Cross-Cultural Advancements in Positive Psychology 10
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Alejandro Castro Solano *Editor*

Positive Psychology in Latin America

Springer

Positive Psychology in Latin America

Cross-Cultural Advancements in Positive Psychology

Volume 10

The aim of the *Cross Cultural Advancements in Positive Psychology* book series is to spread a universal and culture-fair perspective on good life promotion. The series will advance a deeper understanding of the cross-cultural differences in well-being conceptualization. A deeper understanding can affect psychological theories, interventions and social policies in various domains, from health to education, from work to leisure. Books in the series will investigate such issues as enhanced mobility of people across nations, ethnic conflicts and the challenges faced by traditional communities due to the pervasive spreading of modernization trends. New instruments and models will be proposed to identify the crucial components of well-being in the process of acculturation. This series will also explore dimensions and components of happiness that are currently overlooked because happiness research is grounded in the Western tradition, and these dimensions do not belong to the Western cultural frame of mind and values.

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Positive Psychology in Latin America

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Foreword

> If a starving wreck ravished by famine, buffeted by disease, is made happy through some mental conditioning … the person will be seen as doing well on this mental states perspective. (Sen, 1985, p. 188)

> The key to understand the 'Latin American paradox' in happiness studies? Los compadres y amigos! (Ruut Veenhoven, 2012, personal communication)

> There is no need to throw out the descriptive baby with the prescriptive bathwater (Ash, 2012)

For results of well-being and happiness studies concerning Latin America are difficult to understand. Most of the time, Latin America culture is seen somewhere in between the exotic and the mysterious. The 'Latin American paradox' also implies the need to make clear the distinction between the descriptive and the prescriptive domains of positive psychology. There are at least three major subtexts that are worth considering in order to understand Latin American culture, including the two Iberian countries and, partly, Italy:

1. A historical past of authoritarian political regimens and dictatorships, 'benevolent' sometimes, but otherwise sanguine in the majority of cases
2. Social and gender inequality, when compared not only with the Scandinavian twentieth century social harmony but also with other recent democracies
3. In a Carl Hofstead's sense, the relationship between the concrete persons and supraindividual entities such as culture, might be characterized by distance to power, feminine sustainability of relationships (*machismo* being a secondary reflex not a dominant feature), and collectivism (which might be seen in the importance of family life, in the religious behavior and the meanings locally attributed to spirituality).

However, not only history, society and politics play a definitive role in Latin America culture and consciousness. Nature is also a major playmate where exuberant landscapes, majestic mountains and luxurious rain forests give the individuals a sense of abundance, newness and possibilities not very often seen in other places.

In the arts, the historical and natural circumstances lead to the emergence of a specific form of literature, world and life visions labeled as 'magical realism'. Authors like Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortazar, Carlos Fuentes, Gabriel Garcia Marques, and more distantly, Cabrera Infante and Vargas Llosa, to name just a few, are part of this most honored and revered tradition. The common denominator of this tradition of literature might be condensed in a phrase: a different life, with abundance and fairness, does exist and, with an act of imagination, with a mental effort, we are able to bring it to life.

What about the development of human and social sciences? In the above mentioned circumstances, Marxism and psychoanalysis took root deeply in the culture but, happily, most of the time, in an original and creative discontinuity with the European (and North-American) original matrix versions. In a different domain, a similar process of expansion and enrichment occurred in what concerns the emergence of 'liberation theology', during the 1970s.

The South-American intellectual soil is, indeed, rich and fertile! In this vein it is worth to remember that the word 'conscientization', a neologism in English, meaning, became aware of, to bring to conscious thought or, in Spanish, '*darse cuenta*', is derived from the work of a Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire.

How are the seeds of positive psychology (PP) going to grow in this intellectual field? What might be expected from its quick emergence and coming of age as a scientific discipline with a specific related set of practices and applications? How might the Latin American exceptionalism culture and local wisdom help PP to maintain its independent critical tone and intellectual openness, as intended by its 'founding fathers (and mothers)'? How may the rest of the world benefit from the visions coming from the research and applications inspired by PP in Latin America?

This book presents an elegant, eloquent and useful set of research results, concepts, program assessments and applications inspired in positive psychology. The themes and topics covered include: childhood and youth development, which evokes the need of a positive developmental psychology suggested by Martin Seligman in 2000, diverse research related with vulnerable populations, the prosocial behavior, resilience, and social skills programs needed in those contexts. It also includes the issues associated with the development of positive communities, which, by itself, implies methods of research and evaluation that go beyond considering the individual as unit of scientific analysis and intervention, enlarging that way the scope and potential of PP and answering some criticism made.

In every chapter the criteria of scientific rigorous research such as relational responsibility and communicative sustainability is self-evident as well as the ethic and moral dimensions implied when working with individuals.

Having face evil in Susan's Neiman sense, in a more recent past than Europeans and North-Americans, and being able to recreate life whenever life itself demands it, and being able to invent structures of hope in thought and action, Latin American PP researchers included in this book concrete tools, validated programs and applications that will allow not only an avenue of scientific research and growth but also enhance its citizens' quality of life.

This book, allied with equivalent ones representing research efforts inspired in positive psychology done in other areas of the world, will help not only individuals but also the PP field, itself, to flourish.

International Positive Psychology Association Luís Miguel Vicente Afonso Neto
Lisbon, Portugal
17 December 2012

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Part I
General Approach to Positive Psychology in Latin America

Chapter 1
Overview of Positive Psychology in Latin-American Countries

Alejandro Castro Solano

1.1 Introduction

Establishing the beginnings of Positive Psychology (PP) in Latin America is a challenging aim as there was no foundational moment in the words of a renowned psychologist, as was the case of Martin Seligman in the United States (US). Additionally, it is difficult to track works and publications related to PP, as just recently some researchers have been known as 'positive'. Therefore, many professionals in Latin America, now labelled 'positive psychologists', have unknowingly contributed to research and practice in this area. Studies that focus on topics such as values, emotional intelligence, motivation, creativity and more recently, flow and psychological well-being can be included within the paradigm of Positive Psychology.

There are some specific characteristics in the way Positive Psychology is developing in Latin-American countries that might be unknown to professionals who reside in other regions. Even though Positive Psychology has followed different paths within each country, there are some commonalities related to Latin-American Psychology which are very different from what happens in the US, Europe and other developed countries (Alonso & Eagly, 1999; Ardila, 1986). According to Alarcón (2002), Ardila (2004) and Vera-Villarroel, Lopez-Lopez, Lillo, and Silva (2011), the following are some of these particular characteristics that worth mentioning:

- *Dependent nature*. In general terms, Latin-American psychology has been built on the basis of 'imported' models and theories. In the first half of the twentieth century, it was centred on philosophical approaches – Bergson, Locke, Descartes – and well into the twentieth century, became based on logical positivism, Anglo-American psychology and European psychoanalytic currents.

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- *Lack of originality*. In the first decades of the twentieth century, Latin America psychology was only focused on test adaptation and rarely made original contributions. Well into that century, some local theories were designed, such as the *historic bio-psycho-social-cultural theory of human behavior* and the *experimental synthesis of behavior*. The development of the field of Psychology was linked to its professionalization and its expansion begun in the 1950s (Ardila, 2004), almost 50 years later than in Europe and the US.
- *Preference for applied psychology.* Latin psychology is mainly interested in the applied fields and more concerned with solving practical problems than with developing explanatory theories. Therefore, in the research area, more correlational than experimental techniques are used.
- *Social relevance and political permeability*. The first cohort of psychologists guided the development of psychology mostly toward social problems. Within this perspective, professionals have focused on community psychology, political commitment and studies under the action-research paradigm. It was more recently that some studies on political psychology were found. Some of the most well-known authors in the region are Maritza Montero (Venezuela) and Martín Baró (El Salvador).
- *Research orientation*. Early development of Latin-American psychology was strongly focused on empirical psychology, and therefore, it had a strong link to the experimental approach that mainly dominates academic circles. In the first stages, experimental behavior analysis was the most relevant area of work, while in the 1980s and 1990s, the focus changed to cognitive psychology and neuropsychology. On the other hand, in a more applied environment, the interest was in psychological assessment instruments that were relevant to the educational, employment and clinical fields. In the southern cone of the region – Argentina and Uruguay – psychoanalysis has turned into the hegemonic model used to study, explain, and modify human behavior.
- *Holistic approach*. The emphasis is placed on a holistic description and explanation of human beings. This approach tends to understand individuals as complex subjects with multiple determinations. Under this perspective, most studies are interested in comprehensive and explanatory macro-theories of human beings (Calabresi & Polanco, 2011).
- *Areas of application.* Traditional areas of Psychology, such as clinical, educational, organizational and applied social psychology have been dominant in most countries, although varying in their degrees. In recent decades, there has been a strong growth in less traditional areas such as sport, environmental, and health psychology (Ardila, 2004).
- *Number of psychologists per capita*. Estimations made in Latin America indicate that approximately 178,000 individuals have received a Degree in Psychology and are qualified to practice the profession. Countries that concentrate the greatest number of psychologists per capita are Brazil, Argentina, Colombia and Mexico. The highest proportions of habitants per psychologist are for Argentina and Brazil (974 and 1,808 respectively). These countries are followed by Colombia and Mexico in the third and fourth place correspondingly (Alonso & Nicenboim, 1999).

- *Scientific development*. Indexes of scientific development, such as the number of publications and their impact, are quite far from the standards of countries with high scientific production. A recent meta-analysis indicates that Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Chile and Colombia reported the best indicators in terms of scientific development. These countries lead the research conducted in Latin-American Psychology, being quite distant from their neighboring countries (Vera-Villarroel et al., 2011).

Table 1.1 presents an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages for Positive Psychology's development in Latin America, based on the lists the characteristics previously mentioned. One of the main advantages observed is that, due to the low production of local theories, models developed in central countries tend to easily extend to Latin contexts. In addition, PP can be applied to almost every field in which psychologists are involved and is broadly welcomed by a large number of professionals, due to its emphasis on positive aspects of human beings. On the other hand, the main disadvantage is related to the manner in which theories and models are 'imported' in Latin America. Even though theories and researchers recognize the role played by culture in explaining human behavior (Betancourt & López, 1993), some authors consider psychological assumptions as universal in nature. Several psychologists question the generalization of psychological theories (Bond, 1988; Pepitone & Triandis, 1987) and advocate for the inclusion of cultural variables in these theories (Betancourt & López, 1993; Triandis, 1989), but still in the area of Latin-American PP, there are almost no studies that analyze the role of cultural variables.

1.2 Positive Psychology's Origins and Development in Latin America

Positive Psychology was introduced in Latin America by Maria Martina Casullo, a well-known Argentinean psychologist that in 2000 published the first theoretical article based exclusively on this topic: 'Salugenic or Positive Psychology: Some considerations' [*Psicología salugénica o positiva. Algunas reflexiones*] (Casullo, 2000). In this paper, the author pointed out that Psychology had made considerable efforts in studying clinical or pathogenic dimensions of human behavior and concluded that both these aspects and salugenic or positive dimensions should be integrated in the field of Psychology. Casullo understood PP as a theoretical and methodological paradigm focused on salugenic or positive variables. Along her work, Casullo was concerned with the study of protective factors, salugenic constructs and the role played by the context in shaping human behavior.

In the same year, based on Ryff's model of psychological well-being, Casullo published a scale designed to assess well-being in adolescents, named 'Psychological Well-being Scale for Adolescents' [*Escala de Bienestar Psicológico en Adolescentes, BIEPS*] (Casullo & Castro Solano, 2000), a work framed within the paradigm of Positive Psychology. In 2002, this first research study on psychological well-being

Table 1.1 Advantages and disadvantages of Positive Psychology in Latin America

Characteristics of Latin-American psychology	Advantages of Positive Psychology	Disadvantages of Positive Psychology
Dependent nature	Models developed in US and Europe tend to prevail in the region.	Classic psychological models have the hegemony, while modern theories take longer to break through in the field.
Lack of originality	As there is little theoretical production in the region, new models tend to be 'imported'.	Models developed in other contexts are carelessly "imported", without considering regional characteristics.
Preference for applied psychology	Intervention models that address different application areas are generally well-received.	The emphasis placed on application generally neglects the importance of developing research studies regionally.
Social relevance and political permeability	As PP works on salugenic aspects of individuals, it extends to a larger segment of population, compared to clinical psychology that focused on a minor portion of the population.	PP is considered of 'lower status' than psychopathological variables, which are considered the most relevant, especially when studying economically disadvantaged and vulnerable populations.
Research orientation	PP's development is based on rigorous methodologies with a strong scientific character.	PP focuses on research developments and places less emphasis on areas of application.
Holistic approach	PP's pillars cover most aspects of individuals' lives.	PP does not have an explanatory and comprehensive macro-theory; it rather focuses on micro-models of particular aspects of individuals' lives (psychological well-being, positive emotions, flow).
Areas of application	PP can be applied to almost any area of application.	PP's variety of application fields, leads to psychologists not to practice it.
Number of psychologist per capita	If the model is well received, it will disseminate widely.	Most psychologists adhere to classic models.
Research development (countries)	Major dissemination in Argentina, Brazil, Mexico and Chile.	Under-represented in other Spanish-speaking countries.

Table 1.2 Positive Psychology's research projects led by Martina Casullo

Period	Project title	Content
2001–2003	Mental health and emotions: Pathogenic and salugenic impact of romantic relationships in adolescents and youth.	The study of the impact of adolescents' romantic life experiences on their psychological well-being and distress. The construction of instruments for assessing romantic and non-romantic attachment. The identification of romantic relationships that met specific needs according to individuals' sex, age, family structure and place of residence.
2004–2007	Ethical commitment, human strengths and specific contextual challenges: Techniques developed for psychological assessment of salugenic and Positive Psychology proposals.	Construction, validation, adaptation and design of assessment techniques derived from positive constructs, such as values, leadership styles, sense of humor, forgiveness, wisdom.

was published and entitled *Psychological well-being in Ibero-America* [El bienestar psicológico en Iberoamérica] (Casullo, 2002). This book, published in Spanish language, presented the findings of a study on psychological well-being conducted in Argentina, Peru, Cuba and Spain. Thus, this is also the first regional study on psychological well-being which compares different Latin countries. Furthermore, this work also includes psychometric characteristics and norms for the populations assessed.

It worth mentioning that Casullo had led two research projects at the University of Buenos Aires from 2000 until her death in 2008. These projects were exclusively based on positive constructs. The following table presents titles and dates of her work (Table 1.2).

At the time of these research developments, there was a concern about training psychologists in Positive Psychology issues. Thus, PP was introduced as a compulsory course in 2002 for students doing their Degree in Psychology at the University of Palermo (Buenos Aires, Argentina). This course also included topics related to the humanistic and counseling psychology. Well-being, life satisfaction, positive emotions, human strengths and virtues, creativity and resilience were some of the topics studied. It should be noted that in Latin countries, psychologists' training relies almost only on the undergraduate degrees.

As undergraduate programs are not part of the arts or science departments, are mainly focused on the field of knowledge and/or professional practice. The degree granted by universities – called Graduate in Psychology [*Licenciatura en Psicología*] or simply Psychologist [*Psicólogo*] – demands approximately 5 or 6 years and is the only requirement to practice clinical, educational and forensic psychology, as well as the private practice of psychotherapy. For this reason, including a compulsory course on this specific area becomes a precedent for psychologists' training and future professional development. This situation was almost unique in the region and, due to Casullo's legacy, in 2009 two elective subjects were introduced in the undergraduate psychology program. These courses, named Issues on Positive Psychology [*Temas de Psicología Positiva*] and Interventions in Positive Psychology [*Intervenciones*

en Psicología Positiva], which work on constructs that deal with the most modern and positive psychological interventions derived from international authors.

It is also noteworthy the impulse given by Casullo to the Positive Psychology Ibero-American Meetings [*Encuentros Iberoamericanos de Psicología Positiva*] that have been held uninterruptedly since 2006 at University of Palermo in Buenos Aires. These meetings have become a turning point for Positive Psychology development, as they gather papers from most Spanish-speaking countries. Within this same university, Casullo prompted in 2000 the development of a journal named *Psychodebate: Psychology, Culture and Society* [*Psicodebate: Psicología, Cultura y Sociedad*]. From 2006, it has been almost exclusively receiving scientific papers dedicated to PP. In that year, the volume 7 of this publication was entitled "Positive Psychology" and was prefaced by Martin Seligman. From the very beginning, the purpose was to disseminate PP's research studies in Spanish language. It is necessary to highlight the importance of some book such as, *The Well-Being in Latin America* [*El bienestar en Iberoamérica*] (Casullo, 2002), *Positive Psychology Practice* [*Prácticas de Psicología Positiva*] (Casullo, 2008) and more recently, *Foundations of Positive Psychology* [*Fundamentos de Psicología Positiva*] (Castro Solano, 2010). The latter is a compilation of texts done by one of Casullo's closest collaborators. Moreover, since 2009, several Positive Psychology seminars have been held at master and doctoral programs such as Quality of life; Positive Psychology; Emotions and psychological well-being, Foundations of PP; and From Psychopathology to PP, among others.

Current research activities and diffusion of Positive Psychology within the University of Palermo are led by the author of the present chapter, a professor at this university and a researcher at the National Council of Technical and Scientific Research [Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas, CONICET]. Research projects on PP aim, on the one hand, to design and validate psychological assessment tests to use them with local population. On the other hand, they also tend to study positive constructs for the prediction of academic and cultural adaptation of international students (see Chap. 5).

Furthermore, the Interdisciplinary Centre for Research in Mathematical Psychology [*Centro Interdisciplinario de Investigaciones en Psicología Matemática*], a CONICET's agency, brings together a team of professionals with an outstanding scientific career in the study, evaluation and promotion of psychological virtues and resources, such as social skills, attachment, positive emotions, flow, creativity, forgiveness, prosocial behavior, empathy, coping, self-efficacy, parenting styles, values, spirituality, attribution styles and psychological well-being, among others. This Centre has developed an intervention program under the direction of PhD. Maria Cristina Richaud de Minzi. This program named 'Without affection one does not learn nor grow' [*Sin Afecto no se aprende ni se crece*], has been designed to strengthen the development of cognitive, social, emotional and linguistic capital in children who are at risk from extreme poverty. This project has had a positive impact on many Argentinean children's lives by increasing their resilience and subjective well-being (See Chaps. 8, 9, 10 and 11).

After the foundation of the International Positive Psychology Association (IPPA) in 2007, Casullo was invited to be part of the Board of Directors. At that time, there

were three Spanish-speaking countries represented (Mexico, Argentina and Spain), while the majority of directors belonged to Anglo-Saxon countries. From its beginnings, IPPA has considered the development of PP in Latin America and the inclusion of Spanish-speaking countries. In 2009, under the executive direction of James Pawelski, the Ibero-American Network of Positive Psychology [Red Iberoamericana de Psicología Positiva] was created. This network comprises countries such as Argentina, Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil, Uruguay and Spain, and aims to promote contact between professionals from Latin countries in order to disseminate PP's ideas in the Southern cone.

In *Venezuela*, PP's dissemination is fairly recent and has been consolidating in the last 3 years. PP's development has been based at the Department of Behavioral Science of the Metropolitan University [*Universidad Metropolitana, UNIMET*], where PhD. Maria Elena Garassini coordinates a team of psychologists. In 2008, the 4th Congress of Research and Intellectual Creation [*IV Congreso de Investigación y Creación Intelectual*] was held in Caracas, organized by this university. At that event, PhD James Pawelski gave a plenary lecture entitled *Positive Psychology: Theory, Science and Application*. The visit of this prominent personality from the Pennsylvania group allowed the implementation of a wide range of activities related to the area. Since that year, efforts were centred on PP's dissemination both within the University – through workshops for professors and administrative staff- and through activities conducted in different educational, businesses and public settings in the metropolitan Caracas.

