped fine-tuning the boundaries of each theme, discerning additional

underlying patterns, and contemplating the connections between themes and their respective content. Finally, some subthemes were merged together leaving the final model comprised of 5 themes and 6 subthemes. After analysis was concluded and the best excerpts were selected, each excerpt was translated into English by a third party and the author, who later discussed the best way to translate the idea while maintaining original structure of each excerpt. The original Portuguese can be found in Annex B

3. Results

The meaning and experience relating to social change and Social Psychology research can only be understood in context; meaning, for most participants, was tied to the experience of researching in Portugal. Even when participants brought experiences they had had abroad, they were framed in contrast with their experience in Portugal. Therefore, although this research presents themes that may be extendable to other fields or contexts, this action requires proper care. Furthermore, as previously discussed, this research assumes that Social Psychology research that focuses on subjects intrinsically related to social change do understand social change as the objective for which they contribute. Therefore, readings of “impact” are understood as impact “for social change” as it was operationalized.

Five themes were constructed from the interview data: (a) Impact is Indirect, (b) Unfulfilled Potential, (c) The Gap Between Research and Society, (d) Ambivalent Accountability Demands for the Discipline, and (e) “It’s Not Possible to Do Everything”. Participants’ specific descriptions that would potentially violate their privacy were suppressed.

3.1 Impact is Indirect

Social Psychology research’s impact in society was primarily described as indirect. In this sense, the impact of Social Psychology research is perceived as it being instrumentalized by other social actors, who use the research to inform their practices and decision-making. As I1 puts it,

I believe that, first, we should have the understanding that research does not change society. It can help the State and several societal actors to extract information and support social change processes through research. However, our contribution to social change processes is not a decisive contribution. That is, a researcher is not a Minister who decides on social policy implementation. Our position is many steps behind that [policy implementation]. (I1)

The idea that the impact of Social Psychology research is mainly indirect is a recurring theme throughout the analysis. This conceptualization is often implicit in the subjects’ comments about the impact of Social Psychology research: “(...) could perfectly inform intervention models and decisions” (I2). Although the subjects perceive that the impact of research is mostly manifested via “instrumentalization”, its effects may not rely solely on it (e.g., “[We have to] guarantee that this

research has an impact on people, even if that means simply reaffirming certain positions. I think this is already an achievement,” I1).

The idea of the indirect impact of Social Psychology research was not only presented as a descriptive aspect of the field, but imbued with normative representations. Therefore, another facet of this patterns is the recognition that they are not “social engineers” who directly change society, but rather their research should be used by social actors to bring about social change (e.g., *We do not, and should not, have much control over if and how knowledge will be translated into policy,” I4; “I believe our role is to develop good knowledge tools, (...) it is not to directly influence the transformation of reality,” I6).*

However, the need for the instrumentalization of social psychological research by other social actors also raises frustration in participants about social psychologists’ lack of autonomy and agency in shaping the impact of their own research. As participant I2 described,

I think, from a slightly more cynical perspective, that we can communicate whatever we want, but if the policy makers are not sensitive to the importance of incorporating scientific knowledge, I think we can say whatever we want and produce whatever reports and press releases we want that won't impact as much. (I2)

3.2 Unfulfilled Potential

The theme of "unfulfilled potential" captures the perception that Social Psychology research has not achieved the kind of impact on society that many had hoped for and believe it is able to achieve. Most of the participants highlighted Social Psychology as a field possessing a significant potential for promoting social change. As I7 succinctly mentioned, *“Few disciplines have such a large potential for social change as Social Psychology.”* This notion was often supported by Social Psychology’s perceived potential to make significant contributions to various fields (e.g., Social Psychology addresses issues relating to *“health, environment, [...] mental health, [...] child development, [...] prejudice, discrimination, sexual orientation, [...] and racism,” I6*); it’s knowledge about what promotes human behavior (e.g., *“ [Social Psychology] understands which are the variables that can increase the likelihood of a person having an “adequate” behavior or a behavior perceived as adequate at a certain point in time. This is true for the environmental, health, and several other sectors,” I8*); and its applicability (e.g., *“It [Social Psychology] indeed describes,*

explains, and encompasses these psychosocial processes. Given that, it creates enabling conditions for whoever wants to use it to promote social change from my point of view,” I7).

As the overarching theme suggests, Social Psychology's multifaceted potential for impact in society is not perceived to be fully realized. The impact of the discipline is often stated as “*not as significant as we would hope*” (I8), or even considered “*almost inexistent*” (I2). A more subtle description is that it is not “*visible*” (e.g., “*not much [impact] is visible in the public sphere,*” I5; “*I do not feel that there is an impact, at least not direct and very visible,*” I4). For instance, participant I7 mentioned “*we do not have objective indicators to assess that.*” Therefore, it is unsurprising that more vivid descriptions of having impact with one's own research often draw from working within multidisciplinary projects (e.g., “*My experience is not bad. I started working, precisely, because [suppressed] asked me to participate in a project about [supressed],*” I8) and with stakeholders (e.g., “*I think at that time those projects had quite an impact [...] because what we were doing in the project was advising the council directly on how [supressed] and where [supressed],*” I6).

Optimism stands as an answer in front of the lack of objective indicators: “*you need to be optimistic. I can see that there is a good, an impact that we cannot evaluate.*” (I7). However, regardless of this lack of objective measures, I6 describes the impact of Social Psychology as insufficient when general positive outcomes expected from the use of research are not present: “*It is evident that there is hope. It is also evident that we do things and that we can do things. But it is also true that all [new] IPCC reports are more daunting than the previous [ones], isn't it?*” (I6). As we will see more in depth in the following theme “The Gap Between Research and Society”, this reduced tangible impact often appears framed as a disconnect between academia and society.

[the impact] is almost inexistent. Therefore, in general, I think that there is very little connection between academia and public policies in Portugal. In other words, the impact is not the most practical. (I2)

Another dimension of Social Psychology's unfulfilled potential appeared in descriptions of instances in its history when it reinforced social inequalities. Something that may even be ignored by some researchers, as I1 stated, “*Discussions about how psychology itself damaged these groups keeps being neglected. I am thinking, for example, of conversion therapy for LGBT people; of electric shocks...*” A perceived present consequence of said legacy is the further exacerbation of Social Psychology's distance from society as it “*Psychology is often perceived as a science os*

conformity” (I5). This perception (or previous negative experiences) may discourage social groups from engaging with Social Psychology research and researchers. As I4 described,

If we are developing research in Social Psychology that is intended to have an impact on a certain community or social group, how do we reach out to those individuals, how do we build trusting relationships with these individuals? Sometimes, these are individuals who have been mistreated by psychology, by psychology research in the past.

3.3 The Gap Between Research and Society

This theme is a direct follow up from the last two themes, representing patterns that reflect the perception of an existing gap between science (and Social Psychology, in particular) and Portuguese society and how this relationship is intertwined with the field’s unrealized potential for impact. According to most participants, Portugal faces challenges in “*placing science in the ways of thinking and working of institutions, at a political level*” (I7), as the relationship between academia and society “*are challenging, and there are many mechanisms that do not facilitate the access to one another*” (I6).

This theme includes four sub-themes, each highlighting different dimensions of this gap. The first sub-theme, "Research is undervalued," refers to how Portugal's recent dictatorship has negatively affected society's understanding and appreciation of scientific knowledge and left negative marks in terms of human rights. The second sub-theme, "Social Psychology’s Absence from the Social Fabric," highlights how the field is unknown outside academic circles and has failed to be present in non-academic working spaces. The third sub-theme, "Insufficient/Inefficient Knowledge Translation Activities", pertains to the notion that research impact can be improved mainly through better communication efforts. Lastly, the fourth sub-theme, "Disconnect Between Research and Societal Need," emphasizes that Social Psychology research has not adequately addressed the needs of society.

3.3.1 Research is Undervalued

Participants described Portugal's dictatorship as a long and impactful period that still leaves a lasting imprint on the country to this day: “*My country has ‘lived’ a fascist experience for many years, right? Forty-eight years of fascism, and we are still in the democratization process. I do not think it ends.*” (I1). While some participants mentioned the effects of the dictatorship on subjects

relevant to Social Psychology research (such as “sexism”, I3 and “racism,” I1), most of them mainly focused on how education was “devalued” (I7) and how it resulted in “*an expressive shortfall in the scientific system and scientific culture*” (I2) when discussing the historical effects of the dictatorship on the impact of social psychological research.

As a consequence, a relevant pattern constructed from the data describes the perception of a low scientific literacy in Portugal (e.g., “*we have lower levels of education than certain countries, [...] we have 19% of people with bachelor’s degrees and less than 3% with PhDs,*” I3). This low scientific literacy rate means that researchers are considered to be part of an elite (e.g., “*A person who does research and has a doctoral degree is seen as being part of an elite,*” I3; “*The social status of a researcher, of a psychologist more broadly, is higher,*” I9). A difference in status that, however, hinders dimensions of academic presence in society. For instance, I7 exemplified that “*the vast majority of managers have not completed higher academic degrees, and this probably makes them more unlikely to attract highly qualified people from universities, to hire doctoral studies, and to partner with universities.*”

Moreover, being seen as an "elite" also leads to negative representations (e.g., “*There is a stigma that doing research is not a job. That being in the library, reading and thinking is not ‘working.’ And this is something very cultural and intrinsic, I would say, to the Portuguese reality,*” I2) and discourages either party from working towards bridging the gap, as it reinforces the social divide between them. As I4 said,

Academics are often seen as intellectuals, somewhat arrogant in a way, who claim to know what the problems are and how they should be solved and believe that other people are not thinking impartially about certain matters. But then, there is also the reverse, where academics themselves, in a way, look at other people who would be instrumental in this connection between knowledge - for instance, if they are politicians, there is always a suspicion of biases or hidden interests; if they are technicians, that they lack certain knowledge that would be super relevant for the analysis of those problems.

