

JADT' 18

PROCEEDINGS OF THE
14TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF TEXTUAL DATA

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Bridge over the ocean: Histories of social psychology in Europe and North America. An analysis of chronological corpora¹

Valentina Rizzoli, Arjuna Tuzzi

University of Padova – valentina.rizzoli@phd.unipd.it; arjuna.tuzzi@unipd.it

Abstract

Since the European Association of Social Psychology (EASP - initially called European Association of Experimental Social Psychology) has been established in 1966, what was then considered “European” social psychology has been working to affirm its own identity by presenting a distinctive brand to the rest of the world in general and to North America in particular. This study aims to compare European and U.S. social psychology through the analysis of the papers published by two of the main journals in their field: The Journal of Personality and Social Psychology and the European Journal of Social Psychology. All the abstracts (from the first publication to the last one in 2016) of the two journals papers have been collected. By means of a (lexical) correspondence analysis (SPAD software), the existence of a latent temporal pattern in keywords' occurrences was explored. Furthermore, in order to detect, retrieve and compare the main topics the journals dealt with over time, an analysis implemented by means of Reinert's method was conducted (IRaMuTeQ and R software). Results show that even if there are some typical features that distinguish the “European” from the “American” social psychology some publication trends seem to converge. Results will be discussed also reflecting on the contribution of these methods in studying the history/ies of a discipline.

Keywords: diachronic corpora, chronological textual data, text clustering, correspondence analysis, Reinert's method, history of social psychology

1. Introduction

It is widely spread that what is called “the modern social psychology” came from Europe with the migration of scholars during the second world war,

¹This study is a new development of a an interdisciplinary research project funded by the University of Padova, fund CPDA145940 (2014) “Tracing the History of Words. A Portrait of a Discipline Through Analyses of Keyword Counts in Large Corpora of Scientific Literature” (P.I. Arjuna Tuzzi).

and started to develop mainly in the United States. Moscovici and Markova (2006) referred to an American indigenous tradition that compete with a newer Euro-American tradition, not intending to argue that there was a socio-psychological tradition born in Europe and brought to America; but a genuinely American tradition that began with the work of the immigrant Lewin and his new students. While there was a prosperous development of social psychology in U.S., in Europe there were scholars working on social psychology, but there was no European school (Moscovici, 1999). The establishment of the European Association of (Experimental) Social Psychology (EASP - initially EAESP) in 1966 has been fundamental in the development of a "European" social psychology. EASP represented a distinctive brand of the discipline to the rest of the world in general and to North America in particular, by providing a voice for a more "social" social psychology (<http://www.easp.eu/about/>). To consider an "American" and a "European" social psychology as two completely separated and counterpoised entities would be wrong since there was a clear influence between them. Moreover, the first EASP meeting, which fostered the birth of EAESP, was an initiative of U.S. scholars (cf. Moscovici and Markova, 2006). By saying "American" social psychology we usually refer to the indigenous U.S. tradition explicated by Floyd Allport's work in 1924, which considers social psychology as part of general psychology and keeps more attention on the "individual". "European" social psychology usually refers to the Euro-American tradition, promoted by the EASP, that regards social psychology as strictly connected to close disciplines such as sociology and anthropology and accords a greater role to social and cultural aspects (<http://www.easp.eu/about/>). This contribute consists in an empirical analysis that moves from the study of scientific production. Over time, scientific journals shape the history of a discipline as they include objects, fields of application and methods that contribute to delineate the trajectory of a discipline. Thus, an in-depth understanding of the past and the temporal evolution of a discipline can be achieved by analysing the scientific debate inside relevant scientific journals (Trevisani and Tuzzi, 2015; 2018). We have taken into account the European Journal of Social Psychology (EJSP) and the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology (JPSP). The former is an official publication of the EASP and worldwide represents the association's voice. The JPSP belongs to the American Psychological Association, that represents the most widespread community of psychologists in the United States, and not only: It is an important scientific reference that provides guidelines also in Europe. In terms of visibility and prestige, the JPSP is considered one of the most relevant journals of the field. The main aim is to observe and compare the trajectory of the two Journal publications and to reflect about

what contribution these methods can provide for the study of the history of a discipline. We particularly intend: 1) to portray the temporal pattern of the main concepts debated in the past and covered today by EJSP and JPSP; 2) to detect, retrieve and compare the main topics these journals dealt with over time.

