

THE HISTORY OF PSYCHOLOGY COURSE IN SPANISH PSYCHOLOGY CURRICULA: Past, Present, Future

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Since the university education of psychologists began in Spain in 1954, the history of psychology course has been included in the curriculum. In the first few years, only half of the curricula offered the course. From 1973 to 2007, the universities' organization and regulation underwent successive reforms that involved changes in the curricula, decreasing specific national guidelines for each degree and establishing a minimum set of common required courses, called core courses, including the history of psychology. In 2007, the European Higher Education Area was set up, transforming the 5-year bachelor's degrees into 4-year degrees and eliminating the required guidelines, with each university being able to define the content of their curricula. The Dean's Conference for Psychology agreed on some recommendations related to core courses, which continued to include the history of psychology and were adopted by the majority of the universities. In 2015, the government established a new national regulation that makes it possible for each university to voluntarily reduce the length of the bachelor's degree to 3 years. Some psychology historians believe that this hypothetical reduction in the length of the degree, along with the already existing general tendency to prioritize applied or practical courses over basic or fundamental ones, could produce an appropriate scenario for the disappearance of the history of psychology course in some universities.

Keywords: history of psychology course, Spanish psychology curricula, teaching psychology, period 1954–2015, European Higher Education Area

In 1954, the first specialized psychology training in Spain began at the Madrid Complutense University (UCM). It consisted of a 2-year graduate course designed for students holding 5-year bachelor degrees (*licenciaturas*) in any specialty. In 1968, a 5-year degree in psychology was initiated simultaneously in the UCM and the University of Barcelona (UB), as a specialization or section in the schools of philosophy and letters. In that first course in the 1968–69 academic year, approximately 100 students were enrolled in Madrid and another 50 in Barcelona (Siguán, 1978). Since then, psychology has seen unprecedented growth in Spanish universities. Thus, with a pop-

ulation of 46 million in Spain, in the 2013–2014 academic year there were 68,800 psychology students enrolled in 53 universities. Of these, 86% studied in 31 public universities and 14% in 22 private universities. Psychology students made up 4.8% of the total number of university students. In 2013, approximately 8,200 students obtained the bachelor's degree in psychology (Ministerio de Educación, 2014).

In Spain, in contrast to other European countries, and as described by Carpintero et al. (2010), the history of psychology as a discipline has clearly become institutionalized, not only because of its spread presence in university education, as we will analyze in this study, but also thanks to two milestones: the creation of the “*Revista de Historia de la Psicología*” in 1980 and the founding of the *Spanish Society for the History of Psychology* (SEHP) in 1988. Since its origin, the SEHP has had intense activity in the teaching, research, and dissemination of the history of psychology. The Carpintero study describes other relevant aspects of the institutionalization of the discipline in Spain, among which we would like to

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highlight the diverse and quite productive thematic research lines that Spanish historians have been carrying out from different methodological/theoretical movements, in addition to the preparation of numerous teaching manuals for the history of psychology and audiovisual teaching materials (Carpintero et al., 2010). This is not a unique case in Spain, where the history of medicine since the 1940s has also enjoyed a strong institutionalization and may have been an inspirational model for the institutionalization of the history of psychology, in terms of both teaching and research.

The history of psychology course has been present in Spain in almost all of the psychology curricula from their origins to the present day. During this time, the role and usefulness of history of psychology courses in the psychology degree in different countries have been widely discussed and debated (e.g., Barnes & Greer, 2014; Bhatt & Tonks, 2002; Brock, 2002; Danziger, 1994; Fierro, 2014; Garcia, 2011; Giménez, 2002; Goodwin, 1997; Henle, 1976; Mestre, 2007; Milner, 1987; Raphelson, 1979). In the Spanish context, the article by Giménez (2002), which discusses the value of the course in the specific context of the psychology degree in Spain, probably expresses the opinions of quite a few Spanish professors. For her, the history of psychology

... is the only subject through which the students can obtain a global view of the discipline, understand the relationships among processes, theories, methods, models, paradigms, techniques and interventions, situate the different theoretical frameworks ... that make it possible to comprehend the thread of logic that underlies so much disparity, present a systematic set in which all the contents are organized and linked to each other, and provide a solid, broad and integrating perspective of psychology. (Giménez, 2002, p. 224)

We agree that the history of psychology plays a fundamental and unifying role in training Spanish psychologists. However, currently many would disagree with this view, observing in psychology—and in the university in general—a certain “tendency for the foundations of the knowledge base to be substituted by its usefulness and advantages” (Giménez, 2002, p. 224).

Until now, the history of psychology course in Spain has held a privileged place in the psychology curricula (Carpintero et al., 2010; Mestre, 2007). In addition, as we will see, it has been a fundamental factor in the institutionalization of research in this discipline. The question we raise, however, is whether this situation

can be maintained in the future, in light of the important changes that are likely to occur in the next few years in the Spanish university system, based on Spain’s integration in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), known as the *Bologna Process*.

To consider the future of the history of psychology course in Spain, we first need to closely analyze its history and the academic and normative factors that have influenced its progression. Therefore, the purpose of this study is, first, to analyze the history of the course in the psychology curricula in universities in Spain, from their origins to the present day. Special attention will be paid to analyzing the various legal regulations and changes in the structure of university degrees and curricula that took place from the second half of the 20th century to the present day and have largely determined this evolution and presence. Our second purpose, based on this trajectory and considering the current thoughts and feelings of a sufficiently representative sample of researchers and professors in this field, is to describe and discuss possible scenarios for the history course in the context of future changes in the curricula resulting from the integration process in the EHEA. In sum, by collecting and organizing this information, we offer a frame of reference for reflecting on the course’s importance in the official teaching of Psychology in Spain, discussing different scenarios in light of possible future changes in the organization of university degrees. In any case, in this study we do not intend to perform an exhaustive evaluation or reach definitive conclusions about the past or the future.