The undervaluing of research was also frequently characterized in terms of expectations for what constitutes impact, in that participants often argued that it should not necessarily be immediate and quantifiable (e.g. “*I don't necessarily believe that all research done in Social Psychology needs to have a direct, immediate, and known utility.*” I4). Otherwise, as I1 said, impact “*can also have a neoliberal undertone. ‘If there is no impact, is not useful.’*” This neoliberal expectation of impact

was both expressed in the rejection of nuance (e.g., “we oftentimes work looking for interaction effects. And the public, or society, is interested in the main effects.” I3) and how researchers feel forced to forego theoretical research because of, among other things, funding demands:

It doesn't have to be all here and now. I think sometimes the flip side of impact is that we can get a little trapped in this idea of 'I'm only going to study what I know will be funded or what will have a direct impact or what will be heard by policymakers.' And I think that can be a bit limiting and can have long-term effects from the point of view of knowledge production. (I2)

Lastly, a facet that characterizes the undervaluing of research, and was referred in relation to Social Psychology in particular, is how sectors of society are resistant to it. Participants described that Social Psychology deals with “resistance to change” (I7) and that, for some social actors, its value does not justify the risk of exposure (e.g. “Often, the kind of results I try to show can put people in a defensive posture, in the sense that it is putting their image into question,” 3) or is in itself, a risk:

In the same way, those who work with environmental issues, climate change issues, like a person who wants to talk about climate change and the impacts of CO2 emissions from fossil fuels and talk to Galp [a Portuguese multinational energy corporation about their results], isn't it? This is another obstacle: dealing with people's interests. (I3)

3.3.2 Social Psychology's Absence from the Social Fabric

The second subtheme pertains to the perceived low extent of Social Psychology's presence in society beyond the confines of academia. Participants reported that the field lacks social recognition, and its scope is often unknown, be it because social actors may fail to foresee relevant interactions (e.g., “people say ‘Oh, but is this related?’ And suddenly realize, ‘Yeah, it makes sense’” I8) or because they simply don't know what Social Psychology researchers do that may be relevant for them. For instance, when recounting an experience on the field, I2 said:

I now collaborate with [supressed]. And it is so funny because they used to say “I had no idea that you were working on these issues” and I would just say “yeah, we have been working on this for several years.” There is a complete lack of understanding concerning the potential of the discipline and the scientific knowlegde that is produced in some fields.

According to the participants, Social Psychology has a low media presence (e.g., “in the media, interventions, for example, in opinion pieces, in newspapers of wide circulation, we notice that

there is little visibility,” I9). Within participant’s descriptions, this diminished presence was often described as one tangible way of assessing Social Psychology’s low presence in society:

In the specific case of Social Psychology, I believe we have very little insertion from a political and societal viewpoint. [...] Who are the people that are called to comment on a certain matter? We rarely see psychologists who believe they belong on television [...] it's very rare to see this representation. (I3)

Participants highlighted the low media presence of Social Psychology when compared to other sciences (e.g., “*we frequently hear news from other scientific fields and rarely hear news articles about [our] findings,*” I5). One described how even when Social Psychology does receive media coverage, it tends to focus on research conducted outside of Portugal rather than on local studies: “*The majority of times that research, psychological research, is referred to [by the media], I see a reference to that [research] that is not done in Portugal but rather in other international contexts,*” (I5).

One participant in the study (I8) dedicated considerable attention to describing their experience relating to how they perceive some scientific areas to dominate the presence of science in society: “*there is a prevalence of certain scientific areas in society and a lack of prevalence of others [subjects]. We joke that the country is always governed by lawyers, then there are the engineers and managers,*” (I8). They “appropriate” Social Psychology space without the proper methodological background (e.g., “[They] *often appropriate this knowledge from psychology. And it's a pity for everyone because, effectively, those who have the theoretical foundations to understand certain processes, it's psychology,*” I8).

As such, they are prioritized by funding institutions: “*they are the ones that get [the funding and projects], they are the ones that later will look for psychology [professionals],*” (I8) And Social Psychology is left ostracized and without funding. As I8 puts it: “*Thanks to that, there are very few projects focused on psychology. There is little recognition of [social] psychology. And this is something, perhaps, at the national level.*”

The low recognition of Social Psychology relates to another very common pattern in participants’ descriptions: the limited space that qualified researchers, especially social psychologists, can find in the Portuguese working environments outside of the academic sphere: “*we can only find jobs if we stay in academia. Roles outside academia are very rare.*” (I2). This notion highlights the perceived importance of increasing the presence and application of Social Psychology outside of

academia and the potential benefits that could come from a closer link to non-academic sectors. As such, researchers don't find opportunities to apply the knowledge more directly elsewhere (e.g., “[They] don't always manage to find a profession in which they can exercise the skills that they have learned or where they could translate them into an ‘application’, so to speak, of Social Psychology knowledge,” I7).

Lastly, participants framed further integration with non-academic working spaces or (interdisciplinary teams) as both a way to bridge the gap with society (e.g., “If these people could be more easily integrated into teams that are not necessarily dedicated to research, but could bridge this gap [...] it would be super valuable,” I4) and to increase the field's social social recognition (e.g., “Therefore, I believe that we are marking our territory in this interaction between us and other scientific areas, between us and often those who also request science,” I8). This connection may provide opportunities for Social Psychology to have a more direct impact on societal issues and for non-academic sectors to benefit from the insights and knowledge produced in the field.

3.3.3 Insufficient/Inefficient Knowledge Translation Activities

As noted, all participants shared a common belief that Social Psychology needs to be more integrated with society and enumerated numerous factors that explain how this divide is present. A prevalent pattern that emerged from the data was participants' perception of a lack of science communication activities (e.g., “the impact, the communication of this [Social Psychology research findings] to reach the non-scientific community, the wider public, there is a link missing,” I9). This was described as an “important” aspect and often tied with Social Psychology's insufficient efforts on this front (e.g., “There are areas doing this very well and there are scientific fields that do not do this. And clearly we have a science communication deficit [...] I believe that this is the first step in giving visibility to the work,” I2).

These communication activities were framed as knowledge translation efforts that included publishing research (e.g., “the impact is trying [...] to disseminate as much as possible the results from research, from high-impact scientific journals,” I9), reaching to media outlets (e.g., “we become more visible in the media by assuming a more active position [...], giving us more room for providing input to the media and later have more impact on society,” I3; “I believe that it sometimes also involves this aspect, as I usually say, of the news broadcast, of disseminating, of

people realizing that it is interesting,” I8), or anything that would increase Social Psychology presence in society:

It can be many things, it can even consist of delivering lectures. Giving good lectures is disseminating. But there are many other ways: taking part in public debates, roundtables (...), etc. All these little things that exist in civil life, local politics, and the participation of social psychologists, I think it would be very important. (I7)

The importance given to communication activities relates to the first theme, as the discipline's impact was often perceived indirect and to be instrumentalized by other areas of society and has been demanded by financial institutions (e.g., “*Demands are made by funding entities, which are increasingly, and rightly so, insisting on the importance of not only being concerned with communicating science to peers, but also to society at large,*” I2). The field's potential for impact would lie in producing new knowledge and its dissemination and application to real-world problems. Knowledge translation efforts would ensure that the research produced is understood and applied in the appropriate contexts. Therefore, not being known would imply a decisive loss in the field's impact. As I4 said,

I often think that who could take the knowledge [produced by Social Psychology] and put it to good use, in a more applied way, probably do not even know what is happening inside [Social Psychology] laboratories and departments.

Participants identified that one of the main obstacles to effective knowledge translation efforts in Social Psychology is the complexity of the field's theoretical concepts and methodologies that are often oversimplified to a harmful degree (e.g., “*There is a strong tendency towards an oversimplification of what is said, which at times may undermine the intended message,*” I5). They noted that conveying these concepts to the general public or to other fields of knowledge can be challenging as the lack of a common language between Social Psychology and other stakeholders may hinder effective communication (e.g., “[social psychologists and stakeholders] *can even be interested in the same topics, but it is difficult to find a language in which we can [all] understand.*” I4). Furthermore, the aforementioned society's demand for immediate impact reduces their receptivity to subtleties:

Quando eu estou a tentar transmitir a minha investigação [...] seja para as políticas públicas, seja para os média, nunca vai a parte da investigação que eu faço. Fica-se pelo efeito principal, que é de facto existem enviesamentos. Ora, não era preciso a minha investigação para se saber isso

[...]. Enquanto a minha investigação tem a ver com um nível de complexidade que é muito mais específico, um nível de complexidade mais elevado, o público e a sociedade não está disponível para esse nível de complexidade. (I3)

It is very challenging to translate the complexity of the psychological analysis into the [type of] discourse usually required in the public sphere, in which it is almost required that one is 100% sure. (I5)

A subtlety of emphasizing knowledge translation strategies is that participants may be hesitant to explicitly critique the field's research methods based on their potential impact, or they may view such methods as capable of producing knowledge that is effective, albeit underutilized. Based on such understanding, the reduced impact of Social Psychology research would not stem from methodological issues but from the fact that the research is not being operationalized in practice. For instance, I7 not only said that “*the obstacles that exist are almost not of a scientific-epistemological nature,*” they also mentioned:

I do not have a negative or pessimistic perspective of the work that fellow researchers and social psychologists have done. I think they do their job well. I believe they do it very, very, very, very well. This is one of the disciplines where that is perhaps more evident. They develop and produce phenomenal work with a very, very, very, very high potential for social change, which, unfortunately, does not always get the social recognition it deserves. (I7)

The following theme provides a rare description (in the data) that offers a counterpoint to this notion. While other participants, including I7, shared some minor methodological critique of the field, the next theme is mostly composed by descriptions of only one participant who stands out from the group in their more severe criticism of the epistemological foundations of Social Psychology.

3.3.4 Disconnect Between Social Psychology Research and Societal Needs

This subtheme represents one distinct facet of the gap between research and society from the side of Social Psychology. It focuses on its political stand, research questions, methodology, and the very nature of how some of them either reinforce the status *quo* or are insufficient to promote social change. Although shades of such criticisms appeared in the voices of more than one participant (namely I1, I4, and I7), I1's was considerably more emphatic, and their criticism was fundamentally different. As such, the identification and inclusion of this subtheme requires some explanation.

As stated in the methods section, the adoption of a constructionist epistemology emphasizes that the occurrence of a pattern is not necessarily indicative of its significance or relevance to the analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2012). The meaningfulness of data plays a crucial role in the development and interpretation of codes and themes. The concept of meaningfulness in thematic analysis can be understood in two ways: firstly, from the perspective of the researcher who seeks to identify themes that are pertinent to the research questions at hand, and secondly, from the viewpoint of the respondent who conveys their conviction towards the issues being addressed (Byrne, 2022). Therefore, I recognize the importance of recurrence but consider meaningfulness as a central criterion as I seek to construct themes pertinent to the research questions.

