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Social Psychological Studies of Latin American Cultures with Particular Reference to Brazil

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Abstract

This paper presents an English language translation of a book chapter that was originally published in Portuguese. It is reproduced here in full, by kind permission of the editors and publishers, in order to make it available to English language speakers. The paper first addresses ways of defining culture and the development of measures of cultural variation. Contrasts between the collectivism that defines East Asian culture and the collectivism of Latin America are then identified. Topics addressed include values, self-construal, life satisfaction, emotion, honour culture, social influence and the phenomenon of *jeitinho*. Although the text leads toward a consideration of research into Brazilian culture, it does so by way of discussing the distinctiveness of Latin American cultures more broadly. Details of comparative studies that have sampled further Latin American cultures have been added at the end.

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Why do we Need Cross-Cultural Psychology?

In choosing how best to understand human behaviour, we face a dilemma. As Kluckhohn and Murray (1953) noted long ago: “Every man is in certain respects like all men, like some other men and like no other man” (p. 53). If psychologists choose to study those aspects of mankind (and womankind) that are universal or what makes all humans alike, then it does not matter where in the world they choose to make their studies. However, if psychologists choose to study aspects that makes humans different the more geographical variability there is in the phenomena that are under consideration, the more necessary it becomes to note precisely where studies are conducted and what might be the explanation for any differences that are found.

Many studies of key topics that have been investigated by social psychologists, focus primarily on psychological universals. In evaluating the results of these studies, it is important to consider where the major theories in social psychology were first developed and where the studies have been done through which they have been tested. Social psychology first became a major field of study in the years following World War 2 (Farr, 1996). Most of the early work was conducted in the United States, and it remains true until the present time that most (but not all, as we shall see) social psychology is conducted in the US, and in a few relatively similar nations such as Canada, UK, Netherlands, Germany, and Australia (Smith et al., 2013).

Even within these nations, the experimental research methods most frequently favoured require access to the respondents who are readily available to researchers in substantial numbers. Often, those who are sampled are themselves students of psychology. Does this narrowness in respondent sampling matter? Whether it matters or not will depend on the issue crystallised by Murray and Kluckhohn. If we wish to know whether the results of such studies hold true for other segments of a given society and for other societies, we need to sample more widely. In a well-known critique, Henrich et al. (2011) described the samples most frequently employed by researchers into cultural differences as WEIRD, that is to say Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich and Democratic. This selective sampling of cultural groups is likely to qualify our understanding of social psychological processes, and unfortunately this situation persists (Rad et al., 2018).

In this paper we first examine the progress that has been made by cross-cultural psychologists in mapping and understanding the degree to which human behaviour globally differs from that sampled in WEIRD contexts. In succeeding sections of this paper, we consider this variability from three perspectives in turn: Firstly, how much variability is there across the world? Secondly, what is distinctive about Latin America in contrast to other parts of the world? Thirdly, what is distinctive about Brazil?

The first step in discovering what might be the magnitude of cultural variations has been to repeat US studies in alternative locations. This is not an easy enterprise, because there are many reasons why a particular psychological study cannot be exactly matched in a new location. Most obviously, even where the samples of research participants are all

students, they are likely to differ in terms of gender, age, field of study, and their attitudes toward experimental research procedures. Among the early pioneers in this field was the Brazilian researcher, Aroldo Rodrigues. In 1982, Rodrigues published a summary of his attempts to replicate earlier US results, using his Brazilian students as research participants. In the preceding 12 years, replications were attempted in the fields of social influence, impression formation, social power, the balance principle, cognitive dissonance, reactance theory, attribution of causality, coalition formation, equity theory, authoritarianism and attitude change, source credibility and attitude change, and the attitudinal effects of mere exposure. In around half of these studies, effects were found that were consistent with the original findings. For instance, the Brazilian results using Asch's (1956) well-known test of response to conformity pressure were similar to those obtained in the US. However, many other results did not prove replicable.

The global replicability of US results has been much more extensively investigated in more recent times through large-scale undertakings such as a project named 'Many Labs' (Klein et al., 2018). More than 120 research laboratories in many countries have been involved in this project. Here, too, it is found that around half of the original results can be replicated. However, the frequency of replication is not by itself very informative, since the rates of success or failure will have been much influenced by the simplicity or complexity of the particular effects that are selected for study. More importantly it is not of much value to know that results are sometimes replicated and sometimes not replicated, or to know that strengths of the effects may differ. What we need is a theory that can explain why these variations occur.

Dimensions of Cultural Variability

Psychology has traditionally been a study of individuals. In the case of social psychology, this focus has been broadened to include individuals' reactions to their immediate social context. Cross-cultural psychologists in turn have argued in favour of a much more extensive formulation of social context, most typically through their understanding of the concept of culture. Many definitions of culture have been advanced, but their essence has to do with the way in which the actions of individuals can only be understood in terms of the meanings that are assigned collectively to such actions.

Any collective grouping that has continuity over time, be it a marriage, a team, an organization, or a nation will develop and sustain a set of shared meanings for actions and events that are relevant to them in their social and ecological context. A definition that captures this essence well is that provided by the anthropologist Ronald Rohner. He defines culture as, 'the totality of equivalent and complementary learned meanings maintained by a human population, or by identifiable segments of a population, and transmitted from one generation to the next' (Rohner, 1984, p. 119-120).

Working within this definition, if we are to interpret why the results of studies vary around the world, we need to be able to classify how the collective understandings of behaviour varies between cultural groups. The first person to find a way to quantify this

across multiple cultural groups empirically was the Dutch researcher Geert Hofstede. In the 1970s, Hofstede was working for the IBM company, which regularly conducted surveys of the morale of their employees in many countries. He noted that although the survey was completed by individuals, there were marked differences in the mean scores across nations on many of the survey items. Debating with himself how best to summarise this variation, he concluded that a distinction must be made between the variation between individual responses, and variations between each of the nations in the overall sample. By looking at the average scores of individual items for nations, he reasoned that he could estimate the collective understandings of the issues in the survey that prevailed in each nation. In other words, he could characterise differences between national cultures by deriving dimensions of cultural variability.

