God representation, Self Representation, and Educational experience among University Students in Rio de Janeiro*

Representaciones de Dios, auto-representación y experiencia educacional entre estudiantes universitarios en Rio de Janeiro.

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at verifying relations between God representations (GR), self representations (SR), and learning educational experience (LEE) among graduate students in Rio de Janeiro. We studied GR as beliefs stressing God's power over humans (GR1); spiritual power (GR2); providence of a better human life (GR3); mutual dependence between God and humans (GR4); and disbelief of its existence (GR5). We treated SR as composed by individual-self, interpersonal-self and collective-self. The LEE was studied as events produced mainly because of an action of the student's own learning, or as events caused mainly by teaching action over students, like institution/professor/curricula. We used closed/open questions to research among Economy (n=82) and Psychology (n=107) students. Both GR and SR interfered mutually but emancipatory SR's are less linked to GR, except for GR5. Self assertion, assertive interpersonal relation and negative interpersonal relation correlated negatively with LEE.
Keywords
religion belief/practice; self representation; university student; psycho-cultural approach

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RESUMEN

En este estudio procuramos verificar relaciones entre representaciones de Dios (RD), auto-representaciones (AR), y experiencia educacional (LEE) entre estudiantes universitarios en Rio de Janeiro. Estudiamos representaciones de Dios enfatizando el poder de Dios sobre los humanos (RD1); poderes espirituales (RD2); el proveer una mejor vida humana (RD3); dependencia mutua entre Dios y los humanos (RD4); y la no creencia en su existencia (RD5). Tratamos las AR como compuestas por el yo-individual, el yo-interpersonal y el yo-colectivo. La LEE fue estudiada como eventos producidos sobre todo, por una acción de aprendizaje del/a propio/a estudiante o como eventos causados por acción de la enseñanza sobre el estudiante, como institución/profesor/curriculum. Usamos cuestiones cerradas/abiertas para investigar estudiantes de Economía (n=82) y Psicología (n=107). Tanto RD como AR interfirieron mutuamente, pero las AR emancipatorias tendieron a estar menos ligadas a RD, con excepción de RD5. La auto-afirmación, auto-afirmación interpersonal y la relación interpersonal negativa tendieron a correlacionar relacionar negativamente con LEE.
Palabras clave
creencia/práctica religiosa; auto-representación; estudiante universitario; abordaje psicocultural

Introduction

The number of university students has increased in many countries. Their first challenge is to appropriate knowledge outside the common sense and sometimes even to reconstruct or to abandon their previous shared knowledge like religion among other tendencies. It is usual to take it for granted without considering the effects on educational experience. Thus educational experience at university becomes a more unilateral than multilateral event, in the sense that students as learners tend to put aside their previous own thoughts/practices, among other unfolding events. To take an example, the individual practice of studying can become something painful for someone more used to collective studying habits. Further, beliefs originated from religion, acting as guides for action may implicate in educational attitudes focusing more or less on learning or/and teaching action. In a country where some religious beliefs are quite widespread the importance of sociocultural rupture with family, for instance, may have an effect over students, even when they are working by themselves to achieve to a certain extent a cultural mutation. In this sense, the inclusion in a network could have an impact as support or as source of references to be evaluated and adopted regarding eventual confrontation between academic information and common sense.

Religion is a very rich subjective and practical experience, in terms of oneself and with others, including sacred entities (Argyle & Beit-Hallahmi, 1975; Fuller, 1994). More recently, authors have outlined God´s characteristics like to be authoritarian or benevolent (Johnson, Okun, & Cohen, 2014), meanwhile other authors focused on epistemological features of conceptions of God, like to be at the same time, real and fictitious, and composing "theories of mind" (Luhrmann, 2012). In addition, the impact of God´s concept over daily life was studied comparing results of processing memory stories of avoiding harm supposed to be due to God´s intervention or luck, showed its relation with religious identification (Gysman & Hudson, 2012). Other line of research was pointed out by Setran (2012), who proposed to establish the interpenetration of

liberal Protestantism and progressive educational theories and techniques. In that sense, most of religions in Brazil have a central entity called God, which could be considered a common denominator between them. In fact, it is very difficult to find research in Brazil to evaluate the impact of religious beliefs on education. Anyway, in the last years the amount of people without religion has increased reaching around 7,4% in the 2000 National Census (Jacob, Hees, Waniez, & Brustlein, 2003), but what has been more current in the history of this country is people's shifting among religions, eventually creating new ones (Pereira de Queirós, 1968). But because Catholicism had been the official religion for many centuries, we would say that this influence is the strongest one. So even among Evangelicals who today amount to over 25% of the religious people, we can find Catholicism's influence in family relations (Souza Filho, 2000). But Evangelicals mainly use to stress religious practices, attending to church or using more frequently religious discourse (Souza Filho, 2000, 2009).

So after extensive qualitative research about GR (Souza Filho, 2000, 2009), we decided to create "scenarios", or statements involving God, religious practices, believers and their lives, and non believers, which could be considered artificial at first glance. Yet it can be useful not for the study of religious psychology in itself (Paiva, 2000; Lindeman, Pyysiäinen, & Saariluoma, 2002), but to understand its impact over educational experiences. So we formulated four types of beliefs about God as follows: 1) God is an absolute, super-powerful entity; 2) God benefits individuals spiritually; 3) God benefits individuals providing the chance to have a better life; 4) God and individuals are interdependent to exists; but we added a last statement which states the non existence of God in itself, 5) God is a belief created and maintained by men.