In November 2009, the Venezuelan Society of Positive Psychology [*Sociedad Venezolana de Psicología Positiva*] was founded with representatives from various educational, health and business institutions. The aim of this society was to promote, sponsor and certify educational programs, series of courses, conferences and symposia, as well as the printing of books or brochures related to Positive Psychology. It also aims to support events that enrich PP at national and international levels (http://www.svpsicologiapositiva.com/). In May 2010, a Diploma in Positive Psychology was created at the UNIMET through the Center of Extension, Executive Development and Organizational Consulting [*Centro de Extensión, Desarrollo Ejecutivo y Consultoría Organizacional, CENDECO*]. This course lasts two trimesters (two subjects per term), with a total of 192 academic hours. In 2010, the 1st Congress of Positive Psychology was held in Venezuela and the first edition of the book *Positive Psychology: A Study in Venezuela* [*Psicología Positiva: Estudio en Venezuela*] was presented, introducing the main theoretical developments and results of studies conducted in the country. The main PP's topics of interests in Venezuela have been well-being, character strengths, positive emotions, flow, resilience and positive organizations.

In *Peru*, the introduction of Positive Psychology was prompted by PhD Reynaldo Alarcón, who in 2009 organized the fist conference on this topic. In 2011, the National Symposium of Positive Psychology [*Simposio Nacional de Psicología Positiva*] was held in Lima, supported by the Women's University of Sacred Heart and sponsored by the Peruvian Society of Positive Psychology [*Sociedad Peruana de Positive Psychology*]. This institution, created in 2008, aims to encourage PP's theoretical and methodological principles among Peruvian psychologists and

specialists from related disciplines. Alarcón has been publishing scientific papers and other publications related to PP since 2000. It was also important for this country the publication of the book 'The Happiness Psychology' [*La Psicología de la Felicidad*] (Alarcon, 2009) published by the Ricardo Palma University and the series of studies on happiness with Peruvian samples. Moreover, it should be highlighted Alarcon's effort to develop valid and reliable instruments to assess happiness with Peruvian populations (Alarcón, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2006) (See Chap. 3).

The beginnings of Positive Psychology in *Brazil* date from 2003. In that year, PhD Lilian Graziano founded the Institute of Positive Psychology and Behavior [*Instituto de Psicologia Positiva e Comportamento, IPPC*]. This organization was originally created to develop PP in Brazil and to study its constructs with local population. Today, it has expanded its focus to clinical coaching and supervision; scientific research and dissemination; as well as business and educational training. Thus, professionals working in that institute are based on the latest scientific evidence in the field of Positive Psychology. Moreover, the journal *Psyche, Science and Life* [*Psique, Ciencia y Vida*] made an important contribution to PP's dissemination in the country, publishing an article on Positive Psychology in 2006 first issue. Due to the growing public interest in these topics, in 2008 this publication released a special issue entitled 'Science in the search of happiness' [*Ciência na busca da felicidade*].

The first Brazilian congress on Positive Psychology was held in Rio de Janeiro in 2011. The topic of this event was '*The road to flourish'* and approximately 600 individuals participated in that occasion. Martin Seligman was the main guest speaker, presenting an overview of PP, with special reference to his latest book '*Flourishing'*. James Pawelski was also invited to the event and gave a presentation on the PP status in the academic world and especially in Latin America. This congress was organized by the Latin-American Association of Positive Psychology [*Asociación Latinoamericana de Psicología Positiva, APPAL*], an organization founded in 2010, which aims to promote human development through the dissemination of PP. APPAL also aims to raise economic means to fund PP's studies, by connecting the academic world with institutions able to support these research. Daniel Levy, coach and psychologist, is the founder and president of the APPAL, organization that has formed an administrative council with leading researchers and professionals based in Brazil. Due to its importance, APPAL and IPPA announced their institutional affiliation in 2011.

In *Mexico*, PP's movement has been led by Margarita Tarragona who created a Positive Psychology course at the Ibero-American University and currently possesses its fourth cohort of graduates. To date, this is the Latin-American organization with the longest history in training people on Positive Psychology. Professionals from different fields –such as psychologists, nutritionists, dentists, public servants, entrepreneurs and managers – have participated in this program interested in applying PP's principles to their areas of work. Since 2011, Tarragona has been teaching PP at doctoral level and coordinating the 'Positive Psychology Daily News' in Spanish. This website aims to distribute PP's news and research studies in Spanish. Terragona has also joined efforts with Luz de Lourdes Eguiluz and Luisa Pascencia in order to launch the Mexican Society of Positive Psychology [*Sociedad Mexicana de Psicología Positiva*] in 2012. It is also worth mentioning that a book entitled

Positive Psychology: Contributions to Research and Practice [*Psicología Positiva: Aportaciones a la investigación y la práctica*] will be published shortly by the editorial Trillas (Tapia, Tarragona, & Gonzalez, 2012).

1.3 Positive Psychology's Impact in Latin America

In order to explore PP's impact in Latin America, four studies were performed considering two journals and three different congresses as the basis for the analysis. Indexed journals included two regionally well-known publications – *Latin-American Journal of Psychology* and *Inter-American Journal of Psychology* [Revista Latinoamericana de Psicología and Revista Interamericana de Psicología] – and scientific events involved the most relevant meetings for psychology in general and PP in particular where regional professionals participate – *Positive Psychology Ibero-American Meetings*, the *Inter-American Congress of Psychology* [Congreso Interamericano de Psicología] and the *International Congress of Positive Psychology*. These performed studies have a socio-bibliometric character and were based on the assumption that science is a social institution of public nature which can be measured by its scientific productions, such as research articles, theses, abstract books from scientific meetings, etc. Before presenting results from the studies, Table 1.3 describes samples, units of analysis and variables analyzed.

Table 1.3 Measures of analysis of Positive Psychology's impact in Latin America

Samples	Unit of analysis	Studied variables
Articles in Spanish published in two Latin-American indexed journals (2000-2012):	Articles on Positive Psychology	Article's pertinence to PP
Revista Latinoamericana de Psicología		Research's country of origin
Revista Interamericana de Psicología		
Papers presented at the Positive Psychology Ibero-American Meetings. Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2006–2011	Total number of abstracts published in the Abstract Book	Topics studied
		PP's pillars addressed
		Research's country of origin
		Year of presentation
		Type of presentation (research, applied or theoretical)
Papers presented at the 33rd Inter-American Congress of Psychology, organized by the Inter-American Society of Psychology. Medellín, Colombia, 2011	Abstracts on PP published in the Abstract Book	Topics studied
		PP's pillars addressed
		Research's country of origin
Papers presented at the 2nd International Congress of Positive Psychology organized by IPPA. Philadelphia, United States, 2011	Total number of abstracts published in the Abstract Book	Topics studied
		PP's pillars addressed
		Research's country of origin
		Type of presentation (research, applied or theoretical)

1.3.1 Latin-American Indexed Journals

In the first study, papers published in two indexed journals – *Revista Latinoamericana de Psicología* and *Revista Interamericana de Psicología* – were analyzed. Most psychologists who conduct research in Latin America publish their findings in these journals, as they have the greatest impact at regional level. The analysis conducted showed that between 2000 and 2012 both journals published 610 articles. Thus, in order to explore PP's impact, titles and abstracts of each publication were reviewed taking into account the following criteria:

- Authors should be from Latin America (Spanish and/or Portuguese speakers)
- Studies should be conducted in Latin America
- Research should be conducted in academic institutions
- Research participants should be living in a Latin-American country
- Papers should address constructs from Positive Psychology

A content analysis only identified 32 papers related to PP's topics written by Latin American authors. That is, just 5 % of the publications. When PP's development is taken as a grouping variable, and considering three distinct periods – origins 1998–2002; consolidation phase 2003–2007; and expansion 2007–2012 – it is observed that 60 % of the publications were centered in the last period. The creation of IPPA, in 2007, was taken as the cutoff date to create these ranges.

In relation to PP's topics, three quarters of these research articles were based on the study of personal relationships, well-being, values, quality of life, creativity and flow. Most modern and innovative PP's constructs, such as human strengths, positive organizations, positive emotions, gratitude and forgiveness, have been almost no represented. Regarding country's scientific production, 80 % of articles related to PP were only from Mexico, Chile, Brazil and Argentina, which are also the countries with highest rates of research contribution to the field of Psychology.

1.3.2 Positive Psychology Ibero-American Meetings (2006–2011)

For the second study, a content analysis was conducted taking into account all papers presented at the six events of the Positive Psychology Ibero-American Meetings, during the period 2006/2011. As previously discussed, these meetings held at the University of Palermo (Buenos Aires, Argentina), aimed to encourage the exchange of experiences among professionals who apply PP's approach in different fields of work. The first meeting was held in 2006 and PhD. James Pawelski was the main guest, who served as a liaison with Martin Seligman's Pennsylvania Group. These events were research oriented and, in order to ensure presentations' quality, the received papers and posters were cautiously reviewed by a scientific committee. Data introduced in Table 1.4 illustrates PP's impact in the region, as

Table 1.4 Topics most frequently presented at the Positive Psychology Ibero-American meetings (2006–2011)

Topics	%
Psychotherapy and Positive Psychology	12.98
Happiness/well-being	10.91
Interpersonal relationships	10.03
Spirituality/religion/forgiveness/gratitude	7.08
Resilience	7.08
Creativity and flow	6.49
Education and Positive Psychology	5.90
Practitioner-patient relationship	5.31
Positive interventions	5.31

Note: Only the most frequent topics are mentioned. This total covers 71 % of submissions

Table 1.5 Percentage of papers presented at the Positive Psychology Ibero-American meetings by country

Participating countries	%
Argentina	66.84
Brazil	11.14
Chile	4.77
Peru	3.98
Venezuela	3.18
Colombia	2.39
United States	1.86
Portugal	1.59
Mexico	1.33
Spain	1.33
Uruguay	1.06
Italy	0.53

these meetings had exclusively focused on PP as the only topic. It is worth noting that these events received professionals from most countries in South America.

Tables 1.4 and 1.5 described participating countries and the most frequent PP's topics and pillars addressed by the 379 papers presented at the mentioned meetings.

Based on the most frequently addressed topics, it can be concluded that psychologists' main concerns in relation to the PP are those aspects related to the application of positive interventions in combination with a traditional treatment approach. For example, the study of positive aspects in dealing with different psychopathological disorders (depression, eating disorders, psychosis), through various therapeutic models (systemic, psychodynamic, cognitive psychotherapies) in different forms of treatment (individual, couple, family). The study of well-being in different groups and communities has also became important for psychologists, and considered a central issue for Positive Psychology. Another concern for professionals appeared to be interpersonal relationships, covering topics such as romantic and non romantic attachment, prosocial behaviors and social skills. These three themes covered 34 % of the papers presented at a 6-year period. Among the least addressed topics, with a frequency of less than 3 %, were constructs such as humor, optimism, posttraumatic growth, strengths and virtues, as well as PP's cultural aspects.

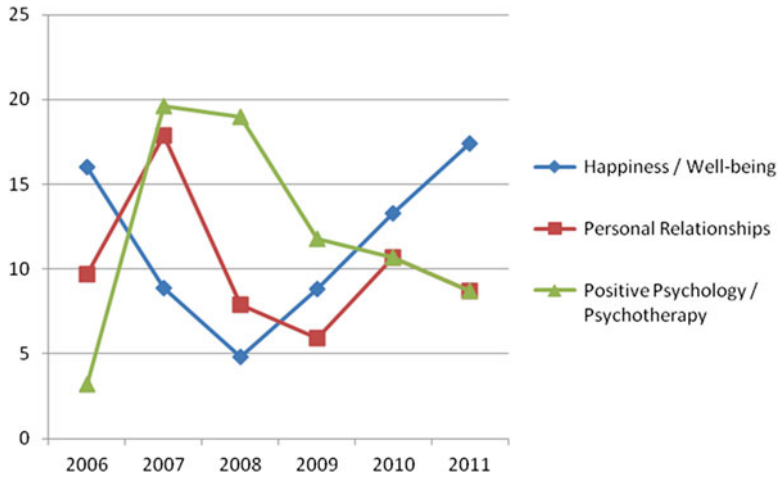

Fig. 1.1 Evolution of topics related to PP (2006–2011)

If these presentations are grouped into the four pillars of Positive Psychology, it can be observed that the first two pillars – well-being/positive emotions and positive traits/flow – account for 72 % of papers submitted, while the study of positive organizations displayed a very low impact with approximately 10 % of the total. Despite its recent inclusion as a PP pillar, interpersonal relationships acquire relative importance being the main topic in 17 % of the presentations.

In relation to country's participation, as shown in Table 1.5, Argentina ranks in first place. This is most likely as meetings have been held in Buenos Aires and was expected to receive a higher number of local presentations. Secondly, bordering countries were the most participating countries, particularly Brazil and Chile, and to a lesser extent, Peru and Venezuela. Latin countries geographically more distant from Argentina, such as Colombia and Mexico, have had a lower participation rate in these meetings. The exception to this trend seemed to be Uruguay, a bordering country with very low participation.

Regarding type of presentations, half of the submissions were based on results from research studies (50 %), while the remaining 50 % was equally distributed between theoretical presentations and applied cases from clinical settings.

As it was possible to have access to presentations over a period of 6 years, a study was designed aiming to identify trends of specific topic of interests. Figure 1.1 illustrates main trends of PP's topics more frequently addressed in presentations at the Positive Psychology Ibero-American Meetings. As shown, there was a steady increase in the interest in studying positive interventions for conventional therapies. This trend has been slightly decreasing since 2008, when the interest in empirically validated positive interventions began to rise.

Studies on happiness and well-being remain fairly constant over time and a U-shaped trend can be observed. At the beginning, this was the dominant topic in

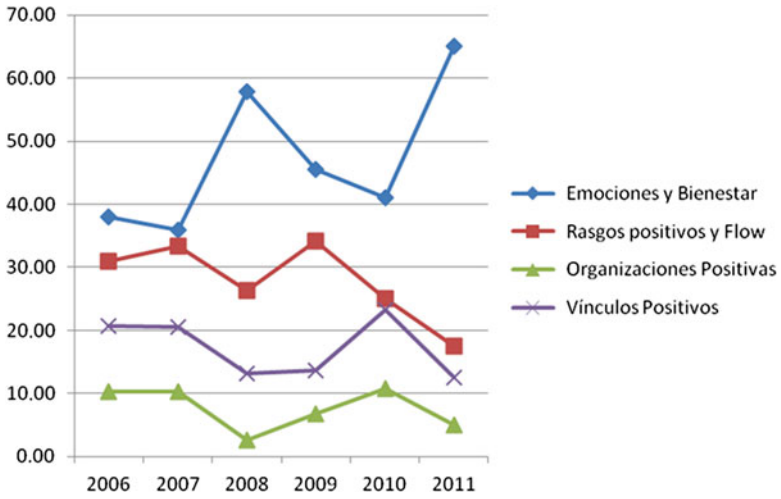

Fig. 1.2 Evolution over the years (2006–2011) of PP's topics grouped into four pillars

PP's meetings but afterward, the interests in this topic slightly decreased. However, in recent years an upward trend and a resurgence of studies on this construct can be reflected. In relation to interpersonal relationships, there was a peak of interest in 2007, but it can be observed that it has remained constant at previous levels from then on.

As shown in Fig. 1.2, if presentations at the meetings are grouped into PP's pillars, it can be observed an increasing interest over the years in studying topics from the first pillar (well-being and positive emotions). The remaining three pillars have shown a much lower interest during the 6-year period, being positive relationships and positive organizations the pillars with the lowest levels of attention from presenting professionals.

1.3.3 Positive Psychology's Impact on the Inter-American Congress of Psychology (2011)

For the third study a content analysis was conducted based on the papers presented at the Inter-American Congress of Psychology in Medellin, Colombia, in 2011. This is an international event held every 2 years, that congregates professionals almost exclusively from Latin America, both Spanish and Portuguese speakers. This event was considered for this study, as it brings together the largest number of psychologists from the American continent and is organized by the Inter-American Society of Psychology [*Sociedad Interamericana de Psicología*], institution with a history of more than 50 years in the region.

The aim of this study was to explore the impact of Positive Psychology in the context of a Latin-American conference of Psychology. In order to analyze presented

Table 1.6 Most frequent PP's topics presented at the Inter-American Congress of Psychology (2011)

Topics	%
Happiness/well-being	21.59
Interpersonal relationships	14.77
Resilience	11.36
Spirituality/religion/ forgiveness/gratitude	9.09
Quality of life	7.95
Creativity/flow	6.82

papers, same criteria of inclusion described for previous studies were applied for this research.

From a total of 1,662 works, 92 presentations at the event addressed topics related to positive constructs. This only represents a 5.53 % of the total. Table 1.6 shows PP most frequent topics lectured at the conference.

The most frequently presented topics were related to happiness and well-being (life satisfaction, subjective well-being, happiness), personal relationships (attachment, prosocial behavior, social support networks) and resilience (children, students and health professionals populations). These three topics were the most highly ranked and represented nearly 50 % of the presentations related to PP. Among the topics that received lower levels of attention – with a frequency of less than 3 % – were positive interventions, human strengths and posttraumatic growth.

When the mentioned presentations were grouped into the four pillars of Positive Psychology, it was found that the first two pillars – emotions and well-being and positive traits and flow – accounted for three-quarters of the papers with approximately 75 % of the total production. The study of positive organizations presented a very low impact, with less than 10 % of the presentations, while the interest in positive relationships appeared to be fairly important for professionals reaching 15.29 % of the presented papers.

In relation to participating countries, Mexico, Argentina and Colombia contributed with the largest number of presentations, accounting for 63 % of the total, followed by Peru and Brazil with an additional 22 %. Venezuela and Chile had a relatively lower contribution, with 8 % and 7 % respectively. It is worth mentioning that having a larger number of papers from Colombia was expected as the event took place in that country.

1.3.4 Comparison Between the 2nd International Congress of Positive Psychology (2011) and the Positive Psychology Ibero-American Meetings (2006–2011)

In the fourth study, a similar analysis to the previously described was conducted based on 474 presentations done at the 2nd International Congress of Positive Psychology held in Philadelphia, United States in July 2011. Identical parameters as

Table 1.7 Topics most frequently studied in Latin America compared to the rest of the world

Topics addressed in Latin America	Topics addressed in the rest of the world	Convergencies
PP and psychotherapy	Happiness/well-being	Happiness/well-being
Happiness/well-being	PP and education	PP and education
Interpersonal relationships	Positive organizations	Spirituality/religion/ forgiveness/gratitude
Spirituality/religion/ forgiveness/gratitude	Positive emotions	Positive interventions/ psychotherapy in general
Resilience	Character strengths	
Creativity and flow	Spirituality/religion/ forgiveness/gratitude	
PP and education	Positive interventions	
Practitioner-patient relationship		
Positive interventions		

Table 1.8 Comparison between Latin America and the rest of the world of topics grouped into PP's pillars

PP's pillars	Latin America (%)	Rest of the world (%)
Emotions and well-being	40	63
Positive traits and Flow	32	19
Positive organizations	10	13
Positive relationships	17	5

those considered for the Ibero-American meetings were applied, except for the variable 'time', as only 1 year was reviewed. Based on the international nature of this event, this research had a comparative purpose attempting to identify similarities and differences between PP's development in Latin America and in the rest of the world (See Table 1.7).

In relation to the topics addressed at the conference, Latin America shares with the rest of the world the interest in the study of psychological well-being and happiness, followed by the study of spirituality, forgiveness and gratitude. The educational field appeared to be the main area of PP's development. While there is in the region a concern with the study of positive interventions in combination with traditional approaches, the rest of the countries are focused on purely positive interventions, derived from Seligman's model. Other PP's constructs and areas of international interest, such as positive organizations, positive emotions and human strengths have not been developed yet in Latin America.

As shown in Table 1.8, when grouping presentations into the four pillars of Positive Psychology, both Latin America and other regions have focused on the study of the first pillar (well-being and positive emotions). It is noteworthy that international research on this pillar doubled the number of presentations originated in Latin America. While 'positive relationships' was an infrequent pillar in most regions, it has displayed a growing importance in Latin America.

In relation to the type of presentations received at the International Congress of Positive Psychology, 79 % of submissions portrayed result of research studies. A similar trend was observed in the Ibero-American meetings. However, this tendency was somewhat more prominent in this international event. Presentations related to the applied and theoretical fields had a much lower impact, representing less than 20 % of presented papers.

