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Brazilian mothers' socialization goals: Intracultural differences in seven Brazilian cities

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The present study aimed to investigate Brazilian mothers' socialization goals. The participants in the study were 349 primiparous mothers, whose ages ranged from 17 to 47 years (mean = 26.6 years), who had children aged between 1 and 48 months (mean = 16.4 months). The families were living in seven different cities representing each of the five geographical regions of the country. A scale to evaluate the families' socio-economic status and an interview about socialization goals were used. The answers were coded in five categories defined in previous studies: self-maximization, self-control, lovingness, proper demeanor, and decency. Comparison of the means showed that Brazilian mothers gave more emphasis to self-maximization and proper demeanor than to the other categories, presenting a pattern that fosters the development of children's autonomous-relational selves. The intracultural variation found was related to the different cities studied. GLM results showed main effects of both city size and mothers' educational level on their socialization goals. These findings contribute to the understanding of characteristics of socialization goals related with autonomy and socio-centrism.

Keywords: beliefs; child development; socialization goals; sociocultural context

Socialization goals that parents hold for their children are an important part of the sociocultural context of children's development. More recently, the interest in socialization goals has been renovated since they started to be seen as part of parental belief systems or ethnotheories, thus integrating different domains of socialization environments for the understanding of human development. The concept of "developmental niche," which is a widespread concept, refers to the context in which ontogenetic development takes place (Harkness & Super, 1996; Harkness et al., 2001). According to this model, the context is considered a system with three subsystems: social and physical environment, shared practices related to child care and the psychology of the caretakers.

Socialization goals are a component of the third subsystem, namely the psychology of the caretakers. This system includes parental ethnotheories about children's nature and needs, parental and community goals for raising children, as well as shared ideas on effective ways of achieving these goals (Harkness et al., 2001). Thus, socialization goals seem to be centrally connected to comprehensive parental socialization

systems and result in different developmental trajectories (Keller, 2002, 2007) strongly influenced by cultural environments, as shown by several cross-cultural studies (Harwood, 1992; Harwood, Schölmerich, Schulze, & González, 1999; Harwood, Schölmerich, Ventura-Cook, Schulze, & Wilson, 1996; Keller, 2007; Keller et al., 2006; Leyendecker, Lamb, Harwood, & Schölmerich, 2002; Miller & Harwood, 2001).

Based on cross-cultural studies, Keller and colleagues (Keller, 2007; Keller et al., 2006) identified three types of general orientations concerning parental beliefs and values among parents of several cultures (German, Euro-American, Greek, Indian, Chinese, Mexican and Costa Rican). The first is an orientation towards the development of an autonomous self (focus on the perception of the individual as separate and autonomous, and socialization strategies centered in personal qualities to support self-maximization). The second, towards the development of an interdependent self (focus on the individuals as interrelated with the others and coagents – heteronomous – and socialization strategies with emphasis on the obedience to norms and hierarchies to harmonic functioning of social environment, mainly the family). Finally, an autonomous-relational self (which involves a sense of agency, valuing autonomy and self-realization, with an emphasis on maintaining close relationships with the family and the social group, and not abandoning relational), as described by

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Kağıtçıbaşı (2005). This last model was identified among mothers from Latin American countries such as Costa Rica and Mexico (Keller et al., 2006).

Keller et al. (2006), based on the autonomous-relational self model, suggest that the Latin American mothers were expected to present high scores in the scale of family allocentrism (characterized by sentiments of loyalty, reciprocity and solidarity to the members of the family of origin, considered as an extension of the self), a result that was not found in their study. They hypothesize that the scale may not represent adequately the "sense of family cohesion prevalent in Latin American culture". Given the low consistencies of the findings related to the dependent measures assessed in the samples with an assumed autonomous-relational cultural model, they raised the hypothesis of an educational level effect. They also attribute the results to "... the great diversity in cultural backgrounds and histories of the samples subsumed into the autonomous-related group" (Keller et al., 2006, p. 167). This is an important issue and led to the present study which was aimed at investigating the intracultural variability among Brazilian mothers.

Authors studying parental ethnotheories acknowledge and discuss the impact of intracultural variability on socialization goals. For example, Palacios and Moreno (1996) found clear heterogeneity in ideas about children and parental care, pointing out that ethnic and sociodemographic variables are frequently confounded in studies on parental ethnotheories. Harwood et al. (1999), also calling attention to cultural diversity, state that "... no substantive researcher (...) claims that cultures are monolithic, homogeneous entities devoid of internal variation" (p. 1006). Harwood, Schölmerich and Schulze (2000) also investigated this issue and reported evidence of heterogeneity, both in communities belonging to the same national culture and in different situational contexts in which the individuals were inserted. In the same direction, Lordelo, Fonseca and Araújo (2000), in a study of Brazilian parental beliefs and practices, found differences between two groups of diverse socio-economic levels living in the same city.