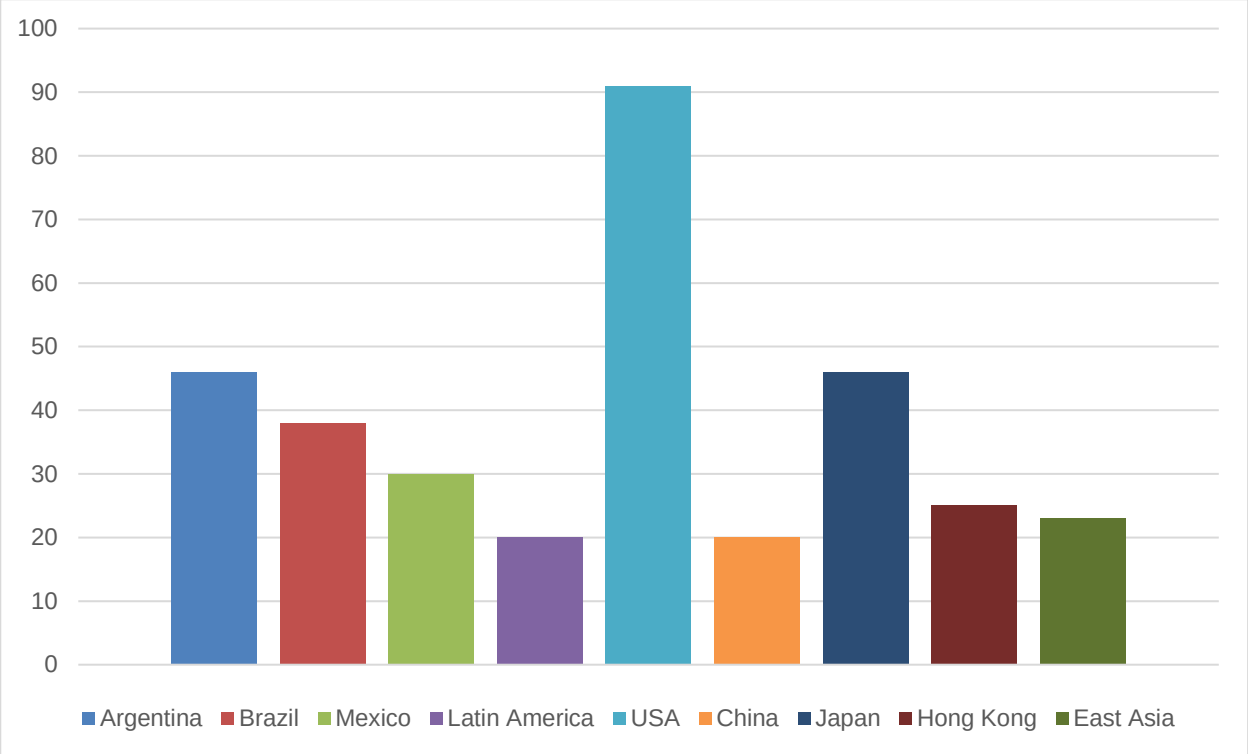
To achieve this outcome, he averaged the individuals' scores for each survey item from each nation. He then used these averages as a basis for a factor analysis—a statistical technique to summarize larger amounts of quantitative information into smaller groupings. Before doing this analysis, he also discarded some of the data to enable the samples of IBM employees from each nation to be more directly comparable in terms of age, gender, and occupational role. Thus, his factor analysis was not based on the 117,000 original responses to the survey, but on initially 40, then later 50 nations as well as three regions for each of which the averages had been combined across nations.

Hofstede's pioneering analysis was first published in 1980, followed by an enlarged set of analyses in 2001. Four dimensions of cultural variation were identified. Firstly, he found that nations varied in terms of what he termed Power Distance. In other words, nations differ in terms of the degree to which hierarchical differences are present and are accepted in society. His second dimension was named as Uncertainty Avoidance, referring to expectations of risk and change and the need to guard against them. His third dimension contrasts Individualism with Collectivism. Individualistic cultures are those in which one's goals in life are defined by personal priorities, in contrast with collectivistic societies in which one's goals are more strongly defined by commitments and loyalties to key groups in one's life. Finally, Hofstede distinguished nations with what he called Masculine cultures that emphasise achievement goals from those with Feminine cultures that emphasise relationship quality.

Each of these dimensions was identified through factor analysis of the averages of just 32 of the items in the original morale survey. None of the items had been explicitly written for research purposes, and they derived from what might be the distinctive profile of one particular business company. Consequently, there has been substantial debate about their validity. However, they have had a major impact on the subsequent development of cross-cultural psychology, most particularly in relation to the dimension of Individualism-Collectivism. Figure 1 compares Hofstede's individualism scores for the average of his Latin American samples with the average for East Asian samples, including also some specific nations as examples.

Figure 1.

Hofstede's Scores for Individualism: Comparing Latin America and East Asia with the USA



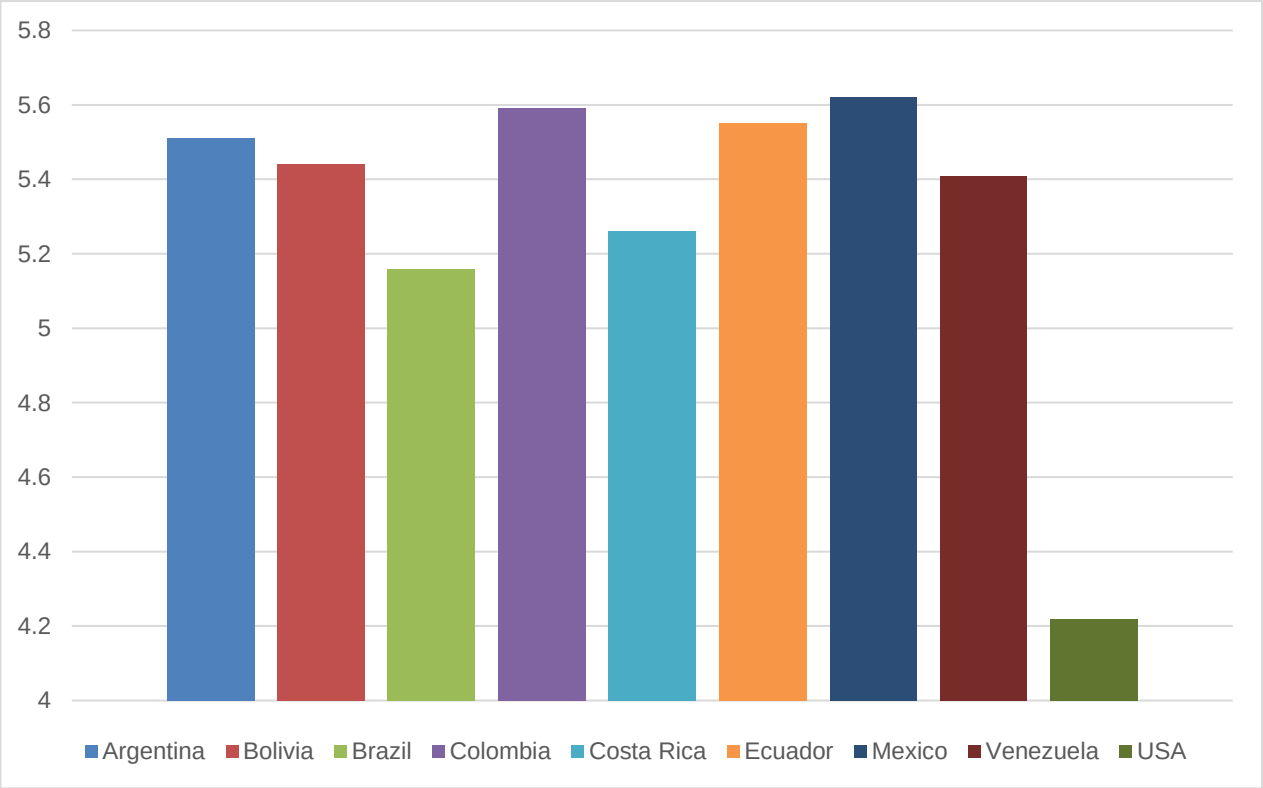
Notes: High individualism is equivalent to low collectivism. The score for Latin America is the average for 13 nations. The score for East Asia is the average for 12 nations.

The reasons for the strong focus on this dimension are easy to see. According to Hofstede's scores, the most individualistic nation in his sample was the US. The other nations in which social psychology has mostly been conducted all also score high on Individualism. Collectivism was found to be highest in East Asia and in many of the Latin American nations in the sample, although not so much in Brazil. If you wish, you can compare the scores for all nations using Hofstede measures at https://www.hofstede-insights.com/product/compare-countries/. If these scores are valid, we must consider whether the individualistic values that prevail in the US might have influenced the theories and methods that have become widespread in the conduct of social psychology. We would need to examine whether different research findings could be explained on the basis of whether these theories are tested within collectivistic rather than individualistic national cultures.

There is some evidence that is directly relevant to this last point. Bond and Smith (1996) examined the results of 134 published replications of the Asch (1956) conformity study in terms of where each study had taken place. Hofstede's score for collectivism was a significant predictor of the percentage of experimental subjects who conformed to the false judgments made by their peers. At least in this contrived experimental setting, more

collectivism yields more conformity. Note that this is an example of moving beyond the simple question of replication versus non-replication of a psychological effect to an investigation of cultural factors that can influence the strength of the effect: some conformity is found in almost all the studies, but the size of the effect varies between cultural groups.
Since the time of Hofstede's analysis, many further studies have been reported that also examined variability across nations. While the items in Hofstede's measures tapped a mixture of values, beliefs, and reported behaviours, the newer studies have used more precisely delineated measures. House et al., (2004; usually referred to as the GLOBE study) surveyed business employees working in three specified industries within 61 nations. Their primary goal was to study variations in leadership effectiveness, but, in order to do so, they created a set of measures that were mostly modelled on the dimensions that had been identified by Hofstede.