Finally, an analysis of participating countries was conducted aiming to review Latin-American impact on an international event. Forty-four percent of submissions were only from the United States. If other Anglo-speaking countries, such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Israel were also considered, these five countries accounted for 61 % of total presentations. In particular, Latin countries contributed with less than 10 % of the presentations. Participating countries in this congress were Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Chile, Venezuela and Mexico. Unfortunately, Colombia, Ecuador and Central-American countries were no represented at this international event.

1.4 Conclusion

The dissemination of PP in Latin America was not a homogeneous process, as some countries have welcomed it very early while others had shown little development. Mexico, Chile, Brazil and Argentina appeared to be the countries with the highest levels of scientific production related to Positive Psychology. The topics most frequently studied were psychological well-being, interpersonal relationships and psychotherapeutic interventions. Overall, Latin-American psychologists seemed to be concerned with the practical application of this perspective.

Even the majority of these professionals are researchers working at recognized universities, most professionals from the field of PP are interested in its application, and education emerges as the most important area of development.

It is worth mentioning the lack of development of modern PP constructs such as human strengths, positive emotions and positive organizations. These topics have received little interest in Latin America and are underrepresented in the research conducted in the area of Psychology. Psychologists from this region are concerned with combining PP's contributions with traditional intervention strategies in clinical settings. Still there are few positive psychologists participating at international level, as almost three quarters of scientific production presented at academic events comes from Anglo-speaking countries.

Overall, it can be concluded that PP was well received in Latin America. It is possible that the early introduction of PP in Spanish-speaking countries offers a series of advantages and disadvantages for Psychology's development in Latin America. Among the advantages, the consideration of positive and salugenic aspects in traditional intervention strategies is a remarkable and highly positive fact. Particularly, considering that the study of pathogenic aspects of human beings has been the traditional approach in Latin America. Among the disadvantages found, it should be mentioned that there is a thin division between Positive Psychology and pseudo-sciences such as alternative therapies, new age, mysticism and spiritual

exploration. Although these approaches might facilitate the transmission of PP's principles and ideas to the large community, it might also lead to the perception of PP as a non-serious field of psychological science.

The systematic study of positive constructs based on cultural diversity deserves a new chapter. The universality of psychological constructs is one of the fundamental principles of psychological science, as it allow for generalizations among groups of people; however, groups who speak different languages and who have different beliefs might differ in their manifestations from countries where most theories are developed (Casullo & Fernandez Liporace, 2006; Norenzayan & Heine, 2005).

Despite this, many psychologists assumed universality and tend to draw conclusions related to very specific populations (eg, university students, Caucasian populations, and middle socioeconomic level) extrapolating these results to broader cultural contexts, without specifically considering local variations. The universality assumption based on limited data is not just a theoretical, but also an empirical problem, as many intervention strategies are applied in different fields and contexts based on research with evident cultural biases (Casullo & Fernandez Liporace, 2006).

The top-down approach is the most frequently adopted by Latin-American psychologists, in terms of both theory and application, and there are only few exceptions to this rule. The acceptance of this working strategy makes cultural variations to be underrepresented. This leads to pseudo-etic characteristics or at least to be 'false universals' of the studied psychological constructs. In the reviewed PP's studies from the last decade, it is noteworthy the low priority given to cross-cultural studies and the little interest in local and cultural variations of positive constructs generally designed in the U.S. and Europe. A accurately Latin-American Positive Psychology should systematically study individuals' variations as products of a particular culture, in order to analyze which components are in fact universal (etic) and which ones derived from specific context (emic).

Does 'having a good life' have the same meaning in countries with natural disasters, political instability and recurring economic crises than in countries where these conditions are less frequent? Is it enough to only translate a foreign instrument to assess psychological well-being in order to measure cultural variations in South-American countries? It is likely that many of these questions would remain unanswered. The greatest challenge might be not only to analyze systematic variation of positive constructs due to culture, but also to study the reasons for these differences. This can only be achieved if cross-cultural studies are designed in order to explain variations found in the studied psychological constructs.

As outlined in this chapter, PP in Latin America has a promising future. It is currently being integrated into traditional psychological approaches and is well received by both general public and professionals. A slow but firm process is penetrating into universities and academic circles. The biggest challenge for the next decade is to engender a local Positive Psychology culturally adjusted to Latin contexts. Cross-cultural and intra-cultural studies should explore how Latin PP differs from or is similar to PP designed in Europe and the United States. Specific strategies to address low socioeconomic populations in situations of great instability ought to be considered. To date, there has been a good outcome in the field, but still remains that Latin American psychologists accept the challenge.

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Chapter 2
Latin-American Studies on Well-Being

Alejandro Castro Solano

2.1 Introduction

What makes people happy? What are the paths to achieve plenitude in life? These questions have occupied philosophers' minds throughout the history of humanity and have became one of the most complex and controversial topics in the psychological field during the last four decades (Delle Fave, Brdar, Freire, Vella-Brodrick, & Wissing, 2011). Positive Psychology (PP) has attempted to answer these questions and has established the basis for the study of happiness. Along this time, it has been developing explanatory theories and designing interventions that aim to increase individuals' well-being. Researchers have mainly studied happiness from two different concepts: subjective well-being – hedonic approach – and psychological well-being – eudaimonic approach (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Waterman, 1993).

The *hedonic* conceptualization involves the study of happiness focusing on positive emotions and life satisfaction (Diener, 2000; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985; Pavot & Diener, 2008). Authors like Diener and Fredrickson have highlighted the importance of life satisfaction and positive emotions on the pursuit of happiness. They posited that a happy person is the one who experiences more positive than negative emotions or has a dispositional tendency to be happy. This idea is based on the assumption that positive emotionality is closely related to personality traits and has a heritable genetic component. Therefore, it has little possibility of change (Avia & Vázquez, 1998; Costa & McCrae, 1980). It was also found that a happy person lives longer, has better physical health, acquire more

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fulfilling jobs and establishes good-quality personal relationships (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008). Moreover, positive emotions play an important role on physical health, social commitment and success.

Based on this hedonic perspective, Fredrickson developed the *Broaden-and-build theory*, which posits that positive emotions are central to human flourishing, as they help to broaden individuals' cognitive and behavioral repertoires and allow them to build a reservoir of physical, intellectual, psychological and social resources that would be available to face future crisis in life (Fredrickson, 2000, 2009; Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005).

The *eudaimonic* approach retrieves concepts from the Greek tradition, understanding well-being as the result of virtuous activities and the meaning given to life. Towards the end of the 1980s, some researchers on well-being, such as Carol Ryff, mentioned that happiness was more related to positive relationships and sense of purpose and meaning in life than to the experience of mere positive emotions. As a consequence, during the 1990s, PP's leaders established the need for creating a map of virtues and human strengths as a central task (refer to Chap. 6 for further details). This proposal is grounded on the idea that when people are aware of their personal strengths and apply them to a particular task, they reach a state of flow. This commitment – state of flow – reached when completing the activity derives into a great source of pleasure. This perspective involves a significant change in the concept of well-being, as considers it as a state not easily manipulated through money, temporary pleasure or with medication.

During the last decade, PP has gathered sufficient empirical evidence to demonstrate that achieving happiness through a eudaimonic route would last much longer than through a hedonic path (Peterson, Park, & Seligman, 2005). An eudaimonic happiness is related to personal growth and fulfillment at an individual level and associated with commitment to goals and shared values at a societal level (Massimini & Delle Fave, 2000; Ryff, 1989). The eudaimonic perspective of well-being integrates Ryff's theory of psychological well-being (1989), Antonovsky's construct of sense of coherence (1988), the self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2001), the concept of optimal selection (Csikszentmihalyi & Massimini, 1985), and Keyes' social well-being construct (Keyes, 1998), among others.

Consequently, psychological well-being has several components that have to be studied separately (Diener et al., 2009). It is different to study well-being in terms of positive emotions and cognitive components, such as life satisfaction, than based on personal growth and purpose in life. Although these two traditions in the study of well-being have remained separated, a unilateral approach has became the subject of strong debate (Kashdan, Biswas-Diener, & King, 2008; Waterman, 2008).

Keyes (2002, 2005, 2007) tried to unify the study of hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives through the concept of *flourishing*, developing a specific instrument that assesses social, emotional and psychological well-being. From this new perspective, well-being emerges as a result of completing meaningful tasks (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Table 2.1 summarizes the central aspects of the main lines of research on well-being.

Table 2.1 Differences between hedonic and eudaimonic well-being

Constructs	Type of well-being	Definition
Positive and negative feelings	Emotional well-being (Hedonic approach)	It is based on someone's spontaneous and immediate experience of pleasant and unpleasant feelings. It is the emotional reaction to a wide array of life events.
Life satisfaction	Emotional well-being (Hedonic approach)	It represents an overall assessment of one's life and the satisfaction resulting from the achievement of personal growth. A wide gap between goal achievement and ideals results in a lower life satisfaction. This is a hedonic perspective as it is influenced by the emotions present at the assessment time.
Psychological well-being	Positive functioning (Eudaimonic approach)	It is related to the challenges faced by individuals when striving for full development and functioning as human beings. It is evaluated at an individual level considering its multidimensional nature. It is composed of six dimensions: positive evaluation of oneself; sense of growth and development; sense of purpose in life; positive relations with others; environmental mastery and autonomy.
Social well-being	Positive functioning (Eudaimonic approach)	It is focused on the social tasks encountered by adults in their social structures and communities. It consists of some aspects that indicate to what extent individuals are properly functioning in their social world (neighbors, coworkers, citizens, etc.).

2.2 Well-Being in Latin-American Countries

In order to analyze studies on well-being conducted in Latin-American countries, a review of research articles published in indexed journals was performed. The searching criteria was limited to articles published in PsycINFO® between 1998 and 2012, in order to only include studies peer-evaluated previous to their publication. The introduced key words were *happiness, life satisfaction* and *well-being* and the search restricted to Spanish and Portuguese languages. Studies conducted in Spain or with Spanish populations were not included. As a result, only 53 articles were found under these criteria. Additionally, purely theoretical articles were discarded as they did not provide empirical data from the region. The final sample consisted of 41 research articles. Table 2.2 summarizes methodological aspects considered in this study.

As a result, it was found that countries with most publications on psychological well-being were Argentina, Colombia, Mexico and Peru. This group account for 82 % of the articles considered. In particular, Argentina represented 35 % of the literature on well-being.

Table 2.2 Methodological aspects of studies on well-being conducted in Latin America

Samples	Units of analysis	Analyzed variables
Research articles published in journals from the database PsycINFO in Spanish and Portuguese languages (1998–2012).	Articles whose key words were either: Well-being, life satisfaction or happiness	Research's country of origin. Year of publication Type of well-being considered (refer to Table 2.1). Population studied (adolescents, adults, students, etc.) If cultural variables were included: cross-cultural or emic.

Regarding type of well-being studied, half of the publications took into account the hedonic approach (50 %). These studies considered life satisfaction alone (22.5 %), focused on positive emotions and life satisfaction combined (15 %), or took into account emotional well-being separately (12 %). The remaining half of the articles consisted of studies related to psychological well-being from Ryff's perspective (17.5 %); research from a local or emic approach (17.5 %); and cross-cultural studies or research that included cultural variables (15 %). Overall, studies that included the assessment of cultural aspects accounted for 32 % of the total number of the articles reviewed.

In relation to the units of analysis, 32.5 % of the studies had adolescent samples and 35 % had adult samples from general population. A low percentage of articles (7.5 %) worked with patients with medical conditions, while the remaining 25 % was evenly divided between senior citizens and university students.

When considering years of publication, three periods were created: (1) Origins 1998–2002 (founding moment of the PP); (2) Consolidation phase 2003–2007 (following years to the International Positive Psychology Association's (IPPA) foundation); and (3) Expansion 2008–2012 (from the founding of the IPPA). It was found that articles on well-being were equally spread along the time with an increase in publications – 37 % approximately – during the last period.

In the following sections, conclusions will be discussed in detail and presented according to the studies' perspective: hedonic, eudaimonic and emic approached.

2.2.1 Studies on Hedonic Well-Being

Most studies conducted from the hedonic perspective have taken into consideration variables such as life satisfaction and positive and negative emotions and domain satisfaction. These studies yield findings consistent with the international literature, overall, people perceived themselves as happy or very happy. In particular, perceived well-being tends to be lower in specific groups such as drug users (Córdova-Alcaráz, Rodríguez-Kuri, & Díaz-Negrete, 2010), patients with severe medical conditions (Novoa Gómez, Vargas Gutiérrez, Obispo Castellanos, Pertuz Vergara, & Rivera Pradilla, 2010) and victims of political repression or expatriates for political reasons

(Abello-Llanos et al., 2009). Although these populations reported lower levels of well-being, their scores are not far from those for general population.

Well-being is mostly assessed in Latin America with ad-hoc scales designed for these studies and, in many cases; results are contrasted with those obtained through international scales. The scales most frequently used to evaluate results of these studies are: Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985), Delighted-Terrible Scale (DT; Andrews & Withey, 1976) and Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988).

In relation to participants' characteristics, studies were generally conducted with small samples or taking into account minority populations such as patients with medical conditions, senior citizens, university students, drug users and people who have suffered traumas, among others. Unfortunately, studies with general population and larger number of participants are scarce.

The psychological variables most frequently studied in this type of research were coping strategies, self-efficacy, motivation, social support networks and health habits. Positive relationships turned out to be the life domain more closely related to a higher life satisfaction.

2.2.2 Studies on Eudaimonic Well-Being

Latin-American studies that considered the eudaimonic approach were based on Ryff's (1989) conceptualizations. This author posited that until the 1990s, well-being was understood as the presence of positive emotionality and the absence of discomfort and negative emotions. Thus, if people experience positive affect, rather than negative affect, more frequently and for a longer period of time, they would be happier or more satisfied with life. Implicitly, well-being was associated with personality and emotions (Schumutte & Ryff, 1997). This notion of well-being leaves behind psychological theories of self-realization, life cycle, optimal mental functioning and meaning in life. Ryff questioned the study of psychological well-being as a unidimensional construct and highlighted its multidimensional feature (Ryff & Keyes, 1995), involving autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance.

Ryff (1989) has also mentioned that psychological well-being has significant variations according to age, gender and culture; and characterized it as consisting of 6 distinct dimensions: (1) positive appreciation of oneself; (2) ability to manage complex environments to suit personal needs and values; (3) quality relationships to others; (4) the belief that life has purpose and meaning in life; (5) the feeling that one will grow and develop throughout life; and (6) the sense of autonomy in thought and action. The existence of these dimensions was verified utilizing factor analysis techniques in studies on well-being conducted with general American population (Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

Under this perspective, some instruments were developed in Spanish languages in order to apply them to Latin-American contexts with adolescent and adult samples (Casullo & Castro Solano, 2000a; Castro Solano & Casullo, 2000). These instruments

were named 'Psychological Well-being Scale for Adolescents' (BIEPS-J) and 'Psychological Well-being Scale for Adults' (BIEPS-A) and consisted of a short scale with few items that assessed four of the six dimensions of well-being originally proposed by Ryff (purpose in life, personal relationships, environmental mastery and self-acceptance).

First studies were designed to verify tests' psychometric properties with adolescents between 13 and 18 years-old and to analyzed differences according to sex, age and residency. Research utilizing the BIEPS scale was conducted in different Argentinean regions (Metropolitan, Northeast and Patagonia) and also administered to adults in other Latin-American studies conducted in Peru, Chile and Cuba (Casullo, 2002). In general terms, there were no significant differences in well-being based on age, sex and geographic region. However, Cuba was the exception, presenting the lowest levels of psychological well-being comparing to the rest of the countries studied.

A subsequent study explored the relationship between psychological well-being and personality disorders in adolescents (Casullo & Castro Solano, 2000b). This research showed that two dimensions of psychological well-being, mastery environment and purpose in life, differentiated between young people with and without personality disorders. Adolescents with severe internalized and impulsive disorders perceived lower levels of psychological disorders than those adolescents without psychological disorders. It was concluded that high levels of psychological well-being acted as a protective factor when facing adverse life events in a sample of Argentinean young people between 15 and 20 years-old.

Other studies, administering the BIEPS scale, were conducted in an area of extreme poverty, in the northwestern region of Argentina (Tucumán). These adolescents reported low levels of psychological well-being and exhibited a poor use of coping strategies when facing problems (Contini, Colonel, Levin, & Estevez, 2003; Figueroa, Contini, Lacunza, Levin, & Suedan, 2008). These young people tend to apply the least adaptive strategy in those cases.

Barra (2010) analyzed the relationship between psychological well-being and gender-roles based on Bem's theory of masculinity and femininity (Bem, 1975). A relationship between well-being and male role stereotypes was found in a sample of Chilean university students. Participants who adjusted to masculine and androgynous gender-role stereotypes reported higher levels of psychological well-being than those students with more feminine gender-role stereotypes.

More recently, Marsollier and Aparicio (2011) studied psychological well-being with the BIEPS scale in a sample of public servants living in the city of Mendoza (Argentina). In line with international literature, high levels of psychological well-being was reported by this population.

2.2.3 Emic Studies

As most Positive Psychology´s constructs have been studied in the United States and Europe, the predominant research strategy has been the *imposed etic approach* (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 2006), "exporting" psychological constructs to

other cultures, assuming their universality and focusing on the similarities. However, this section will center on studies on psychological well-being conducted from an *emic* perspective and what is named in Latin America as *indigenous psychology*. This local approach tends to develop psychological constructs related to the socio and the cultural context where people are involved (Berry et al., 2006). While this perspective could be understood as merely local and with emphasis on psychological relativism, some authors believe that considering local variations of psychological constructs is an important step towards the search for universal principles of psychology (Sinha, 1997). Therefore, the studies discussed below describe what people understood for psychological well-being and the meaning giving to this well-being. In most cases, theoretical models and instruments used derived from US and European countries were not considered beforehand.

In Argentina, Casullo and Castro Solano (2001) conducted a study using qualitative methods in order to explore what young people understood for psychological well-being. The sample consisted of 271 male and female adolescents from a middle socio-economic level who lived in Buenos Aires and aged between 13 and 19 years. Incomplete sentences related to well-being were given in order to facilitate participants' responses with the first idea that come to their minds. Some examples were "Feeling good about yourself is ...."; "Well-being is…"; "I'm happy when…"; and "Being happy is…". Afterwards, adolescents had to describe situations in which they had experienced intense feelings of well-being. Three judges from the field of psychology coded the statements, using the content analysis technique, and assigned them into categories.

Results showed that well-being was firstly described as an *overall state of wellness and enjoyment* (e.g., having fun, enjoying life, the ability to enjoy what one has), and related to happiness or life satisfaction. Secondly, well-being was associated with *having good relationships with others* (spending time with friends, getting along with people one loves, maintaining good relationships with family) and *acceptance of the life one has* (accepting personal flaws, feeling satisfied with one's achievements; feeling confident with oneself, having self-esteem besides one's imperfections). The descriptions mentioned with lower frequency were related to *personal projects* (achieving goals, mastering one's purposes), *physical and mental health* and *lack of problems.*

Regarding situations involving psychological well-being, young people associated them with events involving good peer relationships and personal achievements (social meeting with friends, holidays, birthdays, early dating, etc.). Casullo and Castro Solano (2001) concluded that findings were partially consistent with Ryff's (1989) multidimensional conceptualization of well-being. While dimensions such as purpose in life, self-acceptance and personal relationships with others were found in the qualitative analysis, personal growth, environmental mastery and autonomy did not appear in the findings. Regarding events that evoke happiness, consistent with international literature, they are mostly related to establishing good peer-relationships (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008; Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005).