Exceptions are examples of subtleties and contradiction in the data (Phoenix and Orr, 2017). Failing to acknowledge them can be problematic as it may undermine confidence in the thematic findings (McPherson & Horne, 2006). Furthermore, due to the limited data sample, I am compelled to rely more heavily on the degree of conviction that can be inferred from participants' descriptions and how their engagement influenced my perception of the theme. I recognize that extensively relying on one participant's remarks may limit the nuance present in this discourse. However, my aim in exploring these exceptions is to expand the scope of the analysis by embracing complexity, disputes, and acknowledging the theme's intricacy that I construct from my dataset. As such, suppressing it would be more restrictive than fully engaging with it. In this subtheme, the gap between Social Psychology and society and its consequent lack of impact is not framed on the grounds of poor communication or scientific literacy but rather on perceived fundamental issues of the discipline, starting with research questions.

Some participants used normative remarks to refer to Social Psychology's role in addressing issues deemed relevant and pressing in society. Implying that the field, sometimes, falls short in this regard:

I believe researchers are, to some extent, responsible for being aware of what the world needs. It is okay not to do research about the most "fashionable" topic. Nonetheless, since we are being paid by taxpayers, since we want to give something back to society, [we need to] at least be aware of whether or not what we are studying can (or not) be useful to the world in present times. (I4)

[Social Psychology] can and must, from my point of view, be able to position itself at the forefront of solutions. What needs to be done to find solutions to the questions that concern us all. (I7)

I1 departs from the cautious and indirect criticism observed in other participants, as they openly express their perception that Social Psychology researchers often lack interest in exploring topics that are relevant to society. Resulting in what they call “*anecdotal impact*”, some research questions *are basically of interest to some researchers. They don't have any social repercussions, in most cases. Or it ends up in something worse, which is what I call an 'anecdotal impact', that is, the kind of things that appear in the scientific curiosity columns of newspapers. For example, 'people think worse in places where it smells bad'. I don't think this helps us at all with the issues we currently face. (I1)*

Those sorts of question are not perceived to be merely “useless”; they are described as actively shifting the focus of scientific discourse and diminishing the general perception of the urgency of pressing issues (e.g., “*they serve as [newspaper] cover to pretend that everything is going well*”, I1). Ultimately, they would engender conformity: “*I believe these forms of psychology not only end up having no impact but also any effect they may have justify the neoliberal system in which we live in,*” (I1).

This notion is tied with how I1 perceives the focus of research to often be on social groups with high status (e.g., “*we always keep looking, psychology at least, always keep looking at those who have power,*” I1), whose perspective would not properly promote meaningful social change:

How are you going to ask white people what they think about black people in a society that has always been structurally racist? [...] [Instead,] you must go ask black people, precisely, what is going on here. They are the ones who can shed light on this. (I1)

Another facet involves the perceived field’s overreliance on positivist methodologies focused on individual “cognition”. In this, I1 was accompanied by I7, who stated that “*we look at psychology mostly in processes that are strictly individual or cognitive. These may be important, but if we focus only on that, we will not be able to change much.*” However, whether I7 described that, for Social Psychology to promote meaningful social change, moving beyond said cognitivist approach was complementary (e.g., “*we cannot [guide ourselves] only by interindividual mechanisms, such as cognitive mechanisms.*” I7), I1 considered it to be ineffective: “*It depends*

on what one understand by Social Psychology because if it's within the cognitive framework, the impact will be zero.” Particularly when they do not take the portuguese social context into account:

I feel that Social Psychology research should encompass the social context in which people live. Because it is always more relevant than pre-made theories – made in the United States – talking about a universal that does not apply. (I1)

Differently than dissemination efforts, for example, the very existence of questions regarding the methodological foundations of the discipline may dispute the role of Social Psychology. The remarks presented here mainly by I1 address how some perceive impact to require changes in how the field conducts research. But, as noted, these remarks are not all created equal. I4 and I7 encourage subtle additions and slight changes, at most, while I1 advocates for a profound restructuring of the discipline.

3.4 Ambivalent Accountability Demands for the Discipline

This theme highlights to which extent participants place expectations and requirements on Social Psychology regarding its legitimacy and professional authority (or lack thereof). Ambivalent accountability demands refer to how responsibility or the sense of duty for the discipline itself as a field of knowledge was negotiated by participants. Participants' descriptions for this theme encompass two sub-themes in dispute: (a) “Engagement”, referring to how research should be intertwined with the promotion of social change; and (b) “True Scientific Research”, which highlights the field’s main objective as being the disciplinary accumulation of knowledge.

3.4.1 “Engagement”

Similar to the subtheme “Disconnect Between Social Psychology Research and Societal Needs”, this pattern derives mainly (in this case, entirely) from one participant. However, I considered it a meaningful addition to the discourse as it explicitly and thoroughly expresses social psychological research's role in promoting social change as a precondition for its worth. In this sense, political engagement is a condition for proper research: *“the research we do cannot be disconnected from social change processes,”* (I1).

Amongst the participants’ descriptions, claims of “neutrality” are not considered to be valuable (e.g., *“I cannot accept research as a process in which I, neutrally and objectively, assess things. I do not think this has any place in this day and age,”* I1). They (I1) describe their research as

something that requires direct “engagement” with social actors: “*it is very much a practice of engaging with these [social] movements, of listening to what these movements have to say and what are peoples’ needs.*” I1). Meaning that Social Psychology is necessarily political, consequently, the impact of social psychological research for promoting social change is perceived as explicitly intertwined with a politically engaged non-positivistic approach to research: “*the knowledge produced by research [activities] is integral to this democratization process. Therefore, they are necessarily political a priori,*” (I1). Something that I1 frames as a more “concrete” way of conducting research (e.g., “*It is more realistic than imagining a bunch of ideas about people and theoretical frameworks that often have nothing to do with people,*” I1) and that requires the researcher to meaningfully participate beyond the constraints of Social Psychology “[*these practices] force us to be present, perhaps, and pay more attention to what is going on in the political and economic spheres,*” (I1).

This notion blurs the boundaries between society and academia based on similar hierarchy and skepticism about the purposes that historically drew the lines between “science” and other discourses. As I1 said, “*I think psychology horribly overuses the concept of science.*”

Ultimately, they base their critique of positivism in social psychological research on its lack of meaningful impact: “*as long as we cannot accomplish these minimal things, we are not going anywhere and will continue to be a discipline that essentially serves as a methodological repository of things,*” (I1).

3.4.2 “True Scientific Research”

Amongst most participants’ descriptions, there was often a sense of a much higher distinction between research and its desirable impact for social change. “*Scientific knowledge*” was framed separately and independently, constituting the primary objective of scientific research. As such, researchers are perceived to be responsible for “*doing quality research, publishing, and training students*” (I9).

Participants often expressed the belief that political activism is not a natural part of the research process in Social Psychology and that it risks tainting the objectivity and legitimacy of the discipline. Such concerns sometimes appeared as form of internal criticism:

In a way, it is even difficult to distinguish if what they [some social psychologists] are doing is activism or scientific research. (I4)

When a doctoral student comes in here telling me that he is doing a Ph.D. because they want to save the world or because they are an activist, I tell them straight away: "That is wrong, it does not work like this. This is not the goal of a Ph.D." I believe the objective of scientific research is to produce scientific knowledge. (I2)

This idea carries a nuance in that participants did not see it as a rejection of personal convictions or political engagement, but rather such efforts should be separated from the researcher's role (e.g., *"it is about not letting ourselves get completely mixed up with our [other] roles, which we can also have in parallel. That is, also being an activist in addition to being a researcher,"* I4). While participants often acknowledged the importance of social change efforts, the legitimacy and accountability of the research field are perceived as primarily based on its ability to generate knowledge and insights, not on its ability to effect social change.

[our role] is not to influence society's transformation directly. Of course, we direct efforts towards that. But these efforts are "second-line" efforts. The "baseline" are the efforts towards strengthening a field of knowledge and its analytical instruments. (I6)

Ultimately, this distinction may not only be perceived as an internal value for the discipline, but as metaperception. Participants perceive society to value such efforts and they would cement Social Psychology's professional authority on the basis of its specialized knowledge. For instance, when referring to attempts of increasing the field's impact, I3 defended *"First, trying to show that we are neutral, that we do not have vested interests, [that we] are not striving to find pre-determined results, and that our research is designed in a way that does not favour a result or the other."* Something that is contrary to what I1 defended in the previous subtheme: *"It's about establishing a connection and dialogue with social movements to provide them with the theoretical support they sometimes need,"* (I1)

Different from what happened in the sub-theme "engagement", where the value of research was framed as intertwined with political engagement and the field's potential for impact, the critique of more politically engaged methods present here was not explicitly framed on its potential for societal impact, but on its legitimacy as a "science". The accountability of the research process was mainly expressed as an active detachment from political engagement.

Further elaboration is required on the assumption made for conducting this study - that Social Psychology research that addresses societal issues is ultimately concerned with social change (as operationally defined). The different accountability demands were interpreted here regarding the

degree of desired change or *how* Social Psychology should contribute to this process. Claims of neutrality were not interpreted as relinquishing the goal of social change, but rather as a facet of how participants negotiated the specific role that the discipline should play.

3.5 “It’s Not Possible to Do Everything”

The last theme related to how academic pressure and constraints often leave participants with little time, energy, and resources to act beyond their research throughout their academic careers. Previously, one dimension of the sub-theme “Social Psychology Absence from the Social Fabric” alluded to the perception that researchers have difficulty finding work outside of academia. However, to find job security in academia, one is not only required time (e.g., “*I have been on this career path [...] for such a long, long time. I received my Ph.D. a little over ten years ago [...], and only now I managed to get, for instance, a contract [in the field],*” I4), but is also required to publish in the right journals. And lots of it (e.g., “*Nowadays there is much more concern with issues such as the number of publications in journals of a certain profile,*” I1).

This means that the current academic structure does not reward researchers (particularly early career ones) for engaging in efforts to bridge the gap with society (e.g., “[Researchers] *are only evaluated based on their research as such. Impact on social change does enter into the equation,*” I7). In such a competitive environment, this becomes a matter of survival. In fact, some participants noted that efforts for bridging the gap with society may even be viewed as damaging to their primary obligation of conducting research and publishing in high-impact journals, particular in the beginning of their career: “*until we reach some stability [in work], we are definitely worried about having a certain number of publications,*” (I4).

Adding the fact that the most widely recognized Social Psychology journals are in English, researchers often prioritize communicating their results to peers instead of other social actors. As I5 stated, researchers “*tend to favor specialized journals in the English language, especially considering the career implications and prestige of such publications.*” Consequently, this means that academia values publishing to the point where it becomes detriment for the impact of the field: “*very little time is left for us to engage in practices that would actually be more useful, I would say, for society,*” (I4).