Figure 2.
In-Group Collectivism Practices: Comparing Latin America and the US (House et al., 2004)



Their measure of Collectivism was divided between what they called in-group collectivism, defined by items referring to family relationships, and institutional collectivism, defined by items referring to organisational and governmental policies. The nation-level measures of House et al. (2004) for perceived in-group collectivism and for perceived values favouring institutional collectivism were both strongly and significantly correlated with Hofstede's

scores for Collectivism. Thus, although these data were from different business sectors, used different items for measurement and were collected 30 years later, the results concurred as to which nations are more collectivistic. Figure 2 compares the Latin American scores for in-group collectivism with those for the US. The rankings from the two studies for power distance were also consistent. You can see more on the results for Latin America at https://globeproject.com/results/clusters/latin-america?menu=cluster#cluster

The GLOBE study was distinctive in that at least in part the measures referred to perceptions of the actual behaviour that occurred in the organizations and nations studied. An alternative priority has been to survey the values endorsed in different national cultures. Schwartz (2010) has surveyed the endorsement of ten different types of values by schoolteachers and by students in more than 70 nations. When analysed at the nation level, these surveys have yielded several dimensions of values. The dimension contrasting values favouring personal autonomy versus values favouring embeddedness within one's membership groups are also found to be strongly correlated with Hofstede's scores for Individualism and Collectivism. It appears that the contrast between individualistic and collectivistic cultures is consistently replicable using different measures and different samples.

At the same time, many questions remain to be answered as to how best to interpret dimensions that have been identified using nation-level factor analysis of data collected from individuals. For instance, saying that a nation has a collectivist culture does not mean that all individuals within that culture endorse collectivism. Everyday experience teaches us that the individuals around us endorse a variety of different values. Indeed, Fischer and Schwartz (2011) have shown that within Schwartz's data, variability in values between individuals accounts for between 75 and 90 percent. From this perspective, the remaining difference between national cultures is modest, but that does not mean that variance across nations is unimportant. The distinctive distribution of values across nations is likely to be a consequence of shared climate, shared language, shared educational experiences, shared legal structures, shared socio-historical contexts, and so forth.

Possible Causes of Cultural Variability in Social Behaviour

The first priority of cross-cultural social psychology has been to identify ways of describing differences and estimating their magnitude. Now that we have identified some dimensions of variation it becomes important to consider how these differences arose, and whether they are in process of changing. Three principal historical issues have so far been explored. These relate to health, environmental risks more generally and climate. The pathogen stress model notes that different regions of the world vary in the frequency of life-threatening illnesses. For instance, Fincher and Thornhill (2012) have proposed that where pathogen stress is high, individuals would be more likely to survive if they bond together and seek to avoid contact with strangers who may be a source of dangerous infections. Thus, a collectivist culture would be more likely to evolve where illnesses are more prevalent, and these authors have found that Hofstede's scores for nation-level collectivism are indeed

correlated with pathogen frequency. In a similar way, the frequency of natural disasters such as earthquakes, fires and famines would predispose toward uncertainty avoidance and adherence to tight sets of rules, and this prediction has also received empirical support (Gelfand et al., 2011). Finally, the climate in different parts of the world would favour the development of differing cultural adaptations, such as hunting, which is typically an individualistic enterprise versus agriculture, which requires more collaborative enterprise. Even within modes of agriculture, growing rice requires much more collaboration than the growing of wheat, and so it has been found that, in Chinese rice-growing regions, collectivistic identities are currently endorsed more strongly than in Chinese wheat-growing regions (Talhelm et al., 2014).

These proposed historical origins of cultural differences require much more testing against one another to see which gives the strongest explanation. In the contemporary world, the issue of concern is whether the cultural differences that have been identified will persist or whether they will be attenuated or eliminated by current processes such as the globalisation of markets and the media as well as migration and international travel. Data relevant to these processes is provided by opinion polls in numerous countries, each of which contributes to what is known as the World Values Survey. Welzel (2013) has found evidence that what he terms emancipative values are becoming more widespread over time in many of the countries in the world. Emancipative values have four elements: Preference for personal autonomy, freedom to make moral choices, endorsement of gender equality, and belief that one has the right to have a say in important decisions. Emancipative values are more strongly endorsed in the nations that Hofstede defined as individualistic, but Welzel finds that these values are gradually becoming more widely endorsed as each nation becomes wealthier. This is likely to be because the wealth of nations will determine the resources that can be invested in health and education, which may over time foster emancipative values. Thus, the cultural differences that have been found around the world are not necessarily fixed. They may well evolve in response to present and future major events, such as Covid-19, climate change, or other cross-national crises.

‘Consequences’ of Cultural Differences

Hofstede’s (1980, 2001) books included the phrase ‘Culture’s Consequences’ in their titles. By phrasing the title with these words, he implied that there is a causal relationship between the nature of a given cultural group and the events that occur within it. However, determining causal effects can only be accomplished by doing well-controlled experiments, and we cannot change a culture experimentally to see what are the effects that our manipulation causes. What we can do is examine how social psychological effects vary between cultural groups whose character has already been identified. An influential range of predictions of this type was advanced by Markus and Kitayama (1991). Their initial interest was in the contrast between what they called the culture of independence of the US and the culture of interdependence of Japan, but their propositions have relevance to the more general

contrast between nations with more individualistic cultures and those with more collectivistic cultures.

Markus and Kitayama proposed that the central element of the cultural difference in which they were interested comprises the ways in which individuals perceive their self. In individualistic cultures, they proposed that one's self is construed as separate from the surrounding social context, bounded, unitary, and stable. In contrast, a collectivistic construal of self is seen as connected to one's social context and therefore as flexible, fluid, and varying across contexts. These different views of the self, usually referred to as self-construals, are seen as having major implications for basic psychological processes, such as cognition, emotion, and motivation.

Although self-construal is central to Markus and Kitayama's formulation of cultural differences, they did not themselves formulate measures of self-construal. However, many other researchers have done so (Singelis, 1994; Vignoles et al., 2016), and these measures have been frequently used to test whether they can indeed predict variations in social psychological processes (Smith et al., 2013). Unfortunately, the great majority of these studies have followed the specific contrast in Markus and Kitayama's formulation, focussing specifically on differences between the US and the nations of East Asia, particularly Japan and China. This chapter takes a different direction, more relevant to you, the reader. Shinobu Kitayama is himself of Japanese origin, but his multicultural team at the University of Michigan has adapted to criticism of their emphasis on a single aspect of cultural difference by conducting studies in several other regions of the world. We shall examine a key series of studies by his team as well as by relevant others in the next section.

How Does Latin America Differ from East Asia?

Although Hofstede's identification of cultural variability in terms of a contrast between individualistic and collectivistic cultures has proved valuable, the implication that all the nations in the world that are collectivistic are relatively similar to each other does not withstand close scrutiny. It may also be the case that there are other dimensions of cultural variation that can better capture the contrast between Latin America and East Asia. We first examine two recent studies that have examined the culture of Latin American nations in terms of Collectivism (Salvador et al., 2020; Krys et al., 2022). Cultures evolve over centuries in response to differing ecological contexts. In terms of agriculture, East Asian nations have been predominantly rice-growing nations, whereas herding has been predominant in Latin America. East Asian nations have until recently experienced low levels of immigration and relatively less intrusive colonial penetration, while immigration and colonisation have been far more frequent in Latin America which also share a history of forced immigration in the form of slavery. Confucianism and Buddhism have been predominant in East Asia, but Catholic Christianity is prevalent in Latin America. In each of these ways, the ecological context of East Asia has favoured the development of societies that are collaborative and stable. The more heterogeneous and unstable context of Latin America can be expected to have favoured the development of individual enterprise.