Some authors have described the phenomenon of self-presentation (Baumeister, 1998, 1999; Jones, Rhodewalt, Berglas, & Skelton, 1981; Leary, Tchividjian, & Kraxberger, 1994; Owens, 2003; Sedikides & Gregg, 2003; Stryker, 1980), as Goffman (1959) in his book on "the presentation of self in everyday life". For him this could

be considered a self image construction in order to comply with social expectancies and to conform to social norms. In this sense, Beauvois and Dubois (1988) were able to show how "internality" was rather a social norm adopted by students to please teachers, confirming Goffman's theoretical proposal. Many authors reproduced this stress on social conformity to study social interaction until the sixties when innovative social movements emerged. In fact this trend started at the beginning of the twentieth century in many fields of human activities, perhaps overshadowed by the long period of the so called Cold War. Since then it had been necessary to study interaction also as a search for autonomy, differentiation and delimitation of boundaries among individuals and groups. In this direction heads the work (Moscovici, 1976; Moscovici & Doise, 1992) on minority influence in which the importance of social conflict creation for society change was underscored. Or the work of Wicklund & Gollwitzer (1982) who described people as trying to preserve social identity to assert political and religious ideas before an audience that does not share them. It would happen in public situations like at university or other social environments throughout the action of regular individuals and groups without power or external signs of previous social recognition. To face such challenge of modern times in Westerns societies, diffusion of beliefs about the individuals' capacity to change their destiny was undertaken. Therefore, some authors (Farr, 1992) have postulated the existence of a collective norm ("hegemonic representation", Moscovici, 1988) about individualism. In many countries this is sought after mainly in terms of self-image construction. For instance, the possession of a diploma, cultural consumption, and so on (Bourdieu, 1984), or even displaying external images through the use of material objects like cellular phone or prestigious label clothing (Almeida & Tracy, 2003). Apparently, the legitimacy of the individual as an autonomous, differentiated and delimitated entity would be restricted to some dimensions of the self mainly available for the middle classes. Meanwhile, others groups would

be able to appear socially according to collective traits, frequently negatively regarded in society. In another direction, Gergen (1992) described the phenomenon of the "saturated self" when the self representation looses consistency and endurance in contemporary life, taking for granted that individual and social self were both lived as something unified and stable before.

For us what is more frequently found nowadays is the increasing importance of a self-reflexion phenomenon. Self-reflexion allows people to become aware of social conventions and, consequently, brings them to choose and to reconstruct them. So most traditional social identifications like belonging to an old religion or ethnic group give place to a more dynamic and free relation with it. Therefore, we may postulate self-representations as social-cultural constructs, including also universal psychological dimensions, like physical and concept possibilities (Schlicht et al, 2009). More recently, studies on self-representations have increased in numbers, mainly enhancing socio-cultural aspects, such as women´s own images in art works in the 20th century (Kuspit, 2012); self-portraits of Gypsies in photos (Tremlett, 2013); Mosuo local people describing their own community and tourism destinations through autobiographic texts and weblogs (Wang & Morais, 2014); self-representation in digital culture, which according to the reviewer highlight people´s "ordinariness". In addition, one interesting work was made to examine the role of self-representations, positive relationships with teachers in academic performance, among high school Native and European Americans (Fryberg, Covarrubias & Burack, 2013). They found that academic performance was positively associated with interdependent self and trust in teachers among Native Americans. Whereas for European Americans was positively related to both dependent and interdependent selves, as well as trust in teachers was not associated with academic performance. For the author cultural congruence between self-representations and trust in teachers is predictive for academic performance.

In order to go deeper into self representations (SR), an extensive qualitative research was previously undertaken (Souza Filho, 2013b). The theo-

retical descriptive proposal adopted here for SR is a three dimensional construct axed on the individual-self, the interpersonal-self and the societal-self.

The individual self would be composed by contents like self assertion, when individuals presented themselves drawing upon personality traits considered something positive or/and neutral ("calm"; "someone with many objectives and able to accomplish them"; "beautiful"; "I am what I am"), for which someone does not need another individual to actualize them; self criticism, from positive and negative personality traits at the same time, as taking stock of himself/herself ("with faults and qualities"); self depreciation, when trying to underscore the negative traits of himself/herself ("anxious"; "ugly"; "complicated");

The interpersonal self would be composed, in turn, by assertive interpersonal relation, when introducing himself/herself in situations to assert his/her criteria/positions regarding those from the other people ("I am not concerned about what other people say."; "I have my own point of view and I do not admit to be contradicted."; "I like to make everything by myself."); positive interpersonal relation, when described himself/herself living a common situation with other people without conflict or feeling something negative, ("someone who is devoted to my family"; "a playful fellow"); negative interpersonal relation, when described himself/herself living a situation of interaction in which he/she tries in a certain way to boycott/undo it without the explicit purpose of self promotion or to assert something belonging to himself/herself or someone else ("bad humoured."; "annoying").

Finally, the collective self would be composed by social categorization, when described himself/herself using demographic categories, in general those employed by official state agencies ("I am a woman"; "I am an adolescent of the secondary school."); group identity, describing himself/herself as been part of a particular group or special traits, in general chosen for a rational purpose ("blond, blue eyes"; "I am a daughter of Jesus."); moral value, when describing himself/herself to follow/respect moral general principles ("I hate injustice"; "I am a truthful person"; "humble."); social deviance, when

introduced himself/herself throughout transgressions/ruptures of general social norms ("I am crazy."; "I am not normal.").

Thus, self representation and representation of God seem to be social constructs which offer us analytical tools to understand certain complex processes of learning and teaching and, further, could allow us to evaluate the way students interact with educational environments. For us, what it is at stake is the possibility of emergence of free thought and action at university, for so it is necessary to start acting from an early stage in an assertive way with oneself and with others. Further, we think that educational autonomy is associated to a starting point of self reflexion, including self criticism, which might happen first of all when it is considered legitimate to think about ourselves as individuals. And also when the social dimension "in general" is considered hierarchically as coming after, which includes the interpersonal interactions. After the consolidation (or not) of the individual self, would arrive the moment to work the other components of the self in order to rethink and reconstruct social life. Nevertheless, we consider that all the mentioned three parts of the self are experienced together. For doing so, some sociocultural reflexions and perhaps ruptures or deep transformations would be necessary (Touraine & Khosrokhavar, 2004). Most of our individual being is received almost passively and ready made from the previous generations without criticism. That is why we have highlighted for example lack of belief in god, because it is known to be a break of a social norm in Brazil. After a very comprehensive study of arguments in history, the social psychologist Michael Billig (1987) and collaborators (1988) proposed that each society in any moment maintained specific ideological dilemmas, like the following pairs: authority versus subordinate, dominant and dominated, good and bad boy/girl and so on. For a long period some societies have organized themselves around the dilemma individual versus society. But indeed modern societies got at the same time multiple axis of ideological debate. In Brazil, as

in many other countries, religion has become an important system of beliefs which deserves to be more studied together with self representations and educational experience.

So the main objective of this study was to analyse social constructions on God representations in order to verify the impact on self representations, relevant educational experiences and traineeship experiences.