2. Methods

All the available abstracts of the two journals have been included in two corpora and collected from different acknowledged sources compared with the website of the journals. As regards EJSP, a total of 2,559 items was collected, for a period of 46 years, from the very first in 1971, Volume No. 1, Issue No. 1 to the latest of 2016, No. 46, Issue No. 7. Regarding JPSP, an amount of 9,568 item was downloaded, for a period of 52 years, from 1965, Volume No. 1, Issue No. 1 to 2016, No. 111, Issue No. 6. Items without any abstract have been deleted (e.g., editorials, master heads, errata, acknowledgements). The EJSP corpus is composed of 2,195 abstracts, while the JPSP one of 9,536 abstracts.

To improve the homogeneity of the corpora we decided to privilege the British spelling (e.g., we replaced *analyzed* with *analysed*) in EJSP and those American in JPSP. Our corpora have been normalised only replacing uppercase with lowercase letters. The lexicometric measures showed that there is a good redundancy, that is fundamental to work with frequencies (Lebart, Salem, & Berry, 1998; Tuzzi, 2003; Bolasco, 2013).

Multi-words (MW) with frequencies ≥ 5 for the EJSP corpus and ≥ 10 for the JPSP one (it is consistently larger than the former) have been recognised, selected and considered as textual units. We resort to a procedure for automatic information retrieval that permits to recognise repeated informative sequences, e.g., an adjective followed by a noun as in “social psychology”, that produce a MW (Pavone, 2010). Two encyclopaedias of social psychology (Manstead et al., 1995; Baumeister & Vohs, 2007) and index of keywords available in the downloading process provided further MWs.

In order to depict the structure of the association between years and words and to establish the existence of a chronological dimension, a (lexical) correspondence analysis (CA) has been conducted on two matrices: 5,784 words over 46 years (rows per columns) for EJSP corpus and 8,349 x 52 for JPSP. To detect a set of relevant topics included in the journals and observe their temporal development, an analysis implemented by means of Reinert's method (1986) has been conducted. Topics can be defined as “lexical worlds” (Reinert, 1993), that are groups of words referring to a class of meaning. The result, performed with a hierarchical descending classification, is a dendrogram that groups units into classes that mirror a similar lexical

context. Textual data were processed with the Taltac2 dedicated software and statistical analyses were conducted with SPAD, Iramuteq and R software packages.

3. Results

By means of CA we can observe the existence of clear-cut temporal dimension in both the corpora (Figure 1). The keywords which mainly contributed to the factorial solution show which concepts typifies each time-span.

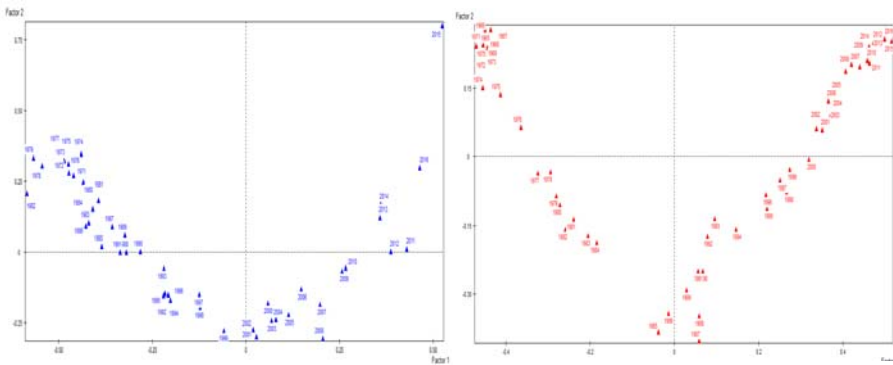


Figure 1 - First factorial plan of Correspondence Analysis of EJSP (left side) and JPSP (right side). Projection of years

