

Wishes and gratitude of students from private and public schools

By: Elisa A. Merçon-Vargas, Maria Adélia M. Pieta, Lia Beatriz de Lucca Freitas, and [Jonathan R. H. Tudge](#)

Merçon-Vargas, E. A., Pieta, M. A., Freitas, L. B. L., & Tudge, J. R. H. (2016). Wishes and gratitude of students from private and public schools. *Psicologia, Revista da Universidade de São Francisco*, 21(3), 651–652. doi: 10.1590/1413-82712016210317

Made available courtesy of Universidade de São Francisco: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/1413-82712016210317>



Published under a Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0); <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Abstract:

We examined social class (measured by attendance in public or private schools), gender, and age-related variations in the expression of wishes and gratitude of 430 7- to 14-year-olds (181 male, 62.1% from public schools). Chi-square analysis indicated that students from private schools expressed significantly more social-oriented wishes and connective gratitude, whereas those from public schools expressed significantly more self-oriented wishes. Girls in the public schools expressed significantly more self-oriented wishes and verbal gratitude than did boys. Regression analysis (curve estimation) indicated that verbal gratitude, self- and social oriented wishes increased and concrete gratitude decreased significantly with age, but connective gratitude tended to increase. These findings support the idea that gratitude and wish types involve the development of cognitive aspects, such as taking others into account and thinking about the future, but it is also influenced by the social contexts in which children live, such as their social class.

Keywords: gratitude | wishes | social class | gender | child and adolescent development

Article:

*****Note: Full text of article below**

Wishes and Gratitude of Students from Private and Public Schools

Elisa A. Merçon-Vargas – Universidade da Carolina do Norte, Greensboro, Estados Unidos

Maria Adélia M. Pieta – Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, Brasil

Lia Beatriz de Lucca Freitas – Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, Brasil

Jonathan R. H. Tudge – Universidade da Carolina do Norte, Greensboro, Estados Unidos

Abstract

We examined social class (measured by attendance in public or private schools), gender, and age-related variations in the expression of wishes and gratitude of 430 7- to 14-year-olds (181 male, 62.1% from public schools). Chi-square analysis indicated that students from private schools expressed significantly more social-oriented wishes and connective gratitude, whereas those from public schools expressed significantly more self-oriented wishes. Girls in the public schools expressed significantly more self-oriented wishes and verbal gratitude than did boys. Regression analysis (curve estimation) indicated that verbal gratitude, self- and social oriented wishes increased and concrete gratitude decreased significantly with age, but connective gratitude tended to increase. These findings support the idea that gratitude and wish types involve the development of cognitive aspects, such as taking others into account and thinking about the future, but it is also influenced by the social contexts in which children live, such as their social class.

Keywords: gratitude, wishes, social class, gender, child and adolescent development

Os Desejos e a Gratidão de Estudantes do Ensino Público e Privado

Resumo

Foram examinadas variações na expressão de desejos e gratidão de 430 participantes (7 a 14 anos) de acordo com classe social (ensino público ou privado), gênero e idade (181 meninos, 62,1% da escola pública). Análises de Qui-quadrado indicaram que estudantes da escola privada expressaram mais desejos orientados para os outros e gratidão conectiva enquanto os da escola pública expressaram mais desejos orientados para si. As meninas na escola pública expressaram mais desejos voltados para si e gratidão verbal do que os meninos. As análises de regressão (estimação de curva) indicaram que gratidão verbal, desejos para si e para os outros aumentaram, e gratidão concreta diminuiu com a idade. A gratidão conectiva tendeu a aumentar. Esses resultados apoiam a ideia de que os tipos de desejos e gratidão envolvem o desenvolvimento cognitivo (levar em conta os outros e uma perspectiva futura), mas também são influenciados pelos contextos sociais (classe social).

Palavras-chave: gratidão, desejos, classe social, desenvolvimento de crianças e adolescentes

Deseos y Agradecimiento de Estudiantes de Enseñanza Pública y Privada

Resumen

Fueron examinadas variaciones en la expresión de deseos y agradecimientos de 430 estudiantes (7 a 14 años) con relación a la clase social (enseñanza pública o privada), sexo y edad (181 niños, 62,1% de escuelas públicas). Análisis de **Chi-cuadrado** indicaron que estudiantes de escuelas privadas expresaron más deseos orientados hacia los otros y agradecimiento conjuntivo, mientras que los de escuelas públicas expresaron más deseos enfocados hacia su propio bienestar. Las niñas de escuelas públicas expresaron más deseos de bienestar propio y agradecimiento verbal que los niños. Los análisis de regresión (estimación de curva) indicaron que el agradecimiento verbal, los deseos para sí y para los demás aumentaron, la gratitud concreta disminuyó con la edad, mientras que el agradecimiento conjuntivo tendió a aumentar. Estos resultados apoyan la idea de que los tipos de deseos y agradecimiento involucran el desarrollo cognitivo (tener en cuenta a los otros es una perspectiva futura), pero también están influenciados por el contexto social (clase social).

Palabras-clave: agradecimiento, deseos, clase social, desarrollo de niños y adolescentes

The Wishes and Gratitude of Students from Private and Public Schools

Tudge (2008) defined a cultural group as any group of individuals who share a set of values, beliefs, and practices (and intend to communicate those to other generations), who share a common sense of identity,

and who have access to similar resources and institutions. An entire society as well as sub groups within a society may be considered as cultural groups to the extent to which they ascribe to different values and practices (Kasser, Ryan, Zax, & Sameroff, 1995; Tudge, 2008). Among things that are likely to impact people's

values and beliefs are their socioeconomic backgrounds. As in many emerging countries, social-class differences are also evident in Brazil.