To reconstruct the evolution of the history of psychology course in Spain, we collected and reviewed 152 psychology curricula from 1954 to the present, corresponding to 49 different universities. We also collected and analyzed the 49 course teaching guides currently being used. In addition, we carried out a review of the different legal norms that have regulated the successive modifications in the structure and organization of universities and university education in Spain, and specifically where a psychology curriculum is taught. We also considered various documents in which some psychologists offer detailed data about different stages in the evolution of psychology degrees in Spain, which they witnessed and participated in, as well as studies that have examined the history of psychology course in these degree programs. Finally, several official reports

have been reviewed that were used as working documents in the elaboration and implementation of successive curricular reforms.

Teaching Psychology in Spain (1954–2015): A History of Curricular Changes

The Origins of Psychology as a University Program

The first psychology courses in Spanish universities date back to the 19th century, as part of the philosophy curriculum (Carpintero, 1982). In the last decades of the 19th century, they begin to be introduced in the study plans for Medicine. Thus, as Siguán (1978) points out: “(. . .) due to the influence of the new ways to understand psychology in Europe, the experimental psychology chair was created at the School of Sciences in Madrid and taught by Doctor Simarro” (p. 127). Created in 1902, it was one of the first psychology chairs in Europe in a school of sciences (Yela, 1994, 1996). In these beginnings, it is important to mention the important role of the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* (*Free Teaching Institution*), created in 1876 and inspired by the Krausist Movement, which from that time until the Civil War acted as a fundamental channel for the introduction, teaching and diffusion in Spain of the new psychological ideas being developed outside the country, with special consideration given to experimental and physiological psychology (Yela, 1994). We cannot thoroughly analyze here the complex history of the beginnings of psychology in Spain in the final decades of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century or the contributions of the numerous precursors, such as Cubí, Pi i Molist, Turró, Mira i López, Mata, Esquerdo, Simarro, Rodríguez Lavín, Latorra, Germain, Zaragüeta, Barbado, Mallart, and many others. An extensive presentation can be found in Carpintero (1982, 1994), which clearly shows the commencement of a positivist, experimental and applied tradition that would permeate the future development of Spanish psychology. It should also be mentioned that from the 1920s on, generalized psychology applications were initiated in different social settings, especially represented by the two psycho-technical institutes, one in Madrid, directed by José Germain, and the other in Barcelona, with Emilio Mira in charge (Carpintero,

1994; Siguán, 1978; Yela, 1987, 1994). Unfortunately, all of the developments were dramatically interrupted by the Spanish Civil War.

Although psychology was present in the university from the 19th century, the systematic teaching of psychology at the university level was able to begin from 1953 with the creation of the Graduate School of Psychology at the UCM, directed by Juan Zaragüeta (Bandrés & Llavona, 2004; Siguán, 1978). These classes began in 1954, making it possible to award the first official psychology degrees in Spain for students who already had bachelor's degrees in any specialty. This graduate school had been promoted by the Experimental Psychology Department of the *Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas* (*High Council of Scientific Research*), created in 1948, after the traumatic interruption in the development of Spanish Psychology produced by the Civil War and the first postwar years. The graduate school was an attempt, led by José Germain, to recover and foster a scientific, experimental and applied psychology that would be linked to the prewar tradition (Siguán, 1978, 1989).

In this department, a group of people coincided who would later occupy the first psychology professorships in the Spanish university. They would have a strong influence on the evolution of psychology in the country, in both scientific and teaching and applied aspects. They brought to Spain and spread the different developments occurring at the time in Europe and the United States, in other words, the successive movements that promoted psychology in the 20th century. In the words of Miguel Siguán, both witness to and participant in this stage:

Working in the Department was Mariano Yela, developing and defending the factorial analysis techniques he had learned alongside Thurstone; José Luis Pinillos, who after following the orientations of German charactology for a time, modified his path because of his contact with Eysenck in London; [Manuel] Ubeda . . . , [Psychophysiological doctor, philosopher and friar], who spread the recently introduced encephalogram technique; Pertejo, who specialized in Rorschach; and myself [Siguán], who spread the T.A.T. in Spain before working in industrial psychology, based on the Hawthorne Experiments, who I met in England. To these names should be added those of some collaborators at the Pedagogy Institute, which shared the same building with the [Experimental] Psychology Department, dedicated to genetic psychology and child psy-

chometry (Secadas, García Yagiie). (Siguán, 1978, p. 128)

Thus, Siguán continues, “from this group of people and in this intellectual setting, the [graduate] School of Madrid emerged” (Siguán, 1978, p. 128), in a favorable political and academic context: the Ministry of Education was held by Joaquín Ruiz-Jiménez, protagonist of the first movement toward intellectual openness in the Spanish university after the Civil War, and whose friendship with Manuel Úbeda could have been decisive in approving the School’s initiation (Loredo, Lafuente, & Ferrándiz, 2000). In addition, the rector of the University of Madrid was Pedro Lain Entralgo, doctor, humanist and a great historian of medicine with a profound interest in psychology (Siguán, 1978). It seems strange, however, that a graduate degree in psychology would be created before a previous bachelor’s degree. On this topic, we reproduce some words by Mariano Yela included in a posthumous autobiographical article:

The idea was to establish some psychology studies . . . that would lead to the 5-year degree and the doctorate, which still did not exist, to our embarrassment. . . . The 5-year degree would give the students basic training and the beginning of a specialization. The School would offer, later, professional preparation and practical training in various sectors of applied psychology. Then, in 1953 the authorities approved the creation of the complementary training—the School, but not the previous basic training—the 5-year degree. Thus, we began to construct psychology teaching from the top, but at least we could begin. (Yela, 1996, p. 50)

From 1954, this graduate school offered a specialization diploma in psychology that lasted two years, and it admitted graduates with degrees from any field (e.g., medicine, education, philosophy, law, engineering). The curriculum in the first year included general courses, and in the second year students specialized in educational, industrial or clinical psychology. In 1964, the Graduate School of Psychology was created at the UB, offering a 3-year graduate diploma in psychology and only two specializations, educational and industrial psychology, because at the same time the Graduate School of Clinical Psychology was established in the Medical School (Siguán, 1978, 1989). The large number of applicants for these graduate diplomas showed generalized interest in psychology and reinforced the need to create a 5-year de-

gree. Moreover, these students were the seeds for the teaching staff that would take responsibility for these degrees (Gabucio, Malapeira, Forns, Guàrdia, & Quevedo, 1994).

Thus, in 1967, because of a clear social need and especially to the pressure and demands of the students (Siguán, 1978), a ministerial order was published (Dirección General de Enseñanza Universitaria, 1967) establishing the psychology *specialization* within the philosophy section of the School of Philosophy and Letters of the UCM (these Schools in Spain were in fact “Schools of Philosophy and *Human Sciences*,” given that they included philosophy, history, geography, literature, modern languages, and education sections). On finishing these studies, students obtained the bachelor’s degree in Philosophy and Letters, Specialty in Psychology.

A few months later, the ministerial order was extended to include the UB, and in the 1968–1969 academic year, bachelor’s degree programs were begun in both universities. In 1969, these psychology curricula were established as autonomous psychology *sections* within the Schools of Philosophy and Letters (Yela, 1994), and they would become the basis for future Schools of Psychology that would emerge in the 1980s. That same year, psychology sections were established in the recently created Autonomous University of Madrid (UAM) and Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB), which, from the beginning, have offered the psychology specialty to their degree students. In the following years, various universities progressively incorporated psychology courses into the philosophy and letters degree curriculum to create the psychology specialties or sections. At the same time, the number of students enrolled in these courses increased almost exponentially (Siguán, 1978, 1989).

During the early years, the bachelor’s degree curricula were organized in two blocks (Yela, 1994): The first block, lasting two years, did not contain psychology contents and included courses that were common to all the sections in the schools of philosophy and letters; the second block, lasting three years, consisted of a specialization in psychology. Until 1973, each university established the courses that made up its curriculum, which meant that there was great heterogeneity in the curricula studied by psychologists in different universities. Moreover, there were frequent changes from one academic

year to another. A clear example can be found in the UB, where the curriculum for philosophy and letters, known as the *Maluquer Plan*, effective in the UB from 1969 to 1973, allowed students in both the first and second cycles to freely choose from a broad range of optional courses, some of them different each year, as well as when to take them (Gabucio et al., 1994; Siguán, 1978), thus establishing a personal curriculum that was different for each student. This curriculum, although quite highly rated by the students, had difficulties because of the complexity of applying it in a context of insufficient human and material resources with a rapidly increasing number of students (Siguán, 1978).

In 1972, a ministerial order was published that reformed the university studies (Dirección General de Universidades, 1972), organizing the 5-year degree in an initial 3-year cycle and a second 2-year specialization cycle. In 1973, in applying this new regulation, the philosophy and letters degrees were reformed throughout Spain (Dirección General de Universidades, 1973) in a renovation known as the *Suarez Plan*. The contents of the first cycle would no longer be common for all the students in the different sections, as subjects pertaining to each section or specialty had to be included. A minimum number of required core courses was established for each section—including the psychology section—leaving each university to establish the rest of the subjects, which meant that psychology could begin to clearly differentiate itself from philosophy. The obligatory courses for the psychology section were psychometrics, psycho-diagnostics and history of psychology (first cycle) and experimental psychology, differential psychology, physiological psychology, psychopathology and psychology of the personality (second cycle). From that time on, the psychology sections progressively incorporated a greater number of other specific psychology courses into the first cycle (Siguán, 1978), eliminating those with contents more aligned with philosophy. With this process, the first degree curricula completely devoted to psychology began to be composed. A few years later, at the beginning of the 1980s, the first schools of psychology were created, and with them, the first psychology degrees completely independent from the schools of philosophy.

The final results of the process described was the basic two-cycle structure and the contents of

the study plans that, even while incorporating new courses stemming from a constantly evolving psychology, prevailed in psychology degrees essentially unchanged until the first decade of the 21st century. The first cycle addressed the basic education, normally including (a) basic psychological subjects that deal with the cognitive processes (perception, attention, memory, thinking, language, learning, among others), motivation and emotion, developmental psychology, social psychology, psychodiagnostics and history of psychology; (b) methodological subjects (statistics and psychometrics); (c) subjects that introduce the biological bases of behavior (biological foundations of behavior); and (d) introductory subjects to other relevant specialties for psychologists (sociology, philosophy, logic, pedagogy, anthropology, among others). The second cycle focused on specialization for professional practice in the different areas of psychology, mainly in the fields of Clinical, Educational and Organizational Psychology, although, as highlighted by Yela (1987), courses on topics such as child psychology, family dynamics, psycholinguistics, and social or theoretical-experimental psychology, among others, were also offered.