Of course, individual enterprise is also a defining attribute of the individualistic nations of Northern Europe and North America, but the ecological context of these nations also differs from those of Latin American nations in important ways. To illustrate, the prevalence of life-threatening pathogens, both historically and at the present time, is higher in Latin America than in Europe, and, as we have noted, pathogen stress is associated with the evolution of collectivist cultures. Furthermore, over past centuries it was the Europeans who were the colonisers, whereas it was indigenous cultural groups in Latin America and elsewhere who were the targets of colonisation. So, there are reasons to expect that Latin American cultures will have attributes that are both individualistic and collectivistic, as well as power distance.

Markus and Kitayama's (1991) theory of culture was built around variations in self-construal. The most detailed analysis of self-construal that is yet available is that of Vignoles et al. (2016). These authors identified seven different aspects of self-construal, each of which contrasts an aspect of independence with an aspect of interdependence. Endorsement of each of these components of self-construal was then surveyed in 55 samples in 33 nations drawn from all the major regions of the world. Nine of these samples were drawn from Peru, Chile, Colombia, and Brazil. Figure 3 shows the scores obtained for the Latin American region in contrast to the results for East Asia and for Western nations, including only the four aspects of self-construal where there was a significant difference from the other regions. Positive scores in the table indicate a more independent construal of self, while negative scores indicate a more interdependent view of self.

The table shows that relative to the other samples the Latin American respondents favoured seeing themselves as more different from others, more consistent in their behaviour, more expressive rather than seeking harmony, and more concerned with their own interests rather than those of others. This contrasts especially sharply with the responses from the Asian samples. At least in these samples, Latin Americans are more individualistic than Westerners. We need to consider further studies to verify this conclusion.

Salvador et al. (2020) tested the prediction that Latin American culture is characterised by what they called 'expressive interdependence'. In other words, these researchers concluded that Latin Americans endorse some aspects of collectivism but differ from East Asians in their preference to express feelings rather than suppress them in the manner favoured in East Asia. These authors conducted a series of studies sampling Japan, US, and Colombia. Using the Singelis (1994) measure of self-construal they found Colombian responses more similar to those from Japan than from the US. However, this measure of self-construal has been found less valid than those developed by Vignoles et al. (2016), so it is the other results obtained by Salvador et al. that are of greater interest for the present analysis.

It has been proposed that a key element of interdependent cultures is that people tend to think in ways that are holistic rather than analytic (Nisbett et al., 2001). Holistic cognition involves looking at people and situations in ways that take in all aspects rather than picking out a key element. Thus, in considering why someone behaved in a certain way, someone thinking analytically might put the behaviour down to personality, whereas some thinking

Figure 3.

Contrasts in Self-Construals between Latin American, East Asian and Western Nations

Note: High scores indicate stronger endorsement of each of these aspects of self-construal by Latin Americans. Positive scores are above the average for the world as a whole. Negative scores are below the average for the world as a whole.

holistically would take more account of the context as a possible cause of behaviour (Morris & Peng, 1994). Salvador et al. found that in three separate tests, the Colombians showed evidence of holistic cognition that was less than among the Japanese but more than among the US respondents.

A second aspect of independence versus interdependence concerns the types of emotional experience that we associate with happiness. Salvador et al. (2020) contrasted the correlates of socially engaging emotions (for instance, friendly feelings) with socially-disengaging emotions (for instance, pride and self-esteem). On this measure, Colombians resembled the US respondents, reporting more positive feelings associated with social-disengaging emotions, whereas the Japanese were happier when experiencing socially engaging emotions.

As the study by Vignoles et al. (2016) emphasised, a key aspect of Latin American culture is expressiveness rather than the search for harmony. Salvador et al. (2020) examined the reported intensity and frequency of expressing different types of emotions. They found emotional intensity to be higher in the US and Colombia. However, the expression of socially engaged emotions in proportion to disengaged emotions was high in both Japan and Colombia, and lower in the US. Thus, this study suggests that while emotional expression is strong in both US and Colombia, only the socially engaged emotions

are prominent in Colombia. In contrast, emotional expression is weak in Japan, and here too only the socially engaged emotions are expressed. So, interdependence between relatively individualistic Latin Americans may be sustained more by expressing friendly feelings. Interdependence between relatively collectivistic Japanese would be sustained more by suppression of negative feelings. The Colombian emphasis on expression of positive feelings rather than negative feelings supports the widespread view that simpatía is a key cultural script in Latin America (Triandis et al., 1984).

The study by Salvador et al. (2020) is important, as it is the first that has fully explored detailed attributes of what has been considered to be Latin American collectivism. Of course, sampling of a single Latin American nation cannot be considered to represent the entire region in a valid way. However, it points the way forward in detailing potential contrasts and similarities with East Asian collectivism. We can apply two further tests of the conclusions so far. A key element of East Asian collectivism is the stability of group memberships. Families and workgroups in that region are sustained by harmony and it is very difficult for an individual to leave their groups and then join others. Thomson et al. (2018) developed a measure of perceived 'relational mobility' and obtained answers to this measure in 39 nations, including six in Latin America. The items comprising the scale concerned perceptions of how easy and frequent it is to change one's group memberships in one's society. Scores for each of the Latin American samples were among the highest worldwide, and those for East Asia were lowest (see Figure 4). This implies that in Latin America changing one's group memberships is relatively frequent. Across the world sample, Thomson et al. (2018) showed that high perceived relational mobility is found among nations that have a history of farming based on herding rather than agriculture, and a moderate level of historical and ecological threats.

Another contributing factor to the creation of a distinctive Latin American culture has been the experience of conquest and colonisation. Over extended periods of time a hierarchical relationship existed between new settlers and both the indigenous population and those who were coercively brought to Latin America. The survey by Hofstede (2001) showed high scores for power distance for Latin America. Power distance is defined in terms of relative acceptance of hierarchy within society and within organisations. Smith et al. (1999) found that business managers in five Latin American nations (including Brazil) reported stronger reliance on their superiors than those in many of the other regions of the world. These results support power distance as another key cultural script in Latin America.