In Mexico, a study conducted by Anguas Plata (2001) utilized the *natural semantic networks* as a technique to explore the meaning given to psychological well-being

and its related-behaviors in the semantic memory. They surveyed 150 individuals from three different age-groups in Mexico City (15–21; 24–30 and 40–46 years-old). Participants had to mention words associated with certain stimuli-word provided by the researcher, such as satisfaction, adjustment and well-being needs. Results showed that the semantic structure of well-being was formed by concepts such as family, friends, goals, health, faith, economy, needs, safety, self-realization, self-esteem, satisfaction, balance and emotion. These terms were independent of participants' age and sex. The emotions most commonly associated with well-being were: satisfaction, pride, happiness, tranquility, love, joy, pleasure, enthusiasm, optimism, passion, affection and contentment. Based on this, Anguas Plata concluded that psychological well-being is the perception of homeostasis and a positive internal state, accompanied by a pleasant affective tone resulting from the satisfaction of basic and superior human needs. With these information, the author developed a scale to assess psychological well-being with Mexican population. This scale has two components: (1) affective-cognitive evaluation (satisfaction experienced in different aspects of life); and (2) emotional experience.

In Brazil, a study conducted by Albuquerque and Torres Tróccoli (2004) showed that international scales for the assessment of well-being were not adequate to Brazilian population as participants could not properly understand the items. Thus, they construct an instrument for Brazilian people by obtaining information to design the items through the focus-groups technique. Participants were asked to respond two trigger questions: "How do you feel when you perceive yourself as happy and satisfied with your life?", and "How do you feel when you perceive yourself as unhappy and dissatisfied with your life?". Factor analyzes revealed three hypothesized well-being dimensions: life satisfaction, positive affect and negative affect.

Ballesteros, Medina, and Caicedo (2006) inquired about how Colombians understand psychological well-being and which factors they consider contribute to its development. They surveyed 138 individuals, men and women, who sought psychotherapy at a specialized centre in Bogota, Colombia. A series of open questions were asked, such as: "What is psychological well-being for you?"; "What do you associate well-being with?"; "What does hinder and what does help to improve psychological well-being?"; "How does a person who is in a state of psychological well-being feel and behave?"; and "What aspects of the country macro-context affect Colombians' well-being?". Based on the responses, categories were created: (1) *Personal Dimension*: which includes emotions, psychological competences, overall state of balance, peace, lack of problems or concerns, life satisfaction, physical and psychological health; (2) *Social Dimension:* which includes social, family, couples, and friends personal relationships; (3) *Structural conditions:* which includes environmental conditions in different life domains such as, work, education, leisure time, social security, socio-economical and country's socio-political situation.

It was concluded that psychological well-being focuses on the personal dimension, specifically as a state of balance and psychological competences required to achieve good social ties. The social dimension indicates a clear association between the establishment of personal relationships and perceptions of psychological well-being. In a second level, well-being was associated with the lack of problems and the

experience of positive emotions, such as joy, happiness and tranquility. Regarding structural conditions, employment status, socio-economic situation, and country's insecurity and political conflict have a strong influence on the perception of psychological well-being. In sum, well-being is considered as a multidimensional construct composed for subjective, emotional-affective, cognitive, and social aspects.

In Peru, Yamamoto and Feijoo (2007) explored emic components of well-being in a sample of 550 participants who belonged to small and traditional Peruvian communities as well as marginal urban settlements. A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was used for this study. It was found that participants related their experiences of well-being to three different needs: having a better place to live; raising a family; and having and developing opportunities. These findings lead to the conclusion that well-being is a process of satisfying basic needs. This process begins by setting goals and continuous with the access to material resources for its implementation, what in turn, leads to a perception of achievement. Goals are associated with people's values and personality.

Alarcón (2002) also conducted a study with Peruvian adults in order to identify objects that make people happy and determine whether these elements vary according to gender, age and marital status. The guiding idea that prompted this work was that happiness implies the acquisition of certain desirable goods and the possession of these objects would generate the subjective experience of well-being. It was found that these goods had a varied nature (ethical, economic, religious, aesthetic, social, familiar, material and ideal). While some people achieve happiness from having wealth, others feel happy when achieving ideals of justice and freedom. Exploring a sample of 163 men and women from a middle socio-economic level from Lima, Alarcon found that having good health, living according to God's expectations and having a family were the most frequent desirable elements and facilitators of well-being.

Alarcón (2002) found that these three objects accounted for 71 % of individuals choices. Having money, enjoying freedom, being honest, having friends and being nice to others, having a stable job, and being well-educated were the categories with the least influence on perception of well-being. Regarding gender differences, living according to God's expectations was more important for women than for men. Young and single people mentioned goals related to success, while middle age individuals preferred good health. Results revealed that friendships and family are the main sources of happiness for people with middle and high socioeconomic status. A good income does not contribute to happiness in groups that have already satisfied their basic needs.

Overall, the findings presented in this section are consistent with the international literature on psychological well-being. Emphasizing different aspects, some studies give more weight to emotional well-being while others to psychological well-being. It is worth mentioning the lack of studies exploring the meaning of well-being with larger samples, and the absence of many Latin-American countries in this review. In general terms, studies used specific or very small samples (patients, indigenous people, adolescents), limiting the possibility to generalize the conclusions achieved. Unfortunately, emic studies on well-being were not found for Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay, Chile, Ecuador or Brazil.

2.3 Cross-Cultural Studies

One of the goals of cross-cultural studies is to validate the universality of psychological principles and theories in different cultures. Is in this way, psychological knowledge might become generalizable and valid to apply in a larger number of cultures (Berry et al., 2006). In order to conduct this type of studies, culture is considered as an independent variable while behaviors or principles to validate are taken as dependent variables. In this way, it is possible to compare the behavior of groups that have been naturally exposed to different cultures or levels of a cultural variable.

Regarding research strategies, it is common to find studies that compare several cultural groups (10 or more cultures) and those that only take into account a few cultural groups (2 or 3 cultures). Within this last classification, studies have been guided by a theoretical or an empirical approach (Williams & Best, 1990). In the latter cases, groups are selected by convenience and compared according to the psychological variables in consideration. This strategy is the most commonly used in research studies on psychological well-being in Latin American countries.

Castro Solano and Díaz Morales (2002) studied the relationship between life goals and life satisfaction with a sample of Argentinean and Spanish adolescents. This research was guided by the premise that life satisfaction is influenced by having goals and these goals are closely linked to the cultural context. The sample consisted of 816 male and female adolescents, between 15 and 18 years-old. Life goals were assessed with Little's (1983) methodology for evaluating personal projects. That is, asking participants to mention specific life goals they are working on at the moment of the study. Satisfaction was measured by an adaptation of Andrews and Withey's Dilighted-Terrible Scale (DT) (1976), taking into account life domains such as school, family, friends, fellow students, physical and psychological health. Results showed that there were different patterns of goals and satisfaction between countries.

Spanish adolescents expected little satisfaction derived from goal achievement despite facing just a few obstacles and having a degree of control over them. In general terms, these young people appeared as non-satisfied with their life projects and this dissatisfaction was closely linked to the personal relationships established in academic environments, such as friends and fellow students. In Argentina, the dominated pattern of life goals was characterized by poor personal growth and low social support. Similar to the Spanish sample, dissatisfaction was closely linked to the establishment of personal ties with peers. In relation to the degree of urbanization, it was observed a trend to perceive dissatisfaction in most spheres of life for those who live in highly populated areas. The more rural the area where adolescents lived, the more satisfied they perceived themselves in the majority of life dimensions evaluated. These variations in the type of life – rural and urban – were similar in both countries. Although some differences were found between Spain and Argentina in relation to life goals, a low perception of achievement was associated with the degree of dissatisfaction with personal relationships in both countries.

Londoño (2008) considered life satisfaction as an indicator of human and social development that can be affected by diverse life aspects such as properties, trust, values, and perceptions regarding country's governability and function of democracy. The World Values Survey database (Inglehart, 2003) was utilized for this study and the units of analysis were 31 countries with different human development indexes. Results showed that variables related to individuals' external conditions have a lower possibility of explaining life satisfaction than variables named as *functionalities*. This factor consisted of current health perception, satisfaction with economic status, possibility of saving, perceived freedom of choice, and control over life. Economic satisfaction and real income are not related to satisfaction in the same manner. While salaries showed a low association with life satisfaction, the variable functionalities showed a strong significant relationship. Thus, it was concluded that life satisfaction can be an indicator of development, affected by personal interpretations more than by objective living conditions.

Miguel, Oliver Germes, Navarro Pardo, Melendez Moral, and Molina Sena (2009) studied psychological well-being with senior citizens in Dominican Republic and Spain. The study was designed with the purpose of exploring different factors that could influence perceptions of psychological well-being in a sample of 1,296 adults over 65 years old residing in Dominican Republic and 476 adults with the same characteristics, residing in Spain. Results showed that in both countries, sociodemographic variables had a multivariate and an univariate effect on well-being. However, they showed a low sizes effect. Age was negatively related to well-being while level of education was positively associated with it. Regarding marital status, married individuals reported higher levels in some well-being domains that single participants. Country of residence was the factor with the largest effect, participants from Dominican Republic reported a significant lower level of well-being that their counterparts in Spain, even when controlling for other factors. It was concluded that, given the magnitude of the effect size on all well-being dimensions of the variable country of residence, the importance of cultural and sociopolitical factors were implicit in this study.

Finally, two studies considered well-being at work based on Warr's theory and the differences among diverse cultural contexts. One research study explored the role played by affective and personality factors as predictors of work well-being with a sample of Spanish and Mexican teachers (Laca Arocena, Mejía Ceballos, Yáñez Velasco, & Mayoral Sánchez, 2011). The other study analyzed the relationship between implicit theories of leadership and well-being at work, considering leader-follower relationship as a mediating variable, in four culturally different regions of Argentina (Nader & Castro Solano, 2010). The review of these studies leads to the conclusion that there is a lack of studies describing cultural differences, and in general, research takes into consideration a small number of cultural groups and there are just a few. Cross-cultural studies which include Latin countries and explore psychological well-being and its relationship with other variables are scarce.

It should be noted that cross-cultural studies conducted in Ed Diener's laboratory deserve a separate chapter (Diener & Suh, 2000; Diener & Tov, 2009; Morrison, Tay, & Diener, 2011; Tay & Diener, 2011). Although he has included

Latin-American countries in most of his research, Diener's purpose was to explore the universality of constructs related to well-being rather than to study individual differences at country level and among nations. It was found that there are unique predictors of happiness in each culture. Self-esteem, consistency and life goals emerge as weaker predictors of happiness in collectivist societies than in individualist societies. In particular, Latin people are much happier than East-Asian people when considering positive emotions. Moreover, the importance given to the experiences of happiness varies from one culture to another. Regarding instruments, Diener considers different cultures react in different way to the same items and scale's format. Still, research has not found a significant effect of the translations used to connote well-being in different cultures.

2.4 Conclusion

Overall, based on previous studies, Latin-American people perceive themselves as happy or very happy. However, the conclusion cannot be generalizable to every country. Although well-being studies, both from the hedonic and eudaimonic approach, have been conducted in the region since PP's beginnings, research has been atomized and has not been included in major research projects. Moreover, researchers generally used small samples – mainly convenience samples – and have rarely conducted intra-cultural and cross-cultural studies in the region.

Only three countries have produced most of the research on psychological well-being – Mexico, Argentina and Peru – and not much is known about this construct in the rest of Latin America. Even though there are several studies on well-being conducted by Diener's laboratory, from a hedonic perspective, the purpose of this research have been exploring the universality of findings on well-being obtained in the United States, rather than examining individual or intra-cultural differences.

The majority of the research studies reviewed for this chapter has used an etic imposed approach and only a few cases have considered the variants of an emic perspective. What does *being happy* mean for someone from Latin America? What are the experiences related to happiness in different countries? What makes a Latin-American person happy? Although based on the findings presented in this chapter, it is possible to have an idea of the responses, several questions remain unanswered.

Studies exploring cross-cultural and intra-cultural differences, particularly in Latin America continue to be scarce. This statement becomes even more important when considering that many Latin-American countries have a large percentage of aboriginal people who might emphasize intra and inter-cultural differences. This is particularly prominent in large-territory countries such as Brazil and Argentina. To date, there is no empirical evidence regarding these individual and group differences.

In relation to instruments to assess well-being, international scales – such as SWLS, PANAS and DT – are mainly used, as well as some local instruments

designed based on well-known theories with major impact. This regionalization of the instruments helps to understand well-being dimensions in different countries and conduct comparisons between regions. This latter trend appears to be the most common practice in Latin America.

In sum, although the study of psychological well-being has early captured the attention of Latin-American psychologists, a regional effort to study this construct has not been developed yet. The main challenge for the coming years is to combine a local (emic) approach with the knowledge obtained in Europe and the United States. A collective effort to integrate different countries in a single research project might allow a better understanding psychological well-being for Latin-American citizens. The unstable political and economic situations, the oscillating legal certainty, the gap among social-classes, the prevalence of poverty and the large size of aboriginal population characterize Latin America. Despite this negative scenario, Latin-American people have developed strategies to live and be happy.

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Chapter 3
Positive Psychological Assessment in Latin America

Maria Laura Lupano Perugini

3.1 Introduction

The present chapter aims to describe Latin-American development of psychological instruments to assess Positive Psychology (PP) constructs. As PP has not received as much attention in Latin America as in the United States (US), leading authors have suggested to conduct cross-cultural studies in order to extend and verify its dissemination in different cultural contexts (Delle Fave, Massimini, & Bassi, 2009). For this purpose, the International Positive Psychology Association (IPPA) has launched an Ibero-American chapter by creating an international committee – formed by Spain, Portugal and Latin-American countries – aiming to understand PP's specificity in Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking contexts. In this regard, Latin America presents a double challenge: On the one hand, developing assessment tests from a new theoretical framework; and on the other hand, solving the debate over constructing new instruments or adapting tests previously developed.

When same psychological constructs are measured in different cultural contexts, it cannot be assumed that results would be similar and comparable among these groups. As intervention programs are established based on results from research studies and these might have evident cultural bias, instruments designed to measure psychological variables should be statically tested in order to establish structural and metric equivalences among different socio-cultural contexts (Byrne et al., 2009). The universality assumption is not only a theoretical problem but also an empirical concern (Casullo & Fernandez Liporace, 2006).

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However, there are several reasons why tests are commonly adapted from one language or culture to another one. One of the main motives is the possibility to conduct comparative studies among countries, and the fact that is quicker, more practical and less expensive than constructing a new test (Cardoso Ribeiro, Gómez-Conesa, & Hidalgo Montesinos, 2010; Hambleton, 1994).

Nevertheless, when an assessment instrument is adapted, the changing nature and specificity of the culture of origin should be considered. As culture is neither stable nor permanent, it must be taken into account by professionals that develop instruments as well as test's users who apply them with different populations (Fernandez Liporace, Cayssials, & Pérez, 2009).

3.2 Positive Psychological Assessment in Latin America

As explained in Chap. 1, Positive Psychology was introduced in Latin America by Maria Martina Casullo with the article *Salugenic or Positive Psychology: Some considerations* [Psicología salugénica o positiva. Algunas reflexiones] (Casullo, 2000). Only 2 years after PP's beginnings with Martin Seligman's inaugural speech as President of the American Psychological Association. Since then, a series of research projects were conducted in Argentina in order to address main areas of study that PP has developed in the US. As a complementary approach to the clinic model focused on patients' dysfunctional aspects, Casullo attempted to redirect professionals' attention towards salugenic factors and the construction of local instruments to assess them (Casullo, 2000). This initial interest was gradually disseminating in Latin America and currently, most countries in the region have professional associations dedicated to the study of Positive Psychology with a local approach. Countries, such as Argentina, Mexico and Peru, have a prolific research activity on assessment instruments while others are still in the initial phases of exploration and development.

For the purpose of this chapter, a literature review was conducted to explore Latin-American development on psychological tests to assess positive variables. Considering science as a social institution of public nature that can be pictured in scientific productions (Mariñelarena-Dondena & Klappenbach, 2010), main sources of publication were analyzed. For the present review, databases with a large production in Spanish language and mainly from Latin contexts, such as EBSCO – REDALYC – LILACS – SCIELO – PSYCINFO, were explored. Renowned indexed journals were considered, based on their high regional impact and the interest of researchers in publishing their findings in these publications. Same examples are: the 'Latin-American Journal of Psychology' [*Revista Latinoamericana de Psicología, RLP*], the *Inter-American Journal of Psychology* [*Revista Interamericana de Psicología, RIP*], the *Ibero-American Journal of Psychological Assessment* [*Revista Iberoamericana de Evaluación Psicológica, RIDEP*], the '*Journal of Psychology, Pontifical Catholic University of Peru* [*Revista de Psicología de la Pontificia Universidad Católica de Perú*], and *Psycho-debate Journal* [*Revista Psicodebate*].

Additionally, abstract books from regional congresses and scientific meetings that include studies on PP and cover the production of most Latin-American researchers were reviewed. In particular, the following events were considered: the 'Positive Psychology Ibero-American Meetings' [*Encuentros Iberoamericanos de Psicología Positiva*] held in Argentina between 2006 and 2011; the 'International Congresses of Research and Professional Practice in Psychology' [*Congresos Internacionales de Investigación y Práctica Profesional en Psicología/Jornadas de Investigación*] held between 2000 and 2011; and the '33rd Inter-American Congress of Psychology' [*XXXIII Congreso Interamericano de Psicología*] held in Colombia in 2011.

Both literature reviews, from databases and abstract books, only took into consideration articles whose authors were from Latin America, their topics focused on Positive Psychology and were published between 2000 and 2012. This period was chosen as 2000 is considered the foundational year for Latin-American Positive Psychology. Considering that research production is constant, the present literature review does not pretend to be a complete description of tests used in the region, but it is an exhaustive attempt to explore Latin-American positive psychological assessment.

In the conducted literature review, it was found that several Latin-American studies used "imported" instruments without their corresponding validity and reliability tests to demonstrate their psychometric properties. In many cases, only linguistic adaptations were made by translating and/or adjusting items. This might be the reason why the number of published articles on assessment instruments to measure positive constructs broadly exceeds the amount of studies that will be presented in this chapter, related to.

3.2.1 Assessment of Positive Psychology Pillars

The following sections introduce Latin-American development in relation to test construction and adaptation of instruments used to study concepts of Positive Psychology. Assessment tests are presented according to PP's pillars as proposed by Martin Seligman (2002): the study of *positive emotions, positive traits, positive institutions* and a fourth pillar, added in 2009, *positive relationships* (social life).

The *first pillar* is purely hedonistic as considers that happiness is achieved by increasing and experiencing in life as many pleasant moments as possible. These happy states can be achieved by practicing skills such as mindfulness and savoring. However, there are also positive emotions related to the past, as gratitude and forgiveness, and to the future, as hope and optimism. The conducted literature review included instruments that assess positive emotions, happiness, life satisfaction and well-being (specifically subjective well-being).

Regarding the *second pillar*, one of its central concepts is flow, which refers to the mental state of operation and the pleasure obtained when committed to an effective task, having the sense of being absorbed by the activity and loosing track of the time. A state of flow requires effort and is not as quickly reached as positive

emotions: It is necessary to use personal strengths to experience more flow in life. According to Peterson and Seligman (2006), strengths are another important aspect within this second pillar, as they are psychological ingredients that define *virtues*, understanding these latter ones as morally praiseworthy behavior. These authors claimed that there are six virtues that tend to be present: courage, justice, humanity, temperance, wisdom and transcendence. In the literature review conducted, assessments tests that measure flow and personal strengths were included as well as some instruments that assess variables associated with positive traits such as humor styles, resilience, values and openness to other.

The *third pillar* is related to the application of personal strengths in helping others to develop their potential and belonging and serving something that people believe is larger than themselves. That is, use one's skills to the service of others in order to get meaning in life (Castro Solano, 2010). Usually, this process takes place in different social institutions such as family, work, school and community. In the conducted literature review, it was included assessment tests that measure diverse aspects related to positive organizations and instruments that assess variables, such as spirituality, that might contribute to obtain meaning in life.

Finally, Seligman added a *fourth pillar* related to positive relationships, which includes the study of social ties. According to the author, research has shown that people tend to be happier when they are surrounded by others. As this PP's pillar is still under study and is not as systematized as the previously described, in the literature review were included instruments that assess aspects related to social relationships and related positive variables. The constructs reviewed were attachment, social support, parenting styles and love styles.

