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# Family and Socialization Factors in Brazil: An Overview

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## Abstract

The structure of the Brazilian family is related to five sub-cultures that, in turn, relate to the geographic regions of the country. This chapter presents a brief characterization of Brazilian culture and family, and describes changes in the structural relations and in the redefinition of models of Brazilian family organization. In order to illustrate the subtle interactions among social factors that influence the family in Brazil, we point out some values, beliefs, and practices employed by middle- and working-class parents. This paper also describes some of the characteristics of parent-child relationships within these families, providing an overview of children's work, school, and home environments as they relate to socialization in poor families. We conclude the chapter by emphasizing that family has a privileged place in the creation, protection, support, and maintenance of relationships in Brazilian society.

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## Introduction

This updated chapter examines social factors and their impact on the socialization process within Brazilian families. Following the format used in previous chapter, the current chapter is divided into four sections. The first section includes a brief description of Brazilian culture and its diversity, and explores five sub-cultures commonly found within Brazilian culture. The second section presents an overview of families in Brazil, emphasizing their origins through a historical and sociological perspective, before depicting some of the recent changes to familial roles which have occurred throughout the last decades. In the third section, we review studies conducted with working- and middle-class families, discussing parent-childhood relationships and presenting a picture of the socialization process with regards to work, school, and home environments in very poor families. Finally, bearing in mind the country's cultural diversity, we conclude the final section of the paper by highlighting the importance of employing caution when generalizing the effects of poverty, but also stressing the need and importance of future studies to explore family socialization processes in Brazil.

## Brazilian Culture and its Diversity

Boasting a territory of more than 8,000,000 km<sup>2</sup>, and serving as home to a population of approximately 210,000,000 inhabitants, Brazil is, by area and population, the largest country in South America, as well as the fifth largest country in the world (Worldometers, 2018). Economically, the picture is very similar, with an economic growth of 7.5% in 2010 positioning Brazil as the world's seventh-largest economy. However, despite these impressive statistics and a solidified position within the world's economy, obvious economic and social inequalities persist within Brazil. To state a clear example, 10% of Brazil's richest citizens have an income that is twenty-five times greater than 40% of the poorest citizens, as well as greater access to education, better jobs and a better opportunity for social ascension (Motta, 2010).

However, Brazil can be considered to be a "big family" with few formal rules, and although there is little importance given to formality, there is, within Brazilian culture, a clear emphasis upon conformity and adaptation to social rules (Candido, 1972; Strohschneider & Güss, 1998). In other words, Brazilians have a tendency to accept situations as given, without inquiring about their causes, although they try to solve problems and difficult situations through improvisation. Part of this improvisation is accomplished by the Brazilian *jeitinho* (literally, 'little way out'), which is a strong characteristic of behavior in many segments of society in Brazil (Barbosa, 2006). *Jeitinho* refers to creative ingenuity in rapidly achieving short term solutions to problems. *Jeitinho brasileiro* is understood as part of Brazilian national life and identity, carrying with it a positive connotation. Yet, as *jeitinho* represents a social procedure implicitly learned, it does not actually have any specific systematic registering (Torres & Dessen, 2008). It is embedded in the nucleus of Brazilian

society, and is usually passed on through daily experienced situations, or oral tradition, throughout the generations in the country.

According to Pearson and Stephan (1998), Brazilians prefer a vertical cultural pattern (Triandis, 1995), which is in line with the *jeitinho* concept, and are significantly more collectivist than Americans. Yet, Van Horn, Garian, Souza, and Feijó (1995) provided evidence that Brazil is not uniformly collectivist and also that there may be variation regarding power distance in different regions of the country. However, such differences have been observed at the cultural-level of analysis and, thus, refer to cultural values, whereas values at the individual level have been less investigated. In a meta-analysis using the Schwartz Values Scale in Brazil, Torres, Porto, Vargas, and Fischer (2015) suggested the existence of systematic differences on the human values hierarchy adopted by the participants from the five regions of Brazil. For example, respondents from the Northeast and Southern regions showed a higher endorsement of Conservation values when compared to respondents from the Center-West region. Also, respondents from the Southern region showed a higher endorsement of the values of Stimulation and Universalism when compared to respondents from the Center-West region of Brazil. Following an eco-cultural approach, such differences are interpreted in terms of the socialization processes of such regions, including their history of immigration and colonization.