According to Guzzo and Filho (2005), social-class differences have been for many years reproduced in the educational system in Brazil. The low quality of public schools reflects the level of socioeconomic status of the students who attend them; parents who have the financial resources to pay for a private school (middle-class parents) typically do so, believing that the educational quality of private schools is superior (Vargas, 2009; Zago, 2006). Based on that contextual characteristic, private and public schools can be seen as a marker of different socioeconomic status in the Brazilian context, which is influenced by different experiences, life expectations, resources, etc.

Kağıtçıbaşı's (2007) perspective is that cultural values involve two orthogonal dimensions: one related to agency (autonomy-heteronomy) and the other to connectedness (separation-relatedness). Along one axis, some cultural groups may value and encourage youth to follow the traditions and obey the rules of the group (heteronomous) whereas other cultural groups may raise children to do or decide something with little or no help from others (autonomous). On the other axis, cultural groups either value and encourage connections with the group (related) or value separation with others (separate). Brazil, an emerging economy, should be similar to Turkey, much studied by Kağıtçıbaşı (2007; Kağıtçıbaşı & Ataca, 2005), in that urban and well educated families should be found in the autonomy-related quadrant whereas poorly educated and urban families, like their rural counterparts, should be found in the heteronomy-related quadrant.

Following Kağıtçıbaşı (2007) we believe that the examination of within-society heterogeneity is crucial to the understanding of differences in people's values, beliefs, and behaviors. Cultural values are likely to influence differences in the expression of moral virtues, such as gratitude (Kristjánsson, 2013; McConnell, 1993), given that gratitude, as we define it, involves both autonomy (both benefactor and beneficiary need to act autonomously for gratitude to be relevant) and relatedness (beneficiaries expressing gratitude towards benefactors strengthens links between them). Similarly, cultural values are likely to be associated with one's wishes for the future. Thus, the present study aimed to investigate the differences in the expression of wishes and gratitude of Brazilian 7- to 14-year-olds from different socioeconomic backgrounds. We also examined

whether there were gender differences and age-related changes in children's and adolescents' wishes and their expression of gratitude to those who would grant them their wishes.

Gratitude

The study of gratitude has increasingly attracted scholars' attention in the field of psychology and human development. From our theoretical and developmental standpoint, an important aspect of gratitude is its interpersonal character, as well as the cognitive abilities involved in the expression of gratitude (such as understanding others' viewpoints and intentions), which is consistent with the notion that gratitude is influenced by both cognitive development and social values. From this perspective the focus is on gratitude toward other people and not toward other entities, such as nature or God, and it involves, whenever possible, reciprocity. This is aligned with the positions of McConnell (1993) and Piaget (1965/1995, 1954/1981) who argued that gratitude is a moral sentiment. Gratitude occurs when one person (the beneficiary) receives a freely given benefit (a gift, favor, help, etc.) from another (the benefactor), recognizes the intentionality of the benefactor, and freely wishes to repay with something of benefit to the benefactor—that is, taking into account the other's point of view (Gulliford, Morgan, & Kristjánsson, 2013; McConnell, 1993; McCullough, Kimeldorf, & Cohen, 2008; Tudge & Freitas, 2015).

Although Piaget (1932, 1965/1995) only briefly mentioned gratitude as a moral value, his ideas about moral development are clearly relevant to the understanding of how gratitude develops with age. He called attention to two poles of morality that develop with age—whereas a heteronomous moral orientation is linked to the idea of obedience and unilateral relations (such as in the unilateral respect a young child may feel toward a parent), the notion of an autonomous moral sense is linked to the idea of mutuality and cooperation (such as occurs in cases of mutual respect among peers). Castro, Rava, Hoefelmann, Pieta, and Freitas (2011), based on this Piagetian view of moral development, argued that only children who have developed an autonomous moral sense can be considered as feeling (and then expressing) gratitude as a moral virtue.

From Piaget's perspective, an autonomous moral sense is to some extent linked to cognitive maturation. Children's egocentrism (centering on the self and being unable to take others' perspectives into account) develops to a decentration of the self, and the ability to

coordinate different viewpoints becomes increasingly possible, enabling individuals to engage in more reciprocal relationships. Nelson et al. (2013) also pointed to some cognitive skills necessary to the understanding of gratitude, such as the recognition of emotions and the understanding of others' mental states. In a longitudinal study with young children, they found that both better understanding of emotions and of others' mental states at age 3 served as precursors to some understanding of gratitude at age 5. Therefore, a more developed form of gratitude is cognitively complex and requires specific social-cognitive abilities, such as the recognition of others' intentions and the ability to choose to repay autonomously (freely), aspects that develop throughout childhood and adolescence (Freitas O'Brien, Nelson, & Marcovitch, 2012; Nelson et al., 2013).

The idea that there are different levels of complexity in the expression of gratitude that develop as children age was first addressed empirically in the pioneering study conducted by Baumgarten-Tramer (1938) in Switzerland. She found three main (and increasingly complex) ways in which children and adolescents expressed gratitude: (a) verbal (e.g., "thank you"); (b) concrete (repayment with things important to themselves rather than to the benefactor); and (c) connective (taking the benefactor's wishes or needs into account). A fourth type of gratitude (finalistic, or, for example, being an excellent student in return for a scholarship to a good university) was rarely found and only among 14- and 15-year-olds. The frequencies of these different types of gratitude varied according to the age of the participants – younger children were more likely to show concrete gratitude, adolescents to express connective gratitude, and although Baumgarten-Tramer did not report any linear change with age in verbal gratitude, older adolescents were the most likely to express gratitude in this way. Replications of Baumgarten-Tramer's study in Brazil (Freitas, Pieta, & Tudge, 2011) and in the United States (Tudge, Freitas, Mokrova, Wang, & O'Brien, 2015) provided further support for her hypothesis that there are age-related variations in the way children and adolescents express gratitude.