Method

Participants

They were undergraduate students of Economy (n=82) and Psychology (n=107) at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. There were 116 females and 69 males and 4 did not declared sex (distributed among the courses as follows: Economy: female=39.1%; male=60.8%; Psychology: female=67.2%; male=32.7%). The average age of the group was 21.82 years old (SD= 2.05146). When answering their religion 31.8% declared to be Catholic, 27.2% without religion, atheist and agnostic; 21.2% did not answer; 8.8% Evangelical, Baptist, Protestant and Christian; 7.4% Spiritualist; 3.9% other religions (Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Wicca, Universalist, Santo Daime). About ethnic self-definition, 71.9% declared to be White, 16.4% Mixed, 6.3% Black, 5.2% did not inform.

Instrument and procedure

A questionnaire was specially prepared which was composed by open and close questions (attached) about God, self, relevant educational experiences and relevant traineeship experience. The instrument concerning God representations was considered from two main axes or gradients. The first would situate God as a distant and superpowerful entity, which would implicate turning human beings more fragile and passive in comparison. The second would situate God in terms of spiritual benefits of following religious practices, as well as existing human life, in opposition to the possibility of non religious practices or to doubt about beliefs

in God. Regarding Self representations, shall we point out that according to other recent researches on self-descriptions of the body; a main concern of White people in Brazil is "normality" (Souza Filho, & Beldarrain-Durandegui, 2009). So when we created the questionnaire to study self representations, we had considered this a social deviance/normality issue. We did so bearing in mind that our qualitative researches showed that most regularly what people consider a deviance is a behavior at the opposite pole of normality. For instance, not following the general rules of rationality or common sense (e.g. to be mad, to be drug addict, and so on), or not accomplishing what we might call a singularity. So we prepared a questionnaire to measure agreement/disagreement regarding *Self assertion* (I am what I am/ I run after my goals/ I want to enjoy life; *Self criticism* (I have faults and qualities/I have yet things to discover in me/ I recognize when I am wrong and I do try to correct myself); *Self depreciation* (I am not such a worthy person/ I am pessimistic/ I get easily distracted); *Assertive interpersonal relation* (I prefer to give priority to my own opinion/I do not like people to meddle in my affairs/Everyone is allowed to think the way they want); *Positive interpersonal relation* (I like to devote myself to my friends/ I enjoy my family gatherings/Relationship conflicts with people is something I prefer not to face); *Negative interpersonal relation* (I am annoying/ I am troublemaker/I tend not to expect much from others); *Social categorization* (I am a student-professional like any other/I am a young-adult person of my age group/ I am an average Brazilian); *Group identity* (I prefer to choose my leisure/I prefer to choose who I am hanging around with/ I like wearing clothes selected by myself); *Moral value* (I am responsible/I do not like lies/I fight for justice); *Social deviance* (I like being a normal person/ I am a rebel/ I have moments of madness). Additionally, they filled socio-demographic questions (Age=A), regarding parents' schooling (PS), religious practice's intensity (RP), level of educational aspiration (graduate, master, PhD, Pos-doc) (LA), among others. They were asked to fill the questionnaire once they had signed a freely consented agreement. The application took place during break times between classes.

Analysis of data

God's and self representations questionnaires were created from the answers to open questions as follows: What it is God for you? How would you introduce yourself your own way? Assertions were created, similar to Likert scales, from the most frequent answers. Finally, these assertions were tested in order to make semantic validation, asking people from the same groups in small samples to explain in other words what the questions' meaning was. If at least 30% of the participants agreed with the assertion, it was kept as valid for the research. According to the social representations theoretical approach, a suitable questionnaire must include the main symbolic tendencies of the group, even when it is numerically less frequent. That is, in order to take in consideration sometimes contradictory group dynamics.

ANOVA´s tests were run, multiple regressions´s tests, followed by Pearson´s correlations and Kruskal-Wallis´s and Mann-Whitney´s mean tests among demographic variables drawing upon SPSS. Relevant educational experiences were considered according to their level of focus on the student him/herself as a learner, based on content analysis (Bardin, 1991). So level 1, they treated it mainly (at least 60% of the assertions) as teaching (professor/curricula/institution); level 2, they treated, simultaneously as learning and teaching experiences; and, level 3, mainly as learning experiences (at least 60% of the assertions), it generated a gradient of Learning Educational Experience (LEE), as well as that of Learning Trainee Experience (LTE).

Regarding parents' schooling, it was considered the higher level reached by both parents, which ranged from primary school to post-graduation. Finally, for the demographic analysis we run non parametric tests to compare means among groups.

Results

Before to present the main results, it is important to mention the following correlations between the statements about God or God Representations (GR):
1. GR1 correlated positively with GR2 (R=0.63; p<0; n=188).

2. GR1 correlated positively with GR3 (R=0.57; p<0; n=187).
3. GR1 correlated positively with GR4 (R=0.23; p<0.001; n=188).
4. GR1 correlated negatively with GR5 (R=-0.63; p<0; n= 188).

The means and respective standard deviations of God statements were the following:
1. GR1=2.39 (sd=1.56);
2. GR2=2.30 (sd=1.34);
3. GR3=1.88 (sd=1.38);
4. GR4=1.53 (sd=1.40);
5. GR5=2.08 (sd=1.51).

Below the main statistical tests' results concerning the God representations and Self representations:

We will organize the results reported on Table 1 in terms of main effects which were confirmed by Pearson correlations (Table 14 below). So God statements will be organized according to the main general axis of self-representations (individual-self, interpersonal-self, societal-self). First of all, we could postulate a social psychological self-representation profile as aimed at *social emancipation* (individual self-assertion; individual self-criticism; assertive interpersonal relation; negative interpersonal relation; group identity; social deviance) versus a profile aimed at *social integration* (individual self-depreciation; positive interpersonal relation; social category; moral value). In general, GR1, GR2, GR3 and GR4, which stated the existence of God, have as effects of GR1 on self-representations as positive interpersonal relation, moral value and social deviance (negative Pearson correlation); GR2 on self-representations as moral value; GR3 on self-representations as moral value, social deviance (negative Pearson correlation); GR4 on positive interpersonal relation; and GR5 on (only Main effects) individual self-criticism, negative interpersonal relation, group identity, moral value.