As highlighted in the sub-theme “Insufficient/Inefficient Knowledge Translation Activities”, participants often framed efforts to bridge the gap between Social Psychology and society in terms

of communication. The importance given to knowledge translation activities relates to another common pattern: for the individual researcher, participants perceive such actions as desirable and relevant (e.g. “*I believe we should increasingly think about the outreach. This effort, this act of trying to communicate and disseminate our work, and to engage and communicate more with society at large,*” I3) but, ultimately, voluntary. This was either explained on the basis of a researcher’s “*profile*”:

Some people have a better profile than others to do this type of work, and not everyone should be asked to do this work. (I3)

You cannot also ask this of everyone because people do not all have the same willingness and the same competencies. [...] But maybe, maybe – this “maybe” is very important – maybe more could be done in the field of dissemination, promotion, and getting closer to the public option. (I7)

Our concern is more technical and scientific. Producing quality research and trying to publish in the best journals. With less concern for translating this into publicity. (I9)

Or, alternatively, due to the numerous demands and obligations that come with academic life and leave little time or priority for knowledge translation activities:

Responsibility also demands time, doesn’t it? And many of us, researchers, are also teachers. We also have management tasks. Therefore, the responsibility as a researcher is responsibility during weekends and holidays, isn’t it? [...] We do not have 100-hours days. We have 24-hour24-hours days. And we also have to sleep, eat, and live. (I5)

Associated with this voluntary perspective on knowledge translation activities, participants often considered “institutions” to be the main responsible for them: “*it has to be an institutional question. I believe research centers [should take on this role], and not individuals themselves,*” (I2). Finally, even if not explained in detail, participants described that such efforts would require “*structural reforms*” (I4).

4. Conclusions and Discussion

This thesis aimed to explore how social psychologists in Portugal made sense of the impact of social psychological research and how they negotiate their role in promoting social change. Based on interviews conducted with Portuguese social psychologists and on a thematic analysis of those, five distinct but interconnected themes were identified as key results of this thesis: (a) Impact is Indirect, (b) Unfulfilled Potential, (c) The Gap Between Research and Society, (d) Ambivalent Accountability Demands, and (e) “It’s Not Possible to Do Everything”. The meanings and experiences participants described in relation to the impact of Social Psychology research echo previous research. Impact was predominantly understood as the effect of interaction between scientific and societal stakeholders (Fecher, & Hebing 2021). Taken together, my data shows that participants’ experiences, how they interpret those experiences, and the meaning they attribute to impact and their role in promoting social change are mainly underpinned by dominant positivistic academic pressures and the underlying notion of research and society as two distinct worlds.

Like Belsey & Nisbet (2013), my data suggests that most participants perceive the public as having limited scientific knowledge, which could lead to potential mistakes in judgment and policy preferences. The dictatorial, fascist regime in Portugal from 28 May 1926 until 25 April 1974, and its consequences were mainly brought up by interviewees as primary contributors to the country’s perceived scientific illiteracy. This notion aligns with Davies’ (2008, p.428) research with US physical and environmental scientists and engineers that reflect a “deficit model” of science communication that views a lack of scientific understanding as the fundamental cause of resistance towards technological innovations, environmental activities, and sufficient investment in scientific research. Of note, although these perceptions could be inferred from most participants, some explicitly referred to social actors as a source of research directions and knowledge, which indicates conflicting views within the discipline. Furthermore, participants steered away from naturalistic language when addressing scientific illiteracy. Like most in the 2001 Wellcome Trust study, most participants understand the issue to be related with a perceived lack of access to education, which results in a perceived absence of scientists in everyday Portuguese life.

Consequently, as in Kurath’s & Gilser’s (2009) research with bio- and nanotechnology scientists, engagement with society was mostly framed as sharing information. While generally critical of media coverage, participants often saw it as crucial for promoting science literacy and promoting the field’s social recognition. As a rule, they strongly see the relevance in participating in public

debates and consider policy-makers as the primary audience to connect with. However, differently from Peters' (2013) research that suggests that most scientists consider responding to journalists a professional duty, participants understand dissemination as an effort distinct from their already demanding role as researchers. Therefore, even if explicitly valuing those efforts, most participants don't see themselves as facilitators of the public's direct involvement in decision-making processes, like deliberative meetings.

Data suggests that most participants make a clear distinction between internal scientific communication and public communication, especially in the context of mass media. Regarding policy, this notion aligns with what Lin & Gibson (2003) refer to as a “two communities construct” (p. 22), which follows the assumptions that “the researcher and research organizations are outside the policy process; that the point of persuasion is at the interface between the research world and the policy world; and, that the locus of power is in the policy world” (Lin & Gibson, 2003, p. 22). Dissemination of science reconstructed for public consumption (Dunwoody, 1993) is thus seen as a follow-up step after scientific results have been achieved.

Given that participants also recognize that Social Psychology deals with controversial and complex social issues, this focus given to dissemination as the main way of increasing social recognition might not always be the most effective. For researchers whose work does not stir substantial debate or contention, strategies like school-based outreach and specialized media exposure can be more effective means of communication. However, for those engaging in more controversial topics, it may be more beneficial to consider alternative forms of engagement (Baram-Tsabari & Lewenstein, 2017).

Peters et al. (2012) suggested that the boundaries between internal academic discourse and public communication and between specialized and general knowledge tend to be less rigid in the humanities and social sciences compared to the natural sciences. Participants' remarks introduce an additional layer to this concept in relation to Social Psychology in Portugal. These less strict boundaries are not a consensus, being expressed in conflicting internal views for the discipline where most abide by more traditional separations. Furthermore, the noticeable focus on dissemination implies a positive evaluation of the knowledge produced, that does not call for significant methodological and epistemological changes (except for one participant). The lack of patterns that refer to the aforementioned “crisis of Social Psychology” is noticeable, with only one

participant openly criticizing the field for a perceived lack of relevance due to its preference for acontextual methods and irrelevant research questions.

Participants mainly described the academic context as limiting and constrained, structured by publishing (to peers) neoliberal pressures, and highly competitive, with tenure-track or permanent positions hard to achieve. As Jungbauer-Gans and Gross (2013) pointed out, academics are continuously under pressure to stand out in a crowded field where merit is often measured by quantity and frequency of publication. This prevailing "publish or perish" culture may prioritize publication outputs over other significant aspects of academia, such as teaching, mentorship, and broader societal impacts (Alcaire & Grácio, 2021). Furthermore, the dominance of English as the lingua franca of academia presents a significant challenge to accessibility and inclusivity in knowledge production and dissemination for Social Psychology in Portugal. This language bias means that knowledge pertaining to specific non-English speaking countries, often critical for local policies and practices, becomes less accessible to those who primarily speak the native language (Lillis & Curry, 2010).

Despite an effective complicity of most participants in expressing and enacting the rules dictated by academic pressures (often due to a described lack of alternative or time), many critically discussed expectations over the number of publications and other constraints of academic life. They often talked about their frustration with increasing (already high) working pressures and new demands for demonstrable social impact and dissemination that are not accompanied by more necessary structural changes and institutional initiatives.

The balance between work and family, uncontrolled job demands, the leadership style of supervisors, and the decision-making process within teams are all linked to increased pressure to respond to a series of challenges in the academic job market (Levecque et al., 2017). Mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and stress are on the rise among doctoral students, young researchers, and early-career faculty (Barry et al., 2018; Levecque et al., 2017). An online questionnaire conducted on the Portuguese scientist community at the end of 2019 and the beginning of 2020 unveiled that a third of these individuals exhibited burnout symptoms, such as fatigue, skepticism about their work's significance, and diminished professional efficiency. Furthermore, the majority reported working over 40 hours weekly (Ferreira, 2021). As participants pointed out (or remembered), early-career researchers experience the uncertainty of being stuck in career limbo, spending years, or in some instances, decades, cycling through scholarships,

freelance work, and brief contracts (Alcaire & Grácio, 2021). Participants referred to the little time that is left to engage with other forms of impact through the academic career, an experience that Alcaire & Grácio (2021) succinctly summarized: “there is no time. There is text.” (p.302). However, regardless of text being the measure for everything, everything is not text. Participants highlighted other essential *invisible* dimensions of scientific work such as teaching and mentorship, providing support to students, peer support, academic management, unseen domestic academic work, the communication of social science in media, schools, and other sectors of society, and engagement with communities (Alcaire & Grácio, 2021).

Participants also described increasing pressures for demonstrable impact. According to Dunwoody (2009), the “renewed and growing attention” (p.299) to scientists’ media efforts could be seen as a response to a renewed need for organizational legitimization. Universities are now more independent, but they face more pressure to get public approval for their fixed public funding and to get more financial support from outside sources. To do this, they need to meet the needs of different groups and compete with a variety of other public organizations in a rapidly changing environment (Delanty, 2001). This also relates to the fact that science legitimacy relies more on research results than on teaching (Bishop, 2006). Two related issues align with the participants’ remarks. First, psychology sciences in Portugal are suffering from an overemphasis on short-term results and a profoundly ingrained utilitarian perspective on science (Almeida, 2023). Second, the fields’ legitimacy – and, consequently, its focus - is highly influenced by those powerful or rich enough to provide funding. As Kohring et al. (2013) pointed out, research organizations exert an increased legitimization pressure reflected in the growth of public relations and marketing activities. This notion aligns with Torgal’s (2015) remarks that universities in Portugal are shifting towards a business-centric model, a departure from its prior corporative, enlightened, liberal revolutionary, and social-democratic identities built around notions of autonomy, community, and critical rationality.

This increased academic pressure, however, is felt as a mismatch of commitment between researchers and institutions (Fecher, 2021). Participants’ descriptions infer that whereas academia and funding require more demonstrable impact and argue for changes in how social psychologists conduct and report research, these demands simply take the form of extra work and pressure on already overworked individual researchers. In other words, academia’s answer to legitimacy is not

via supporting integration efforts that would require structural changes and organizational initiative but appears to be based on ever-increasing individual surveillance over researchers.