Hence, despite cultural homogeneity on one level, Brazil exhibits significant cultural diversity, formed by both European immigration and the African slave trade, as well as its extensive variety of climate and vegetation. In 1997, Ribeiro suggested a division of Brazilian culture into five sub-cultures. It should be noted that this division is not the only one recognized in Brazil. Here we suggest, in line with Ribeiro's (1997) classification, that these five subcultures should relate to differences in the socialization processes of each region.

Ribeiro's first sub-culture is denominated "*crioula*". It is observed in the North-eastern region of the country whose history has been constructed by African slaves who worked under the orders of Portuguese colonizers. The second classification is "*cabloca*", of the Northern region, which is located within the Brazilian Amazonian rain forest. Natives and non-voluntary immigrants like the African slaves are the only remaining inhabitants of this geologically defined sub-culture. Both sub-cultures, "*cabloca*" and "*crioula*", are characterized by an authoritarian and patriarchal social system emphasizing group norms and group loyalty. Torres and Dessen (2008) suggested that these regions have a preference for the vertical-collectivist cultural pattern, with people accepting inequality rather than seeing one another as equals.

The third and fourth sub-cultures described by Ribeiro (1997) are labeled "*caipira*" and "*gaúcha*", and are concentrated, respectively, in the Southeast, particularly in the state of São Paulo, and Southern region of the country. Both are distinct social groups composed of descendants of the European immigration of the 17th and 18th centuries, with a majority having migrated from Italy and Germany. The first sub-culture, "*caipira*", was devoted to coffee farms in the 18th century and has since become industrialized, while the second, "*gaúcha*", continues to be devoted to cattle and sugar cane production. Despite the industrialization of these two regions, they still retain some European cultural characteristics.

Torres and Dessen (2008) proposed that both regions may tend to prefer a vertical-individualist cultural pattern, with individuals recognizing and accepting the existence of inequality perpetuating social norms, regardless of whether or not they were responsible for these norms' establishment.

The last sub-culture is described as "*sertaneja*", which includes people from the inland part of the Northeast and, particularly, from the savannas of the central area of Brazil. The development of this region has been remarkable since the country's administrative capital was transferred from Rio de Janeiro to Brasília in 1960. Although this region was quite empty until that time, Torres and Dessen (2008) point out that the very emergence of a new city endorsed autonomy and social status differences. On the other hand, there are large rural sections in this area, with small populations devoted to subsistence. Thus, this region can be characterized by a preference for both vertical-individualism and vertical-collectivism patterns.

Has this diversity of sub-cultures affected the Brazilian family? Is the family important for Brazilians? Have its roles changed drastically in recent decades? What are the socialization factors in Brazil and their implications for Brazilian children's development? Next, we will try briefly to answer these questions emphasizing the history of the organization of the Brazilian family.

## **Brazilian Families: A Historical and Sociological Overview**

### **Models of Family Organization**

In order to better understand Brazilians and their family organization, we must take into account the several differences that constitute this group's social structure (Neder, 1998). The first family model discussed here is one of African origin. The Africans who were taken to Brazil between 1500 and 1850 (i.e., from its discovery until the end of the slave trade) came from several African cultural groups which represented various types of family organizations - matriarchal, patriarchal, polygamous, etc. They had large differences in religion, language and tradition. Living and working in Brazil, the "slave family" was more affected by political-institutional forces than cultural factors. For example, the sale of slaves from their "owners" caused the separation of couples, parents, and their offspring. Today, this pattern of loose family bonds can be seen in the low-income classes of African origin, mainly within families from the states of the Northeastern region of the country.

Another model of family, the traditional family, was characterized by a patriarchal system formed by people of Iberian origin. These families, whose differentiation depended on regional idiosyncrasies (South-North), lived alongside those of African origin. The traditional family is said to have its origins in the colonial period, when aristocratic European elite installed itself in the country (Freyre, 1973). This situation was responsible for the patriarchal and enslaving family structure, whereby the patriarch had complete domain and power over both the individual and property. Such a family structure centered on masculine authority is still the basis of Brazilian society, and has expanded from the private confines

of family to the public ambience of society (Holanda, 1973). In this way, the patriarch exercised his authority on the State during the first centuries of the country's history. Later, politicians and other public authorities led to the establishment of a noted differentiation between the upper and lower classes.