Other set of tests using Linear Multiple Regression (backward method) showed more precise results (tables 2 to 5) regarding God representations´ effects over Self representation as dependent variables.

TABLE 1
Main effects from God Representations over Self representations.

		Df	F	Sig
God is absolute and super powerful/				
Relationship conflicts with people is				
Something I prefer not to face	(+)	4	4.53	0.002
Idem/I am annoying		4	3.28	0.013
Idem/I do not like lies	(+)	3	2.59	0.050
Idem/I am a rebel	(-)	4	3.84	0.005
Individuals do spiritually depend on God/				
I want to enjoy life		3	3.04	0.033
Idem/I have yet things to discover in me		2	5.59	0.005
Idem/I prefer to choose my leisure		3	2.59	0.055
Idem/I do not like lies	(+)	3	4.22	0.007
Individuals depend on God to have a better life/				
I have yet thing to discover in me		2	4.03	0.022
Idem/I am a rebel	(-)	4	3	0.023
God and individuals are interdependent, one				
*Depends on the other to exist/*I have faults and				
Qualities		2	6.37	0.003
Idem/I get easily distracted		4	4.34	0.003
Idem/I enjoy my family gatherings	(+)	3	3.25	0.026
Idem/I am student/professional like any other		4	3.69	0.008
Idem/I have moments of madness		4	3.87	0.006
God is a belief created and maintained by men/				
I have yet things to discover in me		4	5.18	0.008
Idem/I am a troublemaker		4	3.85	0.007
Idem/I like wearing clothes selected by myself		3	3.20	0.028
Idem/I am a rebel		4	2.50	0.049

(+) Pearson's positive correlations; (-) Pearson negative correlations (Table 14 below).
Source: own work

TABLE 2
Multiple regression tests results of God representations (God is absolute and super powerful) as independent variable over Self representations as dependent variables

	B	SE	β	p
Constant	3.37	0.10		0
I want to enjoy life	-0.07	0.03	-0.15	0.039
Constant	3.23	0.14		0
I have yet things to discover in me	0.13	0.03	0.38	0
Constant	1.99	0.12		0
I prefer to give priority to my own opinion	0.14	0.06	0.20	0.040
Constant	2.15	0.23		0
I do not like peope to meddle in my affairs	0.14	0.06	0.21	0.021
Constant	1.97	0.16		0
Relationship conflicts is something I prefer not to face	0.13	0.05	0.16	0.028
Constant	3.07	0.14		0

	B	SE	β	p
I prefer to choose who I am hanging around with	0.09	0.03	0.26	0.005
Constant	3.40	0.05	0	
I like wearing clothes selected by myself	0.09	0.04	0.20	0.031
Constant	3.06	0.09	0	
I am responsible	0.07	0.03	0.16	0.027
Constant	3.21	0.08	0	
I do not like lies	0.09	0.03	0.21	0.003
Constant	1.54	0.13	0	
I am rebel	-0.16	0.04	-0.25	0

Note. God is absolute and super powerful tended to decrease Self assertion and Social deviance, while increasing Self criticism, Assertive interpersonal relation, Positive interpersonal relation, Group identity and Moral value.
Source: own work

TABLE 3
Adjusted R Square`s for God Representations as independent variables over Self representations as dependent variables.

	Adjusted R Square
God is absolute and super powerful	
Idem - I want to enjoy life	0.02
Idem – I have yet things to discover in me	0.07
Idem – I prefer to give priority to my own opinions	0.01
Idem – I do not like people to meddle in my affairs	0.02
Idem – Relationship conflicts with people is something I prefer not to face	0.02
Idem – I prefer to choose who I am hanging	0.03
Idem – I like wearing clothes selected by myself	0
Idem – I am responsible	0.02
Idem – I do not like lies	0.04
Idem – I am a rebel	0.06
Individuals do depend on God to have a better life	
Idem – I tend not to expect much from others	0.01
Idem – I prefer to choose my leisure	0.01
God and individuals are interdependent, one depends on the other to exist	
Idem – I want to enjoy life	0.02
Idem – I am troublemaker	0.02
God is a belief created and maintained by me	
Idem – I have yet things to discover in me	0.07
Idem - I prefer to give priority to my own opinions	0.01
Idem - I do not like people to meddle in my affairs	0.02
Idem – Is of have moments of madness	0.03

Source: own work

TABLE 4
Multiple regression tests results of effects of God representations (Individuals depend on God to have a better life) as independent variable over Self representations as dependent variables.

	B	SE	β	p
Constant	1.80	0.12		0
I tend not to expect much from others	-0.12	0.06	-0.16	0.048

	B	SE	β	p
Constant	3.43	0.08		0
I prefer to choose my leisure	-0.07	0.03	-0.14	0.048

Note. Individuals depend on God to have a better life tended to decrease Negative interpersonal relation and Group identity.
Source: own work

TABLE 5

Multiple regression tests results of effects of God representations (God and Individuals are interdependent) as independent variable over Self representations as dependent variables.

	B	SE	β	p
Constant	3.37	0.10	0	
I want to enjoy life	-0.07	0.03	-0.15	0.039
Constant	1.83	0.15	0.000	
I am a troublemaker	-0.10	0.05	-0.14	0.049

Note. God and Individuals are interdependent tended to decrease Self assertion and Negative interpersonal relation.
Source: own work

TABLE 6

Multiple regression tests results of effects of God representations (God is a belief created and maintained by men) as independent variable over Self representations as dependent variables.

	B	SE	β	p
Constant	3.23	0.14		0
I have yet things to discover in me	0.10	0.03	0.28	0.002
Constant	1.99	0.12		0
I prefer to give priority to my own opinions	0.14	0.06	0.21	0.021
Constant	2.15	0.23		0
I do not like people to meddle in my affairs	0.13	0.05	0.21	0.023
Constant	1.97	0.14		0
I have moments of madness	0.16	0.05	0.20	0.004

Note. God is a belief created and maintained by men tended to increase Self criticism, Assertive interpersonal relation and Social deviance.

Source: own work

TABLE 7

Main effects from Self representations on God representations.

