



Artigo Original

Social science research in Brazil and its potential for Latin American integration

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Resumo O artigo examina o desenvolvimento da pesquisa em ciências sociais no Brasil desde o início dos primeiros programas de pós-graduação, focalizando fatores que contribuíram à emergência da natureza interdisciplinar nas ciências sociais no país. Iniciando a partir da tradição interdisciplinar dos pesquisadores sócio-históricos dos anos 1950 e 1960, o artigo explora o impacto no Brasil de duas tradições intelectuais, a europeia e a norte-americana. Em seguida, o artigo examina a emergência de associações científicas como importantes mecanismos para organizar nacionalmente atividades acadêmicas, fundamentais para formação de redes sociais entre pesquisadores das diferentes ciências, seguindo vetores temáticos em lugar de disciplinares. Finalmente, o artigo analisa tendências atuais em pesquisa, que apontam ao crescente interesse na América Latina, via intercâmbios entre grupos de pesquisa dos países da região. Tais indicadores mostram como cientistas sociais brasileiros estão rapidamente se interessando mais pelos países vizinhos do que pelos Estados Unidos ou Europa. O artigo conclui que há, atualmente, uma tendência à formação de redes de pesquisadores dentro da região.

Palavras-chave: ciências sociais no Brasil, associações científicas, integração latino-americana.

Abstract The paper examines the development of Brazilian social science research since the beginning of the first graduate programs, focusing on factors that contributed to the emergence of the interdisciplinary nature of social sciences in the country. Starting from interdisciplinary tradition of socio-historical researchers in the 1950s and 1960s, the paper explores the impact in Brazil of two intellectual traditions, European and United States. Following, the paper examines the emergence of social science

associations as important mechanisms for organizing nationally academic activities, fundamental for network building among scholars of different scientific backgrounds, pursuing thematic instead of disciplinary vectors. Finally, the paper analyzes current trends in research interests that point to a growing interest in Latin America, through exchanges with research groups in the region. The indicators show Brazilian social scientists are rapidly becoming more interested in neighbor countries than in United States or Europe. The paper concludes that there is currently a move towards more network building within the region.

Keywords: social sciences in Brazil, scientific associations, Latin America integration.

Resumen El trabajo examina el desenvolvimiento de la pesquisa en las ciencias sociales en Brasil desde el inicio de los primeros programas de posgrado, focalizando factores que contribuían a la emergencia de la naturaleza interdisciplinar de las ciencias sociales en el país. Iniciando con la tradición interdisciplinaria de los pesquisadores socio-históricos de los años 1950 y 1960, el estudio explora el impacto de dos tradiciones intelectuales en Brasil, la europea e la norte-americana. En seguida, el trabajo examina la emergencia de las asociaciones científicas como importantes mecanismos para organizar nacionalmente actividades académicas, fundamentales para formación de redes sociales entre pesquisadores de las diferentes ciencias según vectores temáticos en lugar de disciplinares. Finalmente, el trabajo analiza tendencias actuales en pesquisa que apuntan a un creciente interese en Latinoamérica través intercambios entre grupos de pesquisa de países de la región. Los indicadores muestran como pesquisadores sociales brasileños están rápidamente se interesando más por los países vecinos do que en Estados Unidos o Europa. El trabajo concluye que hay actualmente una tendencia para la formación de redes de pesquisadores en la región.

Palabras-clave: ciencias sociales en Brasil, asociaciones científicas, integración de Latinoamérica.

Introduction

According to the level of each country's development of social research structures, Latin American countries may be classified in three broad categories:

- 1) Rudimentary research phase is one in which research institutions are few; graduate training is largely dependent on foreign universities and there is inexpressive governmental support for

- either research or training. In this category are included the countries of Bolivia, Paraguay, Ecuador, Panama, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras, Haiti, and Dominican Republic.
- 2) Emergent research phase characterizes a situation in which social research is conducted mainly in a small number of autonomous social research institutes, training in social research is less structured centering on institutes, with universities providing limited support to scholars and research endeavors without constituting a university system as such, and less institutionalized government funding for research and training. One would include in this category Uruguay, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, and Costa Rica.
 - 3) Consolidating research phase is a category in which social research is anchored in several stable university and institute environments distributed within the country, where researcher training is conducted primarily in structured graduate courses and in a few established government research agencies. Only five countries in the region are classified at this stage: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Cuba and Mexico.