In 1889, the proclamation of the Republic initiated a reorganization of the family structure. The ensuing Republican military project set up norms for the "new family". Only the white family of European origin was legitimized during this period, consisting of, as depicted by the Catholic Church, a patriarchal unit with a clear presence of morality and social control (Van Horn & Marques, 1999). This same patriarchal family system was responsible for another social practice that persists in contemporary Brazilian society: the preference for more informal and affectionate social relationships. In this way, the affective ties and intimacy present in the patriarchal family were extrapolated from the private to the public, where the preference for a more intimate and informal relationship at any hierarchical level became the norm (Holanda, 1973).

The Republican project did not have a specific policy towards the family and education in lower-class families of African origin. This policy continues in today's democratic Brazil - more than 30 years after the re-establishment of democracy (Barreto, Montenegro-Filho, & Scarpa, 2016). However, family has gradually regained its place within political debates regarding service provision and social inclusion. For example, the Family Statute, a law passed in 2015 by the Brazilian Congress, is considered by many to be Brazil's most daring bill (e.g., Pereira, 2012), keeping up with related UN directions. The Statute reinforces public policies in favor of the family, by guaranteeing the minimum conditions for their survival and healthy coexistence among their members. It is also agreed that families should play a role in their children's socialization, especially through the setting of limits and exertion of authority.

This situation, as time progressed, led to the distancing of the law from social practices within the country (Zimmermann, 2009). The Brazilian Constitution states that all Brazilian citizens have granted social rights which affect directly the family, such as a salary floor which is proportional to the extent and complexity of the work, the sanctioned protection of the labor market of women, or the tightening of child labor regulations. Yet, none of these sanctioned rights have been respected. When the family structure is observed, women have had systematically less job offers than men, and when they do obtain said offers, their income is in average of 62.5% less than that of males. In addition, regardless of Brazil's constitutional guarantee, child labor laws have been minimally enforced. More than 2.7 million youngsters between 5 and 17 years of age work in the country, including 79 thousand children between 5 and 9 years old (Nascimento & Pretti, 2018). About 30% of child labor is concentrated in the agricultural sector, and 60% is concentrated in the North and Northeast regions. Of these, 65% of the children are black and 70% are boys.

Beyond the problematic disparity revealed through the comparison of law and social practice, the model of a contemporary Brazilian family includes a hierarchical structure, with husband/father exerting power and authority over the wife and children, a work division separating 'masculine' from 'feminine' tasks, as well as attribution and the bigger proximity between the mother and the children (Romanelli, 2000). Despite this overall structural

similarity, the organization of the Brazilian family is also characterized by a diversity of forms of sociability and has been influenced by deep economic, demographic, and social changes, particularly since the 1940s. These factors have resulted in changes in their structural relations and in the redefinition of the traditional model of the nuclear family (Turkenicz, 2013). For instance, it is suggested that Brazilians' identity is derived mainly from the immediate and extended family, where individuals have strong social ties with their social groups, especially family, and prefer to make group decisions in general (Bertsh & Ondracek, 2010; O'Keefe & O'Keefe, 2004). In addition, they avoid internal conflicts to maintain the group harmony (Javidan, Dorfman, Luque, & House, 2006).

### **Social Factors and Changes in the Role of the Brazilian Family**

First, we would like to give you an idea about the social factors that have affected Latin American families across the continent. Nowadays, an increase in modernization (e.g., greater exchange within society) has not been accompanied by an increase in modernity (e.g., a commitment to social exchange within the home; Arriagada, 2000; Jablonski, 2010). This is largely because wider social changes have been piecemeal. For example, the incorporation of women into the labor force has influenced the function of Latin American families, producing a shift in distributions of time and domestic work without being accompanied by a reallocation of such tasks from women to their men folk. Thus an increase in the stress of the mother's burden does not seem to have been accompanied by a shift in the man's power base.

According to Arriagada (2000), changes in the basic conditions caused by globalization and modernization (e.g., migration, new patterns of consumption, and a greater flexibility in the labor market) have influenced Latin Americans' perceptions of themselves and their families, particularly with regards to their attitudes towards extended kin. Speaking about the new patterns of consumption, for instance, an increase in consumer expectations, left unsatisfied by the market, has led to an increase in illicit earning, delinquency, drug trafficking, corruption, and other forms of violence or social exclusion. The impact of these factors upon family functioning is more than clear, with drastic effects on parent-child relationships, children's relationships, and the transmission of social values, particularly in poor families (Wagner, 2011). Hence, a tension has been created between these changes in social relations and the maintenance of the family's patriarchal structure, in which men still attempt to exert power over their wives and children.