If understanding others' intentionality, being able to take another's perspective into account, and autonomously wishing to repay are essential features of gratitude, connective gratitude is the most developed form of gratitude. The concrete form of gratitude (which may include the understanding of intentionality, but shows no evidence of taking the benefactor's needs or wishes into account – that is, it exhibits egocentrism)

is a less sophisticated type. Verbal gratitude, being something that parents often try to encourage even in their very young children (Freitas et al., 2011) may involve an understanding of intentionality and/or an appreciation of the benefactor's wishes or needs; however, it may indicate mere politeness, as when young children are taught to say "thank you" for a gift. Based on this idea and on previous evidence, in the present study we hypothesized an overall linear increase in the expression of connective gratitude, a decrease of concrete gratitude, and no change in verbal gratitude with age.

Furthermore, Piaget (1965/1995) stated that stages of development (including moral development) are not simply a manifestation of internal maturation, but also depend (among other factors) on the children's social environment. Thus, how children and adolescents express gratitude is also likely to be influenced by their sociocultural context. In this sense Kağıtçıbaşı's orthogonal treatment of cultural differences may also be relevant in understanding variations in the expression of gratitude by children and adolescents from different socioeconomic backgrounds. It is possible that groups that encourage people to think and act in a more self-directed way (autonomously), as well as encourage people to think and act taking into account the social group (related), will be more likely to encourage youth to express the connective form of gratitude. These assumptions are based on the idea that the more sophisticated type of gratitude (connective) requires both autonomous thinking and acting and a sense of connection with others. No study so far has analyzed how groups from different social classes may differently express gratitude. Given that middle-class groups in developing societies are more likely to value autonomy-relatedness, in the present study we hypothesized that students enrolled in private school (middle class) will be more likely to express connective gratitude than will children enrolled in public schools (working class).

Beyond that, personal characteristics, such as gender, may also be implicated in different forms of expression of gratitude. Some research has suggested that females are raised to be more "affiliative" than are males; affiliation is associated with a desire to establish and maintain close relationships (such as being supportive or wanting to please) (Bassen & Lamb, 2006; Strough & Berg, 2000). These affiliative characteristics may influence girls' expression of gratitude. However, results regarding gender differences in gratitude have been mixed. Gordon, Musher-Eizenman, Holub, and Dalrymple (2004) and Kashdan, Mishra, Breen, and

Froh (2009) suggested that North American females expressed greater levels of gratitude than did males in samples with school-aged children and college students respectively. On the other hand, Freitas and collaborators (2011, 2012) and others (Freitas, Tudge, Palhares, & Prestes et al., 2015; Tudge et al., 2015) found no gender differences in samples of Brazilian and North American children for any of the types of gratitude proposed by Baumgarten-Tramer. Nonetheless, in the present study we hypothesized that girls will express more connective gratitude than will boys.

Wishes

Baumgarten-Tramer (1938) asked children what their greatest wish was and what they would do for the person who granted them their wish. This approach is important because children's expression of gratitude is considered in the context of something that they actually wish for, towards someone who they think could grant them this wish. Even though Baumgarten-Tramer only analyzed the second question and reported the different types of gratitude discussed above, the analysis of wishes is also interesting, as these may vary according to individuals' age and gender, as well as by their cultural values. Although few scholars have focused on the links between what children most wish for and how they would respond to their benefactor, some researchers have addressed related topics, such as materialistic values and aspirations in life. Specifically, materialistic values are closely related to wishing for hedonistic things (the desire for something pleasurable or of value immediately, such as desires for toys, a car, or money), whereas non-material aspirations include wishes for one's own future such as success, happiness, academic achievement, etc., or wishes for others' success or happiness.

Regarding materialistic values, there is no agreement as to whether they increase or decrease as children age. Goldberg, Gorn, Peracchio, and Bamossy (2003) found no difference in materialism between younger (9 - to 11-year-olds) and older youths (12 - to 14-year-olds) whereas Achenreiner (1997) and Cardoso (2006) found a linear trend in materialism that increased with age in 7- to 16-year-old North American children and adolescents and 6 - to 11-year-old Portuguese children, respectively. Chaplin and John (2007) found a curvilinear development in materialism, increasing from middle childhood to early adolescence and then decreasing by late adolescence, although age differences were mediated by changes in self-esteem. Other scholars (Freitas

et al., 2015; Tudge et al., 2015), in replicating Baumgarten-Tramer's study, analyzed the changes in the type of wishes in 7- to 14-year-olds both in Brazil and in the U. S. These authors found that hedonistic wishes decreased with age whereas future-oriented wishes for the self (e.g., career success and academic achievement) and social-oriented wishes (e.g., family happiness and less community violence) increased with age. Based on these findings, we hypothesized a change of wish type with age from a focus on hedonism to a focus on self-oriented future wishes or social-oriented wishes.

Some differences in materialistic values and life aspirations have been found related to social class. For instance, Kasser et al. (1995) investigated self-acceptance, affiliation, community feeling, and financial success, using their Aspiration Index, and found that North American teens from less advantageous socioeconomic circumstances valued financial success significantly more than self-acceptance, affiliation, or community feeling. Likewise, Goldberg et al. (2003) found that North American youths with the highest levels of materialism tended to be drawn from families with lower incomes. Dittmar and Pepper's (1994) data also indicated that British working-class adolescents endorsed materialistic values more strongly than did middle-class adolescents. However, suggesting that social class may not have the same impact on values in all societies, Cardoso (2006) found, in a sample of 6- to 11-year old Portuguese children that materialistic values positively correlated with their parents' income. Based on the socioeconomic differences found in some of these studies, we hypothesized greater expression of hedonistic wishes among working-class students (those from public school) than among middle-class students (those from private school).

Some gender differences in materialistic values have also been found. Goldberg et al. (2003) and Kasser (2005) found that North American adolescent girls were less materialistic than same-aged boys. Cardoso (2006) found no gender differences in materialistic attitudes of Portuguese children. Freitas et al. (2015) and Tudge et al. (2015) found that girls expressed more social-oriented wishes than did boys, but no difference was found in relation to hedonistic and self-oriented wishes. These findings are also aligned with the idea that adolescent girls are more affiliative than are boys (Bassen & Lamb, 2006), and therefore would take the social group into account more than would boys. Based on that, we hypothesized in the present study a greater expression of social-oriented wishes among girls than boys.