Despite the earlier discussions, most of the studies reported in the literature on parental beliefs and practices use small samples of mothers from each cultural environment. In addition, although some authors compare urban and rural samples (Keller, 2007), those groups are generally recruited from a country's specific city or region. In societies with great cultural and socio-economic diversity this may be a problem. This is precisely the case in Brazil, which is the largest South American country, and hosts a population with diverse historical and cultural backgrounds. Brazil shares the same religious influence as other Latin American countries, which are mostly Catholic. In contrast, Brazil was colonized in the 16th century by Portugal, and not by Spain like the other Latin countries. Over three centuries, Portugal brought to Brazil a large number of African people as slaves. Later, during the 19th century, Brazil received several groups of immigrants from all continents, especially from Europe, immigrants who ended up interacting with each other in a much diversified society. Furthermore, and also contributing to build Brazil's diversity, the country has five geographic regions with different socio-economic and cultural profiles, both between and within each other.

Although intracultural heterogeneity regarding beliefs and parental practices has been acknowledged, it has also been hypothesized that Latin American mothers present a distinct

and somewhat homogeneous pattern of beliefs about socialization. For example, Leyendecker et al. (2002) consider that "... social interdependence as manifested through emphasis on respect and on social network of the extended family are central features of Latin culture at all socio-economic levels" (p. 249). They also state that a focus on obedience and conformity can be a general characteristic of Latin populations, regardless of social class. Considering Brazil's continental size and social diversity, it seems that the study of mothers' socialization goals in this country would contribute to test these hypotheses of homogeneity and to understand Latin American's tendencies on the three different general orientations mentioned earlier.

Brazilian literature about parental cognitions (Campos & Gomes, 1996; Dessen & Torres, 2002; Lordelo et al., 2000) does not reveal much evidence about parents' socialization goals. An interesting historical analysis carried out by Biasoli-Alves (1997) indicated changes in family organization and values over the last decades of the previous century. Since the 1980s, great emphasis has been placed on independence and autonomy, and socialization goals in recent years are very different for boys and girls, being directed to the development of an independent, autonomous and competitive adult, who would be able to succeed professionally. If this picture is accurate, this tendency would be compatible with that described in the literature among groups of mothers from western urban centers, generally of European origin (Keller & Lamm, 2005). So the question to be asked is: would that be also a general tendency for contemporary Brazilian families?

To date, there is not much empirical evidence to answer this question. Campos and Gomes (1996) acknowledge that for a long time extreme social differences have existed among the geographical regions of Brazil, between urban and rural realities, and between social classes. Nevertheless, they suggest that there has been a movement toward homogeneity, leading to a certain "... hegemony of the urban symbolic system" (p. 143). Based on this assumption, we would expect a prevalence of individualistic socialization goals among Brazilian mothers. However, considering Kağıtçıbaşı's (1996, 2005) assumptions, we may also hypothesize that this urban symbolic system and its individualistic goals would be tempered by strong family values, and a joint tendency for autonomy and interdependence would be found in Brazilian mothers.

One different assumption is that cultural variability in Brazil is so high that it makes it difficult to reach a general characterization of Brazilian mothers' socialization goals. Along the same lines, Dessen and Torres (2002) hypothesized that intracultural differences are reflected in the beliefs of contemporary Brazilian families. This assumption is based on the model of five subcultures developed by the Brazilian anthropologist Ribeiro (1997). According to Dessen and Torres, groups with individualistic tendencies (most common in the south and southeast), sociocentric tendencies (north and northeast) and mixed tendencies (central west region) can be found in Brazilian society. Although these ideas are potentially interesting, there is not much empirical evidence to support either the homogeneity or heterogeneity hypothesis regarding Brazilian mothers' socialization goals.

Many authors have pointed out the relationship between parents' knowledge of childrearing or parental beliefs, including socialization goals, and their educational level (Lordelo et al., 2000; Miller, 1988; Ribas Jr., Seidl-de-Moura, & Bornstein, 2003; Ruella, 2006; Seidl de Moura et al., 2004; Suizzo,