In the EJSP (Figure 1, left side) the first period (1971-1990) is strongly characterised by words that refer to the experimental design. This is the period mainly concerned with the study of aggression, risk taking, dissonance, and attribution theory. The keywords of the subsequent period (nineties) seem to be related to social change, which is characterised by the study of social influence, categorization, and words referring to Moscovici and Tajfel's theories (that marked the European production: social representations, minority influence and minimal group paradigm). In the following years (2000s) we can observe that the attention has turned on the self, ingroup/outgroup relations and the social cognition with the study of stereotypes, emotions, motivation, agency/communion, and so on. In recent years (2011-2016) mainly social issues (e.g., gender, migration, environment, religion) and everyday life concerns are highlighted.

As regards the JPSP (Figure 1, right side), in the first decade considered (1965-1976) the main contribution is given by words as reinforcement, verbal reinforcement, conditioning, and so on, that together refer to behaviourism. At the same time, we can observe the occurrence of words pertain to game's theories, conflict/cooperation as well as aggression and dissonance theory.

Also physiological measurements (e.g. heart rate) and experiments (experimental) are visible. The second period includes the last Seventies until the last Eighties. Its distinctive words are masculinity/femininity, and other terms that remind to motivational theories. Moreover, the presence of words related to personality is evident and becomes stronger in the following period, that includes the Nineties. In this period mood, personality, individual differences, memory and the self represent the main contribution. At the same time also issues about gender and women are noteworthy. The last period starts from the 2000s and shows many references to explicit/implicit, and intimate relationships. Moreover, further specific words about positive psychology (life satisfaction, goal pursuit, and so on) and culture (cultural, culture) are relevant.

The analysis conducted by means of Reinert's method enlightens the presence of nine different lexical worlds (79.64% of the abstracts have been classified) in EJSP (Figure 2).

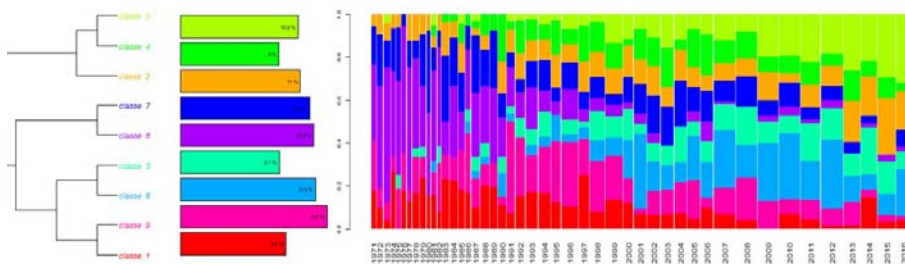


Figure 2 - EJSP classes and their distributions over years – Unsupervised clustering method

Following the classes order from the bottom to the top of Figure 2, a brief outline of their contents is provided below. Class 1 (red) concerns attribution and methodological issues (e.g., method, statistical, model). Class 9 (fuchsia) contains words related to impression formation, categorisation and stereotype. Both these classes show decreasing trends without disappearing. Class 6 (light blue) includes mainly words related to gender studies and implicit measures (e.g., prime, IAT). Class 5 (water blue) concerns moods and regulatory focus theory. These two classes show increasing trends. Class 8 (purple) concerns studies on aggression (in which mainly male/female as subjects involved in an experiment were compared). This class was initially hegemonic in the field and then disappeared along time. Class 7 (blue) includes game theories and studies on cooperation competition and shows a decreasing trend. Class 2 (orange) concerns politics and culture (mainly cross cultural studies) and it is an ever-present topic, as well as Class 4 (green) that concerns the social identity theory and ingroup/outgroup dynamics. Class 3, that concerns the applications of that theory (e.g., migration), shows a clear