Marked Changes in the Spanish University: The University Reform Law (LRU) 1983–2007

In 1983, the government approved the law known as the University Reform Law (*Jefatura del Estado*, 1983), which profoundly modified the legal framework for university degrees in Spain. Until 1990, various regulations related to the application of the LRU progressively transformed the universities' organization and the structure of university degrees. It is beyond the objectives of the present study to analyze all the changes produced by the LRU, and we will focus on pointing out those that directly affected the psychology curriculum.

One important change was that all the university degrees were organized in credits, with each credit corresponding to 10 teaching hours of theoretical lecture classes or the equivalent. These were the so-called *LRU credits*, and the term *credit load* began to be used to refer to the number of credits in a subject, course, degree, and so forth. The degrees maintained their two-cycle structure, the first consisting of two or three years and the second lasting two years, at

the end of which the degree was obtained, qualifying students for professional practice. Furthermore, the third cycle was regulated, consisting of 2 years of PhD courses and culminating in reading and defending the doctoral thesis.

In addition, the Ministry of Education established some mandatory general guidelines for each degree that were previously elaborated and discussed by work groups composed of representatives of universities and other institutions such as professional associations (in the case of psychology, this was the Official Association of Spanish Psychologists). These guidelines determined, among other things, the minimum number of teaching hours for each degree in LRU credits, the duration in years (4 or 5 in the case of bachelor's degrees), and the minimum number of LRU credits in common subjects or courses in all the universities that have to include a curricular plan for each degree: the so-called *core courses*. The remaining LRU credits were established discretionally by each university, with some being required and others optional. Moreover, the so-called *elective courses* were included, chosen by the student from all the courses offered by the university, including courses in other degree programs.

In October 1990, the Royal Decree (RD) 1428/1990 (Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, 1990) was published, which defined the general guidelines for the psychology degree. It established that the degree would have a credit load of at least 300 LRU credits (maximum 375), a duration of 4 or 5 years (which each university would decide), and a minimum of 137 LRU credits (45% of the total) in core courses, divided into two cycles. With these new guidelines, universities started to elaborate and implement new psychology curricula in the first half of the 1990s. This was a complex and difficult process that has been described in detail, for example, in the papers by Blanco (2001) and Blanco and Botella (1995). It should be pointed out that during these years, the majority of the university Psychology degrees had already been separated from philosophy and letters, with schools of psychology having been established.

In this process, the work carried out by the recently constituted Psychology Deans' Conference was fundamental. From the time the Conference was founded, a forum was set up where members could debate and try to agree on the general lines and basic principles of the psychology curriculum in Spain. It is important to

highlight that in the first few years there was no consensus on: (a) the duration of the studies in the different universities (4 or 5 years); (b) the number of LRU credits required for the degree, which initially ranged from the 300 minimum credits indicated in the RD, and adopted by some universities, to a maximum of 355 credits in the psychology curriculum of the UCM (Blanco, & Botella, 1995; Samper, Mestre, Tur, Orero, & Falgás, 2008); (c) the percentage of core courses, which was set at between 60% and 75%, far beyond what was established in the general guidelines; and (d) the distribution of the credit load by knowledge areas or the number of optional courses. The difficulties encountered in this process—which were common to all the degrees—meant that many universities would modify the curricula initially adopted at least once, if not more. Faced with this situation, the Psychology Deans' Conference held in Granada in 1997 managed to reach an agreement on some basic recommendations for organizing the Psychology curricula, among which the five-year bachelor's degree and the required 300 LRU credits stand out (Blanco, 2001).

Bologna Process and European Convergence in the 21st Century

The so-called *Bologna Process* began with the signing of the Bologna Declaration in 1999 by 29 European education ministers. In 2001 in Prague, a document was elaborated that contained the basic lines of the EHEA (European Higher Education Area), establishing the year 2010 as the deadline for its implementation in all the participating European countries.

The purpose was not to homogenize the university systems, but rather to establish procedures to connect them and make them more transparent, preserving the universities' autonomy and diversity through a structured system of comparable university degrees consisting of two main cycles: an initial bachelor's degree cycle—which prepares students for professional practice—and a second graduate specialization (composed of masters and doctoral degrees). In addition, an equivalent credit was established for all the European countries: the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). One ECTS credit equaled 25 hr of student work, including both the teaching hours in class and the student's independent work and study time. In Spain, the previous LRU credit

(which counts 10 teaching hours, but not the student's work) was considered equal to one 25-hr ETSC credit (10 teaching hours and 15 hr of student work).

The adoption of the EHEA in 2007 signified a profound change in the structure of the university degrees in Spain. The design of the curricular plans had already begun, and in 2004 a work team composed of representatives of all the psychology faculties, the Official Association of Psychologists, and student associations presented the *Curricular plan design project and bachelor's degree in psychology* (known as the *White book of psychology*; ANECA, 2004) to the Ministry of Education. Based on the White book, although with modifications, in 2006 the Ministry of Education proposed the *Fact sheet for the proposal for the university bachelor's degree in psychology* (known as the *Psychology fact sheet*; Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, 2006). According to this document, the bachelor's degree would take 4 years and require 240 ETSC credits, which included a minimum of 30 credits dedicated to practice and a final project, and 120 credits in core courses.

In 2007, RD 1393/2007 (Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, 2007) established the new classification for the official university degrees, in order to adapt them to the EHEA. According to this RD, the curricular plans of the majority of the bachelor's degrees contained 240 ECTS credits to be taken in 4 years and were called *grados* (the new bachelor's degree). Obtaining the bachelor's degree—with a few exceptions—prepared students for professional practice. Later, they were able to study for an official master's degree (mandatory to practice in certain specialties), specialized and lasting 1 or 2 years, and then eventually complete their training with doctoral studies.