2002). Because educational level is a central indicator of human capital, we decided to treat it both as a component of socio-economic status and as a separate variable. Another variable that was considered in the study was the population size of the cities where the mothers live, a variable not often taken into account in the literature. In many developing countries populations in rural areas are rapidly diminishing and cities are becoming larger. These larger cities create conditions typical of post-industrial complex societies that lead to goals of autonomy: an increase in the number of potential ingroups and competition, a decrease in loyalty among individuals in any of these ingroups, less social support from extended family, more isolation, etc. (Simmel, 1973; Triandis, 1989; Velho, 1987). As Triandis (1989) points out, in this context, individuals have the opportunity to focus on their own personal goals rather than on the goals of any group to which they may belong. We also hypothesize that population size is one possible indicator of the degree of urbanization and that it may create an ecological condition that is one of the bases for establishing mothers' socialization goals. In such societies, jobs tend to require more years of school, and emphasis on initiative and creativity, rather than obedience and tradition, which are characteristic of sociocentric societies. Thus we expect that mothers who are more educated and live in larger cities will tend to value more individualistic socialization goals, in contrast to mothers who are less educated and live in smaller cities.

Therefore, this study addresses the following questions:

- What are the Brazilian mothers' socialization goals for their children?
- Which intracultural differences can be found among Brazilian mothers' living in the different regions of the country?
- What factors can explain these eventual differences?

Based on the literature and on the earlier discussion, this study's hypotheses are: (1) Intracultural differences among Brazilian mothers' socialization goals will be revealed; (2) Main effects of city size and mothers' educational level on the dependent variables (self-maximization, self-control, lovingness, proper demeanor and decency) will also be found.

Methods

Participants

Participants were 349 Brazilian primiparous mothers, aged between 17 and 47 years ($M = 26.6$). They had one child (48% girls and 52% boys) aged between less than 1 month and 48 months ($M = 16.4$ months). In order to test the hypothesis of intracultural variability, we included 50 participants from seven different cities (all state capitals), representing the five geographic regions of Brazil. Participants are from Belém (B; population: 1,428,368)¹ in the north, João Pessoa (JP; population: 672,081) and Salvador (S; population: 2,714,018) in the northeast, Campo Grande (CG; population: 765,247) in the central west, Rio de Janeiro (RJ; population: 6,136,652) in the southeast, and Florianópolis (F; population: 406,564) and Porto Alegre (PA; population: 1,440,939) in the south. Based

on Gohn (2007) classification, these cities represent medium (51,000–80,000 inhabitants) and large (>800,000 inhabitants) cities. In this study, we adopt this classification, but we consider that large cities can be further separated into two groups: <2,000,000 and >2,000,000 inhabitants. Besides differing in terms of their population size, these cities reflect the complexity of the sociocultural contexts in which children are brought up in Brazil.

Mothers were recruited through daycare centers, nursery schools, hospitals, pediatricians' offices, and acquaintances of the researchers. Participants also suggested other families they knew (snowball technique) to participate in the research. The main criteria for participation in the research were to be a primiparous mother, to have a child not older than 48 months and to voluntarily agree to take part in the study. Most participants (81%) lived with the baby's father at the time of the study. Mothers' educational level varied from incomplete elementary school education to graduate studies. Table 1 presents the sociodemographic characteristics of the sample.

Procedure

As part of a larger study about childrearing beliefs and practices, participants were interviewed individually by trained members of the research team in each city. Interviews took place at their homes and at a convenient time for the mothers. Mothers answered the Socialization Goals Interview (SGI) and a sociodemographic questionnaire asking their age, educational level and occupation, as well as their partners' occupation. Interviews were audio-taped and later transcribed verbatim for further analysis.

SGI. To provide information about the long-term socialization goals for their children, an abbreviated version of the SGI was administered to the mothers. The SGI was developed by Harwood (1992) and adopted in several studies (Harwood et al., 1996, 1999; Leyendecker et al., 2002; Miller & Harwood, 2001). It is administered individually and includes originally four questions, asking the parents to describe qualities they (1) would and (2) would not like their children to possess as adults, and to describe toddlers they know who show indications of these (3) positive and (4) negative qualities. Results of previous studies (Harwood et al., 1999) indicated that the first two questions were the most informative. We also had results from preliminary investigations in Brazil (Ruella, 2006), showing that the second question produced similar results among mothers of different socio-economic status. We choose to administer only the first question of the instrument. The open-ended question put to all participants was: "What qualities would you like your child to possess as an adult?" Following their answers, a probing question was introduced: "What else would you like for your child?"

Socio-economic status (Hollingshead Four-factor Index). Socio-economic status was evaluated using the Four-factor Index (Bornstein, Hahn, Suwalsky, & Haynes, 2003). This scale integrates the factors "occupational activity" and "educational development" of both parents. Occupational activity was evaluated according to a list with ≈ 450 professional activities, and was tabulated in a scale with nine levels. Non-qualified employees and housekeepers, for example, receive the lower punctuation in the scale. By contrast, executive and autonomous professionals receive the highest punctuation in the scale.