Method

Participants

A total of 430 children and adolescents aged from 7 to 14 (mean age = 10.35, $SD = 2.09$) enrolled in schools from a city in southern Brazil participated in the study. More of the sample were female (249, 57.9%) than male (181, 42.1%). The sample was one of convenience drawn from two public schools (267, 62.1%) and two private schools (163, 37.9%). The participating classrooms were drawn at random in schools where there was more than one class for each grade (Pieta, 2009). In the present study, the types of school were used as marker of social-class differences, in which working-class students were represented by those from the public schools, whereas middle-class students were represented by those from private schools.

Procedures and Instruments

The following questions were posed in the classrooms to children and adolescents who returned the signed parental consent and who themselves agreed to participate: "What is your greatest wish?" and "What would you do for the person who granted you this wish?" (Baumgarten-Tramer, 1938). The answers to the first question were coded according to the categories previously used by Freitas et al. (2015) and Tudge et al. (2015): (a) hedonism, (b) self-oriented, (c) social-oriented wishes, and (d) other (missing, unreadable, etc., almost 3% of the responses). One small, but important, change to the method that had been used previously (Baumgarten-Tramer, 1938; Freitas et al., 2015; Tudge et al., 2015) was that participants were allowed to provide many wishes rather than just their "greatest" wish. The answers to the second question were coded using Baumgarten-Tramer's gratitude types: (a) verbal, (b) concrete, (c) connective, and (d) other (including finalistic, missing, don't know, and unreadable, approximately 11% of the responses). For reliability purposes, 20% of the responses to the first question and 25% of the responses to the second question were coded independently by two judges; kappas ranged from .78 to .88 for types of wishes and from .92 to 1 for types of gratitude.

Data Analysis

We used contingency-table analysis in SPSS (Version 20) to check whether there were significant differences in the types of wishes and gratitude between students from private and public schools, and between girls and boys. We also conducted post-hoc

analyses to assess possible interactions between gender and type of school and to further explore sub-categories of the wishes (such as monetary, material, career, and academic oriented wishes). Subsequently, we used Regression (Curve Estimation) to analyze whether there were linear patterns by age in the wish and gratitude types—that is, we wanted to know whether the expression of the different types of wishes and gratitude would linearly increase or decrease with age. In order to do that we first calculated the percentage of children expressing each type of wish and gratitude by age (across schools), then we used Curve Estimation to test whether a linear model would fit the data well (age was used as the predictor of the percentage of children expressing each type of wish and gratitude). Descriptive results for the frequency of wishes and gratitude types by school and age are found in Tables 1 and 2.

Results

Social-Class Differences in the Expression of Wishes and Gratitude

Type of Wishes. Contrary to our hypothesis, there were no significant differences in the expression of hedonistic wishes between students from private and public schools. However, although not hypothesized, we found that students from private schools expressed significantly more social-oriented wishes (e.g., "my family to be happy") than did those from public schools (35.6% vs. 19.9%, $\chi^2 [1] = 13.08$, $p = .000$). On the other hand, students from private schools expressed significantly fewer self-oriented wishes (e.g., "to have success in life" and "to be a soccer player") than did those in public school (62.6% vs. 75.3%, $\chi^2 [1] = 7.85$, $p = .004$) (Figure 1). We conducted a post-hoc analysis of the sub-categories of wishes in order to understand the nuances in the different types of wishes expressed by students from public and private schools. We found that students from public schools had more career ambition than did those from private schools (40% vs. 25.8%), and although students from the different types of school did not differ regarding hedonistic wishes, overall, students from public schools were more likely to wish for money than were those from private schools (18% vs. 8%).

Types of Gratitude. There were no significant differences between public and private school students in relation to verbal and concrete gratitude. As hypothesized, students from public and private school differed

Table 1
Response Frequency (and Percentage of Children) for Types of Wishes, by Age and School

Age	Public School				Private School				N (Total)
	HED	SELF	SOCIAL	N	HED	SELF	SOCIAL	N	
7	11 (57.9)	10 (52.6)	3 (15.8)	19	17 (73.9)	9 (39.1)	2 (8.7)	23	42 (9.8)
8	18 (48.6)	21 (56.8)	2 (5.4)	37	14 (66.7)	8 (38.1)	5 (23.8)	21	58 (13.5)
9	27 (71.1)	17 (44.7)	9 (23.7)	38	15 (62.5)	12 (50)	8 (33.3)	24	62 (14.4)
10	22 (66.1)	30 (83.3)	6 (16.7)	36	16 (50)	22 (68.8)	16 (50)	32	68 (15.8)
11	17 (51.5)	28 (84.8)	7 (21.2)	33	13 (52)	15 (60)	11 (44)	25	58 (13.5)
12	30 (75)	32 (80)	10 (25.0)	40	9 (50)	16 (88.9)	6 (33.3)	18	58 (13.5)
13	22 (59.4)	36 (97.3)	6 (16.2)	37	13 (76.5)	17 (100)	8 (47.1)	17	54 (12.6)
14	17 (63)	27 (100)	10 (37.0)	27	0 (0)	3 (100)	2 (66.7)	3	30 (7)
Total	164 (61.4)	201 (75.3)	53 (19.9)	267	97 (59.5)	102 (62.6)	58 (35.6)	163	430 (100)

Note. HED = Hedonism; SELF = Self-oriented wishes; SOCIAL = Social-oriented wishes.