As one would suspect the immediate needs of the social science communities will vary according to which category of countries one is referring to.

Likewise, the challenges confronting training and funding, the extent to which research network-building intertwines with academic institution-building and the role that networks play in developing creative and competent social research will vary significantly depending on the phase of development of the social research in each context.

Because of the diversity of Latin American situations, our comments in this article focus on Brazil as it best illustrates the case of countries in the consolidating phase.

Structure of social science disciplines in Brazil: An interdisciplinary tradition

Within Latin America, Brazil is responsible for more than half of the investments in science and technology and almost one half of the students undertaking formal graduate training in the region study at Brazilian institutions (Levy 1996).

Social science graduate education is imparted in 168 institutions of higher learning in 931 distinct graduate programs that cover the various disciplines of the

social sciences and the applied social sciences (Brazil 2001b).

Since the 1960s there has been a concerted effort on the part of the Brazilian government to encourage and promote scientific research through the development and consolidation of the national graduate education system (Schwartzman 1991).

This has resulted in the emergence of a significant university based community of scholars involved in the activities of social research.

Between 1970 and 1984 because of the political environment under the military dictatorship groundbreaking social science research was largely conducted in a small number of private non-university institutes and a few catholic universities, which were relatively unhampered by the controls exercised over the public universities by the military governments.

Since re-democratization in 1985, Brazilian universities have quickly taken the lead in social research by incorporating into their graduate faculties many of the leading researchers previously affiliated to those few non-university research institutes that were created during the military years.

Over the past two decades, Brazilian social sciences have taken on the disciplinary structure of other Western countries

subdivided according to the traditional fields of sociology, anthropology, political sciences, economics, history, education, geography, psychology and law, on the one hand, and more recently in a growing number of interdisciplinary fields such as social work, social psychology, policy studies, gerontology, semiotics, communication, urban studies and planning.

Since undergraduate education is typically concentrated in the traditional disciplines with a reduced amount of course work from any neighboring fields. In contrast, social science graduate training tends to be more interdisciplinary in its scope.

Graduate programs are more conducive to encouraging students to undertake course work in other fields and explore different approaches to social research.

This has resulted in a significant amount of exchanges between the various fields in both graduate teaching and research. This interdisciplinary tendency in graduate studies was the result of several historical factors characteristic of Brazilian academic life.

One factor is rooted in the early initiatives to create graduate education in Brazil at a time when the universities had few faculty members trained at the doctoral level. This made necessary that newly created

graduate programs recruit their faculty from among the doctors in related social science fields.

This was further accentuated when the Brazilian graduate education accreditation office of the Ministry of Education (CAPES) in the late 1970's established clear requirements about faculty degree qualifications for new graduate programs if these were to be eligible for government funding and accreditation.

From this time on graduate programs were fashioned around those topic areas that best accommodated professors with doctor degrees whose research and teaching interests overlapped sufficiently to delimit a graduate curriculum.

In this way, the lack of a large pool of doctors provided the opportunity for graduate studies in Brazil to avoid the rigid disciplinary self-containment that has plagued the North American model of graduate education.

Not only did Brazilian universities create a graduate culture that opened up the possibility of education not being composed exclusively of a single discipline but it also developed research interests that overlapped with other fields and, thus laid down some preliminary conditions for an interdisciplinary perspective in social research activities that would, in more

recent years, facilitate the efforts of the Brazilian national research council (CNPq), as it pushed for the creation of interdisciplinary research groups focused on research questions instead of specialties within an particular disciplinary.

A second factor that has contributed to a more interdisciplinary focus in contemporary graduate education is the fact that traditionally within the Brazilian social sciences there have been few real demarcations among several of the social sciences.

Sociology, political science, anthropology, history and geography have had a high level of interdisciplinarity between each other.

Psychology has traditionally been less integrated into these fields, but with the emergence of social psychology in the 1980's there has been a strong interchange with the fields of social work, education, administration and public health.

While economics and law were more resistant to inter-discipline features, the traditional importance of both these areas made their presence in the other fields unavoidable.

Because of the strong parochial cultures of economics and law, administration arises in Brazil as a strong interdisciplinary field with significant inputs from sociology,

political science, economics, social psychology and law as professionals from these areas come together to create the first programs of public administration.

It will be from the first programs that will also emerge business administration similarly characterized by a more interdisciplinary bent.