¹ Source: IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics). All populations are estimates of September 1, 2006 obtained at <http://www.ibge.gov.br/cidadesat/> on April 16, 2007.

Table 1*Means (SD) for the sociodemographic variables for each city*

	<i>Total</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>CG</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>JP</i>	<i>PA</i>	<i>Rf</i>	<i>S</i>
Mothers' age	26.6 (6.2)	25.3 (5.4)	25.8 (6.2)	27.2 (6.6)	27.5 (5.7)	28.1 (6.1)	27.2 (6.4)	26.7 (6.4)
Mothers' educational level	4.35 (1.7)	3.8 (1.3)	4.5 (1.9)	4.5 (1.6)	4.2 (1.8)	4.4 (1.7)	4.5 (1.7)	4.3 (1.6)
Fathers' age	30.4 (7.5)	29.8 (7.9)	30.7 (8.2)	30 (6.3)	28.5 (6.1)	31.8 (7)	31 (7)	31 (9.3)
Fathers' educational level	4.0 (1.7)	3.7 (1.3)	3.9 (1.9)	4.3 (1.3)	3.7 (1.8)	4.2 (1.7)	4.3 (1.7)	4.2 (1.7)
Babies' age (months)	16.4 (11.27)	15.1 (10.8)	15.5 (10.9)	18 (10.5)	17.4 (11.6)	16.4 (10.9)	16.3 (12)	16.5 (12.3)
Hollingshead's score	35.65 (17.34)	31.80 (14.81)	34.88 (18.85)	39.06 (14.74)	34.44 (14.21)	37.17 (17.20)	40.29 (17.23)	31.92 (22.07)

Educational development was measured in seven levels: incomplete elementary school (1),² complete elementary school (2), incomplete secondary school (3), complete secondary school (4), incomplete undergraduate school (5), complete undergraduate school (6), and graduate studies (7). Scores in the Hollingshead Index (HI) varied from 1 to 60. The codes were adapted for Brazilian use (Ribas Jr, et al., 2003).

Size of the cities. Participants were grouped according to their cities' population into three levels: medium cities (<800,000 inhabitants), which included João Pessoa, Campo Grande and Florianópolis; large 1 (from 800,000 to 2,000,000 inhabitants), including Belém and Porto Alegre, and large 2 (>2,000,000 inhabitants), including Salvador and Rio de Janeiro.

Responses' coding. Mothers' responses were coded in terms of individual word and phrase descriptors according to the following mutually exclusive categories based on Leyendecker et al. (2002): (1) *Self-maximization* – concern that the child becomes self-confident and independent, and fully develops his/her talents as an individual (examples of answers in this category: healthy, happy, self-confident, easygoing, able to communicate problems, intelligent, talented, independent, self-sufficient, adaptable, flexible, capable of making good decisions, assertive); (2) *Self-control* – concern that the child learns to control negative impulses towards greed, aggression, and egocentrism (examples of answers in this category: accept limits, tolerate frustration); (3) *Lovingness* – concern that the child develops the capacity for emotional intimacy (examples: warm, kind, caring, compassionate, understanding, loving, affectionate, having warm, close, trusting relationships with other family members); (4) *Proper demeanor* – appropriate behavior in the context of being part of or getting along with a larger group (examples: good manners, polite behavior, behave appropriately, disciplined, calm, be able to get along with others, accepted by others, adapt to a group, perform role obligations within the nuclear or extended family); and (5) *Decency* – concern with the development of personal standards of behavior, avoidance of illicit behavior and personal integrity

(examples of answers in this category: honest, hardworking, be a good person in moral sense, respect other people's opinions, tolerant). The first two categories (self-maximization and self-control) are characteristic of goals of autonomy and individual development, whereas proper demeanor and decency reflect sociocentric goals of interdependency (Harwood et al., 1999).

A coding manual was prepared based on information provided by Harwood (2003).³ Coding of the responses was done by a group of trained undergraduate and graduate assistants. Agreements and disagreements were discussed in group meetings. More than 90% agreement was initially achieved, ranging from .80 to .95 (Cohen's kappa). The coding system was adopted only when a consensus was achieved among members of the research team. The responses of each mother were scored based on the fluency or total number of descriptors: words (e.g. "independent") or phrase ("a good mother"). For example, in the answer "I want him to be *happy, secure and successful, to have good manners*, and to be an *honest person*" five descriptors were considered. The number of descriptors in each category was then calculated.