Table 2
Response Frequency (and Percentage of Children) for Types of Gratitude, by Age and School

Age	Public School				Private School				N (Total)
	VB	CC	CV	N	VB	CC	CV	N	
7	5 (26.3)	12 (63.2)	3 (15.8)	19	8 (34.8)	11 (47.8)	3 (13)	23	42 (9.8)
8	17 (45.9)	18 (48.7)	10 (27)	37	5 (23.8)	10 (47.6)	8 (38.1)	21	58 (13.5)
9	18 (47.4)	14 (36.8)	12 (31.6)	38	9 (37.5)	9 (37.5)	13 (54.2)	24	62 (14.4)
10	20 (55.6)	8 (22.2)	17 (47.2)	36	18 (56.3)	8 (25)	12 (37.5)	32	68 (15.8)
11	18 (54.5)	6 (18.2)	15 (45.5)	33	12 (48)	4 (16)	19 (76)	25	58 (13.5)
12	26 (65)	6 (15)	10 (25)	40	15 (83.3)	1 (5.6)	10 (55.6)	18	58 (13.5)
13	13 (35.1)	6 (16.2)	17 (45.9)	37	10 (58.8)	3 (17.6)	12 (70.6)	17	54 (12.6)
14	20 (74.1)	2 (7.4)	12 (44.5)	27	2 (66.7)	0 (0)	1 (33.3)	3	30 (7)
Total	137 (51.3)	72 (27)	96 (36)	267	79 (48.5)	46 (28.2)	78 (47.9)	163	430 (100)

Note. VB = Verbal Gratitude; CC = Concrete Gratitude; CV = Connective Gratitude

significantly in the expression of connective gratitude ($\chi^2 [1] = 5.95, p = .01$), with 47.9% of the students from private school expressing connective gratitude compared with 36% of students from public schools (Figure 2).

Gender Differences in the Expression of Wishes and Gratitude

Types of Wishes. Contrary to our hypothesis, there were no significant differences between boys and girls in relation to social-oriented wishes. However, and unexpectedly, girls provided significantly more

self-oriented wishes than did boys ($\chi^2 [1] = 3.35, p = .043$; 73.9% of girls compared with 64.8% of boys). As with the analysis of types of schools, we conducted a post-hoc analysis of the sub-categories of wishes in order to understand the nuances of these gender differences. Overall, we found that girls were more likely to wish for academic achievement than were boys (26.9% vs. 14.9%), but boys and girls did not differ in their career ambitions. When gender differences were analyzed separately for public and private schools, the gender difference in self-oriented wishes was found only for students in public schools ($\chi^2 [1] = 10.03, p$

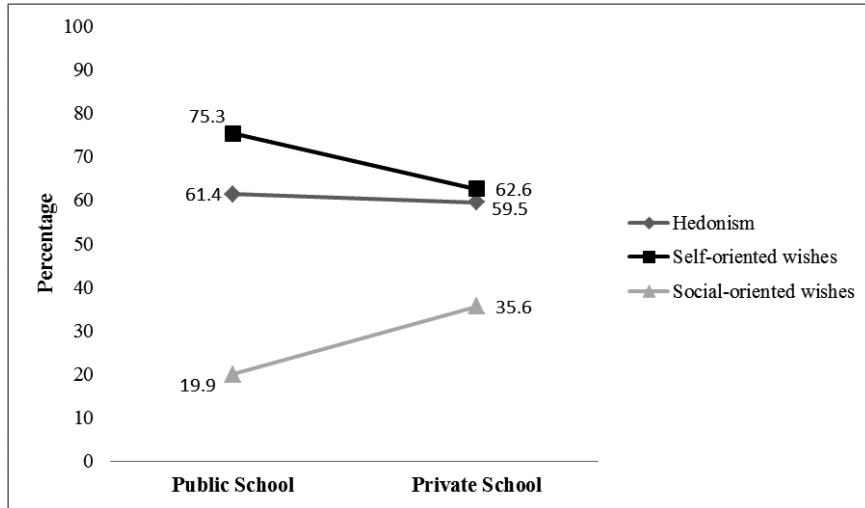


Figure 1. The percentages of children at each type of school expressing each type of wish.

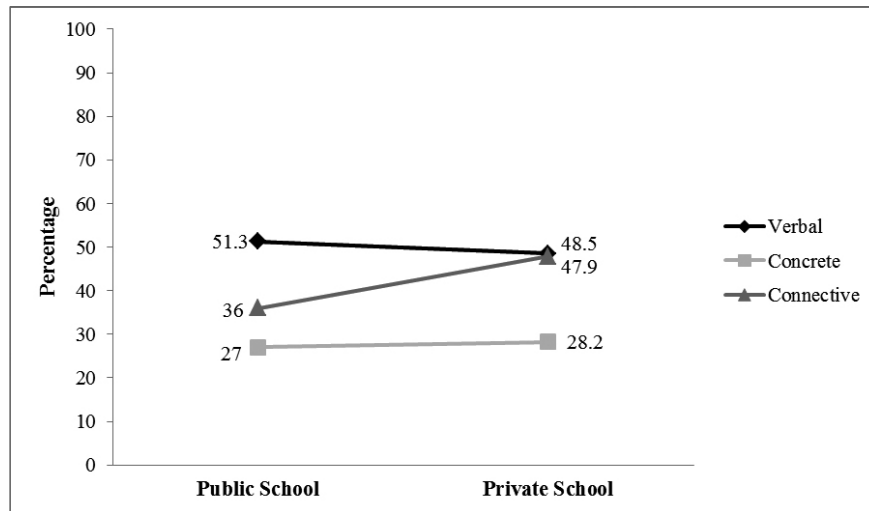


Figure 2. The percentages of children at each type of school expressing each type of gratitude.

= .001), with 82.7% of girls reporting self-oriented wishes compared with 65.8% of boys. Also, only for public school students, boys were more likely to wish for money (23.1% vs. 14%) and material things (47% vs. 34.7%) than were girls.

Types of Gratitude. As expected, there were no significant differences between the expression of connective and concrete gratitude between girls and boys. Nonetheless, and unexpectedly, girls expressed more verbal gratitude than did boys ($\chi^2 [1] = 5.42, p = .013$; 55% of girls compared to 43.6% of boys). However, this difference was only significant for students in public schools ($\chi^2 [1] = 4.97, p = .018$); 57.3% vs. 43.6%.