	Df	F	sig.
I am what I am/GR1	4	3.20	0.01
Idem/GR2	4	2.57	0.04
Idem/GR3	4	2.20	0.04
I get easily distracted/GR4	4	5.62	0
I have yet things to discover in me/GR3	4	2.58	0.04
I am not such a worthy person/GR1	4	3.54	0.01
Idem/GR2	4	2.88	0.03
I do not like people to meddle in my affairs/GR1	4	3.30	0.01
Idem/GR3	4	3.75	0
Idem/GR5	4	2.76	0.03

	Df	F	sig.
Everyone is allowed to think			
the way they want/GR1	4	2.73	0.03
idem/GR3	4	3.27	0.01
Relationship conflicts with people is something			
I prefer not to face/GR3	4	2.94	0.02
I am annoying/GR1	4	3.21	0.01
I am a student/professional like any other/GR1	4	3.78	0
I am a young/adult person of my age group/GR1	4	4.50	0
I like wearing clothes selected by myself/GR1	4	2.69	0.03
Idem/GR3	4	2.91	0.02
I do not like lies/GR1 (+)	4	3.29	0.01
Idem/GR5 (-)	4	3.62	0.01
I am not a normal person/GR1	4	3.92	0
Idem/GR4	4	3.30	0.01
I have moments of madness/GR1	4	4.38	0
Idem/GR3	4	2.61	0.04

Note. Table 7 shows that self-representations impact over God representations in terms of GR1 on I do not like lies; and GR5 on I do not like lies (negative Pearson correlation) I am rebel and I have moments of madness (both only positive Person´s correlations). If we compare the amount of effects confirmed of God representations over Self representations with those on the opposite movement, the last results were inferior according to these above reported ANOVA results. In contrast, the multiple regressions analyses exposed below show a more complete portrait of the phenomena, in which Self- representations constructions appear in a dialectic confrontation regarding God representations. So we can postulate that self-representations construction in the contemporary life is outside religion's realm.
Source: own work

TABLE 8
Multiple regression tests results of effects of Self representations as independent variables over God representations (God is absolute and super powerfull)

	B	SE	β	p
Constant	2.03	0.92		0.03
I recognize when I am wrong and try to correct myself	-0.40	0.16	-0.16	0.019
Relationship conflicts is something I prefer not face	0.17	0.08	0.14	0.037
I tend not to expect much from others	-0.20	0.01	-0.13	0.054
I prefer to choose my leisure	-0.53	0.18	-0.23	0.004
I prefer to choose who I am hanging around with	0.49	0.22	0.17	0.029
I do not like lies	0.58	0.16	0.25	0
I am a rebel	-0.40	0.10	-0.26	0

Note. Self representation of Self criticism, Negative interpersonal relation, Group identity and Social deviance tended to decrease Self representation of *God is absolute and super powerfull*, while Positive interpersonal relation, Group identity and Moral value increase.
Source: own work

TABLE 9
Adjusted R Square`s for Self Representations as independent variables over God representations as dependent variables.

	Adjusted R Square
God is absolute and super powerfull	0.20
Individuals do spiritually depend on God	0.13
Individuals depend on God to have a better life	0.17

	Adjusted R Square
God and individuals are interdependent, one depends on the other to exist	0.12
God is a belief created and maintained by men	0.10

Source: own work

TABLE 10
Multiple regression tests results of effects of Self representations as independent variables over God representations (Individuals do spiritually depend on God).

	B	SE	β	p
Constant	3.98	0.88		0
I recognize when I am wrong and try to correct myself	-0.29	0.15	-0.14	0.051
I tend not to expect much from others	-0.22	0.09	-0.16	0.020
I do not like lies	0.52	0.14	0.20	0
I am a rebel	-0.34	0.09	-0.26	0

Note. Self representation of Self criticism, Negative interpersonal relation and Social deviance tended to decrease God representation *Individuals do spiritually depend on God*, while Moral value tended to increase.
Source: own work

TABLE 11
Multiple regression tests results of effects of Self representations as independent variables over God representations (Individuals depend on God to have a better life).

	B	SE	β	p
Constant	3.50	0.88	0.	
I have yet things to discover in me	-0.55	0.17	-0.22	0.002
Relationship conflicts is something I prefer not to face	0.18	0.07	0.16	0.017
I tend not to expect much from others	-0.26	0.09	-0.19	0.007
I prefer to choose my leisure	-0.41	0.14	-0.20	0.004
I do not like lies	0.59	0.14	0.29	0
I am a rebel	-0.29	0.09	-0.21	0.002

Note. Self representation of Self criticism, Negative interpersonal relation, Group identity and Social deviance tended to decrease God representions of *Individuals depend on God to have a better life*, while Positive interpersonal relation and Moral value to increase.
Source: own work

TABLE 12
Multiple regression tests results of effects of Self representations as independent variables over God representations (God and individuals are interdependent, one depend on the other to exist).

	B	SE	β	p
Constant	-1.35	1.19		0.28
I have faults and qualities	0.73	0.27	0.19	0.008
I like to devote myself to my friends	-0.44	0.17	-0.20	0.009
I enjoy my family gatherings	0.41	0.14	0.22	0.004
I am a troublemaker	-0.28	0.09	-0.21	0.003
I have moments of madness	0.28	0.08	0.24	0.001

Note. Positive interpersonal relation and Self criticism, Positive interpersonal relation and Social deviance tended to increase *God and individuals are interdependent, one depend on the other to exist*, while Positive interpersonal relation, Negative interpersonal relation to decrease.

Source: own work

TABLE 13

Multiple regression tests results of effects of Self representations as independent variables over God representations (God is a belief created and maintained by men).

	B	SE	β	p
Constant	0.19	0.92		0.835
I have yet things to discover in me	0.59	0.19	0.22	0.003
I do not like lies	-0.43	0.16	-0.19	0.007
I am a rebel	0.32	0.10	0.21	0.003

Note. Self criticism and Social deviance tended to increase God representations´s *God is a belief created and maintained by men*, while Moral value to decrease.
Source: own work

TABLE 14

Pearson correlations between God representations and self-representations.

	GR1	GR2	GR3	GR4	GR5
I enjoy my family gatherings	R=0. 162; p<0.026; n=188.			R=0.150; P<0.039; N=189.	
Relationships conflicts with people is something I prefer not to face	R=0.162; p<0.027; n=188.				
I am responsible	R=0.182; p<0.013; n=188.				
I do not like lies	R=0.218; p<0.003; n=188.	R=0.186; p<0.010; n=189.	R=0.209; p<0.004; n=188.		R=-0.148; P<0.043; n=189.
I am a rebel	R=-0.269; p<0; n=188.	R=-0.189; P<0.009; N=189.	R=-0145; p<0.047; N=188.	P<0.007	R=0.195 N=189.
I have moments of madness		R=-0.146; p<0.045; n=189.			R=0.195; p<0.007; N=189.