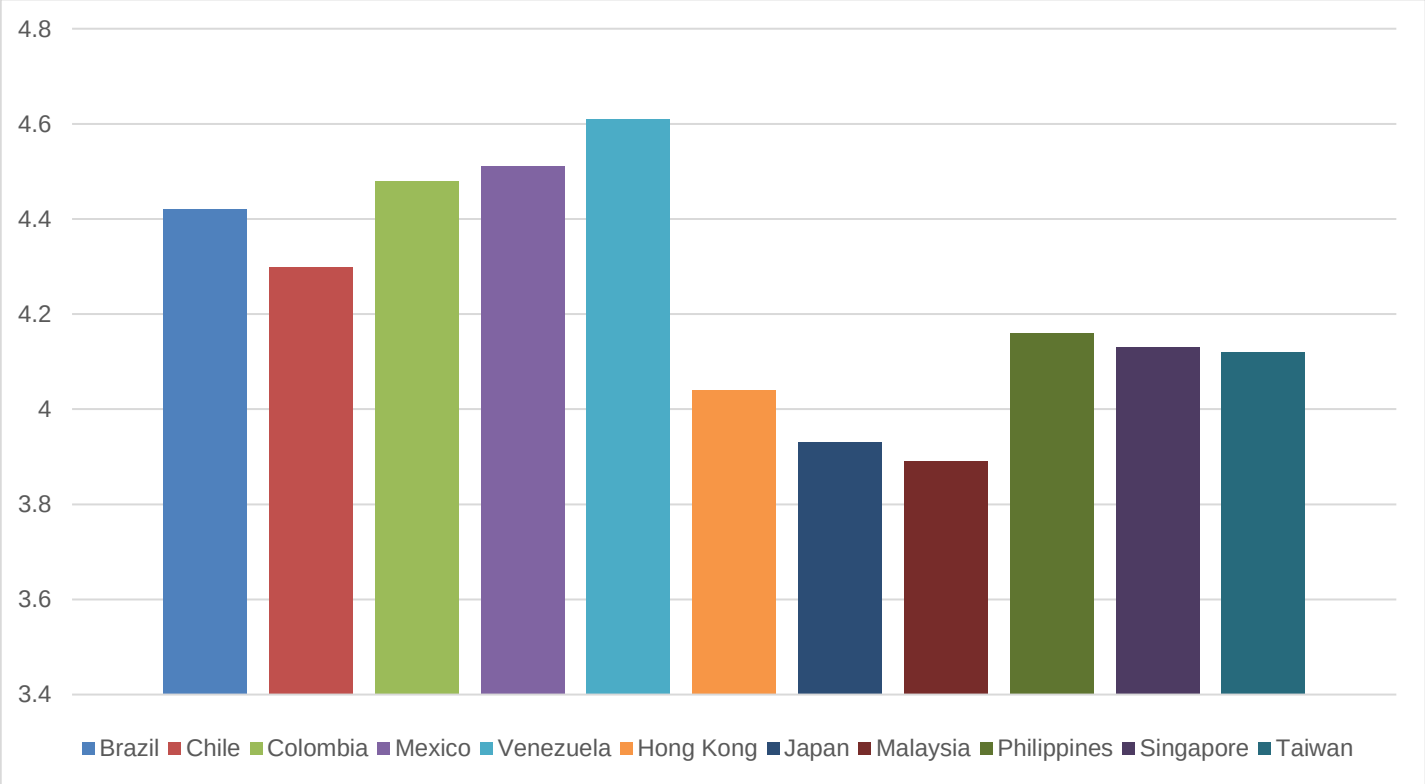
The studies that we have reviewed in this section reveal that classifying the contrast between Latin America and East Asia in terms of variations in Collectivism is unsatisfactory. Latin Americans have self-construals that are predominantly independent rather than interdependent, they have high relational mobility, and they are emotionally expressive. None of these characteristics fit well with the definition of collectivistic cultures.

In recent years an alternative dimension of cultural variability has been formulated which is also derived from discussion of Hofstede's early analyses. This dimension contrasts cultures defined as monumental with those defined as flexible (Minkov et al., 2017). Cultural groups that exemplify monumentalism value self-enhancement, self-confidence, and the stability and consistency of oneself. Cultural groups that exemplify flexibility value

accommodation to others and acceptance of one's situation. A survey measuring these attributes was administered to adults in 55 nations. A factor analysis of the means for each nation for the seven items defining the dimensions yielded a single dimension score for each nation. While the eight Latin American nations sampled (including Brazil) were all placed among the top eleven scores for monumentalism, the seven East Asian nations sampled were the seven highest scorers on flexibility.

It appears that the Flexibility versus Monumentalism dimension does a better job of delineating the distinctiveness of Latin America. The validity of this measure is supported by its association with a variety of objective measures of cultural differences (Minkov & Kaasa, 2021), but more studies will be required using the measure to confirm its replicability. However, we can note in the next section the results of further studies that support this characterisation of Latin American cultures. Monumentalism favours the preservation of the honour of oneself and one's group, a desire to have control over events and a lack of belief in fate. We shall examine studies of each of these attributes in the next section. It is now time to look more closely at Brazil.

Figure 4.
Relational Mobility in Latin America and East Asia



What is Distinctive About Brazilians and Brazilian Culture?

We should first consider basic cognitive processes. As we noted earlier, Salvador et al. (2020) found that on several experimental tasks Colombians showed a pattern of holistic cognition more similar to Japanese responses than American ones. Hoersting et al. (2021) obtained similar results when comparing Brazilian and US students. When asked to estimate the emotions portrayed in a series of cartoons, the Brazilians took account of the social context of those portrayed, whereas the US students did not. When asked to select which two among sets of three items were most similar, the Brazilians grouped together items with similar functions, whereas the US students grouped items that look similar. These results indicated that Brazilian cognitive processes were more holistic, while that of US students were more analytic. However, Hoersting et al. (2021) also introduced experimental primes into their study. They found that when Brazilians are induced to think in more individualistic ways, their cognition became more analytic. In a similar way, US students primed to think collectivistically produced more holistic responses. These results indicate that the basic cognitive processes employed in various cultural groups are not fundamentally different. They are more like habitual ways of thinking, that can change when there are incentives to adapt to new circumstances.

More evidence that cognitive processes in Brazil occur in a way that is comparable to what is found in other countries comes from the assessment of dichotomous thinking. The dichotomous way of thinking entails perceiving and categorizing complex social situations and behaviors in a simplistic manner, so that they will fit extreme and opposing conceptual categories, such as “good” or “evil,” “sacred” or “profane.” This is often referred to as “black and white thinking,” and it correlates positively with intolerance for ambiguity (Oshio, 2009). In two studies with a Japanese and a multinational sample, Jonason et al. (2018) reported positive correlations between dichotomous thinking and the pathological personality traits of psychopathy (i.e., interpersonal exploitation, callousness, and low self-control), narcissism (i.e., arrogance, entitlement, and grandiosity), and Machiavellianism (i.e., flattery, social climbing, and cynicism). Thus, individuals who lack empathy are potentially less willing to understand the complex reasons (the “shades of grey”) underlying people’s actions. Bonfá-Araujo and Hauck Filho (2021) reported similar results in a community sample of Brazilian adults. This indicates that the processes known to underly cognitive biases elsewhere may be the same in Brazil.

There is no reason to expect that all social psychological studies conducted in Brazil will yield distinctive results. We noted already that the Asch conformity experiment yielded similar results to those obtained in the US (Rodrigues, 1982). Another instance is found in studies of prejudice against outgroups. Gouveia et al. (2021) studied prejudice against North Easterners, indigenous peoples and Venezuelans in different regions of Brazil. Prejudice was strongest among those who endorsed social dominance orientation, which is a belief that social inequality is legitimate (Pratto et al., 1994). There was also more prejudice in regions where the outgroups are less strongly represented. Both of these effects are the same as found in other nations. Thus, the dynamics of prejudice are similar, and even the

main types of social groups that are specific targets of prejudice are similar (Cantal et al., 2015), although the specific strength of associations may vary between and indeed within nations.

Brazil spans large areas across a huge range of ecologically different environments, so that we may expect variations in the extent to which cultural adaptations in these areas will have occurred (e.g., see Ribeiro, 1995). Hofstede, Garibaldi de Hilal, Malvezzi, Tanure, and Vinken (2010) compared mean responses by business employees in 27 Brazilian states to the items used in Hofstede's (1980) study. Five regional clusters of responses were identified, approximately representing the five major regions of Brazil. The North and North-Eastern regions were distinctively more collectivistic, while the more southerly regions were more hierarchical and individualistic. However, Hofstede et al. (2010) noted that the variations within Brazil were smaller than the differences between Brazil and neighbouring nations.

Schwartz's (2009; 2010) surveys of basic personal values spanned 76 nations, among whom were eight Latin American nations. These samples mostly showed moderate scores on all of Schwartz's three major dimensions of variation in values. This could be due to high levels of diversity within nations, or to a willingness to endorse opposing sets of values. More recently, Torres et al (2015) conducted a meta-analysis of all previous Brazilian studies that have used Schwartz's measures. Meta-analysis is a technique for integrating the quantitative results of different studies. This study also highlighted contrasts between the five major regions and proposed links between historic and contemporary migration as an explanation of the contrasts found. Significant variations were found in endorsement of nine of the ten value types, but as Table 1 shows, these did not yield any simply interpretable pattern.