Data reduction and analysis. Previous studies have found differences in fluency between the subgroups compared (Leyendecker et al., 2002). In this study, we carried out an initial analysis and found a significant effect for the city where the mother lived on this variable $F(6,348 = 3.68, p < .05)$. Because of this result and the correlation found between educational level and total number of responses ($r = .24, p < .05$), proportions of answers were used in the following analyses. Thus, the score in each category (self-maximization, self-control, lovingness, proper demeanor and decency) was determined by dividing the number of descriptors for each category by the total number of descriptors (Leyendecker et al., 2002). The scores' distributions of self-control's category presented several wild outliers. For this reason, this variable was not included in the next analyses. Figure 1 presents the distribution of scores for each category using box-plots.

The seven city samples were compared on the socio-demographic variables to investigate eventual differences

² In Brazil elementary school lasts eight years, and secondary school three years.

³ Harwood, R. (2003). *SGI coding & subcategories*. Unpublished manual.

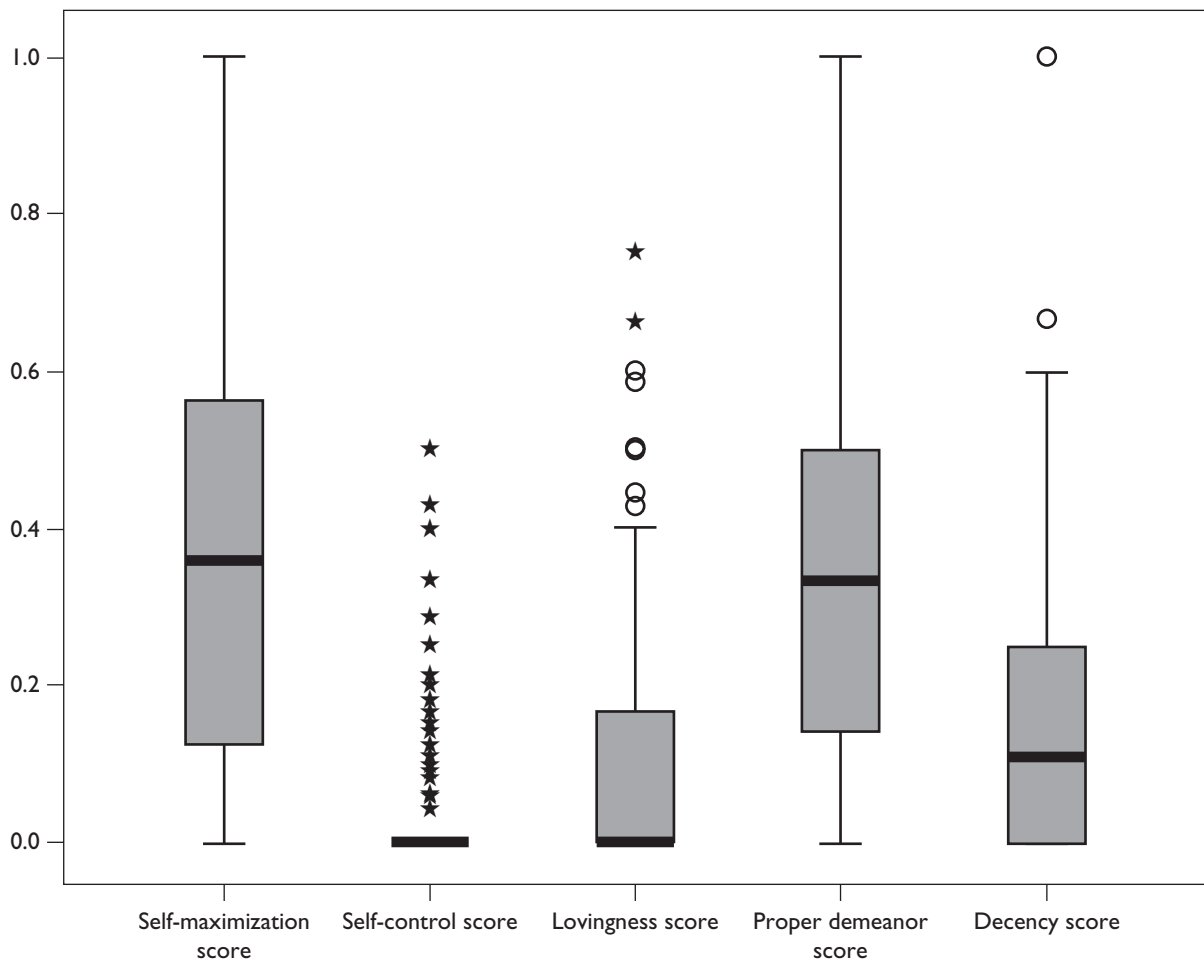


Figure 1. Distribution of mean scores using box plot.

between them. Univariate analyses were performed and the results were not significant for any of the following variables: mothers' age, $F(6,343) = 1.32$, $p = .25$; mothers' educational level, $F(6,343) = .98$; $p = .44$; fathers' age, $F(6,343) = 1.04$, $p = .40$; fathers' educational level, $F(6,343) = 1.02$, $p = .41$; babies' age, $F(6,343) = .39$, $p = .88$; and socio-economic status, $F(6,343) = 1.86$, $p = .08$.