With this said, cultural factors have the ability to explain differences between each country. In Brazil, the majority of families live in precarious conditions, with approximately 38% living below the poverty line<sup>1</sup>, based on the official data provided by the 2010 Census (INEP- Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira, 2017). In rural areas, families are even poorer, with 65.8% of them living below the poverty line. In urban areas, on the other hand, 27.9% of the population lived below the poverty line in 2010. The transition to democracy in the country, coupled with rapid urbanization and

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<sup>1</sup> The official poverty line is defined as family income with a family income up to half of the Brazilian minimum wage, which corresponds to R\$ 499.00 per month or U\$ 5.5 per day.

industrialization, have resulted in changes in values, as well as a redefinition of the social role of Brazilian women, particularly in regard to their greater involvement in the work place (Barreto, Montenegro-Filho, & Scarpa, 2016).

Serious economic crises and insufficient governmental policies have had serious effects upon the Brazilian population and, as a consequence, families within Brazil have also changed. Families have been forced to change their lifestyles to obtain a sustainable income, since increasing levels of poverty have led to (a) an increase in family separations due an increase in migration within regions of the country, especially with the movement of poor families from the Northeast region to the Southeast region, the most industrialized and rich Brazilian region; (b) changes in the man's role as family provider; (c) an increase in families sustained by women alone (Turkenicz, 2013). The participation of Brazilian women in the workforce has, in turn, led to a pressure to redistribute domestic tasks between wife and husband. This redistribution of familial duties has caused marital and family discord, due in part to traditional gender segregation of such tasks (Wagner, Predebon, Mosmann, & Verza, 2005; Borsa & Nunes, 2011). Sometimes, domestic violence has been attributable simply to the man's opposition to the new economic roles of women and problems faced in negotiating an increased sharing of domestic activities (Arriagada, 2000).

In which ways have these changes influenced family functioning in Brazil? It is interesting to note that, in the last century, there were both continuities and changes in the role of Brazilian families. In an insightful qualitative analysis, Biasoli-Alves (1997) clearly described these shifts in middle class families. According to Biasoli-Alves, the family was larger, with more children, and including extended-family members (uncles, grandparents etc.) in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There was an increased contact between generations, and sometimes a large number of members were living together. Children spent their days in a wider social space for play, supervised by peers or siblings. Moral values were transmitted across the generations in a rigid way, with an emphasis upon a strong work ethic.

Between 1930 and 1980, the children's room to social activities shrunk gradually but, particularly in urban areas. This change was coupled with a reduction in group activities and an increase in solitary activity within the home. A preoccupation of parents is to provide sufficient play materials, closely supervised within the home. The appearance of TV into the home in the 1950s also contributed to the acceptance of ideas of modernity within the household. In the following years, TV came to dominate the spacing and timing of family interactions, particularly in low status families. The predominant media images depicted the urban lifestyles of nuclear families, even though in most households strong intergenerational links persisted. The 1980s and 1990s were characterized by a further limiting of children's freedom and by an emphasis upon developing autonomy and competitiveness to prepare children for adult life in the city. Mothers came to allow children to make more decisions in the home and, as the child's activity became more centered within the home, children were given more autonomy within the household.

In sum, research by Biasoli-Alves (1997) strongly suggests that Brazilian society ended the 20<sup>th</sup> century by adapting to profound changes in several domains, such as an increase in urbanization, schooling, the insertion of women in the labor market and so on.

For the author, such changes impacted beliefs about relationships within the home focused upon notions of the 'ideal child', the nature of maturity (e.g., autonomy), and new beliefs in acceptable child care strategies (e.g., close supervision in a highly stimulating environment), coupled with different understandings of the public roles of women and men.

The two first decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have been characterized by an increase of divorce. However, middle class families have kept their compromise with their children, so that both parents, despite of being separated from each other or not, have been actively responsible for caring and education of the children (Turkenicz, 2013). As well, divorces and family reconstitutions at the beginning of this century have caused changes in parental relationships, forcing children to have different life trajectories from that of nuclear families.