A third factor facilitating an interdisciplinary spirit in graduate education is that traditionally the Brazilian university culture has been at the crossroads of both European and American intellectual traditions, and more recently Latin American ones as well.

As the site where these diverse perspectives cross, at first in confrontation and later in synthesis, very often scholars trained in either the European or American perspectives, rooted in different academic genealogies, often found greater affinity with scholars from other fields that shared a similar perspective more so than with colleagues within the same discipline who had obtained their training in the other intellectual tradition.

Thus in the early years of graduate education in Brazil, the experiences of training abroad either in Europe or in the United States produced forms of intellectual identifications among scholars which lead them to cross disciplinary

boundaries, and thus curtailed a tendency of fields becoming excessively self-contained.

A fourth factor is the political reality of Brazilian universities. Politics in the university are present on three levels.

On one level faculty, students and staff generally elect department heads, deans and rectors.

While elections of department chairs are restricted to each department, the selection of the deans and rectors require the forging of alliances, which necessarily must cross-disciplinary boundaries.

Both the elections of deans and rectors require building broad based support networks that must cut through traditional disciplinary parochialisms and biases in order to form winning coalitions in contested races and at the same time provide the means of distributing the key administrative posts among the faculties in a representative manner.

Consequently, the process that involved professors and students in the selection of university administrators also forced a greater integration across academic fields.

Another facet of politics within the university is the recruitment from university academicians of specialists to make with the upper echelons of public

administrations of municipal, state or national governments.

As university professors are called upon to enter public life they must set aside any pretense of exclusivity in knowledge as they seek to form viable teams of practitioners for government service.

In addition as many university academicians eventually are called upon to contribute to the formulation of government programs, this task has also contribute to weakening traditional disciplinary biases as scholars from several fields are obliged to work with multidisciplinary teams.

Thus scholars from any particular field of the social sciences soon confronts the fact that policy and program proposals are the concern of several fields and not the exclusive domain of any specific social science discipline.

Similarly, the break of disciplinary isolation is further accentuated when professors enter politics to occupy elected offices or assume appointed positions (as a politician, adviser, minister or director of an agency).

More likely than not, the academician will have to work with prominent peers from other disciplines that share similar partisan convictions in the running of the government.

In light of the tendency toward greater approximation of the social sciences one finds three distinct developments today.

On the one hand, national government funding agencies have become more supportive of interdisciplinary endeavors both in research and training especially as these agencies focus their funding priorities on issues of national development, which are multidisciplinary from an academic perspective.

At the same time a new emphasis is being placed on master level graduate programs that are more oriented to the formation of practitioners and therefore more multidisciplinary in focus.

These new professional graduate master degrees are viewed as mechanisms through which graduate faculties come together to develop interdisciplinary degree programs focused on thematic areas rather than on a specific disciplinary fields.

Finally there is a growing tendency of greater differentiation between the traditional disciplines through the creation of graduate programs in interdisciplinary fields such as, social anthropology, social psychology, social history, public policy studies and political economy.

While these new divisions might appear as a simple disciplinary involution into sub-fields, in fact they represent new

interdisciplinary approaches to the study of social phenomenon.

At the same time, another set of graduate programs is appearing predicated on the interdisciplinary study of specific topics: gerontology, urban and regional planning, environmental studies, media and technology, and international relations.

Even though the initial structuring of undergraduate and graduate training was along disciplinary lines, the forces present in the Brazilian university today fosters integration within the disciplines having produced forms of graduate education and social research more conducive to interdisciplinary collaboration than is rarely found in American universities and most European universities.

Research network building: Scientific associations and research networking

As a consequence of the expansion of graduate education in 1980's, CAPES undertook the task of creating graduate studies associations for each academic field with the intent of:

- 1) Bringing together scholars from the various institutions for the purpose of exchanging research information;

- 2) Creating a forum of graduate faculty that would be able to introduce a certain amount of systematization of graduate training in each field; and
- 3) Providing the organizational bases from which scholars could be recruited to serve as academic advisors necessary to the tasks of administrating the government's research and educational funding programs and for which the state technocracy was either less qualified and/or unwilling to do.

To a certain extent, this opened up an otherwise autocratic state apparatus many times plagued by political patronage to the participation of another actor less inclined, because of ethical and professional commitments, to yield readily to the types of political pressures that generally permeate Brazilian public administration.