In this RD, there was a critical change related to the proposals initially presented in the white books and fact sheets of the different degrees (as previously described for psychology). In the degrees that qualified students to practice professions not regulated by law, like psychology at that time in Spain, there were no specific guidelines as far as core courses were concerned; that is, each university could freely establish the contents of the degree. It was only possible to establish guidelines in the degrees that prepared students to practice regulated professions, which in Spain in 2007 would include medicine, architecture and a few others, but not psychology. In addition, five main knowl-

edge branches were established: Arts and Humanities, Sciences, Health Sciences, Social and Legal Sciences, Engineering and Architecture.

In light of the lack of a legal standard to regulate core courses, the Deans' Conference and the Official Association of Psychologists agreed to establish recommendations to guarantee a minimal homogeneity of the contents and support the unity and cohesion of the degree and the profession. Thus, the recommendation was to apply the basic proposals from the 2004 Psychology White book and the 2006 Psychology fact sheet, adding some indications agreed upon by the Deans' Conference. It was also recommended that the psychology degree be assigned to the branch of Health Sciences. In any case, the Schools of Psychology were not required to follow these recommendations.

The new bachelor's degrees had 60 credits (600 class hr) less than the former bachelor's degrees (5 years). An important repercussion of this change was the need to reduce the number of courses and, in some cases, their duration, while trying to guarantee a sufficient balance between the basic, general subjects and the courses oriented toward achieving the necessary specialized training and practice in professional skills and competencies. The latter were given increasing importance because they allowed these new graduates to compete in the job market on equal footing with psychologists holding a 5-year degree. The result of this attempt to establish a symmetry between basic and applied training and the balance of power in each Faculty determined the greater or lesser presence (number of credits)—or even the possible disappearance—of various subjects from the curricular plans.

The Position of the History of Psychology Course

First Psychology Curricula

As pointed out earlier, Manuel Úbeda, medical, philosopher, and friar, participated in the creation of the Graduate School of Psychology in Madrid, and he was probably also responsible for the presence of the history of psychology course, which he taught, in the study plans from the beginning. As Loredó, Lafuente, and Ferrándiz (2000, pp. 123–124) pointed out, “he always valued History as a comprehension tool and, consequently, often approached the questions that concerned him from

a historical point of view," a vision he wanted to transfer to the training of psychologists. The presence of this course, however, was unequal in the first curricula (graduate diploma and bachelor's degree), which soon began to be implemented in other universities.

Table 1 summarizes the main data on the history of psychology course in the curricula of the graduate diploma and the first curricula in the psychology section of philosophy and letters degrees.

In the Graduate School of Psychology in Madrid, history of psychology was present as a required course in the second year from 1954 to 1974. By contrast, it was not offered by the Graduate School of Psychology in Barcelona.

When the psychology sections were initiated in 1968 in the philosophy and letters degrees of the UCM and UB, the course was present in both universities, as a requirement in Madrid in the fifth year of the degree program and as an elective in Barcelona that could be taken from the third to the fifth year. However, when the psychology degree curricula were designed in 1969 at the UAM and UAB, history of psychology did not appear in either of them. Thus, the presence of the history of psychology in the degrees was uneven until 1973.

In the general guidelines of the Suarez Plan, published in 1973, history of psychology became a required course in all the degree curricula in the psychology specialty; it was a year-long class taught in the first cycle of the degree program. In the 1973–1974 academic year, the new curricular plan initiated in the universities

already offered the psychology specialization, and from that moment on, the universities that progressively incorporated the psychology degree included history of psychology in the first cycle of their curricula.

LRU Curricular Plans

As Giménez (2002) points out, during the process of elaborating the general guidelines for the psychology curricula of the LRU, the presence of history of psychology as a core course was a controversial question. However, those who defended the need for this subject, such as Antonio Caparrós—one of the first psychologists to teach history of psychology in the degree starting in 1972 at the UB—, among others, made their arguments heard and managed to make it a core course.

Thus, the RD 1428/1990 established the core course of *History of Psychology: theories and systems in psychology*, with a minimum of five LRU credits, guaranteeing that all the psychology students in Spain continued to study this subject as they did in the past. What varied were the year in which this course appeared and the number of LRU credits assigned to it in each university, which could be more than five.

To find out the true situation of this course during that time period, we collected data from 32 universities (23 public and 9 private) and analyzed the number of LRU credits for the history of psychology course in all the curricula elaborated in RD 1428/1990 (when there was

Table 1

The History of Psychology Course in the Graduate Schools of Madrid and Barcelona and in the First Sections of Psychology in the Schools of Philosophy and Letters, 1954–1972

Type of title/school	Initiates psychology studies	History of psychology course (Y/N)	Type of course	When to take the course	Course length
Graduate psychology diploma 1954–1976					
Graduate School of Psychology of the UCM	1954	Y	Required	2nd year	Annual
Graduate School of Psychology of the UB	1964	N	—	—	—
Five-year degree in Psychology 1968					
School of Philosophy and Letters of UCM	1968	Y	Required	5th year	Semester
School of Philosophy and Letters of UB	1968	Y	Elective	3rd to 5th year ^a	Semester
School of Philosophy and Letters of UAM	1969	N	—	—	—
School of Philosophy and Letters of UAB	1969	N	—	—	—

Note. UCM = University Complutense of Madrid; UB = University of Barcelona; UAM = University Autónoma of Madrid; UAB = University Autónoma of Barcelona.

^a The student could freely choose it in any of the 3 years.

more than one plan, we analyzed the one in effect when the new reform of 2007, which we examine later, was enacted). Table 2 presents the results. In the majority of the curricula (87%), the course had more than the five minimum LRU credits established by the RD, with the most common load being six credits. In five universities, the course had nine credits and, as an exception, at the National Distance Education University (UNED) it had 15 credits, because the UNED offered an optional course on the *History of Psychology in Spain*.