We now move to a discussion of the socialization of Brazilian children, in which mothers have played an important role, while fathers provide "authority", despite a diversity of contexts and family types.

## **Socialization in the Brazilian Family Context**

The very combination of cultural diversity and the transmission of deeply held traditional values has forced theoretical analyses of socialization in Brazil to consider the subtle interaction between a range of contextual factors: social processes, cultural forces, economics, history, and beliefs systems regarding the behavior and personality of children. For example, to comprehend children's daily routine, it is necessary to understand daily life in families, the nature of the domestic division of labor, the relationship between the different subsystems within the family (e.g., siblings vs. parent-child relationships), the social support network, cultural values and beliefs and parental practices. To illustrate these interactions, we will discuss briefly the values, beliefs, and practices employed by Brazilian parents.

### **Parental Values, Beliefs, and Practices in Brazil**

As the family hierarchy became more flexible in the direction of greater equality of roles among the parents, marital and parental relationships also changed, mainly in relation to values of education and to the socialization process of children (Dessen, 2010). According to Biasoli-Alves (2000), from 1890 to 1930, values concerning respect, honesty, obedience and the work ethic were transmitted to both sexes, while notions of submission and a need to be pure, delicate, and cooperative were transmitted predominantly to girls. In addition, responsibility for all domestic tasks was handed down from one female kin member to another. These traditional values showed clearly that, in Brazil, the socialization processes employed by adults were directed primarily at girls in order to ensure that they were closely supervised and confined mainly to the home. Severe punishments were employed if daughters transgressed. Marriage was arranged for daughters and women did not need to study or plan for an independent life. Indeed, higher education was seen to disrupt the woman's preparation for her adult role as wife, homemaker and mother. Upper and middle class girls in such settings were educated for marriage, parenthood, and caring for extended

kin, especially the elderly.

In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Brazilian families were comprised of mother, father, and children who depended on the father, both economically and affectively. It was during this period that a new participation of women in society began, having serious repercussions for the division of sexual roles and relations within the family. There was an important change in family values, allowing secondary school girls to enter the professions, as long as such involvement did not interfere with their family responsibilities. Perceptions of women as naive, fragile and susceptible to the influence of others also persisted. So, even with higher education qualifications, women prioritized their domestic responsibilities, while the provider role remained firmly associated with the husband.

At the end of the twentieth century, Biasoli-Alves' (2000) analysis revealed a major escalation of the numbers of middle class women entering into higher education and the professional arena. This facilitated their social contacts and raised questions about the persistence of the sexual imbalance in the home and expectations about the submission of women in particular. However, in dual earner couples, women continued to run the house and care for children, while husbands continued to exercise authority, being the main responsible party for the financial support of the home. The daughter continued to be under close emotional control by her mother, while boys used to be subject to harsh physical sanctions, particularly up until the 1980s. At that time, the traditional maternal role began to be questioned because it conflicted with a more child-centered approach to parenting that was becoming popular at the time.

The first two decades of this century have been marked by the transition from the traditional family structure, especially within the middle class, to another in which both fathers and mothers contribute to the financial support of the family, while simultaneously including a greater participation of the father in domestic chores and caring for children. Although fathers are becoming more involved in childcare, domestic task distribution is still marked by sexual division, with women fulfilling the majority of domestic duties (Moreira, Carvalho, Almeida, & Oiwa, 2012; Wagner, 2005). In this developmental context, the parent-child relations have also changed in both working- and middle-class families as described below.

### **Parent-Children Relationships in Middle- and Working-Class Families**

A close relationship between parents and children has become a principal aim within middle-class families. Parental authority in Brazilian society over the past 4-5 decades has undergone a major re-evaluation and more extreme values have been abandoned. Children are no longer completely accountable to senior family members and there is notably less affective control characterized by strong moral pressure. The new norm is for a free and open exchange of emotion, often reflecting the Brazilian's tendency towards freely speaking one's mind, even if this open expression means acting impulsively (Biasoli-Alves, 2001; Dessen, 2010).