In order to develop a profile for each city, comparisons were made between scores on the different categories using repeated measures t -tests (one tailed). The correlation analysis of scores was used to decide whether multivariate general linear model (GLM) could be used to test the hypotheses of main effects of city size and mothers' educational level on the dependent variables (self-maximization, self-control, lovingness, proper-demeanor, and decency). Each of the six Pearson correlations is negative and significant at a .01 significance level. Finally, multivariate GLM was performed using the scores of self-maximization, lovingness, proper demeanor and decency as dependent variables and the model effects are: (1) interest effects, interaction between babies' sex and city size; main effects of city size and mothers educational level (1 = incomplete secondary level; 2 = up to incomplete undergraduate level; 3 = complete undergraduate education and graduate studies); (2) babies' sex, mothers' age, socio-economic status, and babies' age. The fixed factor levels of population size of the cities are: groups from cities with population up to

1,000,000 inhabitants (C, F and JP, $N = 149$); from 1,000,000 to 2,000,000 inhabitants (B and PA, $N = 100$) and >2,000,000 inhabitants (RJ and S, $N = 100$). The analysis used a power level of .70 and Kimball's significance level of .0253 (global significance level of .05 and two main interest effects) for the main interest effects.

Results

Socialization goals

What is the main tendency in the Brazilian mothers' answers regarding their socialization goals for their children? The results for the whole sample of Brazilian mothers indicate (Figure 2) that they value self-maximization ($M = .36$; $SD = .28$) and proper demeanor ($M = .37$; $SD = .29$) equally. This indicates that individualistic and sociocentric goals were present in the mothers' answers to the SGI. Decency was the second most relevant goal mentioned by the mothers ($M = .16$; $SD = .20$). Responses referring to lovingness ($M = .09$; $SD = .16$) were not very frequent. Thus, considering the mean scores in self-maximization and proper demeanor, this sample could be considered as presenting an autonomous-relational profile with the specific characteristic of not attributing much importance to lovingness. This last category includes the capacity of