The average number of credits for the course in the group of universities was 6.8 LRU credits, representing 2.26% of the total number of credits in the curricular plans.

The general guidelines did not establish in what year the history of psychology course should be taught. However, the data collected show that in all the universities it was taught in the first cycle and, in the majority, in the first year. In one university, it was taught in the third year, but it was not taught in the fourth or fifth year in any of them (Table 3).

Bologna Process

Once all the new “EHEA psychology curricula” were implemented, the majority of psychology schools tried to follow the Psychology white book and the Psychology fact sheet. In these documents, and as occurred in the LRU guidelines, following extensive discussion and some disagreement, this core course was finally

Table 2
University Reform Law (LRU) Credits for the History of Psychology in the Curricular Plans for the Psychology Degree in Spanish Universities Elaborated Under the Guidelines of Royal Decree (RD) 1428/1990

History of psychology LRU credits	Universities	Percentage of universities
5	4	13
6	19	59
7, 5	3	9
9	5	16
9 + 6	1	3

Average number of LRU credits (all the universities): 6.8

Note. In the National Distance Education University (UNED), the core subject of the history of psychology has 9 LRU credits, and there is an optional second-cycle history of Spanish psychology course with 6 LRU credits.

Table 3
Year in Which the History of Psychology Course is Taught in the Curricular Plans for the 5-Year Bachelor's Degree in Psychology in Spanish Universities According to the Guidelines of the Royal Decree (RD) 1428/1990

Year when history of psychology is taught	Universities	Percentage of universities
1st	25	78
2nd	6	19
3rd	1	3

established: *Psychology: History, Science and Profession*, with a minimum course load of five ETSC credits assigned to it.

Describing the content of this course, the Psychology fact sheet states:

Contributions and limitations of the schools and movements that are relevant to current psychology, from a historical perspective. Research and documentation methods to discover the history of psychology. Situation of Psychology in scientific framework. Settings and contexts for the application of Psychology with its ethical and deontological commitments.

In addition to the history of psychology and historiographic techniques, the course also included content related to professional profiles in psychology (students are taught about the different fields of application and professional practice of psychologists) and deontology (professional ethics in psychology practice). This means that universities that decided to introduce this subject in their curricula could include it either as one course that addressed all these topics or as two separate courses: History of psychology (including historiographic techniques), on the one hand, and professional profiles and deontology, on the other. In either case, the credits dedicated to history could vary.

Before discussing the data, we should mention that in the last years of the 20th century and the first years of the 21st, there was an important increase in universities offering psychology degrees, especially private universities, some recently created. Many more of them offered the new bachelor's degree than the previous 5-year degree. In 49 universities (30 public and 19 private), we analyzed the presence of the history of psychology course in the curricula of the psychology degrees elaborated after RD 1393/2007 took effect. Table 4 shows the re-

Table 4
European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) Credits Assigned to the Subject of History of Psychology in the Curricula for the Psychology Degree in Spanish Universities Elaborated Under the Guidelines of Royal Decree (RD) 1393/2007 (Bologna Plan)

ECTS credits for history of psychology	Universities	Percentage of universities
0	2	4
3	1	2
4	6	12
4, 5	1	2
5	1	2
6	37	76
9	1	2

Average number of ECTS credits (universities offering the subject): 5.7

sults for the ETSC credits dedicated to history. When history was an independent course, we have shown its credits. When it formed part of a broader course that included professional profiles and deontology, we have analyzed the teaching guides for the course and, if necessary, consulted the professors responsible for it in each university to more accurately calculate the credits corresponding to history. Therefore, the data always refer exclusively to the credits dedicated to history.

Although the history of psychology was present in the majority of the curricula, it disappeared completely, for the first time since 1973, in the curricula of two universities. In one of them, the University of La Laguna, the subject had been offered for 36 years.

The course's disappearance, especially in a university with such a long tradition, can cause some concern, but the overall results shown in Table 4 are encouraging. Thus, 76% of the universities assigned six credits to history, and one maintained the nine credits it had in the previous curricular plan. In most cases, there was also another specific course dedicated to professional profiles and deontology in psychology practice. On the other hand, in some cases where there were less than six history credits, they were global courses where history, professional profiles and deontology were addressed together. The data in Table 4, as we mentioned above, indicate how many credits were dedicated to history.

In the new bachelor's degrees, the average number of credits for history of psychology (considering only the universities that include it) is 5.7 ECTS credits, which is 16% less than the 6.8 credits of the LRU curricular plans, compared with the 20% overall degree reduction produced by going from 300 to 240 credits. In relative terms, history of psychology now occupied, on average, 2.38% of the total number of credits required for the degree, compared with 2.27% in the previous curricular plans. If we include in the analysis the universities where this subject was not offered, the results would show a mean of 5.5 ETSC credits and 2.26% of the total. In summary, in spite of its disappearance in two universities, the subject maintained its relative weight in the curricula after the introduction of the Bologna Plan in Spain.

Regarding the year when the subject is required (Table 5), we observe that, as occurred in the LRU curricular plans, history of psychology was taken mainly during the first or second year of the bachelor's degree, with the percentage of universities where it was taught in the first year increasing even more. Only two universities offered it in the third year, and none in the fourth.