Source: own work

Correlations between God representation and LEE and other variables were as follows:

TABLE 15

Correlations between God representations and Learning educational experience and others variables.

	GR1	GR2	GR3	GR4	GR5
Learning Educational Experience	(R= -0.180; p<0.016; n=179)				R= 0.284; p<0.000; n=180
Parent´s schooling		R= -0.298; p<0; n=164	R= -0.242; p<0.002; n=163		R= 0.172; p<0.028; n=164
University period			R=0.223; p<0.005; n=157		
Religious practice			R= 0.157; p<0.031; n=188		

Source: own work

TABLE 16
Correlations between Learning Educational experiences and others variables and Self representations.

	LEE	LTE	LA	RP	A	PS	UP
I am what I am	R= -0.167; p<0.026; n=177	R= -0.172; p<0.047; n=134					
I run after my goals						R= 0.231; p<0.003; n=164	
I have faults and qualities				R=0.174; p<0.017; n=189			
I have yet things to discover in me						R= 0.233; p<0.003; n=164	
I recognize when I am wrong and I do try to correct myself			R=0.165; p<0.031; n=171				
I am not such a worthy person	R=0.165; p<0.028; n=179						
I prefer to give priority to my own opinion						R=-0.164 P<0 n=158	
Everyone is allowed to think the way they want	R= -0.201; p<0.007; n=180	R= -0.245; p<0.004; n=135					
I like to devote myself to my friends					R= -0.216; p<0.005; n=167		
Relationship conflicts with people is something I prefer not to face			R=-0.208; p<0.006; n=172				
I tend not to expect much from others	R= -0.158; p<0.034; n=180				R= 0.256; p<0.001; n=167		
I fight for justice			R=0.210; p<0.006; n=172	R=0.233; p<0.001; n=189			
I am a rebel	R= 0.148; p<0.047; n=180					R=-0.153; p<0.050; n=164	
I have moments of madness	R= 0.177; p<0.017; n=180						

Source: own work

Further, the GR1, GR2 and GR3 correlated negatively to LEE and to parent´s schooling, meanwhile GR3 correlated positively to university period and religious practice; and GR5 correlated positively to LEE and parent´s schooling.

According to the exposed data, self assertion and assertive interpersonal relation correlated negatively to LEE and LTE, but LEE correlated negatively also to negative interpersonal relation, and positively to self depreciation and social deviance. While self criticism and moral value correlated positively to level of educational aspiration (LA), which correlated negatively to positive interpersonal relation. Self criticism, and moral value correlated positively to religion practice (RP), while university period (UP) correlated negatively to assertive interpersonal relation. Besides, aging (A) correlated negatively to positive interpersonal relation; and postively to negative interpersonal relation. Finally, self assertion, self criticism and assertive interpersonal relation correlated positively to parents schooling (PS), which also correlated negatively to social deviance.

The most important demographic variables of God representations were religion followed by gender. About religion in general all monotheists tended to show higher GR1 (Catholics=107.68; Evangelist et al=118.61; Spiritualists=115.06; Others=57.52; Not informed=82.81; p<0); GR2 (Catholics=103.59; Evangelist et al=125.95; Spiritualists=112.56; Others=62.93; Not informed=78.69; p<0); GR3 (Catholics=112.32; Evangelist et al=118.63; Spiritualists=81.88; Others=66.76; Not informed=61.33; p<0), but Evangelist, Protestants, Baptists and Christians pointed less in GR type 4 (Catholics=111.79; Evangelist et al=60.89; Spiritualists=83.59; Others=77.14; Not informed=95.08; p<0), while those who did not inform religion pointed high also in type 4. Finally, those who declared not having religion pointed higher in GR5, followed by those who did not inform religion (Catholics=80.83; Evangelist et al=59.26; Spiritualists=56.47; Others=119.05; Not informed=102.22; p<0.).

On gender results, females pointed higher in GR1 (X: f=105.02/m=71.64; p<0), GR2 (X: f=101.49/m=78.72; p<0.004), GR3 (X: f=103.55/m=73.65; p<0.), GR4 (X: f=98.96/m=82.98; p<0.043), and males did about GR5 (X: f=82.57/m=110.54; p<0.).

In terms of intensity of religious practices we did not find statistically meaningful differences among the religious groups, but among ethnic groups we did. So Whites and Mixed did show more intensity, but those who did not inform their ethnic group had the least means (X: Black=84.83; White=97.16; Mixed=105.06; Not informed=46.60; p<0.019).

It is necessary to mention that LEE correlated high positively with LTE (R= 0.582; p<0; n=134).

Among the demographic variables, gender showed more differentiation on self representations. The girls highlighted Self criticism (I have yet things to discover in me) (X: f=101.46/m=78.78; p<0); positive interpersonal relations (I enjoy my family gatherings) (X; f=98.65/m=83.51; p<0.39); (Relationship conflicts with people is something I prefer not to face) (X: f=100.35/m=80.64; p<0.012); group identity (I like wearing clothes selected by myself) (X: f=101.94/m=78.18; p<0.001); moral value (I am responsible) (X: f=101.94/m=77.96; p<0.006); (I do not like lies) (X: f=98.54/m=83.68; p<0.041); social deviance (I like to be a normal person) (X: f=99.63/m=81.85; p<0.023). Meanwhile, boys stressed negative interpersonal relations (I am annoying) (X: f=85.07/m=106.33; p<0.006); (I am a troublemaker) (X: f=85.92/m=109.95; p<0.001); (I tend not to expect much from others) (X: f=85.18/m=106.14; p<0.006); social deviance (I am a rebel) (X: f=85.37/m=105.83; p<0.008).

Students of economy (E) and psychology (P) have shown the following differences: Levels of parents schooling were higher among economy students (X: P=75.15/E=95.23; p<0.001), as well as self assertion (I run after my goals) (X: P=88.86/E=103.01; p<0.045), and positive interpersonal relation (Relationship conflicts with people is something I prefer not to face) (X: P=85.68/E=107.16; p<0.006). However, psychology students stressed self criticism (I have yet things to discover in me) (X: P=102.76/E=84.87; p<0.005).