Taking into account the significance given to social recognition, translation, and dissemination in academia and how it amplifies the individual stress on researchers without implementing or encouraging strategies for the practical application of this research, researchers find themselves in a bind, lacking both the time and training (or even the "profile") to effectively share and translate their findings. A considerable chunk of Social Psychology communication regarding the Portuguese context is tailored to an academic audience and often presented in English. Concurrently, social psychologists are not the primary agents of their own knowledge, as it requires stakeholders to apply it. This academic landscape results in a situation where the knowledge produced within Social Psychology struggles to engage or be generated in collaboration with relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, it prompts us to ponder who is the intended audience we are directed to write for.

Most of the participants in this study have expressed a belief that the legitimacy of psychological research is grounded in a pure understanding of "true scientific research," which is separate from activism. This perspective places value on maintaining objectivity and neutrality in research, emphasizing the importance of the scientific method, and hardly differentiating data and empirical evidence over commitments to social change. Such commitments are not described as undesirable but either as parallel or secondary to the role of a researcher. These remarks highlight the predominant notion that the rigor and credibility of psychological research could be compromised by aligning too closely with activism efforts. In this sense, the field's role in promoting social change has a clearly defined boundary.

Lastly, some active resistance was articulated by one participant who openly criticized the division between those "inside" the academic or professional sphere of psychology and those deemed "outside" (Parker, 2007). Furthermore, they defended that the fundamental principle of Social Psychology should be the commitment to social change (Kagan et al., 2011), which would require active participation in the sociopolitical and economic environment.

4.1 Limitations and Future Research

This study has several constraints to note. Initially, due to the specifics of the study, recruiting participants who were both willing and had the time to participate was challenging. As such, the

modest group of nine participants may not sufficiently reflect the broad diversity of viewpoints within the larger field, and the findings may not encapsulate the full scope of experiences and opinions among Social Psychology researchers in Portugal. This is mainly felt in the relatively small number of participants who abide by more postmodern and critical epistemologies.

Secondly, the study confronts the inherent challenge of operationally defining "social change" and considering it the ultimate goal of social psychological research linked with social change issues. "Social change" is a broad and multi-faceted concept that can vary based on context, individual interpretations, and specific societal concerns. Although an effort was made to define it comprehensively for the study's objectives, the participants operated without a standard definition of "social change," potentially influencing the results' nature and relevance. Other viewpoints on social change from the participants would be beneficial to include their interpretations of the term within the study's framework. Thus, an operational definition could result in ambiguity and varying interpretations among participants and readers.

Moreover, the study primarily focuses on Social Psychology researchers whose work is inherently tied to social change (climate change, racism, sexism, queer studies, *inter alia*). Therefore, the participants' experiences and perspectives may not be representative or transferable to the broader field of Portuguese Social Psychology. Researchers focusing on other areas of Social Psychology might face different challenges or have different perspectives. Therefore, while the study provides valuable insights, we should be careful about generalizing these findings to social psychologists in Portugal.

Given the limitations of the present study, potential thus remains for exploring similar research questions, including how social psychologists conceptualize "social change" itself, with a more varied and numerous group of participants to capture a more comprehensive picture of the field. Also, future research may focus on how different relevant stakeholders legitimize potential uses for social psychological knowledge and whether they match researchers' perceived accountability demands.

Conclusion

This study has revealed critical perspectives on the societal impact of Social Psychology research in Portugal, highlighting a dualistic conception of research and society underpinned by dominant positivistic academic pressures.

The field's lack of impact was framed by participants as a consequence of a perceived gap between academia and society. Engagement with society was primarily described as sharing information, and media was seen as a critical tool. However, participants viewed this as separate from their primary research responsibilities, assigning institutions with the main responsibility to bridge the divide between scientific and public communication.

The prevailing pressures within the academic field, including publication expectations, job competitiveness, and demands for demonstrable social impact, were highlighted by participants. Social psychologists are not the agents of their knowledge. However, academia values publications in academic journals, mostly in English. This means essential findings are mostly restricted to peers and don't always reach those who can use them - like policymakers, teachers, or community leaders. The result is that research doesn't have as much real-world impact as it could.

Though most seemed resigned to these pressures due to a perceived lack of alternatives, some dissenting voices championed a more proactive role of Social Psychology in promoting social change. Moreover, critique and resistance against academic constraints were evident in most remarks, which are necessary precursors to full resistance and change toward more meaningful and relevant research.

Finally, a few psychologists argued for a more substantial commitment to social change, challenging the field's traditionally defined boundaries. This study highlights the complex perspectives within the field and the ongoing negotiations about the role and impact of Social Psychology in society. It underscores the need for concerted efforts to address the existing academic pressures and encourage broader societal engagement of Social Psychology with social change.

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Annex A – Interview Guide

1. What is the impact that Social Psychology research has in Portugal?
(Qual é o impacto que a pesquisa em psicologia social tem em Portugal?)

2. What should be the impact of Social Psychology research?
(Qual deve ser o impacto da pesquisa em psicologia social?)

3. Could you tell me about your experience dealing with the challenge of promoting impact through research?
(Poderia me contar qual a sua experiência em lidar com o desafio de promover impacto através da pesquisa?)

4. What should be done for Social Psychology research to have a greater impact?
(O que deve ser feito para que a pesquisa em Psicologia Social tenha maior impacto?)

5. Where does the responsibility of researchers start and end?
(Onde começa e onde termina a responsabilidade de pesquisadores e pesquisadoras?)

6. Is there something specific in Portugal that interferes with the impact that Social Psychology can have?
(Existe algo específico em Portugal que interfira no impacto que a Psicologia Social pode ter?)

Annex B – Original Excerpts and Translations

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Original (PT)</i>	<i>Translation (EN)</i>
<i>Impact is Indirect</i>	<i>Eu acho que nós temos que ter, primeiro, um sentimento de que uma investigação não muda a sociedade. Ela pode contribuir para que o Estado e vários atores sociais, a partir dela, possam extrair coisas para apoiar processos de mudança social. Mas a nossa contribuição para os processos de mudança social não é uma contribuição decisiva, ou seja, um investigador não é um ministro que decide implementar uma política social. Nossa posição é muito atrás disso. (I1)</i>	<i>I believe that, first, we should have the understanding that research does not change society. It can help the State and several societal actors to extract information and support social change processes through research. However, our contribution to social change processes is not a decisive contribution. That is, a researcher is not a Minister who decides on social policy implementation. Our position is many steps behind that [policy implementation]. (I1)</i>
	<i>“(…) que podia perfeitamente informar decisões e modelos de intervenção” (I2).</i>	<i>“(…) could perfectly inform intervention models and decisions” (I2).</i>
	<i>“[temos de] fazer com que essa investigação tenha algum efeito sobre as pessoas, nem que seja o simples efeito da sua posição ficar registada. Eu acho que isso já é um feito,” (I1)</i>	<i>“[We have to] guarantee that this research has an impact on people, even if that means simply reaffirming certain positions. I think this is already an achievement,” (I1)</i>
	<i>“não temos e não devemos ter muito controlo sobre se e como é que o conhecimento vai ser traduzido em políticas,” (I4)</i>	<i>“We do not have and should not have much control over if and how knowledge will be translated into policy,” (I4)</i>

	<p><i>“eu acho que o nosso papel é produzir bons instrumentos de conhecimento (...). Não é diretamente influir sobre a transformação direta da realidade,” (I6)</i></p>	<p><i>I believe our role is to develop good knowledge tools. (...) It is not to directly influence the transformation of reality,” (I6).</i></p>
	<p><i>Acho que, numa perspectiva um pouco mais cínica, nós podemos comunicar o que quisermos, mas se os decisores políticos não forem sensíveis à importância de incorporar conhecimento científico, acho que nós podemos dizer o que quisermos e produzirmos os relatórios e os “press releases” que quisermos que não vão impactar tanto. (I2)</i></p>	<p><i>I think from a slightly more cynical perspective, we can communicate whatever we want, but if the policy makers are not sensitive to the importance of incorporating scientific knowledge, I think we can say whatever we want and produce whatever reports and press releases we want that won't impact as much. (I2)</i></p>
Unfulfilled Potential	<p><i>“há poucas disciplinas que tenham um potencial tão grande para a mudança social como a psicologia social.” (I7)</i></p>	<p><i>“Few disciplines have such a large potential for social change as Social Psychology.” (I7)</i></p>
	<p><i>Social Psychology “atua na saúde, atua no ambiente, (...) na saúde mental, (...) na educação, na saúde, no desenvolvimento infantil e ao longo da vida. (...) no preconceito, na gestão da discriminação, em todas as áreas da orientação sexual, (...) em questões de preconceito racial,” (I6)</i></p>	<p><i>Social Psychology addresses issues relating to “health, environment, [...] mental health, [...] child development, [...] prejudice, discrimination, sexual orientation, [...] and racism,” (I6)</i></p>
	<p><i>“percebe quais são as variáveis que podem aumentar a probabilidade de a pessoa ter esse comportamento adequado ou que naquele momento a gente quer adequar.</i></p>	<p><i>“understands which are the variables that can increase the likelihood of a person having an “adequate” behavior or a behavior perceived as adequate at a certain point in time. This is</i></p>

<i>Isso é verdade para o ambiente, é verdade para saúde, para um monte de coisas,” (18);</i>	<i>true for the environmental, health, and several other sectors,” (18)</i>
<i>“ela de fato descreve, explica e dá conta desses processos psicossociais. Ou seja, permite a quem quiser utilizá-la para promover a mudança social, do meu ponto de vista,” (17)</i>	<i>“It [Social Psychology] indeed describes, explains, and encompasses these psychosocial processes. Given that, it creates enabling conditions for whoever wants to use it to promote social change from my point of view,” (17)</i>
<i>The impact of the discipline “não é tanto como nós gostaríamos” (18)</i>	<i>“not as significant as we would hope” (18)</i>
<i>“não é muito visível na esfera pública,” (15)</i>	<i>“not much [impact] is visible in the public sphere,” (15)</i>
<i>“não sinto que haja assim um impacto, pelo menos muito direto, muito visível,” (14)</i>	<i>“I do not feel that there is an impact, at least not direct and very visible,” (14).</i>
<i>“nós não temos indicadores objetivos para avaliar isso.” (17)</i>	<i>“we do not have objective indicators to assess that.” (17)</i>
<i>a minha experiência não é má. E eu comecei por trabalhar, precisamente, porque [supressed] me pediram para participar num projeto sobre [supressed],” (18)</i>	<i>“My experience is not bad. I started working, precisely, because [suppressed] asked me to participate in a project about [supressed],” (18)</i>
<i>acho que nessa altura esses projetos tiveram bastante impacto [...] porque o que fazíamos no projeto era conciliar a</i>	<i>“I think at that time those projects had quite an impact [...] because what we were doing in the project was advising the council directly on how [supressed] and where [supressed],” (16)</i>

Câmara a como [supressed] mesmo diretamente.” (I6)

“você precisa ser otimista. Posso dizer que tem um bom, tem um impacto que nós não conseguimos avaliar” (I7).