Over the past decades, Brazilian children have become more involved in family decisions, and a dialogue-based strategy has risen over the more punitive disciplinary

techniques that characterized the parental practices of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Dessen, 2010). Back then, it was common to use coercive parenting practices. While children continued to assimilate values such as respect as positive, this was tied to practices such as coercion and fear. Unlike the previous decades, the mother began to question the excess of rigidity, authoritarianism, the level of demand and the punishment that were part of her education, indicating how important it was to change the way she acted with her children. It is very interesting to note that Brazilian fathers with low salaries are more involved in affective activities (e.g., to talk about children's feelings, to stay with the children when they do not want to stay alone) than fathers with high salaries (Carvalho & Moreira, 2016). On the other hand, fathers with high salaries are more available to and responsible for their children when compared to fathers with low salaries.

According to Marion, Ferreira, and Pereira (2015), different from the middle and upper classes, in which family life concerns members of the nuclear family (father, mother and children), low-income families tend to endorse a code of moral obligations and sharing that, in general, encompasses the family network (e.g., uncles, grandmothers, cousins). Thus, in low-income families, the father and the mother share their roles with the larger family network. As Brazil is a country of great economic and cultural diversity, it is understandable that there are different values and behaviors among the families of upper, middle and working classes.

Biasoli-Alves and Zamberlan (1996) suggested that Brazilian children's social and educational practices are directly linked to socioeconomic conditions. The authors investigated the demographic data from 75 low-income families living in urban areas, in order to examine the association among socioeconomic conditions, educational practices and child-rearing strategies. The sample of low-income families was divided into three groups (high, middle and low), according to income level and into five groups according to educational level (college education; high school education; compulsory schooling whether completed or not; illiterate people). The results show that children from the highest socioeconomic and educational levels engage in more frequent and varied interactions and exploration activities than children from families of lower socioeconomic status. Parents from their sample, whose educational level was higher than those others three groups promote their children's academic activities more, but asked them for less help in housework duties and daily routines. Illiterate parents, on the contrary, asked their children for more help in the same duties. They also found that in the higher income group, the child was never left alone. On the other hand, in low-income group, very young children (3 to 4 years old) were usually left alone to take care of themselves.

Daily life in working class families usually reflects pressing economic necessities. Thus, one aim of socialization is to employ strategies that will train children to become independent as quickly as possible, even if this means that the child will not participate in the education system. Ordinarily, children are required to participate in activities that maintain the family, including domestic tasks and paid labor. The child's participation in such practices is perceived as a means to make the family a more efficient economic and social unit. Sometimes, the responsibility for child-care is shared by relatives and neighbours, often leading children to circulate between different social units.

Unfortunately, studies describing parental relationships of the working class are, at present, quite sparse. Thus, we cannot say much about this specific subject in working-class families. There are, however, studies that examine the socialization processes of poor families with regard to child employment, school, and the home environment.

### **Socialization in Poor Families: Child Work, School, and Home Environment**

As mentioned before, the majority of the population lives below the poverty line and the structure of households in very poor families is characterized by the dominance of the husband (IBGE-Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2017). However, this dominance has been reduced in recent years, mainly because fathers are absent from family life, either to look for jobs in more developed cities or regions of the country, or because of the total abandonment of the family.

As Brazil is a non-egalitarian society with a nondemocratic hierarchical social structure, “in this kind of organization of social and family life the child occupies the center of the family until he grows up and becomes able to take responsibility for tasks that are designated according to age, gender, and necessity” (Rabinovich, Lordelo, & Bastos, 2009, p. 127). In poor families, for instance, the child is often expected to fulfil domestic and childcare duties whilst parents attend to financial responsibilities and occupational obligations.

In both city and rural areas, work is central and forms the basis of interpersonal relationships and group mores. Even across the panoply of family types, and despite a shift towards the notion that childhood is a time of 'play', the majority of poor families still subscribe to the belief that children's socialization occurs through work and parental regulation of such activity (Gomes, 1998).

In working class families above the poverty line, parents expect schools to prepare children for work, and to function as socialization agents in domains such as social life, language, moral qualities, confrontations of dangers, and teachings of self-defense (Silva, Ristum, & Dazzani, 2015). Sometimes, these expectations have emerged more strongly than those relating to school performance. Moreover, parents also expect schools to take on a care-giving roles while parents are at work. This is perfectly understandable, since schools protect children from the dangers of street life. Therefore, schools are seen as guardians for children, as an extension of the family. At the same time, education is seen to represent a crucial means for social improvement (Silva & Costa, 2015).