Discussion

According to the above summarized results, it can be stated that God representations as much as Self representations offer some regularities and tendencies for some questions regarding students' involvement and practice as learners. Before to start our discussion let us remind that among the results of God representations types 1 and 2, it was not mentioned the individual in their operationalizations in the instrument. And that hardly any effect was found on self-representations in terms of individual-self, except type 2, linked to self-criticism. But among most self-representations the following dilemmas can be noticed: shall I follow the moral values or deviate from them? Shall I keep positive interpersonal interactions or negative ones? So, because most youngsters limited themselves at becoming a good boy/girl, we could say it eventually pushed many of them towards social deviance. Yet the dilemmas about keeping interpersonal relations positive or negative, as well as whether to follow the social convention or not were also present, even if in a lesser degree. So we could state that the main ideological dilemmas we found revolved around realms outside the individual, whether interpersonal or collective ones.

In Brazil, Catholic Christians, which are the majority of Brazilians, do not have widespread beliefs about the role the individual plays as the main accountable for his/her destiny such as Protestants reformers indeed did have (Buarque de Holanda, 1936/1984; Farr, 1992; Souza Filho, 2000.). The former usually delegate to a super-powerful entity like God the responsibility for their lives and experiences – a pattern that decreases with family's accumulation of educational experience, as we have shown in this research. Differently of North America history where Protestant religions inherited the affirmation of the Individual as an important entity since they surfaced in Europe – allowing authors to found links between Protestantism and progressive educational theories and techniques (Setran, 2012) - , in many Latin countries it is not object of academic debate, or considered an important issue for educational work.

Therefore, regarding God representations and self representations, it became more evident after our research that they are both interlinked constructs. But this connexion is not so mutual. According to our results God representations are in fact separate from Self representations construction. That is, God representations that put stress on an absolute and superpower entity correlated negatively with learning experience, but it is linked to individual self-depreciation and social deviance. It could implicate to think that the above mentioned student's inhibitions are not only situational, but something learned before university, which could have its effect reduced through parents' schooling. Another point is the tendency of people, when approaching the end of university studies, to increase the belief in God as an entity which benefits individuals, providing them the chance to have a better life. For instance, waiting religious/magical effects to face last examinations at university and professional new life in order to avoid difficulties, as found by Gysman & Hudson (2012). This came together with positive interpersonal relation (I prefer not to face conflict), and again was attenuated mainly by the presence of parents' schooling. One of the challenges students are facing is the more and more competitive job market, which could implicate in value conflicts for them. For successfully facing it, it would be necessary to become a more active student, both existentially and professionally. In this sense, belief in God is part of the challenge, because at least in our Brazilian samples university students as learners, is something associated with non believers. But it is likely that sharing beliefs in God within religious networks could be a practical strategy to face challenges also, whether internally or externally.

It is necessary to notice that part of the reconstructions of God representations among students approaching the end of university studies is to picture God as a benefactor for their present life (Cf. Johnson, Okun, & Cohen, 2014), which is linked to the belief in the super power of God. We did not work with explicit punitive God representations, but God as superpower entity got a potential to punish or to determine positive or negative destiny for individuals and groups.

Those students who did not inform their religion pointed higher in God type 4, which gives some importance to individuals, which was less important even among Evangelicals, Protestants, Baptists and Christians. So in a certain way it gives support to our assumption that the crucial point for many Christians, Catholics or not, is to avoid granting importance to individual action. In addition, we could say that this reinforcement on social norms was noticed among those who informed their ethnic identification in comparison with those who did not. The latter did not practice religion intensively as the former ones. So to reinforce cultural identification (religious and ethnic dimensions) could provide certain self-confidence to people who lacked it in this important moment of their lives.

Concerning gender differences in God representations, it is necessary to say that religion is something practiced together, and it points out the need of social support among youngsters. This is perhaps more expressed by girls than boys, because the former are less uncomfortable expressing social dependence. However, the latter group showed stronger tendency to reflect about belief in God, and even to take distance from it. So it goes beyond. Nevertheless, it might be part of a strategy of self image construction, but anyway it involves existential transformations that they are accomplishing during university studies.

In this sense, Self representations correlated with learning educational experiences. The main body of results showed a reversed effect in the sense that more self depreciation is followed by more descriptions of educational experiences as a learner. Further, more self assertion will go together with less learning educational experiences. But it is important to mention a recent study still not published which shows that explanation for academic success as result of learning focus of university student has a direct effect on academic performance coefficient (Souza Filho, 2013a).

We may interpret these results primarily as effect of a lack of an assertive individual norm. So students as learners, when mentioning relevant educational experiences, have shown focus on professors/curricula/institution in itself or together

with themselves as learners. At the same time, they avoid to show focus on the individual as learner when they are succeeding since this is not popular, probably converging to a norm to be "ordinary people" (Wang & Morais, 2014). Also, we could interpret these results as a difficulty for students to use self critical representations, preferring more extreme answers to describe their individual self. The same pattern of response was observed in terms of interpersonal relations. So affirmative interpersonal relation, as well as negative interpersonal relation, both correlated negatively with learning educational experiences. Apparently, a learner who is considered as individual tries to be cautious and less assertive towards educational activities. If in our sample we found less assertive people, at the same time we found also others who were not avoiding social conflicts, and these have a higher level of educational aspirations. But it is important to remember that the latter have shown more self criticism. So this study confirmed the idea that for an educational change, whether at a private or a public level, it is necessary to face conflict. So to understand further the educational itinerary of students, it is important to notice that both university career period and aging correlated negatively with assertive interpersonal relation. This could be interpreted as a gradual search for social relations without conflicts during the university experience. It could be considered whether a developmental/existential fact or something specific to the university experience. In this sense, still regarding learning experience some of the participants showed positive correlation with social deviance. We could posit that the search of social deviation among students who focus on learning activities is the result of stress experienced during academic activities. But this phenomenon was attenuated depending on the level of parents' schooling, with which it correlated positively.