Early in the 1980's graduate faculties, encouraged by the offer of government funding, mobilized to form their national associations which would provide the necessary national and regional linkages between individual institutions and research groups, and act as vehicles for presenting their demands to government agencies as well as attempting to influence

policy making and its implementation.

Today, one can say that Brazil has an important set of national social science associations that congregate, under different organizational structures, the faculty and the graduate students in each field.

Over the years, though, not all these organizations have been equally efficient catalyzers for ground breaking, creative and quality research, nor have they been efficient in incorporating into their respective ranks new scholars with diverging approaches or research agendas.

One indicator of this is the organizational structures of these national associations. In looking at these organizational structures, a typology was developed which allows us

to categorize each national association according to two dimensions:

- 1) Degree of centralization around a few research institutions or of decentralization federating a larger number of institutions; and
- 2) Priority of associational policies in encouraging or restricting the participation of junior faculty and graduate students in associational meetings.

This typology (Diagram 1) allows us to map the relative position that Brazilian social science associations have along these two dimensions.

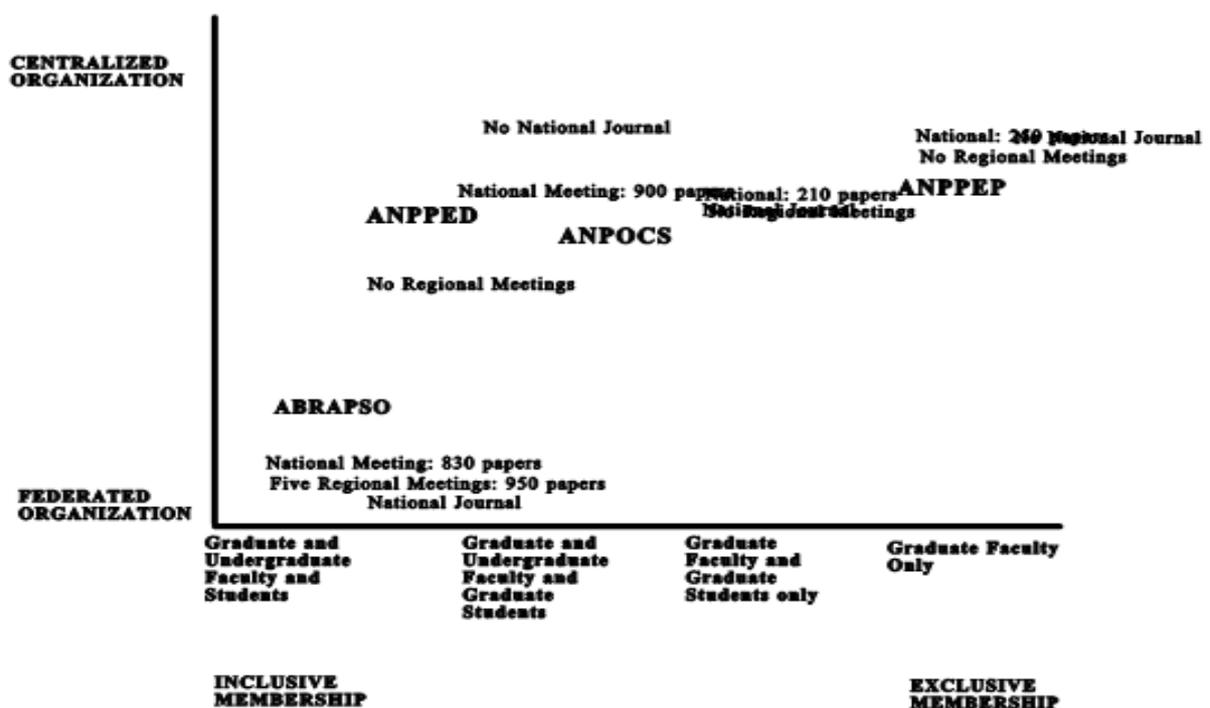


Diagram 1. Typology of academic organization structures in Brazil, 1998-1999.

In this sense, the issue of centralization/decentralization is pertinent in the context of the consolidation of the scientific community in Brazil since these associations are vehicles through which researchers' studies and their topics are acknowledged in a given field by the diffusion of a researcher's work in the national congresses and associational journals.

Furthermore, as noted above, the national associations have often played a major role as advocates of their research constituencies within government funding agencies by nominating members to advisory panels, influencing the agencies' policies with regards to research topic priorities, proposing criteria for grants and scholarships, and assessing the agencies' criteria and procedures of evaluation of funding proposals for research and training.