Age-related Changes in Wishes and Gratitude

The results of the Curve Estimation partially supported our hypotheses. We found a linear increase with age in self-oriented wishes ($\beta = .964, p = .000$) and social-oriented wishes ($\beta = .797, p = .018$). Contrary to our hypothesis, however, hedonistic wishes did not decrease significantly with age ($\beta = -.123, p = .771$). As hypothesized there was a significant linear decrease in concrete gratitude ($\beta = -.953, p = .000$) and connective gratitude tended marginally to increase with age ($\beta = .668, p = .07$). However, although not hypothesized, verbal gratitude increased significantly with age ($\beta = .764, p = .027$).

Discussion

Although a number of researchers have examined the development of gratitude in both the United States and Brazil, the present study makes a significant contribution by considering both social class and gender differences, as well as variations with age, in the expression of wishes and gratitude. This is particularly relevant to Kağıtçıbaşı's (2007) claim that one should find more evidence of autonomy-relatedness in the children of relatively well-educated (i.e., middle-class) parents but more heteronomy-relatedness among the children of less educated working-class parents. Considering that gratitude requires both autonomy and relatedness, we found that middle-class students expressed more connective gratitude than did their working-class counterparts. Admittedly, this evidence is only indirect support for Kağıtçıbaşı's position and future research on the expression of gratitude would do well to include a measure designed to assess autonomy and relatedness directly. We also found that students from private schools expressed significantly more social-oriented wishes whereas students from public schools expressed significantly more self-oriented wishes. These findings do not support Kağıtçıbaşı's position, as one might have expected that greater autonomy would be linked with more self-oriented than social-oriented wishes.

It may be the case, however, that some social factors in the Brazilian context could explain these findings. One possibility for the latter finding is that working-class youth may need to think of and to depend more on their own achievements for their future well-being than their middle-class counterparts with more financial resources. Further support for this idea came from our analysis of the sub-categories of self-oriented wishes, which indicated that public school students had more career goals than did those from private schools. These findings are in accord with studies about youths' future perspectives in Brazil, which demonstrate that students from public schools are more likely to expect an immediate insertion into the labor market after school (which is related to career oriented wishes) (Ribeiro, 2003). This is a reflection of the Brazilian reality, in which higher education is more accessible to students from private schools, whereas students from lower socioeconomic status cannot equally compete for a place at universities, as they do not have the money to invest in basic education (Oliveira, Pinto, & Souza, 2003).

Unlike earlier findings that girls expressed more social-oriented wishes than did boys (Freitas et al.,

2015; Tudge et al., 2015), in this sample girls from public schools expressed significantly more self-oriented wishes than did boys. Post-hoc analyses showed that girls were more likely than boys to wish for academic achievement in both types of school, which is contrary to findings of no gender differences in academic expectations in Brazil (Oliveira et al., 2003). When examining the sub-categories of hedonistic wishes we found that, in public schools at least, boys were more likely to wish for money and material things than were girls; this is in accord with previous research in the United States that suggested that boys are more materialistic than are girls (Goldberg et al., 2003; Kasser, 2005). Finally, regarding gender differences in the expression of gratitude, the findings of this study suggest that public school girls expressed somewhat more verbal gratitude than did their male counterparts, a finding in keeping with those who suggest that females may be more likely to say "thank you" than are males (Becker & Smenner, 1986; Gordon et al., 2004; Kashdan et al., 2009). It is interesting that some gender differences were more prominent among students from public schools in comparison to students from private schools. This may be related to a greater gender stereotyping among the former.

Regarding age-related changes in the expression of wishes, the results found here were partially aligned to previous findings using a similar methodology in both the United States (Tudge et al., 2015) and Brazil (Freitas et al., 2015). As expected, we found a linear increase with age in self- and social-oriented wishes. However, a linear decrease in hedonistic wishes with age was not replicated in the present study. This difference may be due the fact that these participants were allowed to report as many wishes as they wanted rather than their greatest wish (contrary to what was done in the other studies using a similar methodology). This fact is confirmed by a high percentage (67.9%) of youth who reported more than one type of wish, which may explain the high number of hedonistic wishes expressed by all ages. An alternate explanation for these findings would be the fact that hedonism seems to be growing in Brazilian society (O'Dougherty, 2002), including among urban adolescents (Martins, Trindade, & Almeida, 2003). In general, these findings on age-related changes of types of wishes showed an increased propensity with age to think about the future (self-oriented wishes) as well as to think of others' well-being (social-oriented wishes).

Our findings regarding age-related changes in the expression of gratitude partially support previous

results (Baumgarten-Tramer, 1938; Freitas et al., 2015; Tudge et al., 2015), suggesting that the frequency in the expression of both concrete gratitude and the most sophisticated type of gratitude (connective gratitude) is related to age, although only marginally significant ($p < .07$) in the latter case. Contrary to previous findings, however, verbal gratitude increased significantly with age. Baumgarten-Tramer (1938) stated that although this type of gratitude was “equally frequent [between 30% and 48%] with children of the various ages” (p. 59), 72% of her oldest (15-year-old) participants expressed it. If she had statistically analyzed her data she might have found a significant increase of verbal gratitude by age.

Conclusion and Limitations

The present study contributes greatly, for this is the first study to address how moral virtues (gratitude) and children's wishes are in some ways similar but also vary in different socioeconomic and gender groups within a single Brazilian city. We explored these issues by showing that youth from well educated families seemed indeed to be more autonomy-related, as they expressed more connective gratitude and more social-oriented wishes. On the other hand, participants from less advantageous socioeconomic backgrounds showed more self-oriented wishes especially related to career ambitions. This finding is relevant taking into consideration the local reality, in which social-class differences are maintained by imposing barriers to lower socioeconomic-status children accessing high quality basic education. These barriers, in turn, impact their life expectations and their moral values.