increasing trend. As regards JPSP, the analysis shows the presence of eleven clusters (76,08% of the abstracts have been classified - Figure 3). Following the order of the classes from the bottom to the top of Figure 3: Class 7 (light blue) concerns consensus formations and attribution, and seems to be an ever-present topic. Class 6 (water blue) contains processes regarding memory, stereotypes and categorisation and it is particularly recurrent in the nineties and 2000s. Class 3 (grey) contains studies on self, emotion and motivation and shows a clear increasing trend, becoming one of the most relevant topics nowadays. Classes 11 (fuchsia), 10 (lilac), and 1 (red) concern, respectively, studies on aggression and physical measurements, on dissonance and opinion changes, and male and female involved in experimental studies. They were predominant in the first years considered and then disappeared. Class 9 (purple) concerns culture (mainly comparing west and east ones) and politics. It shows an increasing trend although it is not among main topics nowadays. Class 2 (orange) includes words regarding the measurements and their validity (e.g., scale, reliability, test retest) and shows a stable trend. Class 8 (blue) contains words relate to interpersonally differences (based on gender or studied with twin studies). It seems to remain constant even if with a slight decreasing trend. Class 5 (water green) is represented by words concerning health (mental and physical) and how to cope with related problems. Class 4 (green) concerns romantic and couple relationships. Both those classes show increasing trends.

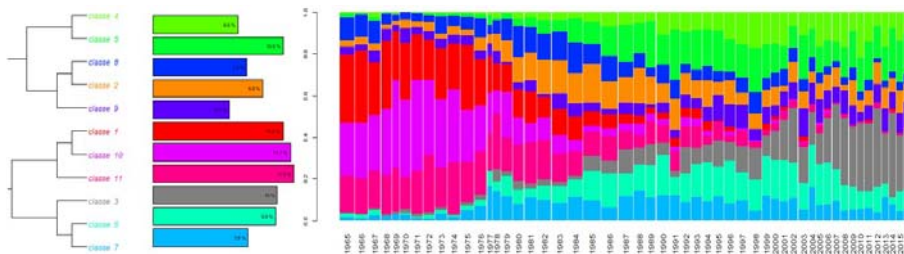


Figure 3 - JPSP classes and their distributions over years – Unsupervised clustering method

4. Discussion and conclusions

The aim of the present study is to compare American and European social psychology offering food for thought on the contribution of the methods used in studying the histories of a discipline. Thanks to these preliminary results we succeeded in highlighting the history of a discipline from the particular point of view of its effective scientific production.

In the first years considered, some similarities among the contents tackled in the two journals can be noticed (e.g., dissonance theory and aggression). The main differentiation that emerged concerns the stronger attention on

individual and personality in JPSP, on the one hand, and the different impact of Tajfel and Moscovici's contributions on the psychology of groups and Moscovici's works on social representations, on the other. This emerged as particularly evident in '80s and '90s. The predominant approach of social cognition seems to be a common feature, as well as methods and research design that mainly refer to the experimental method and topics concerning cross cultural studies and politics. As regards the topics identified, some common trajectories of publication were enlightened. They are, for example, Class 11 in EJSP and 8 in JPSP, concerning studies on aggression that were predominant in the first decades and later decline. Class 1 in EJSP and 7 in JPSP, as regards, studies on attribution. Also, class 2 in EJSP and 9 in JPSP, that are related to culture and politics. Similar contents but different trajectories are shown by Class 9 in EJSP and 6 in JPSP. The main difference between the journals is observed in JPSP Classes concerning personality, health, cope, and romantic and couple relationships (8, 5, 4), and EJSP Classes concerning ingroup/outgroup processes, and intergroup contact and applied concerns (4, 3).

It is worth mentioning the core of the difference between American and European social psychology: the attention on the individual in the American and on the social in the European one. That difference finds its way as a greater attention on social issues in EJSP and individual related studies (e.g. interpersonal relations, personality) in JPSP. Two histories of publications in social psychology have been traced, one North American and the other European. Their typical differentiation is historically well known in the community, but the empirical works that contributed to that debate are less. This is an example of the contribution that quantitative analysis of textual data can provide to the study of the history of a discipline, also known as digital history.

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