PP's pillars can be considered as different paths to increase well-being. In this line, the route of pleasure and positive emotions leads to what is known as *a pleasant life*, while the exercise of character strengths, the commitment to a task and the experience of flow would lead to *an engagement life*. The application of personal strengths to help others and the service to something bigger than oneself – e.g., spirituality– outlines a path that leads to *a meaningful life*. The combined presence of these routes formed what is known as *full life* (Seligman, Park, & Steen, 2004).

The findings found in the conducted review are presented in each pillar by analyzing country's contribution to the field of psychological assessment, the number of locally developed tests vs. adapted instruments, tests' psychometric properties, and theoretical models on which instruments are grounded.

3.3 Psychological Assessment of Positive Psychology First Pillar in Latin America

As previously mentioned, this first pillar mainly focused on the study of positive emotions and life satisfaction. Tables 3.1 and 3.2 present assessment instruments used in Latin America to measure positive emotions about the past, the present and the future and its related variables. These tables describe test's authors, year and country of origin of the research studies found in the conducted literature review.

Table 3.1 Instruments to assess PP's first pillar in Latin America: positive emotions (present moment), happiness, life satisfaction and well-being

Instrument's name	Authors	Year	Country
Positive Emotions Questionnaire [*Cuestionario de Emociones Positivas, CEP*]	Schmidt	2006	Argentina
Trait Meta-Mood Scale, TMMS-24[a] [*Escala de Metaconocimiento de Estados Emocionales*]	Regner	2009	Argentina
Positive and Negative Affect Scale [*Escala de Afectos Positivos y Negativos*]	Alarcón	2008	Peru
Positive and Negative Affect Schedule, PANAS[a]	Moriondo, Palma, Medrano and Murillo	2012	Argentina
Positive and Negative Affect Schedule, PANAS[a]	Robles and Páez	2003	Mexico
Satisfaction with Life Scale, SWLS[a]	Casullo and Castro Solano	2000	Argentina
Life Satisfaction Subscale for Elderly People [*Sub-escala de Satisfacción de Vida en Adultos Mayores*]	Bonilla Muñoz, Castro Cruz, Virseda Heras and Ramirez Aviles	2011	Mexico
Life Satisfaction Inventory-A, LSI-A[a]	Prado, Rojas and Marin	2009	Chile
Happiness Scale [*Escala de Felicidad*]	Alarcón	2006	Peru
Authentic Happiness Inventory[a]	Vásquez Velázquez	2011	Mexico
Happiness Index [*Index de Felicidad*]	Castro Solano and Lupano Perugini	2011	Argentina
Memorial University of Newfoundland Scale of Happiness, MUNSH[a] (adapted for elderly people)	Moyano Díaz, Flores Moraga and Soromaa,	2010	Chile
Couple Happiness Scale [*Escala de Felicidad en la Pareja*]	Pozos-Gutiérrez, Rivera-Aragón and Reyes-Lagunes	2011	Mexico
Multidimensional Scale for Assessing Subjective Well-being [*Escala multidimensional para la medición del bienestar subjetivo*]	Anguas Plata and Reyes Lagunes	1999–2001	Mexico
Subjective Well-being Scale [*Escala de Bem-Estar Subjetivo, EBES*].	Albuquerque and Tôrres Tróccoli	2004	Brazil
Elderly Caregivers Subjective Well-being Scale [*Escala de Bienestar Subjetivo de Cuidadores de Adultos Mayores, EBEMS/CFAM*]	Domínguez Guedea et al.	2011	Mexico
Subjective Well-being Inventory[a]	Omar, Paris, Aguiar de Souza, Silva, and Del Pino Peña	2009	Argentina
Subjective Well-being Inventory [*Inventario de bienestar subjetivo*]	Vera Noriega and Tánori Aguilar	2002	Mexico
Psychological Well-being Scale [*Escala de bienestar psicológico-BIEPS*]	Casullo	2003	Argentina
Psychological Well-being Scale[a]	Balcázar Nava, Loera Malvaez, Gurrola Peña, Bonilla Muñoz and Trejo González	2008	Mexico
Psychological Well-being Scale (29 items) [*Escala de bienestar psicológico, 29 ítems*]	Clavijo and Reynel	2011	Colombia

Note: Instruments with [a] are local adaptations of international tests

Table 3.2 Instruments to assess PP's First Pillar in Latin America: Positive emotions (past and future moments)

Instrument's name	Authors	Year	Country
Dispositional Gratitude Scale [*Escala de Gratitud Disposicional, EGRADI*]	Moyano et al.	2011	Argentina
Gratitude Scale [*Escala de Gratitud*]	Alarcón	2011	Peru
Forgiveness Scale [*Escala de Capacidad de Perdonar, CAPER*]	Casullo	2004	Argentina
Revised Life Orientation Test, LOT-R[a]	Vera Villarroel, Córdova-Rubio and Celis-Atenas	2009	Chile
Dispositional Optimism/Pessimism Scale [*Escala de Optimismo/ Pesimismo Disposicional*]	Diaz Sosa	2011	Mexico
Herth Hope Scale[a]	Arnau, Martínez, de Guzmán, Herth, and Konishi	2010	Peru
Hope Scale for Elderly People [*Escala de Esperanza para adultos mayores*]	Sánchez Estrada et al.	2011	Mexico

Note: Instruments with [a] are local adaptations of international tests

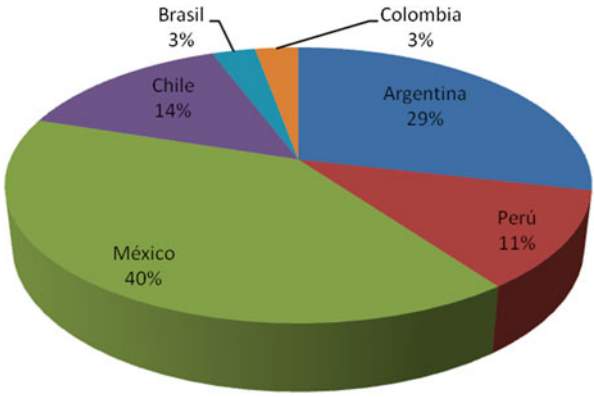

Fig. 3.1 Percentages of scientific production to assess PP's first pillar per country

Regarding countries' scientific production and contribution to the field of positive psychological assessment, as shown in Fig. 3.1, most tests that measure positive emotions were developed or adapted in Mexico and Argentina. These two countries respectively represent 40 and 29 % of the published studies, followed by Chile, Peru, Brazil and Colombia with lower contribution rates.

In relation to the number of test locally developed vs adapted versions of international instruments, Fig. 3.2 shows that the number of assessment tools developed in Latin America exceeds the amount of tests adapted in the region. However, it is worth mentioning that most of the instruments constructed in Latin-American countries are essentially based on already designed tests.

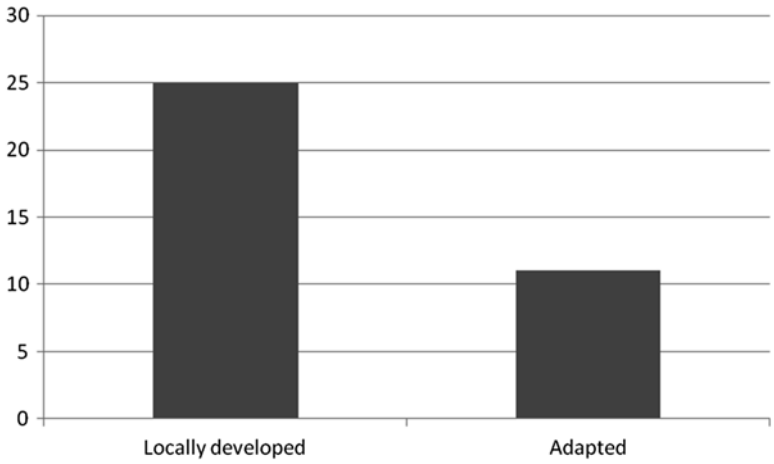

Fig. 3.2 Number of instruments to assess PP's first pillar adapted and locally developed

Regarding psychometric properties -*test reliability* and *test validity* – all instruments described in the present chapter have met acceptable statistical levels. Most studies have employed *exploratory factor analysis* and in some cases *confirmatory factor analysis* in order to explore test validity and the multidimensional or unidimensional nature of the construct evaluated. Only a few studies have also explored *convergent validity*, correlating results from the instrument on validation process with the results from existing and already validated tests. In terms of *test reliability*, almost all studies obtained *internal consistency*. In most cases, results showed a Cronbach's alpha coefficient above .75, an adequate statistical level.

Only few studies found for this first pillar used different procedures from the previously mentioned. For instance, for the Brazilian *Subjective Well-being Scale* an item analysis was performed applying the Item Response Theory (IRT), while the Modified Natural Semantic Network technique was used in order to construct and validate the *Multidimensional Scale for Assessing Subjective Well-being*.

In relation to the theoretical model on which instruments are grounded, Positive Psychology embraces different perspectives on well-being. This construct is considered to comprise three aspects: *positive affect, negative affect and life satisfaction*. Several studies focused on the assessment of emotional states, in order to identify whether well-being increases as a consequence of positive emotions' intensity or emotions' frequency (e.g., Diener, 1984; Diener, Colvin, Pavot, & Allman, 1991). Other studies have explored life satisfaction, a cognitive component more stable than emotional states, resulting from people's global judgment about how their lives have been. This broad conceptualization of well-being is usually referred as subjective well-being (Diener, 1984, 2000). It should be noted that, although based on different theoretical definitions and approaches of well-being, most studies obtained similar results and arrived to similar conclusions (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998).

This *hedonic perspective* of well-being considers that happy individuals tend to experience more positive than negative emotions. That is, the model of life satisfaction strongly emphasized and promoted in Western cultures (Castro Solano, 2010) For instance, many of the instruments presented in Table 3.1 are based on this hedonic theory of well-being, such as the *Positive and Negative Affect Scale*; the *Satisfaction with Life Scale*; the *Happiness Scale*; and the *Subjective Well-being Scale*.

However, there are other definitions of well-being based on a *eudaimonic approach* that recovers the concept from the Greek tradition and considers well-being as a multidimensional process. In particular, Carol Ryff (1989) questioned the classic unidimensional approach to the study of satisfaction that has understood psychological well-being as the absence of distress or disorders, ignoring theories about self-realization, life cycles, optimal mental functioning and meaning in life (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Some researchers proposed that, when studying well-being, it is necessary to take into account the relationship between the individual and the context in addition to individual characteristics related to positive and negative affect and life satisfaction. Other authors have also emphasized that, beyond just experiencing intense emotions, it is important to consider variables such as having purpose and meaning in life. From this perspective, it would be possible to achieve happiness in more stable way (Peterson, Park, & Seligman, 2005).

Instruments described in Table 3.1 that are grounded on a eudaimonic perspective are mainly based on Ryff's original instrument to assess psychological well-being (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Tests developed under this conceptualization, such as Casullo's psychological well-being scale, usually include different dimensions: for instance, autonomy, control of situations, personal relationships, projects and self-acceptance.

PP's first pillar also includes psychological tests to assess past and future affect. As shown in Table 3.2, instruments designed to measure past-oriented emotions focus on the assessment of gratitude and forgiveness. These scales are mainly based on Emmons, McCullough, Hargrave and Sells' concepts, understanding these emotions as states of recognition and restoration that lead to individuals' well-being (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; McCullough, 2000; Sells & Hargrave, 1998). Regarding tests to measure future-oriented emotions, there are instruments based on Scheier, Carver, and Bridges's (1994) dispositional optimism, and on Herth's (1990) and Snyder's (2000) theories of hope.

3.4 Psychological Assessment of Positive Psychology Second Pillar in Latin America

When a literature review was conducted in order to identify psychological tests to assess constructs from the second pillar such as, flow, strengths and virtues, it was found that research on these topics are scarce in Latin America. As shown is Table 3.3, Argentina is the only country that have published studies on the construction of instruments to assess these variables.

Table 3.3 Instruments to assess PP's second pillar in Latin America: flow, strengths and virtues

Instrument's name	Authors	Year	Country
Optimal Experience Scale for Children [Cuestionario de experiencia óptima (flow) para niños y adolescentes]	Mesurado	2008	Argentina
Virtues and Strengths Inventory [Inventario de Virtudes y Fortalezas-IVyF]	Cosentino and Castro Solano	2010	Argentina
Structured Interview to Assess Children's and Adolescents' Strengths [Entrevista estruturada para evaluar fortalezas en niños y adolescents, EFNA]	Mikulic and Fernandez	2006	Argentina

Regarding *test design,* the first two instruments described in Table 3.3 are presented in an inventory-format (Cosentino & Castro Solano, 2010; Mesurado, 2008), while the last one was originally designed as part of an exploratory-descriptive study consisting of a structured interview (Mikulic & Fernandez, 2006). In terms of test validity and reliability, all instruments have demonstrated adequate psychometric properties.

Another series of instruments found in the literature review to assess concepts related to the second pillar, measure variables such as *humor styles, resilience* and *values.* Regarding *humor styles*, there are adaptations of Martin's *Humor Styles Questionnaire* (*HSQ,* Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, 2003) conducted in Argentina, Venezuela and Peru (Refer to Cassaretto & Martinez, 2010; Cayssials & Perez, 2005; Rodriguez Torres & Feldman, 2009). In relation to *resilience* assessment, some instruments were developed in Latin America based on Rutter's (1993) and Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker's (2000) perspectives, such as the *Scale of Resilience in Mexicans (RESI-M*) in Mexico (Paloma Gómez Lever & Valdez, 2010), the *Resilience Factors Inventory* in Peru (Lévano Salgado, 2005) and the *Family Resilient Potential Inventory* in Argentina (Caruso & Mikulic, 2010).

Regarding the construct *values*, most assessment tests are based on Schwartz's (2001) theory and define them as desirable and transituational goals that vary in importance and serves as guiding principles in people's lives. This model proposes ten *motivational types of values* – self-direction, universalism, benevolence, conformity, tradition, security, power, achievement, hedonism, and stimulation – organized in two bipolar dimensions: Openness to change/conservation and self-transcendence/self-enhancement (Schwartz, 1994, 2001). Countries such as Argentina, Chile and Peru have local adaptations of Schwartz's *Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ)* (Refer to Barría et al., 1999; Ezcurra, 2003; Fernandez Liporace, Ongarato, Saavedra, & Casullo, 2005). Additionally, there are psychological assessment tests to study values that, based on the same theoretical model, have been constructed in Latin America. Some examples are the Self-report Scale of 55-Values [*Escala Autoplicada de 55 Valores*] in Venezuela (Angelucci et al., 2009); and the Contextualized Values Questionnaire [*Cuestionario de Valores Contextualizados –VAL*] (Casullo & Castro Solano, 2004) and the Survey of

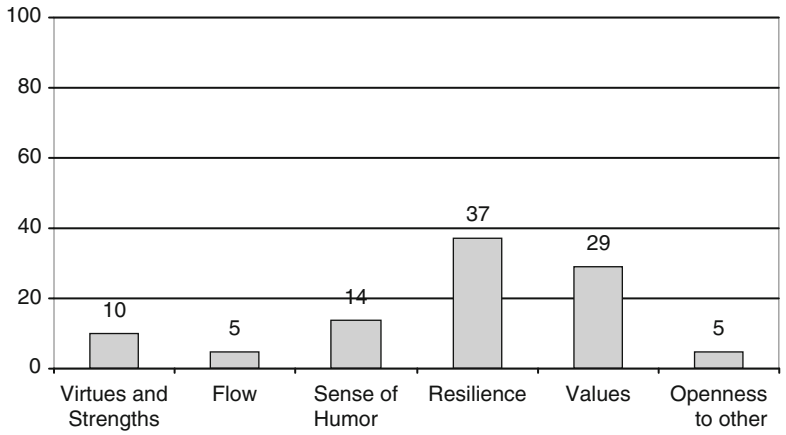

Fig. 3.3 Percentage of instruments to assess PP's second pillar per construct

Interpersonal Values *[Cuestionario de Valores Interpersonales]* (Soto, Wichern, & Rivas, 2004), both in Argentina.

Another construct that can be considered as part of this second pillar is *openness to other.* It implies a genuine interest in relating with people from a different culture (Fowers & Davidov, 2006). In Argentina, Cosentino, Torres, and Castro Solano (2010) designed a questionnaire named *Openness to Other Questionnaire* that has been tested with military and civilian samples.

However, it is worth mentioning that other countries, such as Colombia, are currently performing studies but their results have not been published yet (Salazar Piñeros, 2011). Hence, in terms of countries' scientific production and contribution to the assessment of PP's second pillar, it was found that Argentina has the highest rate with 48 % of the psychological tests studied in the region, followed by Peru and Mexico with 14.2 % and Chile, Brazil and Colombia with 4.7 %.

Regarding the number of tests developed or adapted per PP construct, as shown in Fig. 3.3, most instruments found in the literature review focused on the assessment of *resilience* and *values*. However, the main topics of this second pillar, flow and virtues, have not received as much attention and assessment instruments for their study are scarce.

3.5 Psychological Assessment of Positive Psychology's Third Pillar in Latin America

The results form the literature review for this third pillar show that regarding countries' contribution to the field of PP psychological assessment, Brazil has the highest rate of scientific production (63 %), followed by Argentina (27 %)

and Mexico (9 %). It is worth noting that a significant less number of studies on assessment instruments was found for this pillar-positive institutions – than for the previous ones – positive emotions and positive traits.

Positive organizations, a central topic of this pillar, is associated with the *Positive Organizational Psychology,* an area within PP that focuses on the study of psychological skills and strengths that can be measured, developed and effectively managed to improve work performance (Nelson & Cooper, 2007). In Argentina, Alicia Omar has been working on this topic since 2001 and adapted the *Organizational Commitment Scale* (Omar, 2005). This instrument measures the extent to which a person indentifies with an organization and is willing to continue working for it, a commitment that, in turn, increases employee's efficiency and well-being. Another important work in the area is the design of the *Psychological Capital Scale* for adults (Omar, Salessi, & Vaamonde, 2011). Psychological capital has been defined as a positive and developmental state characterized by high self-efficacy, optimism, hope and resiliency (Luthans & Youssef, 2007).

In Brazil, several studies have been conducted in order to assess well-being at work. Paschoal and Tamayo (2008) designed the 'Work Well-being Scale' [*Escala de bem-estar no trabalho*] to assess job related well-being, according to the dimensions obtained by factorial analyses: positive and negative affect and sense of accomplishment. Campos Dessen and Torres da Paz (2010) developed an instrument to identify personnel indicators of well-being at work (*Instrumento de indicadores de bem-estar pessoal nas organizacoes*). For this instrument, items were based on existing research and drawn from data gathered through interviews with personnel. After conducting factorial analyses and experts' reviews of the resulting factors, ten indicators of well-being at work were obtained: salary, relationship with colleagues and superiors, recognition and growth opportunities, among others. Based on this study, Tamayo, Pinheiro, Trócolli, and Paz (2000) developed a scale named 'Perceived Organizational Support Scale' [*Escala de Suporte Organizacional Percebido, ESOP*] to assess organizational resources and support that allow employees managing work overload more effectively.

It was also found for this pillar a series of instruments that were designed to assess *work values*. Porto and Tamayo (2003) defined work values as principles or beliefs about goals or desired rewards that people try to achieve in working settings. These values are organized hierarchically and not only guide individuals' behavior but also their evaluations of work's environment, alternatives and outcomes. Two tests were designed to assess values in Brazil, the 'Revised Work Values Scale' [*Escala Revisada de Valores Relativos ao Trabalho, EVT-R*] (Porto & Tamayo, 2003) and the 'Organizational Values Inventory' [*Inventário de Valores Organizacionais*] (Tamayo, Mendes, & Torres da Paz, 2000). While the former scale assesses values, such as professional accomplishment and prestige; the latter one explores dimensions such as autonomy versus conservatism, concepts related to the theoretical model discussed in the previous section.