This study also contributes to knowledge about the developmental aspects of gratitude. As shown by earlier research (Baumgarten-Tramer, 1938; Freitas et al., 2015; Tudge et al., 2015), the expression of different types of gratitude varies with age. Wishes regarding one's own future, wishes for others' well-being, and gratitude of the most sophisticated type require not only cognitive development (at a minimum having a theory of mind and being able to take others' perspectives into account) but also encouragement to feel and express gratitude as we have defined it. Thus, the findings from this study support the idea that gratitude and wish types involve the development of cognitive aspects, but it is also influenced by the social context in which children live, such as their social class.

Although the findings presented here contribute greatly to the comprehension of the differences and similarities in the expression of gratitude and wishes in different contexts, as well as to support findings indicating age-related changes in the expression of gratitude and types of wishes, this study has some limitations. First, the data here were cross-sectional and thus only allow inferences about the development of gratitude and wishes orientation. Future research should analyze the changes in types of gratitude and wishes longitudinally in order to better understand how they develop over time. Moreover, social class was measured based only on the different types of schools, which may confound the effect of educational differences with social-class differences. Thus, the inclusion of other variables indicative of socioeconomic status, such as family income and parents' education and occupation may help to better understand the ways in which different contexts and values impact the expression of gratitude and wish types. Moreover, autonomy-relatedness was not directly assessed and was used only as a tool to guide our ideas and analyses. We recommend that future research into the development of gratitude include direct measures of these values in order to understand in which ways values impact the expression of gratitude and wishes. Finally, the present study's sample was drawn from just one city and one region of Brazil, and we would therefore not wish to generalize our findings to other regions of the country.

References

- Achenreiner, G. B. (1997). Materialistic values and susceptibility to influence in children. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 24, 82-88. Retrieved from www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/display.asp?id=8016
- Bassen, C. R., & Lamb, M. E. (2006). Gender differences in adolescents' self-concepts of assertion and affiliation. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 3(1), 71-94. doi: 10.1080/17405620500368212
- Baumgarten-Tramer, F. (1938). “Gratefulness” in children and young people. *The Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 53, 53-66. doi: 10.1080/08856559.1938.10533797
- Becker, J. A., & Smenner, P. C. (1986). The spontaneous use of *thank you* by preschoolers as a function of sex, socioeconomic status, and listener status. *Language in Society*, 15, 537-546. doi: 10.1017/S0047404500012008

- Cardoso, A. (2006). As atitudes materialistas das crianças e os valores procurados no vestuário. *Revista da Faculdade de Ciências Humanas e Sociais*, 3, 63-77. Retrieved from <http://bdigital.ufp.pt/bitstream/10284/591/1/63-77FCHS2006-8.pdf>
- Castro, F. M. P., Rava, P. G. S., Hoefelmann, T. B., Pieta, M. A. M., & Freitas, L. B. L. (2011). Deve-se retribuir? Gratidão e dívida simbólica na infância. *Estudos de Psicologia*, 16(1), 75-82. Retrieved from <http://www.scielo.br/pdf/epsic/v16n1/a10v16n1.pdf>
- Chaplin, L. N., & John, D. R. (2007). Growing up in a material world: Age differences in materialism in children and adolescents. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34(4), 480-493. doi: 10.1086/518546
- Dittmar, H., & Pepper, L. (1994). To have is to be: Materialism and person perception in working-class and middle-class British adolescents. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 15, 233-251. doi:10.1016/0167-4870(94)90002-7
- Freitas, L. B. L., O'Brien, M., Nelson, J. A., & Marcovitch, S. (2012). A compreensão da gratidão e teoria da mente em crianças de 5 anos. *Psicologia: Reflexão e Crítica*, 25, 330-338. doi: 10.1590/S0102-79722012000200015
- Freitas, L. B. L., Pieta, M. A. M., & Tudge, J. R. H. (2011). Beyond politeness: The expression of gratitude in children and adolescents. *Psicologia: Reflexão e Crítica*, 24(4), 757-764. doi: 10.1590/S0102-79722011000400016
- Freitas, L. B. L., Tudge, J. R. H., Palhares, F., & Prestes, A. C. (2016). Relações entre desenvolvimento da gratidão e construção de valores em jovens. *Psicologia, Revista da Universidade de São Francisco*, 21, 13-24. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/1413-82712016210102>
- Goldberg, M. E., Gorn, G. J., Peracchio, L. A., & Bamossy, G. (2003). Understanding materialism among youth. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 13(3), 278-288. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1480217>
- Gordon, A. K., Musher-Eizenman, D. R., Holub, S. C., & Dalrymple, J. (2004). What are children thankful for? An archival analysis of gratitude before and after the attacks of September 11. *Applied Developmental Psychology*, 25, 541-553. doi:10.1016/j.appdev.2004.08.004
- Gulliford, L., Morgan, B., & Kristjánsson, K. (2013). Recent work on the concept of gratitude in philosophy and psychology. *Journal of Value Inquiry*, 47(3), 285-317. doi: 10.1007/s10790-013-9387-8
- Guzzo, R. S. L., & Filho, A. E. (2005). Desigualdade social e sistema educacional brasileiro: A urgência da educação emancipadora. *Escritos sobre Educação*, 4(2), 39-48. Retrieved from http://pepsic.bvsalud.org/scielo.php?pid=S1677-98432005000200005&script=sci_arttext
- Kağitçibaşı, C. (2007). *Family, self, and human development across cultures: Theory and applications*. New York: Psychology Press.
- Kağitçibaşı, C., & Ataca, B. (2005). Value of children and family change: A three-decade portrait from Turkey. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 54(3), 317-337. doi: 10.1111/j.1464-0597.2005.00213.x
- Kashdan, T. B., Mishra, A., Breen, W. E., & Froh, J. J. (2009). Gender differences in gratitude: Examining appraisals, narratives, the willingness to express emotions, and changes in psychological needs. *Journal of Personality*, 77(3), 691-730. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-6494.2009.00562.x
- Kasser, T. (2005). Frugality, generosity, and materialism in children and adolescents: In K. A. Moore & L. H. Lippman (Eds.), *What do children need to flourish? Conceptualizing and measuring indicators of positive development* (pp. 357-373). New York: Kluwer/Plenum.
- Kasser, T., Ryan, R. M., Zax, M., & Sameroff, A. J. (1995). The relations of maternal and social environments to late adolescents' materialistic and prosocial values. *Developmental Psychology*, 31(6), 907-914. doi: 10.1037/0012-1649.32.6.1073
- Kristjánsson, K. (2013). An Aristotelian virtue of gratitude. *Topoi*. doi: 10.1007/s11245-013-9213-8.
- Martins, P. O., Trindade, Z. A., & Almeida, A. M. O. (2003). O ter e o ser: Representações sociais da adolescência entre adolescentes de inserção urbana e rural. *Psicologia Reflexão e Crítica*, 16(3), doi: 10.1590/S0102-79722003000300014
- McConnell, T. (1993). *Gratitude*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- McCullough, M. E., Kimeldorf, M. B., & Cohen, A. D. (2008). An adaptation for altruism: The social causes, social effects, and social evolution of