This advocacy role of the associations has meant that many times they become targets of academic politics in which some factions with specific agendas attempt to maintain associational controls so as to exclude others espousing alternative approaches, topics and/or methodologies which rival established ones.

In spite of academic politics, the associations' role in bringing about some measure of "democratization" of the

government's technocracy and their capacity to mobilize both senior and junior scholars and incorporating new generations of graduate students make the social science associations key players in the development of more effective social research and in providing direction in the course of scientific development.

Looking at the five major social science associations in terms of the two dimensions of centralization-decentralization and inclusive-exclusive practices (Diagram 1), the classification suggests that open, federated associations provide more diverse forums for the debate of research endeavors more so than the more restrictive organizations.

The best example of a federated association is the case of Social Psychology Association of Brazil (ABRAPSO) which is based on five regional units that organize meetings biennially, and in the alternating years come together in a national meetings.

This has provided more opportunities for researchers to meet with their collaborators from other institutions at the various regional and national conferences held over a two years period.

This two tire meeting strategy facilitates the incorporation of new scholars and graduate students at the regional meetings

and who many not have the means to attend the national meetings. One indicator of the efficacy of ABRAPSO is the number of papers presented at both the regional and national meetings over the last two-year period between 1999 and 2000: 1,780 papers presented.

On the other hand, the more centralized and restrictive national associations, as are the cases of the social science and the psychology associations (ANPOCS and ANPPEP, respectively), have had less success in becoming broad forums for scientific exchange if one looks at the data on national meetings.

These two associations have faced problems deriving from being dominated by interests representing a few institutions. As a consequence their role in incorporating a growing number of researchers has been stifled.

This is illustrated by the fact that only 210 papers were presented at the 1999 Social Science Association (ANPOCS) meeting and 300 papers were presented at the last Psychology Association (ANPPEP) conference in 2000.

One defense of exclusive associations has been that the more inclusive ones probably have a larger number of less qualified papers being presented because of the association's large number of participants,

but one can also imagine that the number of good quality papers would probably be similar to those of the more restrictive associations since all the associations rely on the participation of their more qualified scholars in each field and therefore the absolute number of good papers would most likely be about same at each meeting.

Comparatively, it seems that the more restrictive organizations have more frequently suffered from problems of academic politics and concentrating organizational positions in the hands of a few research institutions, a practice which does not seem conducive to creative social research.

On the other hand, the less centralized organizations have proven to be more committed to the participation of the large diversity of researchers and to encouraging new scholars and research groups, as well as, allowing for more interdisciplinary approaches.

This is especially true with respects to the efforts that these associations have made to reach the regional researchers and integrate them into thematic groups as a way of limiting the effects of dispersion which results from the country's continental dimensions.

Yet, it should be pointed out that as consequence of their more federated

structure, these organizations have generally been less effective as advocates and political brokers within the spheres of government in influencing scientific and educational policies.

For certain, all the national associations have organized their meetings around national development issues currently under debate.

In considering the diversity of continental Brazil, the national associations have played a vital, though at times limited, role in creating the occasions for researchers from different regions to come together to debate issues.

Overtime, each association has had to adopt some type of productivity and regional diversity criteria for selecting participants and papers for both regional and national meetings.

Since the early 1980's the national graduate evaluation system includes as one of its criterion faculty participation in scientific meetings.

This means that national associations provide the few academic meetings in which scholars can participate, and thus obtain credits for the standardized government system of academic ratings.

International network-building capacity: The case of MERCOSUL

Another indicator of the consolidation phase of the Brazilian social research community is the extent to which groups have succeeded in forging linkages with partners in other countries.

Of the data available from the national research council (Table 1), one finds that in 1998, 378 research groups (approximately 22% of the total number of groups in the social sciences) had engaged with corresponding groups in the MERCOSUL region in developing some type of joint activities ranging from research projects, meetings, exchanges of scholars and students and inter-institutional graduate-level programs.

The MERCOSUL region encompasses three countries of the southern cone of South American in the emerging regional market, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. In addition, Bolivia and Chile have associate membership status in the regional union.

Many times these linkages involved more than one research group in each country, but few have had a significantly long duration and suffer from periodic interruptions due to funding problems.

Table 1. Number of research groups declaring exchanges with research groups in the MERCOSUL countries, 1994-1998.