Summary and Some Relevant Remarks

The data presented so far show that the history course has been present since 1954 in the majority of the curricula, withstanding diverse, complex, and often controversial, reforms and reorganizations of university degrees in general, and of psychology degrees in particular. It can be argued that the presence of the course in the curricula of the psychology sections of the schools of philosophy and letters, starting in 1973 (Suarez Plan), and in the curricula of the

Table 5
Year in Which the Subject of History of Psychology is Taught in the Curricula for the Psychology Degree in Spanish Universities Elaborated Under the Guidelines of Royal Decree (RD) 1393/2007 (Bologna Plan)

Year in which history of psychology is taught	Universities	Percentage of universities
1st	41	87
2nd	4	9
3rd	2	4

LRU starting in 1990, is explained and justified by its obligatory nature, established in the general guidelines. However, it should be kept in mind that these guidelines were elaborated by work groups with psychologists from the different universities that offered the degree. Even though there was no consensus, the arguments in favor of the course prevailed, with a sufficient majority of the members of these groups recognizing the fundamental role of the course in the degree program. It is also significant that when the guidelines for the LRU curricular plans were applied, the majority of the universities, within the margin of freedom they had, placed the course in the first 2 years (thus recognizing its fundamental nature) and assigned it a higher number of credits than what was established in the guidelines or recommendations.

This situation was repeated in 2007 with the introduction of the Bologna Plan, when obligatory guidelines disappeared. In a context of reduced credits, basic or general courses could be expected to lose their importance compared with practical courses that give students the necessary competencies to practice professionally. In spite of this, and thanks to the work and will of the Dean's Conference and the Official Association of Psychologists, a consensus was reached on the general structure of psychology degrees and a common core of content. Within this content, the history course maintained its privileged spot, although not without some difficulties.

An important contributing factor should be highlighted, related to some of the changes in university organization introduced previously by the LRU in 1983. Although the Plan Suarez, and then the LRU, both maintained the unity of the "Psychology degree," the LRU introduced "departments" and knowledge areas in all the studies. In psychology, six areas were introduced that have been maintained up to the present: basic psychology, social psychology, personality-assessment and intervention, educational psychology, methodology, and psychobiology. History of psychology was then included in the basic department. Some professors of "basic psychology" were then oriented toward history of psychology courses, combining them with other courses on psychological processes. Moreover, its condition as a compulsory course paved the way for the creation of specialized teaching positions, with full professors and assistant professors dedicated to teaching and

research on the history of psychology in all the schools of psychology. This point may be considered, as mentioned previously, one of the keys to the great development of this specialty in contemporary Spanish psychology. However, this is also a process with bidirectional feedback, to the extent that the institutionalization of the history of psychology and the existence of all these specialized professors in the discipline contributed, quite probably, to its being included in the White Book and in the curricula of the majority of the schools, thus allowing the continuity of the teaching and research effort in this specialty in each.

All of this allows us to conclude that during the past few decades and to the present day, the history of psychology course has enjoyed support from historians, but also from a part of the academic community because it is valued for its basic and unifying nature and its potential to provide students with greater understanding, openness and a critical and open perspective when dealing with the complex diversity and plurality of psychology today (Giménez, 2002).

Clouds on the Horizon?

A New Controversial University Regulation

With the implementation of the new psychology degrees barely finalized, the government proposed another normative change that could involve the renovation of an important part of the university curricular plans in Spain. At the beginning of 2015, RD 43/2015 (*Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, 2015*) was published, which partially modifies RD 1393/2007. The new RD stipulates that the universities will be able to voluntarily establish degrees that require 180 ECTS (3 years) or 240 ECTS (4 years). This means, in practice, that some degrees that currently have 240 credits can, through an independent decision of the universities, be reduced to 180 credits, so that the same degree (e.g., the psychology degree) could have a different duration and course load in different Spanish universities (as occurred at the beginning of the 1990s with the 4- and 5-year bachelor's degrees).

In addition, the new RD establishes that students will be able to study for an official master's degree that contains 60 or 120 credits, depending on whether they completed a bachelor's degree with 180 or 240 credits, until com-

pleting an education consisting of a degree plus master with 300 credits. This training provides later access to doctoral studies.

Although the RD was due to take effect in September 2015, the *Conference of Chancellors of Spanish Universities* (CRUE) agreed in their meeting in February 2015 that those universities implementing the 3-year bachelor's degree by transforming the current degrees with 240 credits would not initiate the new rule until the 2017–2018 academic year, to carry out a thoughtful and consensual study that guarantees, while respecting the universities' autonomy, the greatest cohesion possible in the Spanish university system. This moratorium on the application of the RD does not include new bachelor's degrees that could contain 180 and 240 credits for the coming academic year.

This decree has produced concern and unrest, not only among professors and heads of universities, but also among the students and part of the Spanish society, because of the effects it could have, above all, on the job market. As a hypothetical example, if the psychology degree becomes a 3-year degree in some or all of the universities, in just a few years three types of university graduates would coexist on the job market: university graduates qualified to practice psychology professionally who have finished (a) 5-year degrees and 300 credits (former bachelor's degrees), (b) 4-year degrees and 240 credits (current bachelor's degree) and (c) 3-year degrees and 180 credits (hypothetical future bachelor's degrees). The exception would be clinical and health psychology, the practice of which requires (nowadays) an official master's degree regulated by law after the 4-year bachelor's degree.

Beyond any doubt about whether 3 years of training is enough to prepare a psychologist in any area, it is quite likely that all these graduates would have to take an official master's degree containing 120 credits and lasting 2 years to compete on the job market, with the corresponding increase in cost and time, compared to the current bachelor's degrees. This situation, which could occur in many other degrees, has led this new regulation to be commonly called the 3 + 2 model, given that a priori it is assumed that, at least in those degrees that lasted 5 years in the LRU curricular plan, the majority or all of the students will choose to study the 2-year master's degree in order to be

able to join the job market, even though, in theory, the 180-credit degree would qualify them, at least legally, for professional practice.