- gratitude. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 17, 281-285. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8721.2008.00590.x
- Nelson, J. A., Freitas, L. B. L., O'Brien, M., Calkins, S. D., Leerkes, E. M., & Marcovitch, S. (2013). Pre-school-aged children's understanding of gratitude: Relations with emotion and mental state knowledge. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 31, 42-56. doi: 10.1111/j.2044-835X.2012.02077.x
- O'Dougherty, M. (2002). *Consumption intensified: The politics of middle-class daily life in Brazil*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Oliveira, M. C. S. L., Pinto, R. G., & Souza, A. S. (2003). Perspectivas de futuros entre adolescentes: Universidade, trabalho e relacionamentos na transição para a vida adulta. *Temas em Psicologia*, 11, 16-27. Retrieved from http://pepsic.bvsalud.org/scielo.php?pid=S1413-389X2003000100003&script=sci_arttext
- Piaget, J. (1932). *The moral judgment of the child*. New York: Harcourt Brace.
- Piaget, J. (1981). *Intelligence and affectivity: Their relationship during child development*. Palo Alto: Annual Reviews (Original published in 1954).
- Piaget, J. (1995). *Sociological studies*. Genève: Droz. (Original published in 1965).
- Pieta, M. A. M. (2009). *A expressão do sentimento de gratidão: Um estudo com crianças e adolescentes escolares de Porto Alegre* (Unpublished master thesis). Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre.
- Ribeiro, M. A. (2003). Demandas em orientação profissional: Um estudo exploratório em escolas públicas. *Revista Brasileira de Orientação Profissional*, 4, 141-151. Retrieved from http://pepsic.bvsalud.org/scielo.php?pid=S1679-33902003000100012&script=sci_arttext
- Strough, J., & Berg, C. A. (2000). Goals as a mediator of gender differences in high-affiliation dyadic conversations. *Developmental Psychology*, 36(1), 117-125. doi: 10.1037//C012-1649.36JJ17
- Tudge, J. R. H. (2008). *The everyday lives of young children: Culture, class, and child rearing in diverse societies*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Tudge, J. R. H., & Freitas, L. B. L. (2015, January). *The development of the virtue of gratitude in different societies*. Presented at the Varieties of Virtue Ethics Conference, Oriel College, Oxford. Retrieved from <http://cds.web.unc.edu/files/2015/02/Paper-Tudge-Freitas-11-29-2014.pdf>
- Tudge, J. R. H., Freitas, L. B. L., Mokrova, I. L., Wang, Y. C., & O'Brien, M. (2015). The expression of gratitude and materialism in youth. *Paidéia*, 25(62), 281-288. doi:10.1590/1982-43272562201501
- Vargas, M. L. F. (2009). Estudos sobre o funcionamento do sistema de ensino: Da reprodução das desigualdades sociais ao efeito escola. *Cadernos de Educação*, 32, 105-122. Retrieved from <http://periodicos.ufpel.edu.br/ojs2/index.php/caduc/article/viewFile/1682/1563>
- Zago, N. (2006). Do acesso à permanência no ensino superior: Percursos de estudantes universitários de camadas populares. *Revista Brasileira de Educação*, 11(32), 226-337. doi: 10.1590/S1413-24782006000200003

Recebido 15/08/2015
 Reformulado 28/10/2015
 Aceito 08/10/2015

Nota dos autores:

Elisa A. Merçon-Vargas é mestre em Psicologia pela Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo (UFES), Brasil, atualmente é estudante PhD na *University of North Carolina at Greensboro* (UNCG), Estados Unidos e membro do grupo *More Than Thank You: Developing Gratitude*.

E-mail: eavargas@uncg.edu

Maria Adélia M. Pieta é mestre e PhD pela Universidade Federal Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), Brasil, e atualmente é pesquisadora de pós-doutorado no Programa de Pós-Graduação em Psicologia da UFRGS.

E-mail: mampieta@gmail.com

Lia Beatriz de Lucca Freitas é professora associada do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Psicologia pela Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), Brasil, onde coordena o LAPEGE – Laboratório de Psychologia e Genética Epistemologia, e é membro do grupo *More Than Thank You: Developing Gratitude*.

E-mail: lblf@ufrgs.br

Jonathan R. H. Tudge é professor titular na *University of North Carolina at Greensboro* (UNCG), Estados Unidos, onde coordena o grupo de pesquisa *More Than Thank You: Developing Gratitude*, e professor colaborador do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Psicologia da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), Brasil.

E-mail: jrtudge@uncg.edu

Contato com os autores:

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Department of Human Development and Family Studies
248 Stone Building, Greensboro, NC 27412
Telefone: +1 (336)500-2192