“you need to be optimistic. I can see that there is a good, an impact that we cannot evaluate.” (I7).

“É evidente que há esperança, e é evidente que fazemos coisas e que conseguimos fazer coisas. Mas também é verdade que todos os relatórios do IPCC são mais negativos que o anterior, não é?” (I6).

“It is evident that there is hope. It is also evident that we do things and that we can do things. But it is also true that all [new] IPCC reports are more daunting than the previous [ones], isn't it?” (I6).

(o impacto é) quase nenhum. (...) Então, eu acho que, na generalidade, em Portugal, há muito pouca ligação entre a academia e as políticas públicas, ou seja, o impacto não é o mais prático hmm... da ciência (I2)

[the impact] is almost inexistent. Therefore, in general, I think that there is very little connection between academia and public policies in Portugal. In other words, the impact is not the most practical. (I2)

“continua a obliterar-se em relação às discussões sobre os danos que a própria psicologia foi fazendo nestes grupos. Estou pensar, por exemplo, na terapia de conversão de pessoas LGBT, por exemplo; de choques elétricos...” (I1)

“Discussions about how psychology itself damaged these groups keeps being neglected. I am thinking, for example, of conversion therapy for LGBT people; of electric shocks...” (I1)

“muitas vezes a psicologia seja vista como uma ciência da conformidade” (I5)

Psychology is often perceived as a science of conformity” (I5).

Se estamos a fazer investigação em psicologia social que queremos que tenham um impacto numa determinada comunidade ou grupo social, como ir ter

If we are developing research in Social Psychology that is intended to have an impact on a certain community or social group, how do we reach out to those individuals, how do we

	<i>com estas pessoas, como criar relações de confiança com estas pessoas? Às vezes são pessoas que foram maltratadas pela psicologia, pela investigação de psicologia no passado. (I4)</i>	<i>build trusting relationships with these individuals? Sometimes, these are individuals who have been mistreated by psychology, by psychology research in the past. (I4)</i>
<i>The Gap Between Research and Society</i>	<i>Portugal faces challenges in “inserir a ciência nos modos de reflexão e de atuação ao nível das instituições, a nível político” (I7)</i>	<i>Portugal faces challenges in “placing science in the ways of thinking and working of institutions, at a political level” (I7),</i>
	<i>the relationship between academia and Society “são difíceis e há muitos mecanismos que não facilitam o acesso umas às outras.” (I6).</i>	<i>as the relationship between academia and Society “are challenging, and there are many mechanisms that do not facilitate the access to one another” (I6).</i>
	<i>“O meu país viveu uma experiência fascista durante muitos anos, né? 48 anos de fascismo e nós continuamos no processo de democratização. Acho que ele não acaba” (I1).</i>	<i>My country has “lived” a fascist experience for many years, right? Forty-eight years of fascism, and we are still in the democratization process. I do not think it ends.(I1)</i>
	<i>and how it resulted in “um atraso gigantesco no sistema científico e na cultura científica” (I2).</i>	<i>it resulted in “an expressive shortfall in the scientific system and scientific culture” (I2)</i>
	<i>nós termos níveis de instrução menos elevados do que certos países [...] nós estamos com 19% de pessoas licenciadas, em que temos menos de 3% de doutorados,” (I3)</i>	<i>“we have lower levels of education than certain countries, we have 19% of people with bachelor’s degrees and less than 3% with PhDs,” (I3)</i>

Uma pessoa que faz investigação e tem um doutoramento é vista como fazendo parte de uma elite,” (I3)

“A person who does research and has a doctoral degree is seen as being part of an elite,” (I3)

“O estatuto social do pesquisador, do psicólogo no geral, é maior,” (I9)

“The social status of a researcher, of a psychologist more broadly, is higher,” (I9)

“boa parte dos gestores são pessoas que não muito escolarizadas, e isso faz com que, provavelmente, se afastem mais, de atrair gente altamente qualificada, das universidades; de contratar, e.g., doutorandos ou outros e se associar às universidades para fazer investigação.” (I7)

“the vast majority of managers have not completed higher academic degrees, and this probably makes them more unlikely to attract highly qualified people from universities, to hire doctoral studies, and to partner with universities.” (I7)

“Há um estigma de que fazer investigação não é um trabalho. Que esta coisa de estar na biblioteca a ler e a pensar não é trabalhar. E isto é uma coisa muito cultural e muito intrincado, diria, na realidade portuguesa,” (I2)

“There is a stigma that doing research is not a job. That being in the library, reading and thinking is not “working.” And this is something very cultural and intrinsic, I would say, to the Portuguese reality,” (I2)

Os académicos muitas vezes são vistos como como como intelectuais, de certa forma um pouco arrogantes, que se arrogam a ideia de que sabem quais são os problemas e como estes devem ser resolvidos. E consideram que as outras pessoas não estão a pensar de uma forma imparcial sobre determinados assuntos. Mas depois, também há o reverso, em que

Academics are often seen as intellectuals, somewhat arrogant in a way, who claim to know what the problems are and how they should be solved and believe that other people are not thinking impartially about certain matters. But then, there is also the reverse, where academics themselves, in a way, look at other people who would be instrumental in this connection between knowledge - for instance, if they are

os próprios académicos, de certa forma, olham para as outras pessoas que seriam instrumentais nesta ligação entre os conhecimentos como, por exemplo, se forem políticos, há sempre a suspeita de que há enviesamentos ou de que há interesses escondidos; se forem técnicos, de que não sabem determinados conhecimentos que seriam super relevantes para as análises daqueles problemas. (I4)

politicians, there is always a suspicion of biases or hidden interests; if they are technicians, that they lack certain knowledge that would be super relevant for the analysis of those problems. (I4)

“não acredito necessariamente que toda a investigação que se faz em psicologia social tem que ter uma utilidade directa, próxima e conhecida.” (I4)

“I don't necessarily believe that all research done in Social Psychology needs to have a direct, immediate, and known utility.” (I4)

Impact “pode ter também uma dimensão neoliberal no fundo, ‘se não tiver impacto, não serve.’” (I1)

“can also have a neoliberal undertone. “If there is no impact, is not useful.”” (I1)

“nós muitas vezes trabalhamos com procurar efeitos de interação. E o público, ou a sociedade, está interessada nos efeitos principais.” (I3)

“we oftentimes work looking for interaction effects. And the public, or society, is interested in the main effects.” (I3)

Não tem que ser tudo aqui e agora. Eu acho que às vezes o reverso da medalha do impacto é que nós podemos ficar um bocadinho fechados nesta ideia de eu “só vou estudar aquilo que sei que vai ser financiado ou aquilo que vai ter um impacto directo ou aquilo que vai ser ouvido

It doesn't have to be all here and now. I think sometimes the flip side of impact is that we can get a little trapped in this idea of 'I'm only going to study what I know will be funded or what will have a direct impact or what will be heard by policymakers.' And I think that can be a bit limiting and can have long-term effects

por policymakers." E acho que isso pode ser um bocadinho limitativo e pode ter efeitos a longo prazo do ponto de vista da produção do conhecimento. (I2)

from the point of view of knowledge production. (I2)

"muitas vezes o tipo de resultados que eu tento mostrar, podem colocar as pessoas numa postura defensiva, no sentido de que estão a colocar a sua imagem em causa," (I3)

"Often, the kind of results I try to show can put people in a defensive posture, in the sense that it is putting their image into question," (I3)

Da mesma forma, quem trabalha com as coisas do ambiente, das alterações climáticas, como uma pessoa que quer falar de alterações climáticas e do impacto das emissões de CO2 dos combustíveis fósseis e falar a Galp sobre os seus resultados, não é? É outro tipo de obstáculo mexer com os interesses das pessoas. (I3)

In the same way, those who work with environmental issues, climate change issues, like a person who wants to talk about climate change and the impacts of CO2 emissions from fossil fuels and talk to Galp [a Portuguese multinational energy corporation about their results], isn't it? This is another obstacle: dealing with people's interests. (I3)

"as pessoas dizem 'ah, mas, mas isto está relacionado?' E de repente dizem 'Pois, faz sentido.'" (I8)

"people say 'Oh, but is this related?' And suddenly realize, 'Yeah, it makes sense'" (I8)

Eu agora colaboro com a [supressed]. E é tão engraçado porque ele dizia "eu não fazia ideia nenhuma que vocês faziam estas coisas" e eu só dizia "pois, nós o fazemos há imensos anos". Há um total desconhecimento daquilo que é o potencial

I now collaborate with [supressed]. And it is so funny because they used to say "I had no idea that you were working on these issues" and I would just say "yeah, we have been working on this for several years." There is a complete lack of understanding concerning the potential of

da disciplina e do conhecimento científico que é produzido nalgumas áreas. (I2)

the discipline and the scientific knowlegde that is produced in some fields. (I2)

nos meios de comunicação, as intervenções, por exemplo, nos artigos de opinião, nos jornais de grande circulação, a gente nota que nós temos pouca visibilidade,”(I9)

“in the media, interventions, for example, in opinion pieces, in newspapers of wide circulation, we notice that there is little visibility,” (I9)

No caso concreto da psicologia social, acho que temos muito pouca penetração do ponto de vista político e societal. (...) Quem é que são as pessoas que são chamadas para comentar um determinado assunto? Raramente vemos psicólogos que se acham na televisão [...] é muito raro ver essa representatividade. (I3)

In the specific case of Social Psychology, I believe we have very little insertion from a political and societal viewpoint. [...] Who are the people that are called to comment on a certain matter? We rarely see psychologists who believe they belong on television [...] it's very rare to see this representation. (I3)

“nós ouvimos frequentemente notícias de outras áreas científicas e raramente ouvimos notícias sobre as [our] findings,” (I5)

“we frequently hear news from other scientific fields and rarely hear news articles about [our] findings,” (I5)

“Na maior parte das vezes em que se referem, por exemplo, a investigação, investigação psicológica, eu vejo até referida, não tanto aquela que se faz em Portugal, mas outra que se faz notar noutros contextos internacionais.” (I5)

“The majority of times that research, psychological research, is referred to [by the media], I see a reference to that [research] that is not done in Portugal but rather in other international contexts,” (I5).