Each of these studies have used measures developed in other parts of the world, which may miss aspects that are distinctive with Brazil. For instance, Vilanova et al. (2020) have shown that within the turbulent political culture of Brazil, responses to a widely used measure of right-wing attitudes to authority (Duckitt et al., 2010) must be interpreted in a

Table 1.
Regional Variations in Values within Brazil

Region	Highest Rank	Second Rank	Third Rank
North	Self-Direction	Security	Achievement
North-East	Conformity	Security	Achievement
Centre-West	Self-Direction	Security	Conformity
South East	Self-Direction	Conformity	Security
South	Conformity	Achievement	Security

Note: Schwartz's research distinguishes ten types of personal values. Benevolence and Universalism are ranked highly in all regions. The table shows the remaining value types that are most strongly endorsed in each region (Torres et al., 2015).

different manner, distinguishing those who favour submitting to authority from those who favour contesting authority.

While some studies have emphasised diversity in values, others have shown consistency across regions. For instance, Milfont et al. (2020) compared the scores for perceived relational mobility across the 27 Brazilian states and also across the five regions. No significant differences were found in the perception that relational mobility was high. Milfont et al. also asked their respondents how much personal support and understanding they felt from their friends, how much they had disclosed intimate secrets to them, and how similar they felt to them. Each of these indices was higher among those who perceived relational mobility to be high. Thomson et al. (2018) obtained similar correlations between these measures in their multi-nation survey. Building and sustaining one's relations with friends will clearly require different behaviours where relational mobility is high from what is required where relational mobility is low.

One implication of living in a culture where relational mobility is high is that there is an incentive to try to take control of events, rather than passively adapting to whatever events arise. Hornsey et al. (2019) asked adults in 27 nations to rate how much control they had in various aspects of their life and how much control they would like to have. Ratings of perceived and desired control were relatively high in Brazil (and in five other Latin American nations). As Figure 5 shows, these ratings were particularly low in Japan and other East Asian nations. Those who wish to have control over their life are unlikely to believe in fate. A study of cultural variations in beliefs among students from 33 nations showed the four Latin America samples (including Brazil) as the lowest in belief in fate (Stankov & Saucier, 2015). These results are consistent with the view that Brazilians are more likely to initiate change where relationships are unsatisfactory, whereas East Asians will more likely adapt their behaviour to maintain harmony with those around them. Preservation of simpatía and high relationship mobility can each sustain the other.

Simpatía in Everyday Life

Kuppens et al. (2008) examined the correlates of reported satisfaction with life. Students from 46 nations, including Brazil and four other Latin American nations, were asked how often they had experienced a series of different emotions over the past week. As we might expect, satisfaction with life was correlated positively with the experience of positive emotions and negatively with the experience of negative emotions. However, the strength of these relationships varied between nations that are more individualistic and those that are more collectivistic. In collectivistic nations the correlation with the experience of positive emotions was stronger and the correlation with the experience of negative emotions was weaker. This is what we would expect where maintenance of simpatía is a priority.

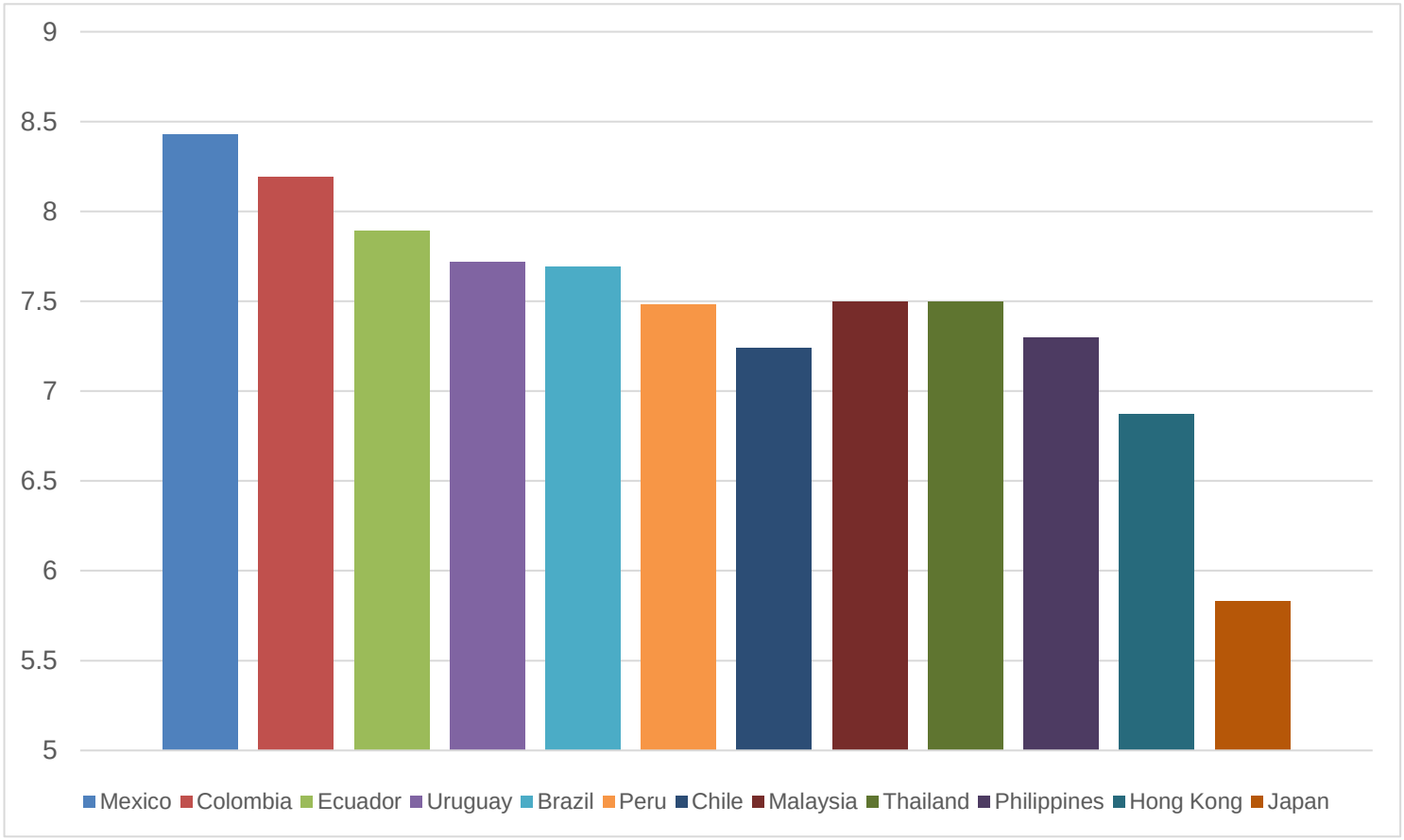
Simpatía may also provide a script for how to behave with strangers and in public places. Levine et al. (2001) conducted a cross-cultural study of pro-social behaviour. In the large cities of 31 nations, they staged what appeared to be a series of small emergencies, and noted the proportion of passers-by who stopped to provide help to those in trouble. In

the first task, a trained accomplice accidentally dropped a pen while walking past a pedestrian. In the second task, as a pedestrian approached, an accomplice who appeared to have hurt his leg dropped a pile of magazines and struggled to pick them up. In the third task, the accomplice, dressed as a blind person, waited at a pedestrian crossing as the light went green. The highest level of response was found among the Brazilian sample. Ninety-three percent of passers-by in Rio de Janeiro offered assistance. Of course, rates of response may be affected by the selection of cities and of specific sites (e.g., North-Eastern versus Southern Brazil), but in some nations the frequency was as low as 40%.