Discipline	Argentina	Uruguay	Paraguay	Total
Ecology	12	6	3	21
Administration	-	-	-	-
Economics	-	-	-	-
Sociology	36	26	12	74
Psychology	37	11	8	56
Law	-	-	-	-
Political Science	11	7	5	23
History	22	15	12	49
Education	20	10	16	46
Anthropology	31	16	7	54
Collective Health	28	17	10	55
Urban & Regional Planning	-	-	-	-
Social Work	-	-	-	-
Geography	-	-	-	-
Demography	-	-	-	-
Total social researchers	197	108	73	378

Obs.: (-) Not specified in the original table.

Source: Brazil (2001a).

Considering that research groups with Southern Cone linkages come from a large array of social science fields, it is evident that the more established network organizations such as CLACSO and FLACSO represent only a small fraction of the exchange activities that have been forged between researchers in the region.

Even within the traditional disciplines in which the CLACSO and FLACSO organizations have recruited partners (sociology and political science) the data suggest that more groups have taken their own initiatives independently of the auspices of these organizations.

Of course, the growth of exchanges between the MERCOSUL countries is also

the result of those countries' explicit policies of encouraging regional integration.

Furthermore, as the regional block emerges, there has been growing interest on the part of scholars to develop exchange activities with corresponding groups from countries in the region. For Brazilian researchers Southern Cone integration is seen as a broadening of opportunities for comparative research.

In addition to the MERCOSUL exchanges, Brazilian government agencies have created exchange programs with several European and North American institutions. In the case of some of the European countries there exist programs for joint

research and student training, degree equivalences and faculty exchanges created under specific bilateral agreements with France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain and Portugal.

Increasingly Brazilian doctoral students are granted one year scholarships for studies at a foreign university (sandwich scholarships) that have contributed in forging academic linkages between the student, his national and foreign supervisors and their institutions.

The “sandwich program” has obliged researchers to become more attentive to the necessity of forming ties with foreign scholars and institutions around specific research themes.

Furthermore, academic exchanges with foreign institutions have also been included as another criteria used to evaluate graduate studies programs in the CAPES.

Official incentives have contributed to the formation of extensive linkages with European research groups and scholars not only to enable the insertion of Brazilian scientists into the world scientific community but also as a safe guard against a possible isolationism resulting from the development of nationally based graduate programs that have reduced the number of Brazilian students traveling abroad to obtain advanced degrees.

At the same time, these efforts have suffered from the lack of funding and the drawbacks of relying exclusively on government resources for funding joint research and exchange projects.

This has meant that the demand for resources to support new exchange activities far out paces the availability of funds and at the same time suffers from the difficulty of the bureaucracies of the funding agencies in adequately reviewing and evaluating these proposals.

Nevertheless, the benefits obtained from these exchange programs far out weight the obstacles that have to be surpassed.

Current research themes in contemporary Brazilian social sciences

Considering that the CNPq scientific census of 2000 catalogued over 1,700 research groups in the social sciences, one can imagine that the research issues that have provoked debates among social scientists are quite varied.

Undoubtedly a main tendency in social science research today in Brazil is a strong impetus given to a multidisciplinary focus on any major research theme.

Certainly, no clear consensus would be found as to the predominance of any specific topics currently under study.

As the different social science fields become diversified it becomes clear that there is not a short concise list of topics that are researched and debated.

Instead, one finds that there is a large array of topics that are researched today.

Table 1 presents many current research topics classified by broad themes and by discipline. Through this classification one can appreciate the diversity of interests and research topics and still focus on how each discipline approaches each of the main thematic areas.

In general, one can say that the main trends in social science research can be aggregated into seven thematic areas:

- 1) Poverty and its reduction;
- 2) Political reforms, democratization and accountability;
- 3) Political contention and social change;
- 4) Race relations;
- 5) Gender issues;
- 6) Economic growth; and
- 7) New technologies.

Under each of these themes most of the disciplinary fields have developed important research activities and publications.

The main thrust of social science research in Brazil today tends to focus largely on issues of social and economic development.

There is little incentive, though, for scholars to dedicate efforts in theorization. This is even more so since government funding agencies tend to attach a premium on research projects that more directly address development issues and that may provide information for practical solutions to these problems.

On the other hand, over the past years here has been a significant increase in researching topics directly related to Latin America.