Since the 1980s, there is consensus among scholars of Brazilian family psychology (e.g., Biasoli-Alves & Zamberlan, 1996; Dessen & Biasoli-Alves, 2001; Rabinovich, 1998; Zago, 1998) that families can generate resources under poverty circumstances despite their necessity for and access to consumer goods. Therefore, poverty should not be perceived as a homogeneous phenomenon, because for some, it provides good conditions for parents to foster the development of their children. Individuals living in urban poverty situations, although economically poor, cannot be viewed from “the perspective of scarcity, since they are creative people, they move themselves, they fight and do not surrender to paralysis, an

idea that the term poverty might indicate” (Alcântara & Ferreira-Santos, 2009, p. 348).

In this direction, Bastos and Rabinovich (2009a) have refused to consider “poverty as something exotic, estranged from human reality, mostly viewed from the academic, political, and financial centers of decision making” (p. xiii). According to them, we need to open our minds concerning the broad variability of modes of living. Despite advances in research on the realities of living in poverty, there is a need to learn more about Brazilian child-rearing patterns and beliefs, particularly those from poor families, and to consider their implications for children's development.

## Conclusions

We would like to conclude this paper by emphasizing that the family has a privileged place in the creation, protection, support and maintenance of relationships in Brazilian society (e.g., Bastos, Moreira, Petrini, & Alcântara, 2015). These characteristics seem to be strongly present in all sub-cultures mentioned in this paper, especially in relation to the family's socialization functions. Brazil is experiencing sociopolitical changes associated with major social problems, just like other Latin America societies. As Brazil is not culturally homogeneous, having several types of families of different social and ethnic origins, we need to invest in research comparing processes of child socialization in different collectivist-individualist groups. Consideration of this perspective is important not only to discover how cultural variations influence communication styles, child-rearing practices, cultural values and beliefs systems, but also to explore whether these factors differentially shape the nature of parenting and child behavior in Brazil.

We recognize that a great effort has been made by Brazilian researchers, but much still has to be done. There is a pressing need to diversify the research methods, moving from predominantly qualitative studies – developed mainly with self-report data from small samples –, to multi-methodological approaches, for instance including data from behavior observation, and based on large samples across the five sub-cultures. This would allow us to interpret sub-cultural similarities and differences in family types. Given the size of the country and its major regional and cultural diversity, Brazil provides an ideal medium for such comparisons.

If we want to understand family processes more clearly we should also consider that the majority of Latin American countries face high rates of unemployment, economic hardship, instability in the labor market, and political crises. Thus, labor is cheap and it is necessary in most social groups to include all family members in its workforce to stave off financial destitution. Obviously, these economic circumstances have a dynamic influence on different family structures such as parent households, two parent families and extended networks.

However, we should be careful about generalizing the effects of poverty on social problems in childhood, particularly as most research uses methods that are devised for privileged populations in the northern countries of the world. In other words, to understand “the cultural structure and psychological context of poverty requires a different pathway”

(Valsiner, 2009, p. x). Since the early 2000s, Dessen and Biasoli-Alves (2001) have called attention to the scientific community and organizations (both governmental and non-governmental) to avoid making simplistic links between poverty and social problems when studying poor families and constructing development programs. Although we are still far from having a complete set of data on Brazilian families, some progress has been made. Perhaps most salient, is to look at poverty as a condition of resilience, as highlighted by Bastos and Rabinovich (2009b). We believe that a change in the way we look at the plurality of current family structures, amongst a diversity of cultural contexts, can produce a new set of theories of family relationships appropriate to a greater proportion of the world's children and families.

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## Questions for Discussion

1. Do Brazilians prefer a vertical or collectivist cultural pattern?
2. How do you describe, briefly, the Brazilian culture?
3. Is the family unit affected by cultural diversity in Brazil?
4. Can we say that there is a single model of family organization in Brazil?
5. What does "modernization without modernity" mean in Latin America?
6. Have social changes influenced family functioning in Latin America and Brazil? In which aspects?
7. Is the family socialization process of Brazilian children different from middle and working class? Was it different across the last century?
8. Are parental values, beliefs, and practices different for boys and girls in Brazilian society?
9. What are the main differences between middle- and working-class families in Brazil?
10. What is the role of child work in very poor families?

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