Pearson and Stephan (1998) compared students' preferred styles of negotiation in Brazil and the US. Brazilians had stronger concerns for the outcomes of the other party than US participants did, when the anticipated negotiation was to be with a fellow student. However, this contrast was no longer found when the negotiation was to be with a businessperson. Studies from other parts of the world have shown that members of collectivist cultures make a sharper distinction between relations with in-group members and relations with out-group members (Smith et al., 2013). The results obtained by Pearson and Stephan (1998) confirm that this effect holds true among Brazilians.

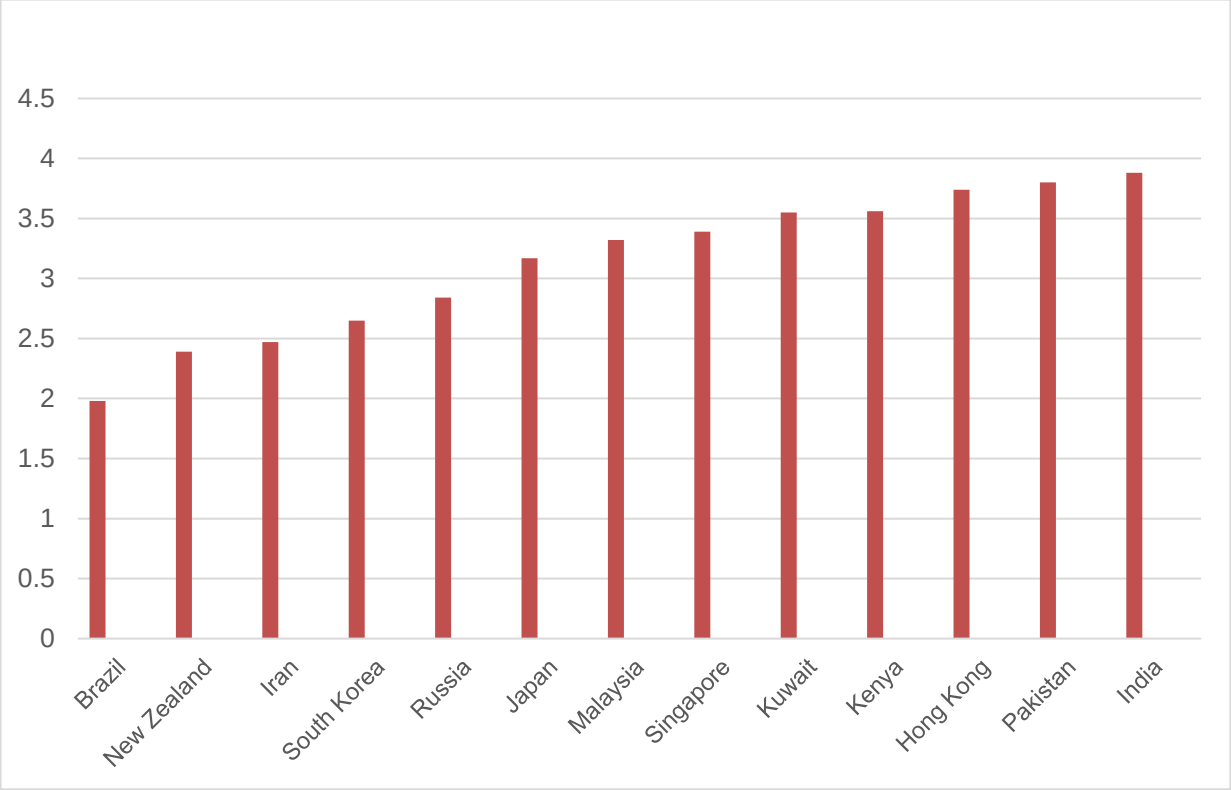
Figure 5.

Perceived Control Over One's Life in Latin America and East Asia (Hornsey et al., 2019)



The Brazilian preference for simpatía poses the question of what types of beliefs may be associated with this outgoing style of behaviour. In some parts of the world, individuals will believe that the overt display of a happy life can cause envy in others, interfere with tasks that must be accomplished or even lead to punishment in the afterlife. Fear of happiness is the belief that happiness may have bad consequences (Joshanloo, 2013). Evidence indeed confirms that the fear of happiness varies across countries. Figure 6 shows that in a comparison between 14 nations, Joshanloo et al. (2014) the Brazilian sample exhibited the lowest mean scores on the scale. No other Latin American samples were include in this study, so we cannot judge whether the effect is distinctive to Brazil. The public expression of happiness may be positively correlated with simpatía, as both involve predispositions towards manifesting positive affect. However, this connection has yet to be studied in more detail. The occurrence of fear of happiness may also vary across Brazilian regions, as the meta-analysis by Torres et al. (2015) identified regional differences in values.

Figure 6.
Cultural Differences in Fear of Happiness (Joshanloo et al., 2014)



Cultures of Honour

As social psychologists emphasize, the individual's memberships of groups are central to the understanding of social behaviour. An aspect of intergroup relations that has particular relevance to Brazil is the pattern of relationships that occurs within honour cultures. Honour cultures are those in which priority is given to the good reputation of one's group and the responsibility of individuals to behave in ways that uphold that reputation (Uskul et al., 2018). Honour cultures are said to have originated in those parts of the world where herding has been the principal form of agriculture. Particular threats to honour in the past might have arisen from theft of cattle by rustlers, family feuds emerging from political and resource control, and from loss of virtue of the women in one's group—the decades-long family feud in Exu, a city in the state of Pernambuco in the Northeast region of Brazil, and the 2001 movie Behind the Sun (Abril Despedaçado) provide illustrations of Honour cultures. In contemporary society, threats to honour more frequently occur on the basis of failure to respond to insults to oneself or one's group.

Guerra et al. (2012) surveyed students' concerns about honour using a scale that comprised items referring to family honour, personal integrity, masculine honour, and feminine honour. After controlling for cultural variations in survey response styles, the sample of Brazilians sampled across geographic regions scored second highest among the eight nations that were sampled, with particularly strong endorsement of the items referring to personal integrity. However, this gives us no indication of the degree of variation between regions. Canto et al. (2017) found that high endorsement of honour values and of masculine role stereotypes predicted stronger reactions to imagined sexual infidelity both among university students in Portugal and in the cities of Salvador and Goiânia in Brazil. Vandello and Cohen (2003) made a more direct test of differing responses to infidelity in honour cultures and in cultures where honour values are less endorsed. Students in the northern US and in Brazil (locations not specified) made ratings as to the honourableness of a husband whose wife was said to be either faithful or having an affair. When the wife was having an affair, the husband was rated much lower in Brazil, but not in the US. Furthermore, when the husband was said to have yelled at and hit his wife, these behaviors were more condoned by the Brazilian respondents. These studies confirm the continuing prevalence of honour values within Brazilian culture, although they do not tell us how much variation there is between different groups and regions.

Brazilian Jeitinho

Cross-cultural researchers face a choice in deciding how best to study cultural differences. In the earlier parts of this paper, we have examined studies in which researchers who have selected measures developed in one part of the world (often the US) have then used them elsewhere, for instance in Brazil. The alternative approach is to start by studying phenomena that are thought to be distinctive locally and to develop an indigenous psychology built upon

local understandings. In the case of Brazil, commentators have long argued that to understand Brazil one must understand jeitinho (e.g., Amado & Vinagre Brasil, 1991; DaMatta, 1984; Ribeiro, 1995). These authors proposed that jeitinho evolved in Brazil as a set of ingenious behaviours and procedures for coping with excessive bureaucracy and to avoid overt conflicts. Although Amado and Vinagre Brasil (1991) suggest that similar procedures are to be found in other Latin cultures, such as France and Italy, commentators argue that jeitinho is distinctive to Brazilian culture as it is widely prevalent and recognised as part of the national identity.