“há uma preponderância de determinadas áreas científicas na sociedade e uma falta de preponderância das outras. a gente

“there is a prevalence of certain scientific areas in society and a lack of prevalence of others [subjects]. We joke that the country is always

costuma dizer brincar que o país é sempre governado por advogados e depois há os engenheiros e os gestores” (I8).

governed by lawyers, then there are the engineers and managers,” (I8).

“[they] muitas vezes se apropriam deste conhecimento da psicologia. E que é pena para todos porque, efetivamente, quem conhece, quem tem as bases teóricas para compreender determinados processos, é a psicologia” (I8)

“[They] often appropriate this knowledge from psychology. And it's a pity for everyone because, effectively, those who have the theoretical foundations to understand certain processes, it's psychology,” (I8).

“são eles que ganham (os projetos), são eles que não sei o quê, mas depois frequentemente vai se buscar a psicologia.” (I8)

“they are the ones that get [the funding and projects], they are the ones that later will look for psychology [professionals],” (I8)

“Por isso, há muitos poucos projetos direcionados para a psicologia. Há muito pouco reconhecimento da psicologia [social]. E isso é uma coisa, talvez um pouco nacional.” (I8)

“Thanks to that, there are very few projects focused on psychology. There is little recognition of [social] psychology. And this is something, perhaps, at the national level.” (I8)

“só temos emprego se ficarmos na academia. E são raríssimas as funções fora da academia” (I2)

“we can only find jobs if we stay in academia. Roles outside academia are very rare.” (I2).

“[they] nem sempre conseguem ter uma profissão na qual podem exercer as competências e que aprenderam ou em que poderiam as traduzir numa aplicação, digamos assim, dos conhecimentos da psicologia social” (I7)

“[They] don't always manage to find a profession in which they can exercise the skills that they have learned or where they could translate them into an ‘application’, so to speak, of Social Psychology knowledge,” (I7).

“se estas pessoas pudessem ser integradas mais facilmente também há equipas que não estão necessariamente dedicadas a investigação, mas já poder fazer esta esta ponte [...] it would be super valuable” (I4)

“If these people could be more easily integrated into teams that are not necessarily dedicated to research, but could bridge this gap [...] it would be super valuable,” (I4)

“Por isso, eu acho que nós vamos marcando o nosso território nesta interação entre nós e outras áreas científicas, entre nós e muitas vezes quem pede ciência também” (I8)

“Therefore, I believe that we are marking our territory in this interaction between us and other scientific areas, between us and often those who also request science,” (I8)

“o impacto, a comunicação disto para chegar à sociedade não-científica, o público mais alargado, aí falta um link.” (I9)

“the impact, the communication of this [Social Psychology research findings] to reach the non-scientific community, the wider public, there is a link missing,” (I9)

“há áreas a fazer isso muito bem e há áreas científicas que não fazem isso. E claramente nós temos um défice de comunicação de ciência [...] Acho que isso é o primeiro passo de dar visibilidade ao trabalho” (I2)

“There are areas doing this very well and there are scientific fields that do not do this. And clearly we have a science communication deficit [...] I believe that this is the first step in giving visibility to the work,” (I2)

“o impacto é tentar [...] divulgar o máximo possível os resultados das pesquisas, das revistas científicas de fator de impacto” (I9)

“the impact is trying [...] to disseminate as much as possible the results from research, from high-impact scientific journals,” (I9)

“nos tornarmos mais visíveis nos órgãos de comunicação social, através de uma postura mais ativa nossa [...], nos dá mais

“we become more visible in the media by assuming a more active position [...], giving us

espaço de nós intervimos mais no espaço mediático e depois ter mais impacto na sociedade.” (I3)

more room for providing input to the media and later have more impact on society,” (I3)

“Eu acho que às vezes também passa por este lado, como eu costumo dizer do telejornal, e do divulgar, do as pessoas perceberem que é interessante.” (I8)

“I believe that it sometimes also involves this aspect, as I usually say, of the news broadcast, of disseminating, of people realizing that it is interesting,” (I8)

Pode ser várias coisas, pode até ser dar aulas, dar boas aulas tá a disseminar, mas há muitas outras formas: participar de debates públicos, em mesas redondas. [...] etc. Todas estas pequenas coisas que existem na vida cívica, política da cidade, a participação de psicólogos sociais, eu acho que seria muito importante. (I7)

It can be many things, it can even consist of delivering lectures. Giving good lectures is disseminating. But there are many other ways: taking part in public debates, roundtables (...), etc. All these little things that exist in civil life, local politics, and the participation of social psychologists, I think it would be very important. (I7)

“exigências são feitas pelas entidades de financiamento, no fundo, que vão exigindo, e bem, este rigor de não só estamos preocupados com a comunicação de ciência para pares, mas também para a sociedade em geral,” (I2)

Demands are made by funding entities, which are increasingly, and rightly so, insisting on the importance of not only being concerned with communicating science to peers, but also to society at large,” (I2)

Muitas das vezes eu penso que quem poderia pegar os conhecimentos que entretanto têm a psicologia social para os pôr a bom uso em termos mais aplicados, provavelmente nem sabe o que é que está a acontecer dentro dos laboratórios e dos departamentos. (I4)

I often think that who could take the knowledge [produced by Social Psychology] and put it to good use, in a more applied way, probably do not even know what is happening inside [Social Psychology] laboratories and departments. (I4)

“há muita tendência para uma simplificação, uma simplificação excessiva daquilo que é dito, que às vezes pode minar até aquilo que se pretende dizer.” (15)

“There is a strong tendency towards an oversimplification of what is said, which at times may undermine the intended messag,” (15)

“[social psychologists and stakeholders] até podemos estar interessados nos mesmos tópicos, mas é difícil que encontremos uma linguagem em que estejamos a compreender.” (14)

“[social psychologists and stakeholders] can even be interested in the same topics, but it is difficult to find a language in which we can [all] understand.” (14)

Quando eu estou a tentar transmitir a minha investigação [...] seja para as políticas públicas, seja para os média, nunca vai a parte da investigação que eu faço. Fica-se pelo efeito principal, que é de facto existem enviesamentos. Ora, não era preciso a minha investigação para se saber isso [...]. Enquanto a minha investigação tem a ver com um nível de complexidade que é muito mais específico, um nível de complexidade mais elevado, o público e a sociedade não está disponível para esse nível de complexidade. (13)

When I'm trying to convey my research [...] whether it's to public policies or to the media, the core of my research never comes across. It remains at the level of the main effect, which is the fact that biases exist. My research wasn't needed to know that [...]. While my research is related to a much more specific and elevated level of complexity, the public and society are not ready for this level of complexity. (13)

É muito difícil passar a complexidade da análise psicológica para um discurso que geralmente é requerido na esfera pública que quase que requerem que a pessoa

It is very challenging to translate the complexity of the psychological analysis into the [type of] discourse usually required in the public sphere, in which it is almost required that one is 100% sure. (15)

tenha 100% de certeza, 100% de evidência.

(15)

“os obstáculos que existem são obstáculos quase não de natureza científico-epistemológica” (17)

the obstacles that exist are almost not of a scientific-epistemological nature,” (17)

Eu não tenho uma visão negativa nem pessimista do trabalho que os colegas investigadores, psicólogos sociais tenham feito. Acho que eles fazem bem o seu trabalho. Acho que fazem mesmo muito, muito, muito bem. É uma das disciplinas onde talvez isso seja mais evidente. Fazem e produzem um trabalho sensacional com um potencial de mudança social muito, muito, muito grande, que infelizmente nem sempre tem o reconhecimento social que deve ter deste potencial para a mudança social. (17)

I do not have a negative or pessimistic perspective of the work that fellow researchers and social psychologists have done. I think they do their job well. I believe they do it very, very, very, very well. This is one of the disciplines where that is perhaps more evident. They develop and produce phenomenal work with a very, very, very, very high potential for social change, which, unfortunately, does not always get the social recognition it deserves. (17)

(...) acho que há alguma responsabilidade dos investigadores de estarem atentos ao que o mundo precisa. Tudo bem que não precisamos estar a fazer investigação sobre o tópico, lá está, que está mais na moda [...]. Mas, já que estamos a ser pagos pelos contribuintes, já que queremos devolver alguma coisa à sociedade, então, pelo menos estar atento se aquilo que estamos a estudar pode ou não ser útil para um mundo no momento atual. (14)

I believe researchers are, to some extent, responsible for being aware of what the world needs. It is okay not to do research about the most “fashionable” topic. Nonetheless, since we are being paid by taxpayers, since we want to give something back to society, [we need to] at least be aware of whether or not what we are studying can (or not) be useful to the world in present times. (14)

[A Psicologia Social] pode e deve, no meu ponto de vista, ser capaz de se pôr mais do lado das soluções. O que fazer para encontrar soluções para as questões que nos preocupam a todos. (I7)

[Social Psychology] can and must, from my point of view, be able to position itself at the forefront of solutions. What needs to be done to find solutions to the questions that concern us all. (I7)

basicamente interessam a alguns investigadores. Não têm repercussões sociais nenhuma, na sua maioria. Ou então fica numa coisa pior, que é aquilo que eu chamo de um “impacto anedótico”, que é do tipo aquelas coisas que aparecem nas colunas de curiosidades científicas dos jornais. Por exemplo, “as pessoas pensam pior em lugares onde cheira mal”. Eu acho que isso não nos ajuda em nada nas questões que temos no momento. (II)

are basically of interest to some researchers. They don't have any social repercussions, in most cases. Or it ends up in something worse, which is what I call an 'anecdotal impact', that is, the kind of things that appear in the scientific curiosity columns of newspapers. For example, 'people think worse in places where it smells bad'. I don't think this helps us at all with the issues we currently face. (II)

“servem de capa [de jornal] para fingir que tudo está a correr muito bem” (II)

serve as [a newspaper] cover to pretend that everything is going well (II)

eu acho que estas formas de psicologia acabam por não só não ter efeitos, como os efeitos que têm são a justificação do sistema neoliberal em que vivemos (II)

I believe these forms of psychology not only end up having no impact but also any effect they may have justify the neoliberal system in which we live in. (II)

“nós continuamos sempre a olhar - a psicologia pelo menos - continua sempre a olhar para quem tem poder.” (II)

“we always keep looking, psychology at least, always keep looking at those who have power,” (II)