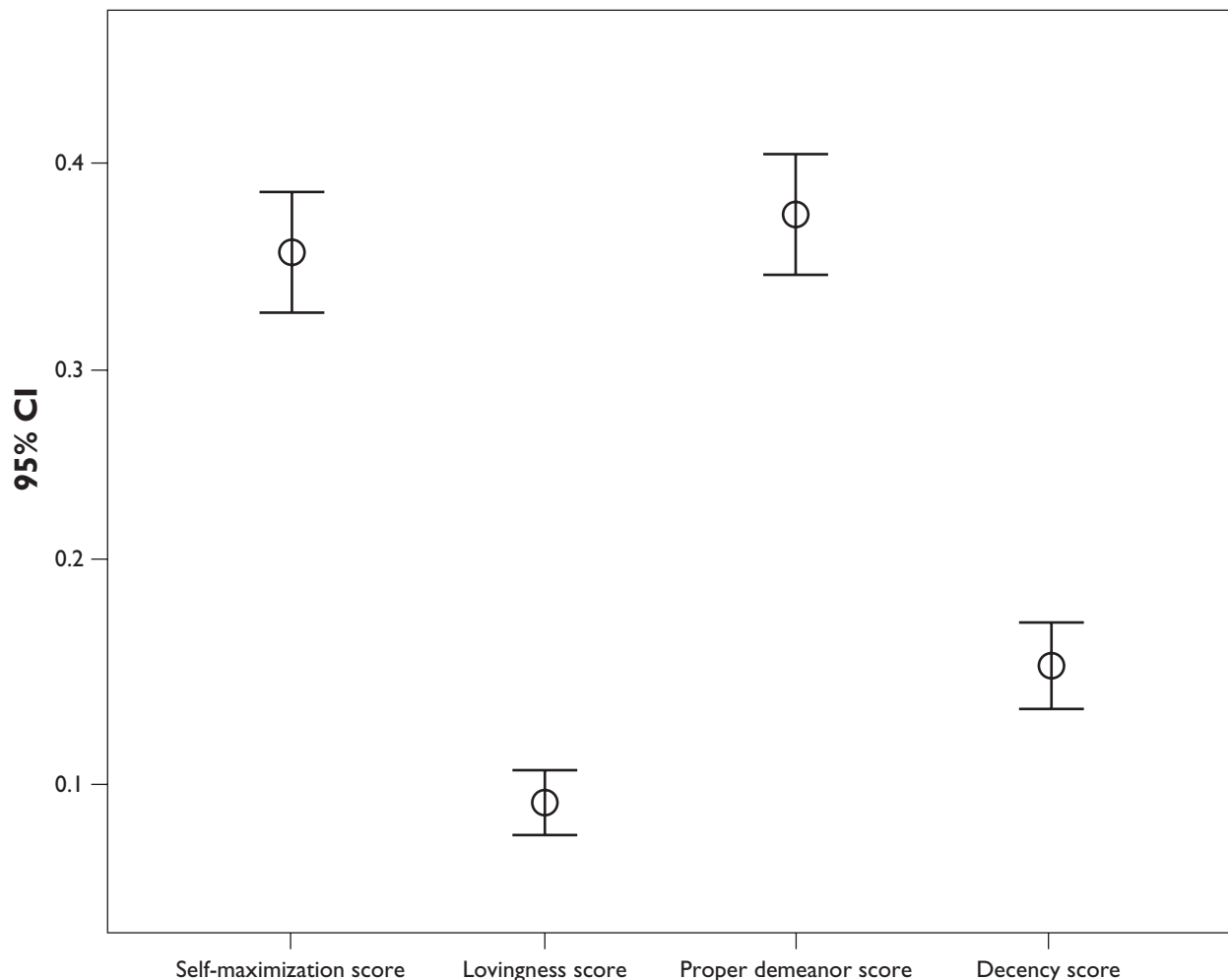


Figure 2. 95% confidence intervals for the scores in Self-maximization, Lovingness, Proper demeanor and Decency.

developing close relationships with the family, which has been associated with a sociocentric orientation.

Can intracultural differences be observed in the answers of Brazilian mothers of different regions in the country? What factors can explain these differences when they are identified? In order to address these questions, mothers' responses from the seven cities were compared based on the categories of self-maximization (a goal of autonomy) and proper demeanor (a sociocentric goal). These two categories were chosen because they represent both the two main goals mentioned earlier and the highest means in the groups investigated. Three main tendencies were identified. The groups from Salvador, Belém and João Pessoa (cities in the north and northeast) present a similar pattern. They value in the first place goals of self-maximization and proper demeanor equally, which are associated to the development of autonomous-relational selves. The results of the paired samples *t*-tests comparing means on self-maximization and proper demeanor were not significant. Mothers from Campo Grande showed a similar tendency, but this group had the highest scores in decency. A second pattern can be observed in the group of mothers from Florianópolis and Porto Alegre (in the south). These mothers have higher mean scores in proper demeanor than in self-maximization. Thus, for them, a goal of acting according to social and group

norms was more important than the maximization of the child's potential. The results of the paired samples *t*-test comparing means on self-maximization and proper demeanor indicate a tendency for a sociocentric orientation (Porto Alegre: $t(49) = -1.94, p < .05$; Florianópolis: $t(49) = -1.91, p < .05$). Finally, a third pattern was found: mothers from Rio de Janeiro seem to place more importance on self-maximization – a characteristic that fosters the development of an autonomous self – than on proper demeanor. The difference between the means on the two categories was significant: $t(49) = 2.1, p < .05$.

In order to further explore intracultural differences and investigate the effect of city size and mothers' educational level on socialization goals, a multivariate GLM was performed with the model described earlier. The results are presented in Table 2. As hypothesized, significant main effects for mothers' educational level ($p = .016$; estimated power = .81) and city size ($p = .004$; estimated power = .95) were revealed. The interaction effect was not significant. Therefore, this confirms the hypothesis that population size is a variable that creates conditions for the development of different tendencies in mothers' beliefs. Even though all the mothers were from urban contexts, they showed different perspectives in socialization goals, either more oriented towards sociocentrism (emphasizing proper demeanor) or autonomy (emphasizing

Table 2

Multivariate GLM analysis of main effects of city size and mothers' educational level on mothers' scores on self-maximization, self-control, lovingness, proper demeanor and decency (Wilks' lambda)

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	p	Noncent. Parameter	Power ^a
Intercept	.174	398.18 ^b	4	335	.00	1592.72	1.00
Mothers' age	.996	.31 ^b	4	335	.87	1.24	.12
Hollingshead	.991	.79 ^b	4	335	.53	3.16	.25
Babies' age	.991	.77 ^b	4	335	.54	3.09	.25
Babies' sex	.985	1.24 ^b	4	335	.29	4.96	.39
Size of the city (SC)	.934	2.89 ^b	8	670	.004	23.13	.95
Mothers' educational level (MEL)	.964	3.09 ^b	4	335	.016	12.35	.81
SC * MEL	.963	1.61 ^b	8	670	.12	12.90	.72

^a Computed using alpha = .05.