In Argentina, Góngora and Grinhauz (2011) have adapted the *Meaning in Life Questionnaire* – developed by Steger, Oishi, and Kashdan (2009) – an instrument

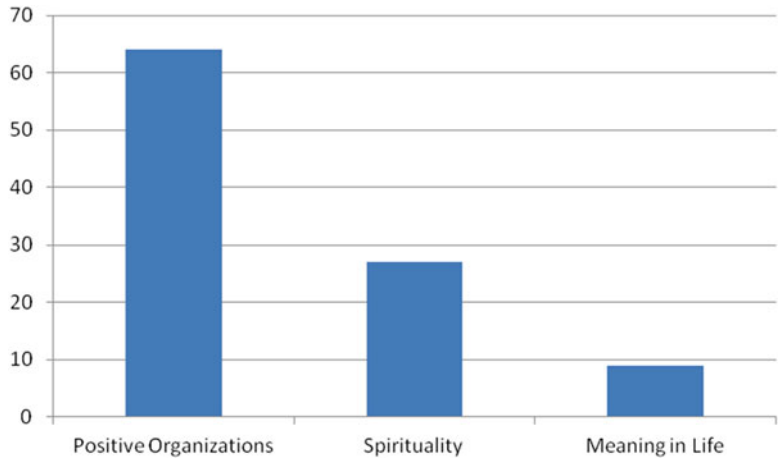

Fig. 3.4 Percentage of instruments to assess PP's third pillar per construct

that measures one of the central construct of this third pillar. The presence of meaning in life refers to the extent to which people comprehend, make sense of, or see significance in their lives, accompanied by the degree to which they perceive themselves to have a purpose, mission, or over-arching aim in life. The adapted scale has two dimensions, *presence of* and *search for,* depending on whether people have goals and purpose in life or whether they believe have to search for them.

Latin America also counts with instruments to assess *spirituality,* a construct that might be included within this third pillar as it is an important aspect to achieve a meaningful life. Spirituality has been defined as a set of thoughts, positive emotions and actions that lead to the search for something sacred that has an existential impact on people's well-being (McDonald, 2000). In Brazil, Panzini and Bandeira (2006) validated the Spiritual/Religious Coping Scale [*Escala de Coping Religioso Spiritual, CRE*] based on the Religious Coping Scale, RCOPE (Pargament, Koening, & Perez, 2000). In Mexico, Vásquez Velázquez (2011) designed a spirituality scale that measures spiritual positive states, perceptions of spirituality and spiritual experiences. All these instruments attempt to explore the relationship between spirituality and well-being.

All instruments described in this section have demonstrated adequate psychometric properties for its use.

In sum, as shown in Fig. 3.4, most assessment tests related to PP's third pillar have been developed to measure positive organizations and factors that contribute to that perception. Variables such as spirituality and meaning in life, essential in this route to achieve a full life, have received significant less attention in the field of psychological testing.

3.6 Psychological Assessment of Positive Psychology's Fourth Pillar in Latin America

In order to conduct the review for this pillar, different positive variables related to positive relationships, such as attachment, social support, parenting styles and love styles were chosen. Given the large number of instruments found, findings will be presented in separate tables organized by the constructs explored.

Regarding countries' contribution, tests developed in the region are evenly distributed among Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Mexico. In terms of test construction vs adaptation, almost half of the instruments found in the literature review are adapted versions of international tests.

Regarding *attachment*, all the scales mentioned in Table 3.4 are based on Bowlby's attachment theory (1969, 1979) that defines attachment as a intense and affectional bond that infants establish with the primarily caregiver that provides security. These early experiences are internalized and lead to different attachment styles, such as secure, avoidant and resistant. Most of the instruments mentioned are designed to measure adult attachment style, except for the *Inventory of Parents and Peers Attachment* that assesses adolescents' perception of attachment quality (Pardo, Pineda, Carrillo, & Castro, 2006).

Considering that the attachment style developed during infancy tends to influence the way adults interact with significant others, it seemed appropriate to include in

Table 3.4 Instruments to assess PP's fourth pillar in Latin America: attachment

Instrument's name	Authors	Year	Country
Romantic/Non-romantic Attachment Scale [Escala de Apego Romántico/No romántico]	Casullo and Fernández Liporace	2005	Argentina
Inventory of Parents and Peers Attachment, IPPA[a]	Pardo, Pineda, Carrilo and Castro	2006	Colombia
Questionnaire of Attachment Evaluation in Adults[a] [Cuestionario de Evaluación del Apego en el Adulto, CAMIR]	Garrido, Santelices, Pierrehumbert and Armijo	2009	Chile
Adult Attachment Prototype Interview[a] [Entrevista de Prototipos de Apego Adulto, EPAA]	Guzmán and Medina	2007	Chile
Adult Attachment Styles Scale [Escala de Estilos de Apego Adulto]	Márquez Domínguez, Rivera Aragón and Reyes Lagunes	2009	Mexico
Attachment Style Inventory for Adults [Inventario de Estilos de Apego para Adultos, IEAP-A]	Ojeda	2003	Mexico
Romantic Attachment Questionnaire [Cuestionario de Apego Romantico]	Matos, Barbosa and Costa	2001	Brazil

Note: Instruments with [a] are local adaptations of international tests

Table 3.5 Instruments to assess PP's fourth pillar in Latin America: parenting styles

Instrument's name	Authors	Year	Country
Parental Practices Questionnaire [Cuestionario de prácticas parentales]	Gaxiola Romero, Frias Armenta, Cuamba Osorio, Betanzos and Olivas Salido	2006	Mexico
Children Rearing Practices Perception Scale [Escala de Percepción de Prácticas Parentales de Crianza para Niños, EPPPCN]	Flores Galaz, Cortés Ayala and Góngora Coronado	2009	Mexico
Parent-Child Relationship Inventory, PCRI-M[a]	Becerra, Roldán and Aguirre	2008	Peru
Childrens' Perception of Parental Behavior. Self-Report Inventory, 4 a 6–8 a 12 year-old subjects [Autoinforme de percepción de relación con padres, 4 a 6–8 a 12]	Richaud de Minzi	2007	Argentina
Perceived Parenting Styles and Inconsistency Scale [Escala de Estilos Parentales e Inconsistencia Parental Percibida, EDIPP]	de la Iglesia, Ongarato and Fernandez Liporace	2011	Argentina

Note: Instruments with [a] are local adaptations of international tests

this pillar variables such as *attitudes toward love* and *relationship satisfaction*. There are several studies on marital satisfaction and close relationships developed in Mexico by Rolando Diaz Loving, a well-known author on this topic. Regarding assessment tools, the Multifaceted Marital Satisfaction Inventory (Cañetas, 2000) was developed in Mexico, and the Marital Satisfaction Scale (Roach, Frazier, & Bowden, 1981) was adapted in that country by Arias-Galicia (2003).

Some tests to evaluate *love styles* have been developed based on Hendrick and Hendrick's (1986) instrument and Lee's (1977) conceptualization of love (eros, ludus and storge). There are adaptations of this assessment tests in Argentina (Brenlla, Brizzio, & Carreras, 2004) and in Mexico (Ojeda, 1998, 2003). Another important theory about love is Sternberg's triangular model which considers three components: intimacy, passion and commitment. In particular, a smaller version of this triangular love scale has been studied in Brazil (Refer to Veloso Gouveia, Nunes de Fonseca, Palmeira Nóbrega Cavalcanti, Diniz da Costa, & Chacon Dória, 2009).

In the same line, another variable that influences the type of relationship people establish with others is *parenting styles*. Table 3.5 shows instruments developed and adapted in Latin America. Most of them assess parental rearing styles were based on Baumrind's (1966, 1996) theory and other authors (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Schaefer, 1997), which proposes different styles: *authoritarian, permissive, authoritative*, *negligent* and *overprotective* style. While the majority of the instruments to assess parenting styles are self-report inventories from children's perspective about their parents' behavior, the Peruvian adaptation of the Parent-child relationship inventory measures parental attitudes toward child-rearing. The parenting practices questionnaire, developed in Mexico by Gaxiola Romero, Frias Armenta, Cuamba Osorio, Betanzos, and Olivas Salido (2006), also focuses on parents' perspective.

Table 3.6 Instruments to assess PP's fourth pillar in Latin America: social support

Instrument's name	Authors	Year	Country
Students Social Support Scale[a]	Fernández Liporace and Ongarato	2005	Argentina
Mannheim Interview on *Social Support, MISS*[a]	Sacchi y Richaud de Minzi	2002	Argentina
Perceived Social Support – Family Scale (PSS-Fa) and Perceived Social Support – Friends Scale (PSS-Fr)[a]	Dominguez Espinosa, Menotti, Contreras Bravo and Procidano	2011	Mexico
Interpersonal Trust Questionnaire, ITQ[a]	Guarino y Sojo	2009	Venezuela
The Convoy of Social Support[a] *[Medida de apoyo social, Diagrama da Escolta]*	Pinheiro, Koller, Novo and Sanchez Soares	2008	Brazil
The MOS Social Support Survey[a]	Rodriguez Espínola and Enrique	2006	Argentina
Social Support Questionnaire[a]	Zanini, Verolla-Moura and Pinheiro de Abreu Rabelo Queiroz	2009	Brazil

Note: Instruments with [a] are local adaptations of international tests

In relation to the fourth pillar, it also worth mentioning tests developed to assess *social support*. This is pivotal component for people's subjective well-being (Diener & Fujita, 1995) and promotes and maintains mental health. Generally, individuals with lower levels of social support are at greater risk for developing psychological problems than people with higher levels of support (Park, 2004). As observed in Table 3.6, there is a wide variety of conceptualizations of social support. Different theories attempt to describe construct's dimensions, such as direction of support – receiving or giving – and sources of support – emotional or material – (Refer to Barrera, 1981; Cohen, Gottlieb, & Underwood, 2000; House, 1981; Tardy, 1985). Other studies are based on Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) theoretical model, defining social support as one of the main coping strategies that people have when facing stressful situations.

Regarding test's design, the majority of the assessment tests on social support use an inventory format, except for the *Mannheim Interview on Social Support* (Veiel, 1990), an instrument that has been adapted in Argentina by Sacchi and Richaud de Minzi (2002).

As explained for previous pillars, all assessment instruments introduced in this section have demonstrated adequate psychometric properties.

3.7 Instruments to Assessment Positive Psychology Pillars: A Summary of the Literature Review

Results from the literature review show that instruments to assess PP constructs are mainly focused on the measurement of PP pillars independently. However, Castro Solano (2011) has developed a scale to measures the three first pillars in a single test,

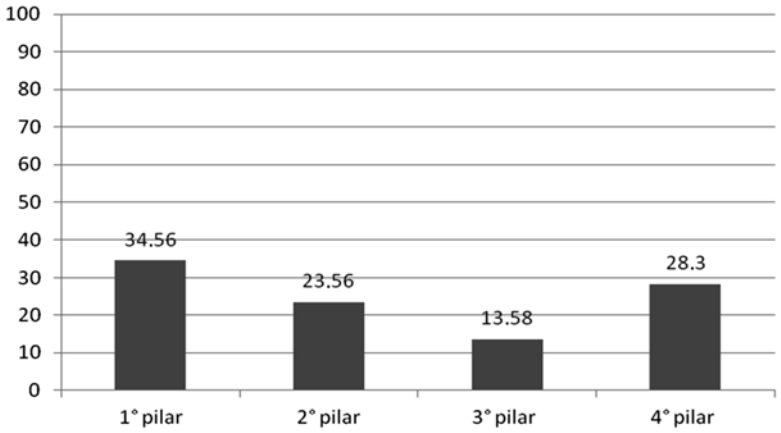

Fig. 3.5 Percentage of assessment instruments found per PP's pillar

named as 'Three Routes to Access Well-being Scale' [*Escala de Tres Rutas de Acceso al Bienestar, ERBIEN*].

As shown in Fig. 3.5, scientific production was mainly distributed between the first and the fourth pillars. That is, instruments that assess variables related to a pleasant life and a social life. While a systematic theoretical framework was used to measure well-being and positive emotions; positive relationships were evaluated based on related constructs. Results from the literature review show that PP's interest on the second pillar-positive traits and flow- has not been accompanied in Latin America for the development of assessment instruments, and that the third pillar, presented the lowest rate of instrument development. Therefore, considering the importance of attaining a meaningful life, it would be necessary increasing the number of psychological tests to assess this pillar.

Regarding countries' contribution, Argentina and Mexico lead the scientific production in the region. Colombia and Venezuela have shown a growing interest in test construction, however, they do not count yet with a significant research production (Fig. 3.6). Although the majority of the tests reviewed in this chapter are constructed in Latin America –with 43.2 % being adapted versions of foreign instruments – this distribution should be different, favoring a greater development of local instruments.

In relation to sample characteristics, in most cases, tests developed in Latin America have been designed to be applied with adult population and, in some cases, with elderly people. Approximately 12 % of the instruments address children and adolescents' perspective, but they are mainly associated with variables such as attachment and social support.

Regarding instrument's design, the most commonly used are self-report inventories, while some tests are designed as checklists where people simply select adjectives that best describe them. Only a few instruments have a structured-interview format. Although self-reports are the most frequently used, they are not exempt

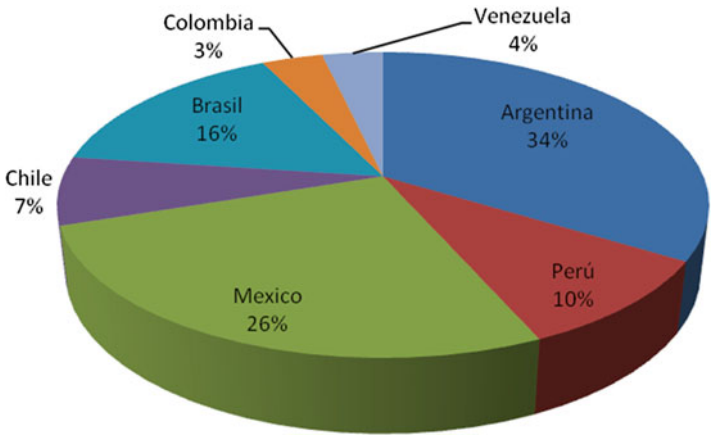

Fig. 3.6 Percentages of scientific production per country

from criticism as it is difficult to determine the validity of participants' judgment (Castro Solano, 2010).

Finally, it should be noted that all assessment instruments included in the literature review have proven to meet standards of scientific rigor, such as validity and reliability properties; and have been published in indexed journals or presented at renowned conferences in the field of psychology.

3.8 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to present Latin-American development of psychological instruments to assess Positive Psychology's main constructs. The review conducted for this purpose could not possible cover all the tests developed in the region, as some authors might have published their work in journals that were not included in the consulted databases. Nevertheless, the conducted research reveals a growing interest in the region to measure salugenic and positive variables, after decades of focusing on abnormal aspects of people's functioning and mental health.

Due to the challenge that implies the study of psychological phenomena considering cultural differences, along this chapter, instruments were discriminated between tests locally designed and adapted versions of international instruments. This review highlights the importance of conducting cross-cultural studies in order to explore contextual particularities for each psychological aspect studied. This is critical as intervention programs should be designed based on context characteristics and conceptualizations rather than derived from models that assume universality (Norenzayan & Heine, 2005).

Another important aspect to consider is the uneven levels of production among PP pillars. Furthermore, it is noteworthy how the growing interest on some

pillars is not accompanied by the development of assessments tools for the variables associated.

It is known that an adequate integration of methodologies, both assessment and intervention, is fundamental in the practice of a good positive psychologist. Thus, it is necessary to construct assessment instruments for different areas where positive psychologists works, such as clinical, educational, and organizational, among others.

In sum, the interest in the development of assessments instruments to measure PP' constructs in Latin America, as in other regions, must go together with the consolidation of an integrated body of knowledge – without overlapping concepts and aiming to achieve people's well-being – in order to develop instruments with unquestionable validity (Castro Solano, 2010; Casullo, 2008; Gancedo, 2009; Lazarus, 2003; Vazquez & Hervás, 2009).

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Part II
Positive Psychology and Academic Achievement

Chapter 4
Perceived Parenting-Style: Its Central Role in Psychological Adjustment and Academic Achievement of Argentinean Students

Mercedes Fernández Liporace and Guadalupe de la Iglesia

4.1 Introduction

Parenting has been historically supported in cultural traditions. These customs used to rely on philosophical or religious values imparted generationally or by religious leaders. Recently the topic acquired a new scientific interest. This new found curiosity triggered a vast amount of studies on the subject. Since then, research on this matter has proliferated.

Most of the questions aim to detect which parenting styles or practices function as protective factors of the individual's psychological adjustment or achievement in different areas – mostly educational ones. Which styles promote a better academic performance? Does perceived parenting relate to adaptive coping? How is parenting associated to social support? These are some examples of inquiries which are – with time – increasingly starting to get answers.

4.2 How Is Parenting Studied?

A controversy in the study of parenting relies upon which is the right methodology for data recollection. Is it better to ask the offspring about their parents´ behavior? Would it be more accurate to request the parents to describe their parenting practices? Or should researchers cover both sources of information and investigate both parties? Certainly, this last option is the least accessible though the most reliable.

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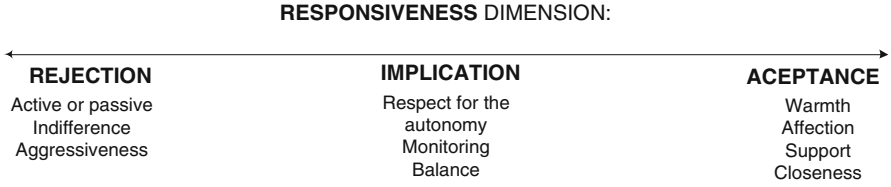

Fig. 4.1 Parenting dimensions: responsiveness

From a cognitive perspective the spotlight is on assessing the perception that children have of their parents´ behavior dismissing their real conduct (Ausubel et al., 1954; Schaefer, 1965; Serot & Teevan, 1961). In this respect, Maccoby and Martin (1983) indicate that the participants of an interaction react not just to the other's behavior but to their own interpretation of what the other is doing. This way, an analysis from the offspring perspective results a valid method for measuring parenting.

In addition, the study of parenting has had various angles, varying from author to author and even within one researcher's work across time. In occasions the analysis comprehended the postulation of global *dimensions* that compose the phenomenon; in others, several *categories* of parenting styles were constituted by theoretical or statistical criteria. This two major methods – the dimensional and the categorical – have been the most commonly used when trying to measure parenting (Baumrind, 1996; Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

4.2.1 Dimensions or Categories?

The operationalization of parenting from the dimensional approach converged in the study of two major aspects: parental *responsiveness* and *demandingness*. One can see how these two components are pointed out as central in the tasks parents have when socializing their children. This happens even in theories which in essence are very different, like the work of Erikson (1963) or that of Minuchin (1974), who represent two theories as dissimilar as psychoanalysis and the systemic model. These two dimensions were the base of practically every proposed parenting model and are identifiable throughout many other theoretical postulations. To begin with, we shall describe them.

The main component of this *response to the child* is related to the degree of affection expressed by parents in terms of warmth, concern, dialogue, closeness, affection, support, listening. This dimension is considered bipolar –see Fig. 4.1, with affective acceptance in one extreme and affective rejection in the other (Ainsworth, Bell, & Stayton, 1971; Baumrind, 1996; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Rohner, 2004).