Como é que você vai perguntar a gente branca o que acham de pessoas negras

How are you going to ask white people what they think about black people in a society that

numa sociedade que é totalmente, que é estruturalmente racista desde sempre? [...]Tens é que ir perguntar exatamente às pessoas negras o que é que se passa aqui, que são elas que têm a descodificação disso. (I1)

has always been structurally racist? [...] [Instead,] you have to go ask black people, precisely, what is going on here. They are the ones who can shed light on this. (I1)

“estamos a ver a psicologia sobretudo em processos que são estritamente individuais ou cognitivos. Podem ser importantes, mas se nós nos focarmos só naquilo, nós não vamos conseguir mudar muita coisa.” (I7)

“we look at psychology mostly in processes that are strictly individual or cognitive. These may be important, but if we focus only on that, we will not be able to change much.” (I7)

não podemos ir só pelos mecanismos intraindividuais, como os mecanismos cognitivos.” (I7)

“we cannot [guide ourselves] only by interindividual mechanisms, such as cognitive mechanisms.” (I7)

“Depende do que entende por psicologia social porque se for dentro do referencial cognitivista é zero, o impacto será nenhum.”(I1)

It depends on what one understand by Social Psychology because if it's within the cognitive framework, the impact will be zero.” (I1)

“O que eu acho que a investigação em psicologia social deveria fazer é dar conta do contexto social em que as pessoas vivem, porque é sempre mais importante do que terem teorias pré-feitas - feitas nos Estados Unidos - a falarem num universal que não se coloca.” (I1)

“I feel that Social Psychology research should encompass the social context in which people live. Because it is always more relevant than pre-made theories – made in the United States – talking about a universal that does not apply. (I1)

***Ambivalent
Accountability
Demands for
the Discipline***

“a investigação que a gente faz, não pode ser desligada de processos de mudança social.” (I1).

“the research we do cannot be disconnected from social change processes,” (I1).

<p><i>“eu não consigo conceber a investigação como uma coisa que eu estou aqui, neutro e objetivo a avaliar coisas. Eu acho que isso não tem cabimento nos dias de hoje.”</i> (II)</p>	<p><i>“I cannot accept research as a process in which I, neutrally and objectively, assess things. I do not think this has any place in this day and age,”</i> (II)</p>
<p><i>“É muito uma prática de engajamento com esses movimentos, de escutar o que os movimentos têm para dizer e de entender quais são as necessidades das pessoas.”</i> (II)</p>	<p><i>“it is very much a practice of engaging with these [social] movements, of listening to what these movements have to say and what are peoples’ needs.”</i> (II)</p>
<p><i>os saberes produzidos pela investigação fazem parte desse processo de democratização. Então, eles são necessariamente políticos a priori.”</i> (II)</p>	<p><i>“the knowledge produced by research [activities] is integral to this democratization process. Therefore, they are necessarily political a priori.”</i> (II)</p>
<p><i>“É mais mais realista do que estar a imaginar um monte de ideias sobre as pessoas e quadros teóricos que muitas vezes não têm nada a ver com as pessoas”</i> (II)</p>	<p><i>“It is more realistic than imagining a bunch of ideas about people and theoretical frameworks that often have nothing to do with people,”</i> (II)</p>
<p><i>“[these practices] nos obrigam a estar presentes, se calhar, com muito mais atenção ao que se passa na esfera tanto do político, como do econômico”.</i> (II)</p>	<p><i>“[these practices] force us to be present, perhaps, and pay more attention to what is going on in the political and economic spheres,”</i> (II).</p>
<p><i>“Eu acho que a psicologia abusa horrores da ideia de ciência.”</i> (II)</p>	<p><i>“I think psychology horribly overuses the concept of science.”</i> (II)</p>
<p><i>Eu acho que enquanto não conseguirmos cumprir estas coisas mínimas, não vamos a</i></p>	<p><i>“as long as we cannot accomplish these minimal things, we are not going anywhere and</i></p>

<p><i>lado nenhum e vamos continuar a ser uma disciplina que serve essencialmente como uma espécie de repositório metodológico de coisas. (11)</i></p>	<p><i>will continue to be a discipline that essentially serves as a methodological repository of things,” (11)</i></p>
<p><i>“Fazer a pesquisa de qualidade, publicar e formar alunos” (19).</i></p>	<p><i>“doing quality research, publishing, and training students” (19).</i></p>
<p><i>De certa forma, às vezes até é difícil destrinçar se o que estão a fazer é ativismo ou verdadeira investigação científica. (14)</i></p>	<p><i>In a way, it is even difficult to distinguish if what they [some social psychologists] are doing is activism or scientific research. (14)</i></p>
<p><i>Quando me entra aqui um aluno de doutoramento a dizer que vai fazer um doutoramento porque quer salvar o mundo ou porque é ativista, digo logo que "está tudo mal, não pode ser. Não é esse o objetivo doutoramento." Acho que o objetivo da investigação científica é produzir conhecimento científico. (12)</i></p>	<p><i>When a doctoral student comes in here telling me that he is doing a Ph.D. because they want to save the world or because they are an activist, I tell them straight away: “That is wrong, it does not work like this. This is not the goal of a Ph.D.” I believe the objective of scientific research is to produce scientific knowledge. (12)</i></p>
<p><i>“é não nos deixarmos misturar completamente com as nossas posições, que também as podemos ter em paralelo, ou seja, também para ser ativista para além de investigadora.” (14)</i></p>	<p><i>“it is about not letting ourselves get completely mixed up with our [other] roles, which we can also have in parallel. That is, also being an activist in addition to being a researcher;” (14)</i></p>
<p><i>[our role] não é diretamente influir sobre a transformação direta da realidade. Claro que nós fazemos esforços nesse sentido, mas esses esforços são os esforços de segunda linha. A primeira linha são os esforços de reforçar um campo de</i></p>	<p><i>is not to influence society’s transformation directly. Of course, we direct efforts towards that. But these efforts are “second-line” efforts. The “baseline” are the efforts towards strengthening a field of knowledge and its analytical instruments. (16)</i></p>

conhecimento e os instrumentos analíticos desse conhecimento até então. (I6)

“primeiro tentar mostrar que somos neutros, que não temos motivações à partida, não temos resultados que preferimos encontrar e que a nossa pesquisa está construída de uma forma que não favorece um resultado ou outro.” (I3)

“First, trying to show that we are neutral, that we do not have vested interests, [that we] are not striving to find pre-determined results, and that our research is designed in a way that does not favour a result or the other.” (I3)

é estabelecer uma articulação e um diálogo com movimentos sociais para conseguirmos apoiá-los nalguma fundamentação, que as vezes é necessária. (I1)

“It's about establishing a connection and dialogue with social movements to provide them with the theoretical support they sometimes need,” (I1)

“It Is not Possible to Do Everything”

“estou nesta carreira, não é, há tanto, tanto, tempo. Já tenho meu doutoramento há pouco mais de dez anos (...) e só agora é que consegui, por exemplo, uma contratação” (I4)

“I have been on this career path [...] for such a long, long time. I received my Ph.D. a little over ten years ago [...], and only now I managed to get, for instance, a contract [in the field],” (I4)

“Aqui hoje em dia se preocupa muito mais com coisas como por exemplo, a quantidade de publicações em revistas com determinado perfil.” (I1)

“Nowadays there is much more concern with issues such as the number of publications in journals of a certain profile,” (I1)

“[Researchers] São só avaliados pela investigação que fazem enquanto tal, e esse impacto na mudança social não entra na equação,” (I7)

[Researchers] are only evaluated based on their research as such. Impact on social change does enter into the equation,” (I7).

“Até chegarmos a um sítio estável, estamos tão preocupados em ter que ter um certo número de publicações” (I4).

“until we reach some stability [in work], we are definitely worried about having a certain number of publications,” (I4).

“tendem a privilegiar a comunicação em língua inglesa e em revistas de especialidade, até por uma questão de carreira e de reconhecimento que tal implica essas publicações.” (I5)

“tend to favor specialized journals in the English language, especially considering the career implications and prestige of such publications.” (I5)

“Sobra muito pouco tempo para depois nos envolvermos em práticas que seriam de facto mais úteis, diria eu, para a sociedade abrangente.” (I4).

“very little time is left for us to engage in practices that would actually be more useful, I would say, for society,” (I4).

“acho que cada vez mais se deve pensar que o outreach, esta forma, esta coisa, de tentarmos comunicar o nosso trabalho e divulgar, e de levar e de comunicar mais com a sociedade em geral,” (I3)

I believe we should increasingly think about the outreach. This effort, this act of trying to communicate and disseminate our work, and to engage and communicate more with society at large,” (I3)

Há pessoas que têm mais perfil do que outras para fazer esse trabalho e não deve ser pedido a toda a gente para fazer esse trabalho (I3)

Some people have a better profile than others to do this type of work, and not everyone should be asked to do this work. (I3)

Também não se pode pedir isto a todos porque as pessoas não têm todas o mesmo gosto, a mesma vontade, as mesmas competências por fazer. Mas talvez, talvez - este “talvez” é um condicional muito importante - talvez houvesse mais a fazer

You cannot also ask this of everyone because people do not all have the same willingness and the same competencies. [...] But maybe, maybe – this “maybe” is very important – maybe more could be done in the field of dissemination,

no campo da disseminação, da divulgação, de nos aproximarmos mais da opinião pública (I7)

promotion, and getting closer to the public option. (I7)

Nossa preocupação é mais técnico-científica. Produzir a investigação de qualidade e tentar publicar no que há de melhor. Com menos preocupação em traduzir isto em publicidade. (I9)

Our concern is more technical and scientific. Producing quality research and trying to publish in the best journals. With less concern for translating this into publicity. (I9)

Mas a responsabilidade exige também tempo, não é? E muitos de nós, investigadores, somos também docentes. Também temos tarefas de gestão. Então, a responsabilidade enquanto investigadora é responsabilidade dos fins de semana e das férias, não é? (...) Nós não temos dias de 100 horas. Temos dias de 24. E temos de dormir, comer e viver. (I5)

Responsibility also demands time, doesn't it? And many of us, researchers, are also teachers. We also have management tasks. Therefore, the responsibility as a researcher is responsibility during weekends and holidays, isn't it? [...] We do not have 100-hours days. We have 24-hour24-hours days. And we also have to sleep, eat, and live. (I5)

“acho que tem que ser uma questão institucional. Acho que tem que ser os centros de investigação e não a pessoa em si a acumular dez diferentes especialidades e tarefas.” (I2).

“it has to be an institutional question. I believe research centers [should take on this role], and not individuals themselves,” (I2).