Should be mentioned that the results' data correlating self-representation and gender have highlighted some differences between men and women which for us clarify several aspects of the situation students were living. In fact both groups are less prone to start and to keep an assertive relation with

themselves and with others. So girls have stressed positive interpersonal relation, whereas boys negative interpersonal relation. They complement each other in a certain way in their role-playing situation. Some recent studies in Rio de Janeiro have shown the tendency among girls to think that freedom does not exist and that it is conditioned; and among boys to reclaim freedom, as if it would be something to get fighting about (Souza Filho, Coêlho, & Scardua, 2010). So the main difference is that one group is still suffering the psychosocial difficulty to face conflict, and the other is somewhat "in the attack" (Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1988), without expressing their proposals.

In recent years the pressure over youngsters to accomplish and to succeed increased. Such a phenomenon is followed by higher social control over them. As a consequence, stress and social deviance are stepping up, together with certain difficulty to focus on academic tasks to the benefit of other activities. For instance, recent research on the use of internet in Brazil has pointed out that youngsters prefer to access social networks instead of those with academic purposes (Duarte & Gunther, 2011; Souza Filho, 2013a, 2013b). In part, internet would be offering to youngsters an alternative way to improve quality of interactions. At the same time, regarding academic life, it could be considered as evasion to avoid conflict with scholars and/or their socio-cultural background, such as religious experience. So we intend in future studies to observe if people's academic formation would undergo any influence of self-representations and religious beliefs on the free choice of theories and practices. The reported results did not intend to study if professors from the academic institutions in focus were authoritarian or flexible during their interactions with students. It is possible that they did not use to take into consideration the existing common sense of students, including religion, as something that may have an effect on educational practices. To face the situation students had a few alternatives: 1) to put aside their previous knowledge, sometimes forgetting that it remains somewhere in their minds and can re-emerge any time; 2) to reconstruct and change their beliefs, incorporating the academic ideas, in a sort of composition which

reformulate theories and practices; 3) to refuse the academic new knowledge, eventually trying to find support for old ideas or new ones found within or outside themselves; 4) to evade from the academic situation, not taking advantage of it as a forum for learning the existing knowledge, nor as a place to develop new ones, among other possibilities.

Thus we consider possible to compare some student situations of interaction at universities as similar to social minorities because they do not have an automatic social recognition when they start their academic life. In this sense, some researches on social influence of minorities (Moscovici & Perez, 2007), showed that there is a tendency among some of them to portray themselves as living unfortunate lives. It had a higher immediate effect of social influence that assertive minorities would not enjoy. The unfortunate minorities do rather reinforce old beliefs among majorities such as offering help in order to feel less guilty without changing any social rule. On the other hand, professors tended to prefer less affirmative students, who confirm their message more than criticise it (Souza Filho, 2000; 2012.). So it would be more convenient or strategic for students to comply with teachers. Anyway, there is an almost consensual position among teachers that a student should first of all incorporate all the existing knowledge which is considered valid, and is mastered by the former. Bearing in mind that the academic university environment reproduces some of the social influence models in terms of power relation, we could raise the hypothesis that students, when describing their educational experience, will tend to focus more on the negative results of their learning performance than on the positive ones. This is because they would prefer autonomy of students only if it does not disturb the maintenance of the main social academic norms. The same way, those students focusing on teaching would intend to show openness toward the professor and stressing his/her positive evaluation of the curricula and teaching practise in the institution, perhaps trying to stimulate them. The exception would be students coming from families with historic of academic achievements or inserted in social networks, their stress on learning action could be considered a self

promotion, not a popular way to show oneself, when people expect humility values, etc. Part of the above presented thoughts is related to the self construction, in its many dimensions.

Thus educational activities should provide more chances to tackle academic tasks linked to a free work and, even, for leisure opportunities in order to keep attention and steady involvement of students. This exploring study has been a first step towards other researches.

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Anexo

<u>Instrument</u> *(translated from the Portuguese):*

<u>Personal information</u>:

- Sex: Age: Profession/occupation:
- What is your graduation course at the university:……………….… Period: …………..
- Diploma aimed at: …………………………
- Your personal ethnic/racial definition (underline one of the following alternatives and/or self-describe as you wish: Black, White, Dark-Skinned, or others):
- Religion:
- Practicing (underline): Always – Frequently – Sometimes – Never
- Father's schooling level: Mother's schooling level:
- Father's profession: Mother's profession:
- Until which schooling level do you intend to keep studying, if this is the case?
- Do you participate (or participated) in any group or association? Which one?

1) Do please indicate the degree of concordance between the following <u>statements about God</u>, according to the scheme as follows:

0. I do completely disagree	1: I disagree	2. Neutral	3. I agree	4. I do completely agree

God is absolute and super powerful	O	1	2	3	4
Individuals do spiritually depend on God	0	1	2	3	4
Individuals do depend on God to have a better life	0	1	2	3	4
God and individuals are interdependent, one depends on the other to exist	0	1	2	3	4
God is a belief created and maintained by men	0	1	2	3	4

2) Please, indicate how much you do agree with the following <u>statements about yourself</u>, according to the below depicted scheme:

0. I do completely disagree	1. I disagree	2. Neutral	3. I agree	4. I do completely agree

1. I am what I am	0	1	2	3	4
2. I run after my goals					
3. I want to enjoy life					
4. I have faults and qualities					
5. I have yet things to discover in me					
6. I recognize when I am wrong and I do try to correct myself					
7. I am not such a worthy person					
8. I am pessimistic					
9. I get easily distracted					
10. I prefer to give priority to my own opinion					
11. I do not like people to meddle in my affairs					
12. Everyone is allowed to think the way they want					

13. I like to devote myself to my friends					
14. I enjoy my family gatherings					
15. Relationship conflicts with people is something I prefer not to face					
16. I am annoying					
17. I am troublemaker					
18. I tend not to expect much from others					
19. I am a student/professional like any other					
20. I am a young/adult person of my age group					
21. I am an average Brazilian					
22. I prefer to choose my leisure					
23. I prefer to choose who I am hanging around with					
24. I like wearing clothes selected by myself					
25. I am responsible					
26. I do not like lies					
27. I fight for justice					
28. I like being a normal person					
29. I am a rebel					
30. I have moments of madness					

3) How would you describe and explain your important educational experiences regarding success and failure in terms of learning (yourself as an apprentice) and teaching (professors, Curricula and institutions you met)?

4) How would you describe or explain your important traineeship experiences in terms of success and failure and professional practices and applications (yourself as a probationer) and conditions of traineeship (supervisors, opportunities provided, work environment)?