If we wish to establish that a particular cultural attribute is indigenous to a given cultural group, it is desirable to show that it is absent from other cultural groups. As cross-cultural psychology has developed, a variety of informal influence procedures have been proposed as indigenous to certain groups. For instance, guanxi is said to be distinctive to Chinese cultural groups and wasta is reported to be particularly important in understanding Arab cultures. To compare levels of indigenousness, Smith, Huang et al. (2012) asked students in each of several countries to construct scenarios illustrating jeitinho, guanxi, and wasta. The origins of these scenarios were then disguised, and the scenarios were presented to new samples of students in each country, who rated how typical they were locally. The jeitinho scenarios were rated typical in Brazil only, whereas the other scenarios were found to be less distinctively associated with any national group. This result was replicated in a further scenario study using business managers (Smith, Torres et al., 2012). Thus, we have some evidence of the distinctiveness of jeitinho, although these studies did not include any other Latin cultural groups.

Pilati et al. (2011) sought to define the concept of jeitinho more precisely by content analysing interviews in which respondents described ways of solving problems. Instances exemplifying jeitinho were seen as including simpatía, harming others, using cunning, breaking rules, innovating, addressing hierarchy, and gaining compensation for low status. Ferreira, Fischer, Barreiros Porto, Pilati, and Milfont (2012) used these categories to construct a questionnaire that exemplified three different aspects of jeitinho: corrupt behaviour, creativity in solving problems, and the breaking of social norms. Respondents were then asked to judge the similarity between themselves and the persons portrayed in each of these types of jeitinho scenarios, as well as how similar these persons were to a typical Brazilian. Finally, they completed a personality questionnaire and measures of beliefs and values. Younger persons identified with the creativity scenarios, whereas richer persons identified with the breaking of social norms. Those who identified with the corruption scenarios scored high on social dominance orientation (Pratto et al., 1994). However, they did not perceive that typical Brazilians matched this profile. Thus, there was a mismatch between what the corrupt individuals would perceive as legitimate for themselves and what they would perceive as legitimate in society as a whole.

Endorsement of corruption was further explored by Fischer et al. (2014). These authors tested the proposition that high levels of media coverage of corruption in Brazil encourage individuals to believe that it is acceptable. Respondents were exposed either to media coverage of political corruption or to a “malandro” individual (i.e., a usually powerless person who acts in a clever, but deceptive way to obtain resources or solve a difficult

situation). Among those who identified strongly with being Brazilian, corruption intentions increased after viewing Malandro images, perhaps because these images suggested that corruption is lovable and harmless. Among those who identified less strongly, the political images had the stronger effect. This type of study shows how locally important issues can usefully be explored in ways that would be impossible if studies were restricted to measures developed internationally.

Most recently, Miura et al. (2019) have developed a new measure of jeitinho-related behaviours and established stronger connections between identification with jeitinho and internationally validated measures of personality and values. They distinguish jeitinho simpático, which corresponds to creativity in solving problems and jeitinho malandro, which corresponds to the earlier categories of corruption and norm breaking. Respondents endorsing jeitinho simpático were found to score high on the personality dimensions of agreeableness and openness to experience. Those endorsing jeitinho malandro scored low on the personality dimension of conscientiousness. From this perspective, jeitinho behaviours can be seen as some of the distinctive ways in which universal dimensions of personality are expressed within contemporary Brazilian culture.

Conclusion

So how does cross-cultural social psychology aid our understanding of Brazilian society? We noted at the beginning of this paper that all humans resemble one another and that all humans are also unique. There is no reason to doubt that the broad principles guiding the processes of interpersonal and group relations that have been identified by social psychologists in other parts of the world have relevance to Brazil. The question is more one of identifying the ways in which these broad principles have been modified and interpreted within the distinctive socio-cultural contexts that comprise contemporary Brazil. Climate, pathogen frequency, colonisation and immigration have yielded a series of particular cultural adaptations. Within a context of in-group collectivism, hierarchy and inequality, a culture has evolved in which individual initiative and ingenuity are sustained by relational mobility and by simpatía and low fear of happiness. Societies do not have fixed cultures and only the passage of time will show in what ways Brazilian culture will evolve in relation to present and future challenges.

Postscript

We note here some additional detail that addresses the extent of cultural differences between Brazil and other nations in Latin America. This can best be done by focusing on those studies that have actually made cross-national comparisons. The cross-national study of Thomson et al. (2018) found that relational mobility was also high in Colombia and in Venezuela and was exceptionally high in Mexico and Puerto Rico. The study of helping strangers by Levine et al. (2001) found helping also to be high in Costa Rica, Mexico and El

Salvador. Hornsey et al. (2019) found that the perception of perceived control over one's life was also high in Chile, Peru, Colombia, Mexico and Uruguay. Results similar to Vandello and Cohen's (2003) study of the role of honor values in Brazilian response to female infidelity were obtained in Chile by Vandello et al. (2009). Reported frequency of positive emotions was distinctively high in Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela, just as it was in Brazil (Kuppens et al., 2008), whereas reported frequency of negative emotions was no more than the average.

Jeitinho is frequently described as particularly characteristic of the Brazilian culture, but somewhat similar processes of informal influence such as palanca have been identified for instance in Mexico (Arellano-Gault, 2018) and the term pituto is used in Chile (Bazoret, 2006). However, the similarities or differences of these processes have yet to be addressed. While Brazilian researchers have not directly addressed what it means to be simpático, some Latino/a researchers have sought to define and measure the values entailed in simpatía (Acevado et al., 2020). Based on a review of prior relevant literature (e.g., Triandis et al., 1984; Sanchez-Burks et al., 2000), Acevado et al. identified two components: positivity/warmth and avoidance of negativity and conflict. For instance, Sanchez-Burks et al. (2000) found that Mexicans had a stronger preference for friendly workplace relations than Anglo-Americans, while Sussman and Rosenfeld (1982) found that Venezuelans had a smaller distance from conversational partners than did those from non-Hispanic samples.

Enquiring further into the nature of simpatía, Ramirez-Esparza et al. (2008) noted that when responding to personality questionnaires, Hispanics have frequently been found to score lower on measured Agreeableness than do European Americans. These authors asked bilingual Mexican Americans to converse with a partner in either Spanish or English. Observer ratings showed that the level of Agreeableness was higher when speaking Spanish. Ramirez-Esparza and colleagues concluded that the difference between self-reported Agreeableness and actual behaviour is because simpatía includes a degree of modesty when presenting oneself to others.

The studies noted in this postscript suggest a degree of uniformity in Latin American culture. Of course the history and circumstances of every single Latin American nation will have elicited numerous distinctive facets, which are beyond the scope of this brief review. It may nonetheless be the case that in Latin America, national identity is less salient and regional identity is more salient than is the case in other continents and regions. Indeed, in an early study, Salazar and Salazar (1996) found that respondents in Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru and the Dominican Republic all identified more strongly with being Latin American than with their own nationality. It would be interesting to know whether such effects still exist.

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Discussion Questions

1. What do we mean when we say that a country has a distinctive culture?
2. In what ways is your country similar to Brazil? How is it different?
3. How can we best explain the cultures that have evolved in Latin America?
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of relational mobility?
5. What is simpatía, and how might it differ from personality traits such as agreeableness?
6. Does Brazil have regional cultures?
7. Latin American cultures are said to be honour cultures. How can we know whether this is true?
8. How do you understand jeitinho? Is it distinctive to Brazil?
9. How useful is it to categorise nations in terms of dimensions such as individualism-collectivism and power distance?
10. What is holistic cognition? How much are we able to switch between thinking about a particular situation in holistic and analytic ways? Why should some cultures favour one type of cognition over the other one?

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