Traditionally Brazilian scholars have been more predisposed to focusing their intellectual attentions to Western European and North American audiences, academic contributions and scientific exchanges.

Nevertheless, one finds that over the past decade, there has been an increasing interest in studying topics directly related to other Latin American countries or to the region as a whole.

When examining the data provided by the National Directory of Research Groups of the Brazilian National Research Council (Diretorio de Grupos de Pesquisa/CNPq), the data between 2000 and 2007 on key words describing academic works by

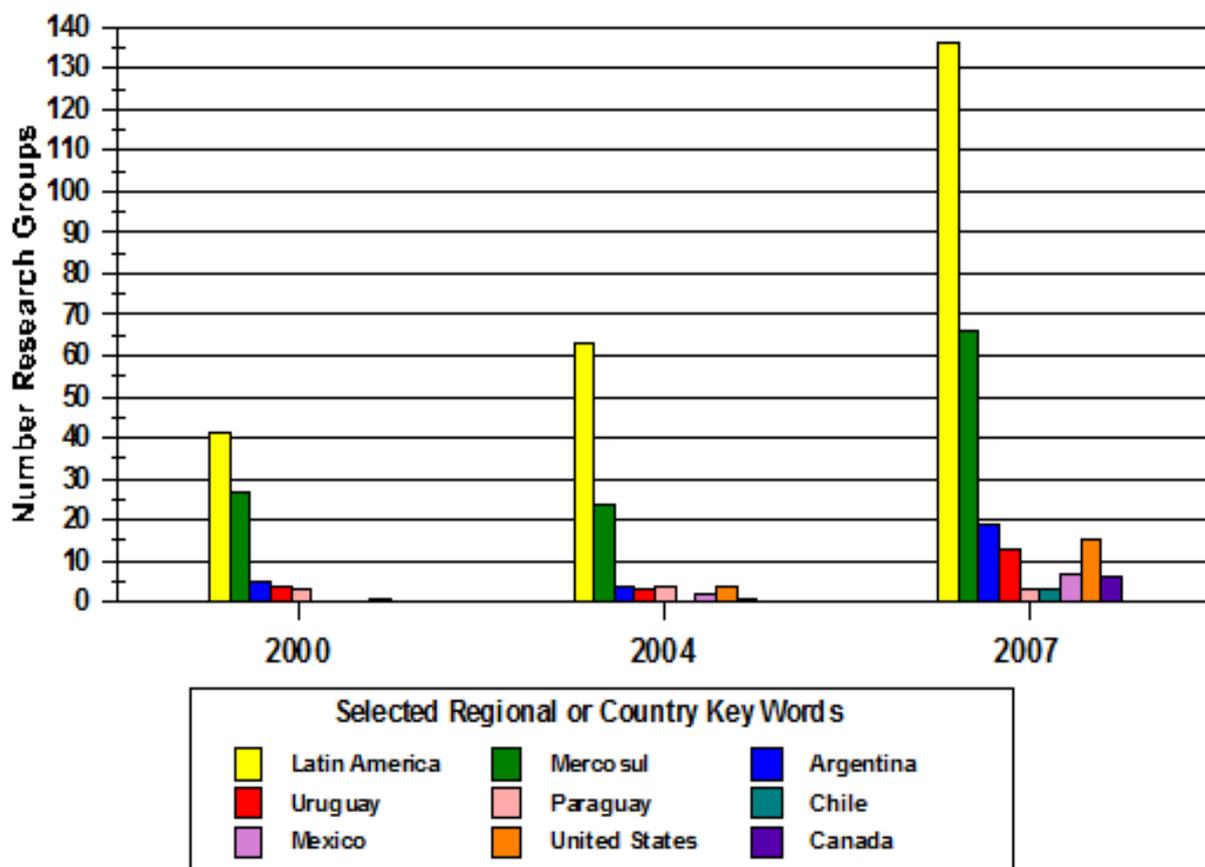
scholars belonging to the research groups registered with that Brazilian agency show an important increase in the number of research groups that conduct studies on Latin American topics (Brazil 2010).

This can be seen by the growth in the number of research groups reporting studies. Over the seven years between 2000 and 2007 there was a 300% percent increase in studies on Latin America in general.

In addition to this, the studies on MERCOSUL topics more than doubled in

the same period. Likewise, studies that specifically focused on Argentina and Uruguay also increased in a similar percentage almost tripling in number.