^b Exact statistics.

self-maximization), depending whether they lived in medium, large or very large cities. Mothers' education level was also a significant variable influencing their socialization goals. Mothers with higher levels of education tended to give more importance to goals of autonomy than mothers with lower levels of education.

Discussion and conclusions

The results corroborate the two initial hypotheses: intracultural differences were found among Brazilian mothers' socialization goals; main effects for city size were revealed on the self-maximization, lovingness, decency and proper demeanor categories. Each of these major findings is discussed later.

Main tendencies in the Brazilian mothers' answers regarding the socialization goals for their children

Our results indicate that, if we consider the whole sample, Brazilian mothers presented an autonomous–relational profile. In general, they want their children to be happy, healthy, self-confident, successful, self-sufficient, and adaptable; they want them to be able to make good decisions, to be assertive, to have a good education, and to stand up for themselves (self-maximization). But they equally value qualities of appropriate group behavior, such as being respectful and well brought up and of fulfilling role obligations within the family (proper demeanor). Overall, their answers do not attribute much importance to dyadic or within-family interpersonal warmth (lovingness, a sociocentric characteristic). This corroborates some authors' hypotheses (Keller et al., 2006) that classified other Latin samples (Mexican and Costa Rican) as presenting an autonomous relational model. At the same time, the results indicate differences from other Latin samples (Leyendecker et al., 2002), suggesting that there is not a uniform pattern of socialization goals among mothers from Latin countries.

Keller et al. (2006) discuss some of their results with respect to the cultural models hypothesized and propose that relatedness may be changing in urban educated families. One would expect more differences than similarities among Latin American groups, and these differences would be explained by their different cultural backgrounds and by transformations in their society, among other variables. We hypothesized that urbanization, as reflected in the population size, may explain

differences in beliefs among groups of the same country and culture.

Intracultural differences and significant factors

Corroborating our hypothesis, we found intracultural differences. Our results support the ideas of Palacios and Moreno (1996), and Harwood et al. (1999), but do not show the pattern proposed by Dessen and Torres (2002). The three tendencies described in the literature were observed in our study. The group from the north and northeast of the country presented a pattern consistent with aiming to develop autonomous–relational selves in their children. This pattern has specific characteristics, such as valuing the fulfillment of social expectations and the development of children's potential. Mothers from Campo Grande (central region) showed a similar tendency, but a great emphasis on decency. Thus, the process of promoting the development of autonomous selves may be diverse, depending on the context.

The group from the south has characteristics of valuing interdependency in their children's development. For them, acting according to social and group norms appeared to be more important than maximization of the child's personal and economic potential. However, this did not represent a linear pattern, because mothers from this group value personal standards of behavior (such as decency, also a characteristic of interdependency) less than self-maximization. The third pattern observed was valuing autonomy, a characteristic presented by mothers in Rio de Janeiro. Although self-maximization is the category with the highest score in this group, proper demeanor is also important for them.

Finally, we tried to identify variables related to the intracultural differences observed. Our hypothesis about the effect of city size on socialization goals was confirmed. It seems that this variable may create a set of conditions that foster the tendency for the establishment of mothers' socialization goals towards autonomy. Mothers in the present study, all from urban contexts, show different perspectives, more oriented towards goals of either interdependency or autonomy, depending whether they lived in medium, large or very large cities. Corroborating Keller et al.'s (2006) hypothesis, mothers' educational level was also a significant variable in the direction of their socialization goals. Mothers with higher levels of education tend to place more importance on autonomy goals than mothers with lower levels of education. This may explain some of the variations in the profiles of beliefs observed in this sample.

Limitations of the present study and suggestions for further research

This study has some limitations, which should be considered in order to discuss the results. First, we asked only one question to obtain data about the mothers' beliefs. This question provided rich data to be analyzed, but future research should compare these results with data gathered with other instruments, such as questionnaires and inventories. Second, the sample is from urban areas, all from state capitals, although from diverse regions of the country. It would be interesting to compare urban and rural groups from all these regions.

Although we are aware of these limitations, we are convinced that the present study contributes to the literature on parental socialization goals. It tried to encompass some of the social diversity of the Brazilian culture, studying a sample of diverse socio-economic levels, from all five geographical regions of the country. Thus, it allowed the investigation of the hypothesized intracultural differences. In addition, the study contributes to the understanding of some aspects of the cultural complexity of Latin American developmental niches.

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