The principal characteristic of the second dimension is the demand of certain behaviors from parents to the children – see Fig. 4.2. This entails the set in motion of some control over them which will include limits, prohibitions, punishments, rules, discipline. Also a bipolar dimension, firmness is in one pole and negligence in the

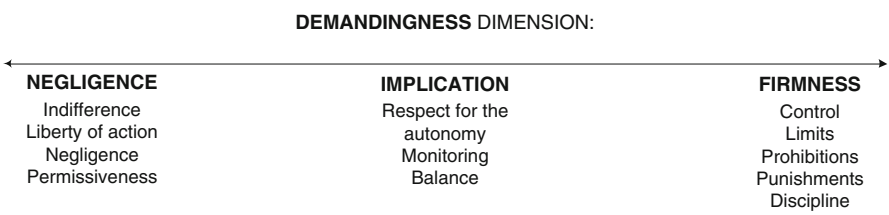

Fig. 4.2 Parenting dimensions: demandingness

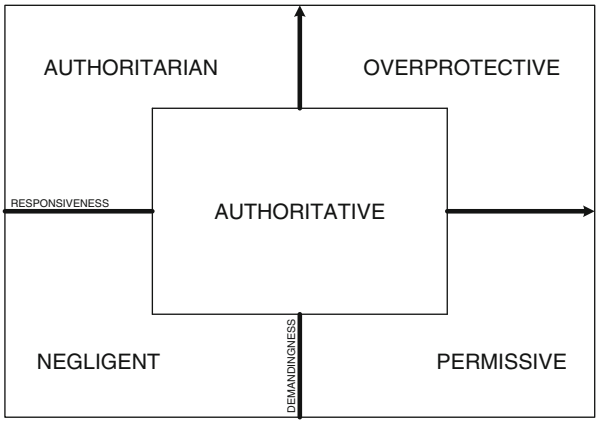

Fig. 4.3 Five parenting styles model (de la Iglesia et al., 2011a; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Schaefer, 1997)

opposite. Sometimes when control is present it is assessed as normal or pathological. The presented approach for the measurement of the demandingness dimension does not contemplate that difference as it measures the degree of presence of control but not its type (Ballesteros, 2001; Baumrind, 1996; Grolnick & Pomerantz, 2009).

But, as mentioned before, there is another very used method to study parenting: the categorical perspective. Under this perspective, a complete consensus was not found either. However, Maccoby and Martin's (1983) four-styles model has shown to be the most employed – authoritarian, permissive, negligent and authoritative. Yet, it does not cover completely the possible parenting styles – not including the overprotective one (Levy, 1931, 1938, 1939, 1966; Schaefer, 1997) and it is not accurate in the representation of a parenting style named authoritative, described as the most balanced position. In aiming to amend this, a five-style typology that combines Maccoby and Martin's (1983) as well as Schaefer's (1997) – a typology that includes the overprotective style along with several intermediate styles – proposals was introduced (de la Iglesia, Ongarato, & Fernandez Liporace, 2011a). It included the following parenting styles: authoritarian, permissive, negligent, overprotective and authoritative – see Fig. 4.3. As its predecessors it is based in the combination of parental responsiveness and demandingness.

The *authoritarian* style (Baumrind, 1966, 1991a, 1991b; Dwairy, 2007; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Merino & Arndt, 2004) is characterized for its emphasis in child control. The main target is obtaining child obedience. Parents use punishment as a way of control. Their goal is that their children follow their behavior standards. They value obedience and allow themselves to take punitive or force measures in conflictive situations. The environment thus generated is regulated by rules with not explained justifications.

Parents with a *permissive* style (Baumrind, 1991a, 1991b; Dwairy, 2007; Merino & Arndt, 2004) tend to allow child autonomy, expecting that they self-regulate their own behaviors by making their own decisions. They are warm to their children. Avoiding confrontation is also one of their main characteristics.

Negligent parents (Baumrind, 1966, 1991a, 1991b; Merino & Arndt, 2004) are not punitive and show little or no interest in their parenting responsibilities. They accept any impulse or behavior of their children as natural. Usually this is perceived by children as a resource to obtain what they want. In this case parents pretend that their children self-regulate their behaviors. Moreover, they are rejecting and neglecting their parental responsibilities.

The *overprotective* style (Levy, 1938, 1939, 1966; Richaud de Minzi & Sacchi, 2004) is characteristic of parents who do not allow their children to develop their own initiative and who control their relations with peers. Physical and social contact is excessive. Infantilization is prolonged. They discourage independent behavior and social maturity. There is excessive parental control or overindulgence.

Finally, the *authoritative* style is thought to be the one which favors a better psychological state (Baumrind, 1971). Authoritative parents (Baumrind, 1991a, 1991b, 1996; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Merino & Arndt, 2004) impart warmth and control, allowing their children to become more and more autonomous. They use reasoning to impart their limits justifying their decisions and rules. They dialogue with their children listening to what they have to say. They are assertive but not intrusive or restrictive.

So which is the better approach? The dimensional or the categorical? Although the major dimensions have an unquestionable effect on children's outcomes, they are mutually influenced, resulting in the categorical perspective as the most complete view (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). However, both standpoints are recognized as relevant and necessary. The first one allows us to consider the effect of each dimension independently and the latter permits us to watch the combined effect.

4.3 What Kind of Consequences Perceived Parenting Promotes in the Offspring?

The central tendency in the research line is focused in identifying, among other things, the consequences that perceived parenting has in psychological adjustment and achievement in areas of importance according to age. When thinking about infants is common knowledge that the way parents raise them will affect in

an important degree their lives as a whole. Adolescents, also show clear traits of their upbringing. But, do parenting styles still have impact in young adulthood? Some seem to think this is certain and should be regarded with the same importance that scholars assume it has in childhood and in adolescence (Anisman, Zaharia, Meaney, & Merali, 1998; Maccoby, 1994; Rohner & Veneziano, 2001; Rothrauff, Cooney & An, 2009).

The consequences of parenting have been mostly assessed in children population, being infants the most studied group about their perceived parenting. Researchers around the world have concluded, for example that some styles were predictors of social responsibility, high academic achievement and self-regulated, independent, purposive behavior (Baumrind, 1971, 1975; Cheah, Leung, Tahseen, & Schultz, 2009; Jennings et al., 2008). Other parenting styles, however, were pointed out as the cause of difficulties in the expression of emotions, the lack of social responsibility, the presence of child fears, irritability and vulnerability, as well as the possibility of less independence and personal responsibility and alcohol abuse (Baumrind, 1971; Lengua, 2006; Lengua & Kovacs, 2005; Tildesley & Andrews, 2008).

In adolescents, some socialization practices have been identified as protective factors of possible alcohol and substance abuse, and have been linked to high self-esteem, better academic achievement, social competence, psychological adjustment or prosocial behaviors (Baumrind, 1991a, 1991b; Brody et al., 2009; Carlo, McGinley, Hayes, Batenhorst, & Wilkinson, 2007; Fletcher, Steinberg, & Sellers, 1999; García & Gracia, 2009; Kim & Rohner, 2002; Simons & Conger, 2007). In contrast, other parenting behaviors promote unpleasant results such as antisocial behaviors, psychological disorders, decelerating the development of social self-confidence, independence and initiative (Benson, Buehler, & Gerard, 2008; Brand, Crous, Bernhardt, & Hanekom, 1990; Dwairy, 2007; Dwairy & Dor, 2009; Jablonski, 2008; Saint-Jacques & Lépine, 2009; Vieno, Nation, Pastore, & Santinello, 2009).

Rohner and Veneziano (2001) ascertained that parenting affects the offspring development from childhood to adulthood. Nevertheless, young adults have not been subjects of much interest in the research of parenting and its possible consequences. Some findings in this population show that psychological distress, depressive states, self-criticism and lack of self-confidence are related to particular parenting styles (McCranie & Bass, 1984; Schwarz & Zuroff, 1979). The study of this age group is of interest in psychology and there is a clear lack of knowledge of how the effects of socialization practices remain in adult life.

4.4 Perceived Parenting in Latin America

Parenting investigations in Latin America are recent but have developed widely in a short time. Though Brazil, Mexico and Colombia stand out as the countries with most research on the subject, these are not the only countries. Peru, Costa Rica, Chile, and of course, Argentina have began to make their way in this field.

4.4.1 Brazilian Results

Brazil, as said, is the country that shows most research in the subject (Mafioletti Macarini, Dal Forno Martins, Minetto, & Vieira, 2010).

Some psychometric tests have been developed or adapted (da Costa, Teixeira, & Gomes, 2000; Pereira Teixeira, Machado Oliveira, & Hastenpflug Wottrich, 2006). Simultaneously, Dobrianskyj Weber, Müller Prado, Viezzer, and Justen Brandenburg (2004) tried to answer the mentioned methodological question concerning the measure of parenting from the parents or the offspring view. They found that despite the fact that both measures were not exactly the same, they correlated positively and significantly.

Additionally, parenting from a broad perspective has been found to be determined in some degree by the family socioeconomic status (de Castro Ribas & Bornstein, 2005; de Castro Ribas, Seidl de Moura, & Bornstein, 2003) and has been linked to the development of personal values in adolescents (Moraes, Camino, da Costa, Camino, & Cruz, 2007; Pereira Teixeira & Melo Lopes, 2005). Positive parenting practices have been associated with high academic achievement (Sapienza, Aznar-Farias, & Silvares, 2009) and negative ones were more likely to be perceived by firstborns (Sampaio & Vieira, 2010). Also, divorced mothers were found to be more involved with their children (Grzybowski & Wagner, 2010). Mothers were more intrusive and simultaneously more rejecting with their sons than with their daughters (de Oliveira, Frizzo, & Marin, 2000). Demandingness was associated with adolescents stress while responsiveness functioned as a protective factor for stress (Justo & Novaes Lipp, 2010) and depression (Nuhlmann Schneider & Röhnelt Ramires, 2007). In this line, authoritarian styles predicted behavior problems (de Oliveira, College, Marin, Pires, & Frizzo, 2002) and the development of Anti-Social Personality Disorder (Wellausen & Ruschel Bandeira, 2010). Lastly, consistent parenting was more likely in children with better social skills (Turini Bolsoni Silva & Marturano, 2007).

4.4.2 Mexican Research

Mexican researchers have also developed various psychometric instruments to assess parenting (Aguilar, Valencia, & Romero, 2004; Andrade & Betancourt, 2008; Betancourt Ocampo & Andrade Palos, 2007; Márquez-Caraveo, Hernández-Guzmán, Aguilar Villalobos, Pérez-Barrón, & Reyes-Sandoval, 2007; Palacios & Andrade, 2006; Rivera Heredia & Andrade Palos, 2010; Segura-Celis Ochoa, Vallejo-Casarín, Osorno-Munguía, Rojas-Rivera, & Reyes-García, 2011).

When it comes to results of investigations that involved parenting dimensions or styles, Betancourt Ocampo and Andrade Palos (2011), for example, found that psychological control had a bigger influence than behavior control in matters of emotional and behavioral problems in Mexican adolescents. In this line, an authoritarian style of either parent was related to depressive symptoms in female teenagers

(Vallejo Casarín, Osorno Murguía, & Mazadiego Infante, 2008). Also, it was found that in male adolescents, perception of love from the father was associated with less depressive symptoms, a more positive body image, and when combined with less mother control, it was related to higher self-esteem (Benjet & Hernandez-Guzman, 2001). Andrade Palos, Betancourt Ocampo, and Palacios Delgado, (2006) detected that female teenagers who had initiated their sexual activity had less communication and attachment with both parents and felt more rejection from the mother. In the case of boys, more communication and more permissiveness from both parents, as well as more perceived rejection from the mother characterized them.

Mexican adolescents also had higher self-esteem when parents monitored their behavior and respected their autonomy – had an authoritative style (Bush, Supple, & Lash, 2004). Parental overprotection, on the other hand, correlated negatively with one of the components of their conception of psychological well being: positive relations with other (Vallejo, Aguilar, & Valencia, 2001, 2002).

Solís-Cámara, Díaz, Medina-Cuevas, and Barranco-Jiménez (2008) studied the prevalence of interparental inconsistency and its relation to the upbringing and expectations of their children. Mexican scholars have emphasized the need for research on the relationship between parenting and academic achievement in their society (Vallejo Casarín & Mazadiego Infante, 2006), and some have already found associations with it in children (Solís-Cámara et al., 2007). Finally, an interesting breakthrough in Mexican research is the evaluation of a training program which aims to train leaders in parenting which will eventually carry on interventions for training parents (Solís-Cámara & Díaz Romero, 1999).

4.4.3 The Colombian Case

An emphasized research line in Colombia is the study of roles and their changes in the Colombian family (Ardila, 1988; Gutiérrez, 1976; Maldonado & Micolta, 2003; Martínez, 2001; Micolta León, 2007; Puyana, 2003; Vanegas & Londoño, 2000). However, the study of consequences associated with parenting styles seems to be also a trend and research focused in the use of one psychometric test for parenting assessment in particular (Ballesteros, 2001). Parental control was found to be connected to lesser time dedicated to play with children (Caycedo et al., 2005), anxiety, depression, aggressive behavior and breaking of rules in adolescents (Cabrera García, Guevara Marín, & Barrera Currea, 2006). Aggressive behaviors in parents were related to aggressive behaviors in children (Álvarez Gallego, 2010; Chaux, 2003).

Parents were found to be more controlling with adolescents and more affectionate with children (Mahecha & Martínez, 2005). Dialogue was related to adherence to treatment in diabetic children (Novoa Gómez, Morales Palencia, Osorio Domínguez, & Vargas Gutiérrez, 2008). An authoritative style was associated with a better emotional development in terms of sympathy, emotional regulation and emotional comprehension (Henao López & García Vesga, 2009).

4.4.4 *Peruvian, Costa Rican and Chilean Findings*

As mentioned before, although other Latin American countries do not represent the *avant-garde* in the subject, some of them have some attractive findings to show.

In Peru, for instance, the study of the evolution of parenting in families has also been of interest (Izzedin Bouquet & Pachajoa Londoño, 2009; Merino, 2006). Merino and Arndt (2004) found that the parenting styles more frequently perceived by adolescents were authoritarian, permissive and negligent, and that fathers were more negligent with boys and more authoritarian with girls. Various psychometric tests have been adapted to assess parenting from the perspective of children (Merino, Cohen, & Díaz, 2003), adolescents (Merino, 2003), adults (Merino & Díaz, 2003) and parents (Becerra, Roldán, & Aguirre, 2008; Merino Soto, Díaz Casapía, & DeRoma, 2004).

Finally, Costa Rica accounts a qualitative research line of how children theorize about punishments imposed by parents (Sánchez Gutierrez, 2009). Chile developed a scale to measure in what degree parents perceive themselves as efficient in playing their parenting roles (Farkas Klein, 2008).

4.5 Perceived Parenting in Argentina

Research on parenting has some precedents in Argentina, being studied only in children and adolescents. A few psychometric scales were developed in Argentinean population for the assessment of perceived parenting in children (Richaud de Minzi, 2002, 2007), in adolescents (Richaud de Minzi, 2005a; Schmidt, Barreyro, & Maglio, 2010) and in young adults (de la Iglesia, Ongarato, & Fernández Liporace, 2011b), and for the measurement of parental tolerance towards children behavior as well (Samaniego, 2010).

When it comes to the study of parenting and its consequences in offspring's outcomes, Richaud de Minzi (2006a, 2006b, 2009), for instance, found that parental acceptance was related to adaptive coping, to prosocial behaviors, and functioned as a protective factor from loneliness and depression during childhood. Concerning adolescence, some investigations aimed to describe parenting in this stage of life (Moreno, 2007). Permissive styles were related to autonomy and were identified as protective factors from loneliness, while acceptance was linked to adaptive coping and pathological control was associated with depression and perfectionism (Richaud de Minzi, 2005a, 2005b; Richaud de Minzi, Sacchi, Moreno, & Oros, 2005). Other studies showed that a warm relationship has a clear link to self-esteem, less substance abuse, depressive symptoms and antisocial behavior (Facio, Batistuta, Micocci, & Vivas, 2003; Facio & Resett, 2007).

Gallo (2010) studied with a qualitative methodology how the liaisons with parental authority have changed over time and also analyzed its reflection in liaisons with school authority. To finish, Casullo and Fernández Liporace (2008) studied perceived parental consistency in adolescents. They found that the parental couple had

a moderate interparental consistency in the level of control imparted as well as when intraparental consistency was considered. Parental consistency was also characteristic of mothers and fathers with higher educational level and higher socioeconomic status. Also, the levels of perceived control were lower in the case of fathers when parents were divorced.

4.5.1 How Are Argentinean People Raised?

The culture in which the family is living in has a fundamental influence in the way parents conceive and practice their children´s socialization (Dwairy, 2007). Harkness and Super (2006) described *parental ethnotheories* as different implicit assumptions of which is the "natural" way of raising children. They can be more *etic*, thought likely universal and being found in many cultures across de world, and consequently studied by the scientific community as an outsider observer; otherwise they can be more specific or *emic,* being considered particular of a group or population and therefore being analyzed taking into account what the very social actors say about the investigated phenomenon (McNeely & Barber, 2010; Pike, 1954; Yau-Fai Ho, 1994).

Moreno (2007) pointed out that in the first half of the twentieth century, Argentinean upbringing was characterized by people being raised in a very structured family system, defined by the obedience of children. Parents were regarded as role models. In the second half of the same century, however, parents started to lose power and authority. The imposition of norms began to be seen as repressive. As a consequence, parents stopped setting boundaries, with the current scene distinguished by the lack of control over offspring behavior.

In the same line, but from a philosophical approach, Barylko (1992) refers that 1950 was the beginning of the *permissive century*. In Spain – a country that shares many similarities with Argentina since many Argentineans have Spanish ascendance, the outlook is the same. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2003) remarked that the scenario of Spanish childrearing is inserted in and individualized society in which the lack of guidelines and responsibilities in the family prevail. Meil (1999) also shares this view, highlighting the great amount of Spanish fathers and mothers that show permissive parenting styles having little control over their children and, in consequence, a likely symmetrical relation with them.

Bornstein et al. (1998) carried out a study that examined the self-perception of parenting in mothers from many countries: Argentina, Belgium, France, Israel, Italy, Japan and the United States. At first they described Argentinean parenting practices as *uncertain* as there were no clear rules about how a father or a mother should behave. Despite this uncertainty, they indicated that the authoritarian style is the most frequent. Results also included a description of the self-perception of Argentinean mothers regarding their parenting. They described themselves as little competent in their parental role and little involved in their children upbringing. The authors emphasized that Argentina does not have a public health system that

provides help or advice on parenting. A consequence of this is that mothers go to family members or friends for advice, and also they tend to undermine their parenting role. It is interesting to be noticed that this research included urban middle class and low-middle class cases – majority in Argentinean population, excluding higher class and lower class participants.

4.5.2 Which Is the Picture for Argentinean College Students?

With the purpose of continuing the ongoing research in Argentina, a study including 369 college students was carried out. They were asked about their perception of parenting with the *Perceived Parenting Styles and Inconsistency Scale* – EPIPP (de la Iglesia et al., 2011b), developed *ad hoc* for the same authors. This instrument assesses parenting in a dimensional and categorical manner. Results of measures include: parent responsiveness, parent demandingness, interparental inconsistency, intraparental inconsistency, and parenting style, represented by the five-factor model as a result of the integration of Maccoby and Martin's (1983) and Schaefer's (1997) proposals – authoritarian, permissive, negligent, overprotective and authoritative[1] (de la Iglesia et al., 2011a).

In addition, participants were questioned about their perceived social support by means of the *Social Support Scale* (Fernández Liporace, Castro Solano, & Contini de González, 2006; Fernández Liporace & Ongarato, 2005; Nolten, 1994) which in this case was used to measure perceived total social support. Also, their coping styles were examined by the *Coping Inventory for Adolescents and College Students* (Moss, 1993; Ongarato, de la Iglesia, Stover, & Fernández Liporace, 2009; Rial Boubeta, de la Iglesia, Ongarato, & Fernández Liporace, 2011) considering the frequency of use of approach coping – cognitive and behavioral – and avoidance coping – cognitive and behavioral. Finally, it was of interest to assess some aspects of their academic achievement such as: the amount of passed courses in total, the proportion of passed courses regarding the time since initiating college studies, how many failed evaluations they had, how many times they dropped out of a course, and if they finished an introductory and mandatory course for all careers on the stipulated time.