Important no note is the fact that during the same period, the aggregate research groups data reported an increase in studies on the United States, but in looking at the volume of studies conducted, the data show an overwhelming and growing interest in studying topics related to Latin America and MERCOSUL as opposed to research concerns with the United States or Canada.



Graphic 1. Brazilian research groups with regional or country topics. 2000-2007.

The trends illustrated by this data suggest that Brazilian social scientists are becoming more concerned with research themes related to the Latin American context, even though this does not necessarily mean that North American or Western European theoretical influence has subsided.

More likely than not, one would find that there is still a considerable dependence among Brazilian social scientists on theoretical work and empirical approaches developed in North Atlantic academic centers, but the growing interest in Latin America brings to the surface important changes that may eventually contribute to the emergence of a more regional process of constructing that may, in the near future, alter this situation.

The first of these processes is that growing interest in studying Latin America has become.

New challenges in continued social science research development in Brazil

The development of social sciences in Brazil today is at a “*take-off stage*”, to use an old Rostowian concept. Institutionally, structurally and quantitatively social science research has reached a stage that clearly differentiates Brazil from most of the Latin American countries.

Few countries in the region have made similar concerted efforts to structure and support a national system of training and research such as the one briefly described above.

Probably, only the Cubans have devoted a proportionate amount of resources to developing their research capabilities with the Mexicans following closely behind them.

Given the continental scale involved in successfully establishing the large number of research and training institutions, the diversity of funding from a few government agencies and the mobilization of many institutional resources and individual talents, this undertaking has resulted in the first, the largest and most consolidated system of graduate education in the social sciences to emerge in Latin America.

Nonetheless, the advances achieved over the past thirty years, illustrated in the statistical data presented in this analysis, also has meant that now certain needs and demands become more relevant at this “*take-off*” stage.

While the institutional framework for sustaining a social science research community was being put in place, much less attention was given to the lack of library facilities.

Today at least two conditions have become key bottlenecks for the continued advance of social research in the country.

The first is the challenge of developing a national research library system in a country that only began this task twenty years ago.

This is indeed a new and unique challenge: how to acquire the bibliographical resources necessary for the support of creative and qualified social research in the near future.

If, on the one hand, the Brazilian case demonstrates that the institutional barriers to establishing stable sites for social research and training have been overcome, on the other hand, this now dramatizes a situation of poor libraries making it the next obstacle to be tackled.

The challenge is unique because now planning and funding have to be turned to the tasks of developing a national network of research libraries.

While the continued funding of various types of study trips abroad are designed to substitute the general weakness of the Brazilian research library system, certainly these efforts are palliative.

Clearly today's agenda calls for a major concerted effort in setting in place a system that will greatly enhance the access to bibliographical materials without the need

of each scholar or graduate student to make international trips for bibliographical research.

Similarly, another urgent challenge is the devising of a system that would make available to researchers the doctoral dissertations and masters' theses defended at Brazilian universities.

In the year 2000 alone, in all the sciences, Brazilian universities approved 18,374 master theses and 5,342 doctoral dissertations. In the social sciences, in this year, were approved 5,867 masters theses and 1,333 doctoral dissertations.

In addition to this, there is a significant backlog of these academic works that have been defended over the past 30 years and are stored in each university library and the future will bring a growing number of these studies.

Without a doubt much valuable research is to be found in these works especially in the doctoral dissertations and the fact that by and large these studies are not easily available to researchers has its consequence in the ever growing possibility of research duplication and therefore the quality of research cannot be enhanced by an informed revision of what has already been studied.

Since in Brazil today, there is still a lag between the amount of doctoral level

research that is being conducted and the limited publishing sources, most social research remains in dissertation form.

Thus, this is the moment that steps have to be taken to begin solving the library deficiencies by creating:

- 1) A system similar to the American Dissertation Abstracts of Pro-Quest Information and Learning; and
- 2) A network of regional research libraries integrated in national reference system with necessary infrastructure and separate well-defined funding that will provide financial resources on regular bases.

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Considering the growing integration of the Brazilian research community with its MERCOSUL counterparts, the creation of these information systems will without a doubt mean that research in these countries as a whole will also be benefited.

While in the Southern Cone region each country is at a different stage in the development of its social science research community, the fact remains that the process of integration has begun and the existence of an established and functional information system of regional research libraries and a dissertation clearing house will bring to the whole region basic resources that are key elements in doing creative and quality research.

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