In summary, at the time of the present study, the Spanish university system is immersed in a situation of uncertainty in which various scenarios could emerge in the future. Given that one of them could be that the degree in psychology, in some or all of the universities, would be reduced to 3 years and still qualify its graduates to practice professionally (except clinical and health psychology as mentioned above), it is relevant for us to investigate how this possibility could affect the history of psychology course. To do so, it is revealing to find out the opinions and forecasts of historians who currently teach the course, some of whom were active participants in the recent curricular changes described throughout this article.

The Future of the Undergraduate History of Psychology Course: The Historians' Predictions

In May 2015, in Tenerife (Islas Canarias), the XXVIII symposium of the SEHP (Spanish History of Psychology Society) was held, in which approximately 40 Spanish researchers and professors of history of psychology participated. During this event, participants were given a brief survey containing one open question asking their opinion about the future of the course after the Royal Decree (RD 43/2015) published at the beginning of 2015 ([Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, 2015](#)). Later, some historians who were not able to attend the congress were contacted by mail and asked the same question.

A total of 22 responses were obtained from 33 questionnaires handed out, representing 20 of the 49 universities currently offering the psychology degree. Among the responses, some came from the most important psychology programs, together representing 70% of the psychology students in Spain.

Interesting conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of the responses and reflections of psychology historians. The first conclusion, expected but important, is the consensus that a change in the degree to 180 credits will not guarantee the adequate training of psychologists with sufficient competencies for professional practice. Regarding the curricular plans and the history of psychology course, approximately

half of the historians interviewed think that, regardless of the long trajectory of the course, if the 3-year degree is introduced, legally enabling them to practice as psychologists (except clinical and health), there is a danger -greater or lesser depending on the university- that the course will disappear or be marginally incorporated in other more generalist courses. Some of them argue that in their faculty, the subject is not highly valued compared to other core courses, and that, if it were necessary to eliminate contents, not many would support its continuation instead of other subjects.

Many of these historians also agree that university studies in general, and psychology in particular, have been immersed in recent years in a progressive professionalization process, and even commercialization, where priority is increasingly given to training oriented toward professional practice rather than toward creating a knowledge base. We would like to reproduce the words of an emeritus professor and psychology historian, who in response to our letter asking for her opinion of the current situation, expresses the feelings of many psychology historians:

I would not be surprised if History ended up disappearing from the Psychology curricula . . . this possibility responds to the *zeitgeist* . . . there is a preference for an approach designed not so much to train people to someday become psychologists, but rather to train technicians in the resolution of specific psychic problems.

Without denying what has been described previously, other historians are optimistic about the future of the history of psychology course in their universities, because they perceive that there is a consensus or majority acceptance, more or less explicit, on the part of their colleagues with regard to the fundamental and unifying nature of the course. They think that, even with a hypothetical change to 180 credits, the course could be maintained, but with a reduction in credits. Finally, a few professors point out that the course would remain the same or even improve. They argue that, if the 3-year degree is introduced, in practice a 3 + 2 model would be used throughout the country, where all the students would take the bachelor's degree and the master's degree (similar to the former 5-year bachelor's degrees), allowing the degree's psychology curricula to be oriented to-

ward more generalist and basic training, making it a good scenario for the subject of history.

In any case, many agree in highlighting two aspects that will be critical. The first is the importance of the balance of power and agreements among the members of each faculty in making the final decisions about the curricula. The second is the role played in the past 25 years by the Dean's conference and the Official Association of Psychologists in reaching agreements and combining their interests in designing the curricula of the Schools of Psychology, especially in the absence of general guidelines by the Ministry of Education. Their majority position regarding the course, without doubt, could greatly determine its future in the majority of universities, and this position up until now, although not unanimous, has been positive.

Finally, a few have gone beyond the question posed, pointing out that any changes in the course's current privileged position will undoubtedly affect the status and future of the history of psychology as a discipline in Spain.

Conclusion

In this study, we analyzed, on the one hand, the evolution of psychology teaching in Spain and the presence of the history of psychology course in psychology degrees in Spain; and on the other hand, we collected the opinions and thoughts of various history of psychology researchers and professors about the future of the course in the context of the curricular changes proposed for the coming years. In describing the history of the course, in addition to analyzing the legal regulations and norms that have been fundamental at each point in time in setting the pace of university psychology teaching in Spain, we have included descriptive quantitative data that try to reliably and objectively trace the course's transformation.

The past and the present outlined here and in other studies, such as the one by [Carpintero et al. \(2010\)](#), lead us to be moderately optimistic about the future. However, we have shown that some Spanish psychology historians are concerned about the hypothetical reduction in the length of the psychology degree and the resulting need to adapt the curricula. This process, given the need to maintain courses that provide competencies and skills directed related to pro-

professional practice, could cause certain courses whose direct application cannot be defended, including history, to disappear or become relegated to a secondary role in some universities. This concern is reinforced by a general tendency in recent years toward the professionalization of the contents of university degrees.

At the time these lines were written, some voices in the Psychology Deans' Conference have begun to suggest that a national RD requiring 240 credits in degrees that provide access to legally regulated professions—as in the case of Clinical Psychologist and General Sanitary Psychologist, both regulated professions in Spain since 2011—would give stability to the current 4-year psychology curriculum. We add that it might contribute to the stability of the history of psychology course as well. This is only a possibility that will be discussed in the coming months or years. In light of all this, psychology historians cannot merely wait for events to unfold as mere observers. Instead, as they have in the past, they should be active and watchful participants in the effort to guarantee a future for the history of psychology in Spain.

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