4.5.3 Perceived Parental Responsiveness and Demandingness in Argentinean College Students

Initial analyses considered parenting dimensions related to coping styles – Fig. 4.4. As expected, students who used more frequently cognitive and behavioral approaches for coping – considered as healthy ways to deal with stressful situations – perceived

[1] This integration, proposed by de la Iglesia et al. (2011a), was described in the paragraph titled *Dimensions or categories?*

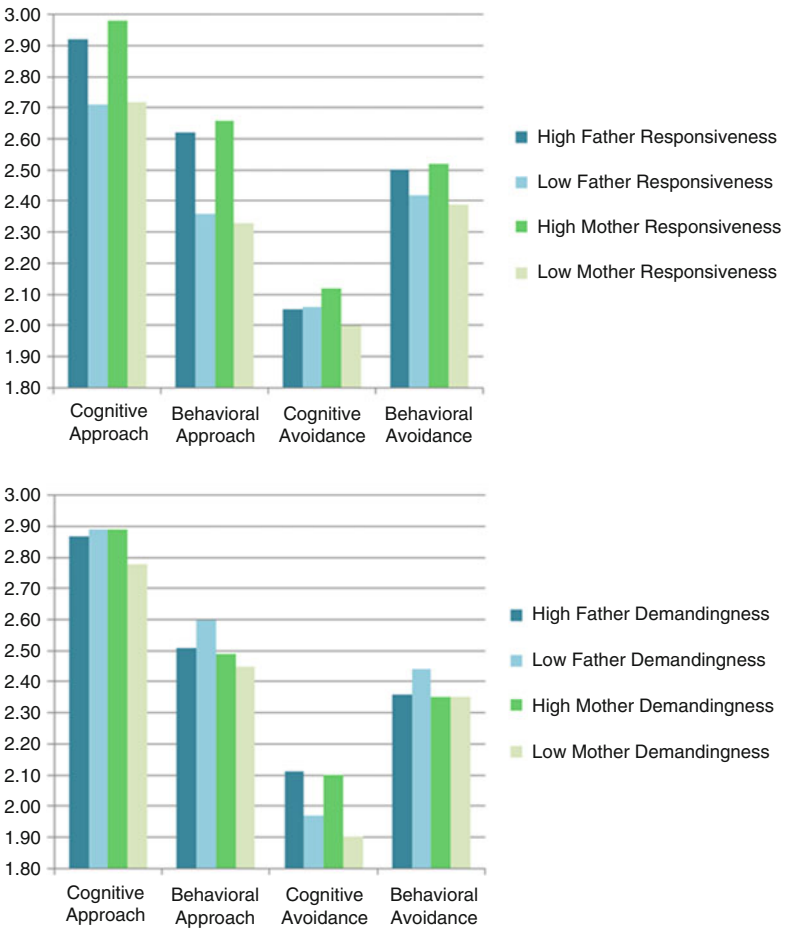

Fig. 4.4 Differences in coping styles regarding parental responsiveness and demandingness

high responsiveness from fathers and mothers. On the other hand, the perception of high demandingness from the mother was found in those students who used an avoidant cognitive coping modality more often.

Next, perceived social support was examined. In this case differences were only found in parental responsiveness – Fig. 4.5. A high perception of responsiveness from the father as well as from the mother was related to a higher perception of social support. No differences were found when considering parental demandingness.

Looking into one of the different aspects of academic achievement included in the study, students who had a higher proportion of passed courses perceived higher father and mother responsiveness – Fig. 4.6. No differences were found when studying parental demandingness.

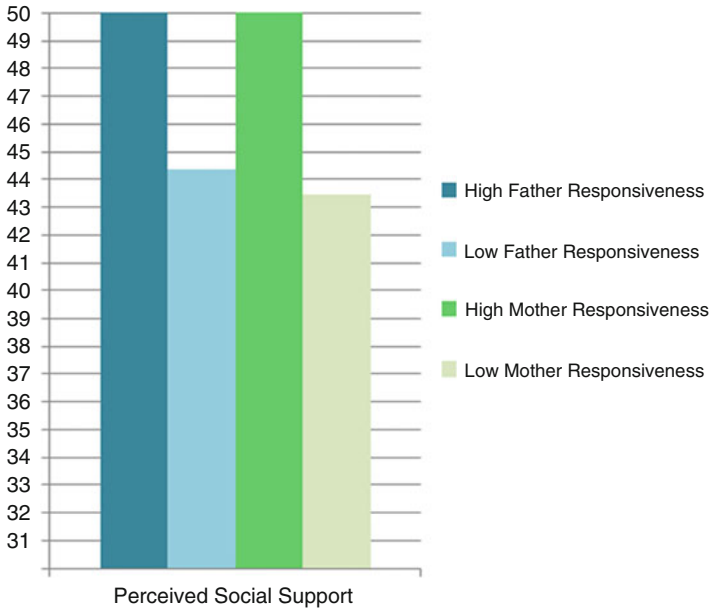

Fig. 4.5 Differences in perceived social support regarding parental responsiveness

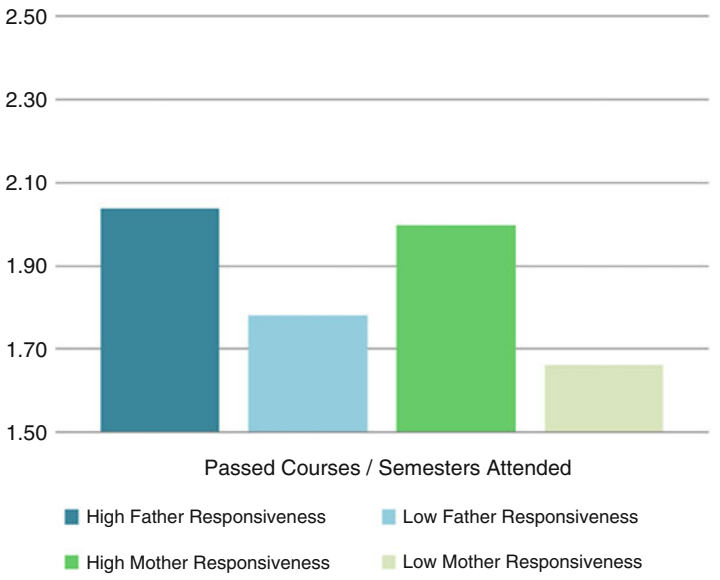

Fig. 4.6 Differences in the proportion of passed courses/semesters attended regarding parental responsiveness

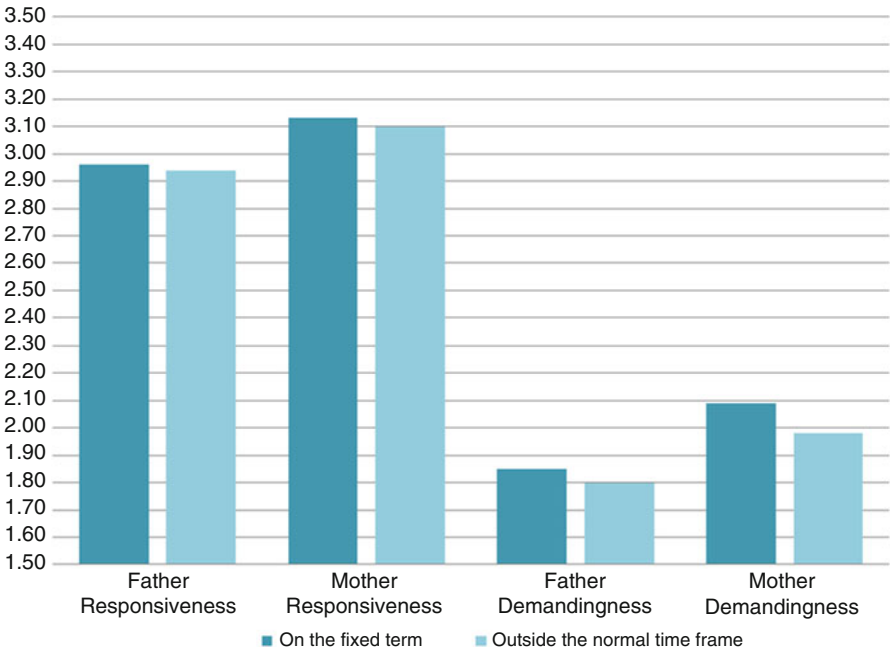

Fig. 4.7 Parenting dimensions in students who finished on time and outside the normal time frame

On the other hand, students who passed the introductory and mandatory courses on time – another indicator of academic achievement – perceived higher mother demandingness. As seen in Fig. 4.7, although no significant differences were found when contemplating parental – mother and father – responsiveness and father demandingness, the tendency was the same.

Finally, students who had dropped out of at least one course in their academic career perceived higher father demandingness – Fig. 4.8. In this case no differences were found regarding parental responsiveness and mother demandingness though again the tendency was the same as the one found on father demandingness.

4.5.4 Perceived Parenting Styles in Argentinean College Students

From a parenting styles perspective, the authoritarian one showed to be the most harmful. For instance, when analyzing coping styles students exhibited a lesser use of approach cognitive coping style if the father was authoritarian. Also, they used less approach cognitive coping when the mother was authoritarian or neglectful, and less approach behavioral coping style when the mother was authoritarian – Fig. 4.9.

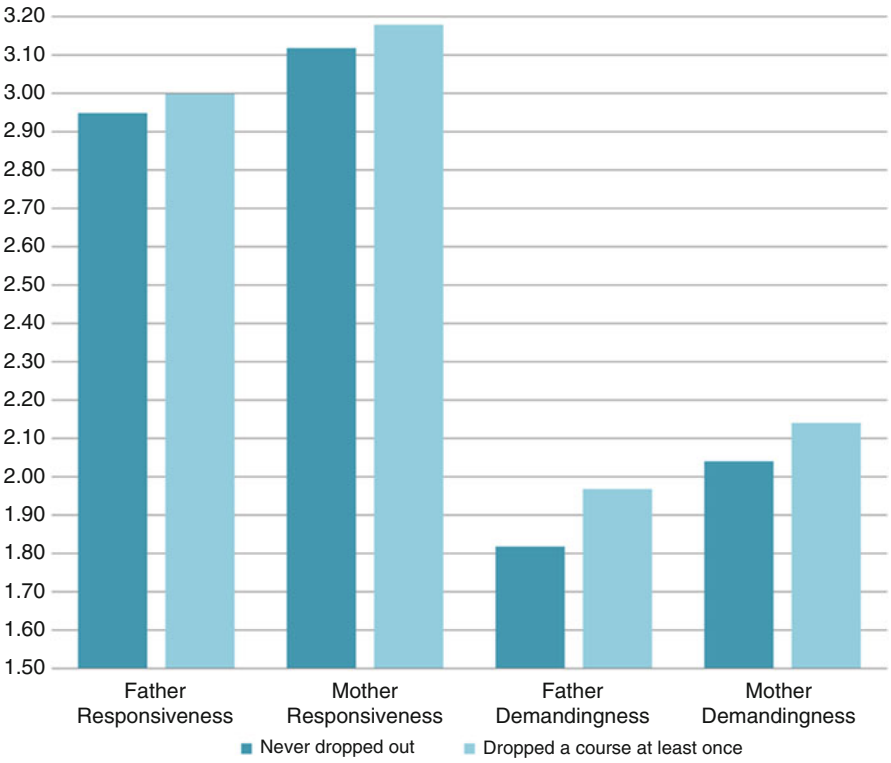

Fig. 4.8 Parenting dimensions for students who never dropped a course and those who dropped a course at least once

Besides, measures of social support showed that authoritarian styles from the father or the mother were common in those students who perceived less support – Fig. 4.10.

Finally, students with an authoritarian mother had passed less courses considering the amount of time since started studying – Fig. 4.11.

4.6 Conclusions: The Importance of Responsiveness

Previous studies provided clear foundations for the assumption that when taking into account only parental *responsiveness,* its importance in psychological well-being is unquestionable whether considering children (Jennings et al., 2008; Lengua, 2006; Novoa Gómez et al., 2008; Richaud de Minzi, 2005b, 2006b) or adolescents (Benjet & Hernandez-Guzman, 2001; Brody et al., 2009; Carlo et al., 2007; Facio & Resett, 2007; Facio et al., 2003; Fletcher et al., 1999; Justo & Novaes Lipp, 2010; Saint-Jacques & Lépine, 2009).

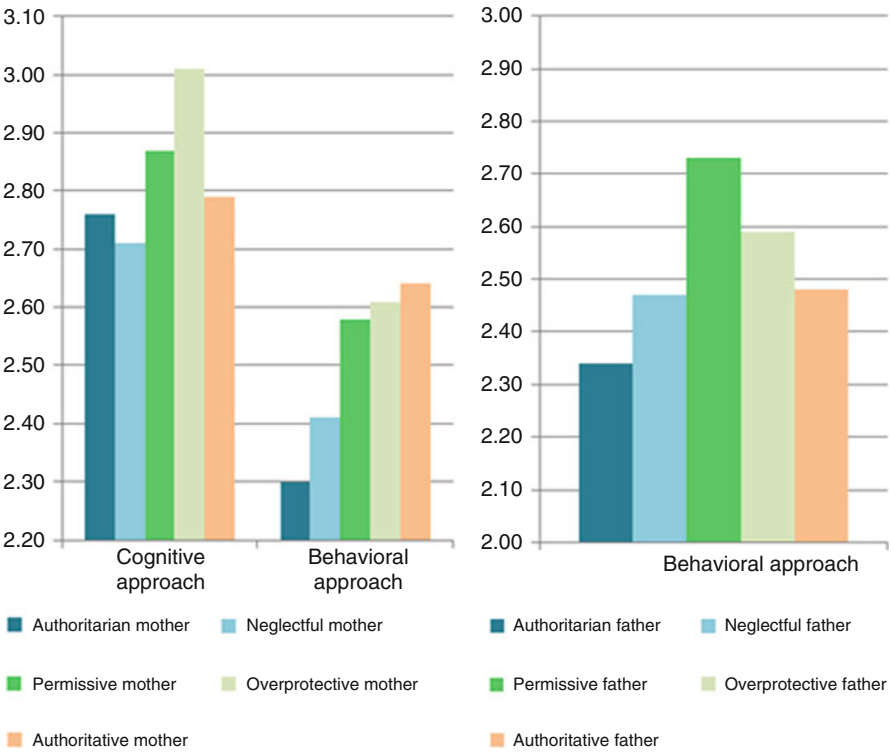

Fig. 4.9 Coping styles regarding parenting styles

When looking into the variables analyzed here, the state of the art showed that more responsive parenting was linked to a higher perception of social support (Gayman, Turner, Cislo, & Eliassen, 2011) and to the use of adaptive coping responses (Dusek & Danko, 1994; Valiente, Fabes, Eisenberg, & Spinrad, 2004; Valiente, Lemery-Chalfant, & Swanson, 2009).

In the analysis carried out with Argentinean college students, responsiveness – as expected – stood out as the most important parenting dimension. Similarly to what was found in other age groups by the above mentioned researches, social support was higher when parents were more responsive. In addition, parental responsiveness made a difference in the way students cope with stress. Adaptive coping – cognitive and behavioral approach – was a characteristic of those who perceived higher affection. As this kind of coping allows individuals to search different ways to solve stressful situations and, in addition, to set in motion several possible actions, it is described as a definite healthy attribute to have. When studying other age groups, high controlling parenting was linked to avoidant coping (Dusek & Danko, 1994; Richaud de Minzi, 2006a; Zhou et al., 2008). This style of management of stressing settings has been proved to be unhealthy as the unstable factor does not

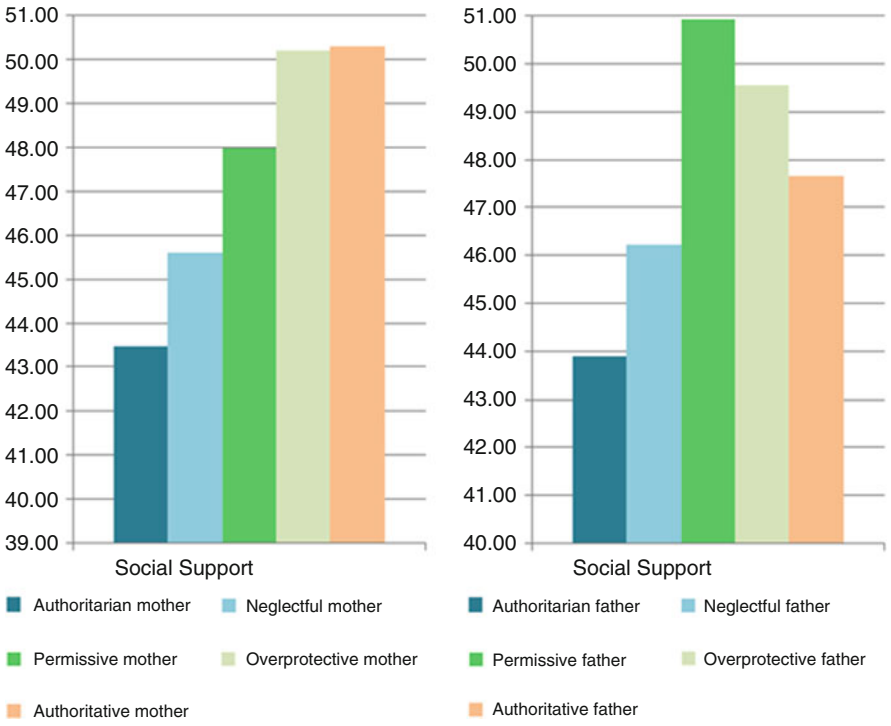

Fig. 4.10 Social support regarding parenting styles

disappear for the individual, who does not deal with it. In the college sample this finding was replicated since demandingness was associated with avoidant coping – behavioral.

Finally, responsiveness was linked to a higher academic achievement in elementary school (Iruka, Burchinal, & Cai, 2010; Saracho, 2007) and high school (Fletcher et al., 1999; Kim & Rohner, 2002; Sapienza et al., 2009). In the sample studied here, a better academic achievement was related to both high responsiveness and demandingness.

It is interesting that from the dimensional perspective responsiveness occupies a distinctive part in the emergence of healthy psychological states and demandingness seems to be associated mostly to the opposite. Furthermore, the way students perceive warmth or the limits their parents imparted have a clear relation with those outcomes, albeit several of them no longer live with them. This remarks the fact that socialization practices still have an impact on offspring as they go through adulthood (Anisman, Zaharia et al., 1998; Maccoby, 1994; Rohner & Veneziano, 2001; Rothrauff et al., 2009).

Despite the importance of these findings, there is a lack of the consideration that both central socialization dimensions do not occur independently one from another.

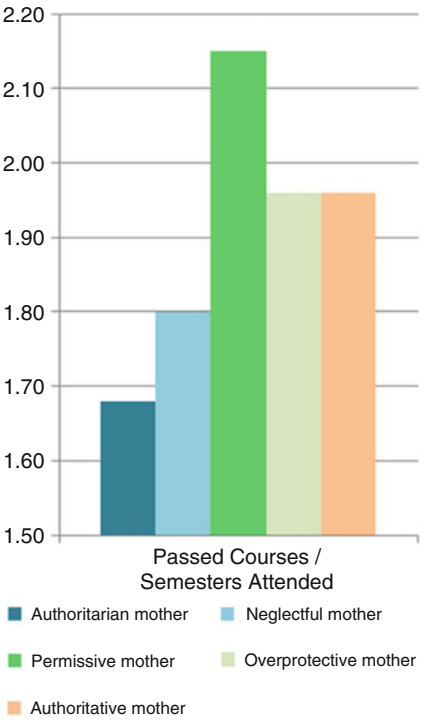

Fig. 4.11 Proportion of passed curses/semesters attended regarding parenting styles

The categorical approach of perceived parenting allows us to see the phenomenon as a whole, contemplating both dimensions in conjunction. In previous research, authoritative and permissive styles were associated with approach coping strategy (Dusek & Danko, 1994; Richaud de Minzi, 2006a) and overprotective parents were characterized as having children who use avoidance coping strategies (Blechman & Culhane, 1993). Argentinean college students used, in general, less approach coping style when parents were authoritarian and, in the case of the mother also when she was neglectful. Having a parent with an authoritarian style was also a characteristic of students who perceived less social support, particular finding which is not comparable with any previous study.

When looking into academic achievement authoritative style has been linked to better achievement in children (Baumrind, 1971; Cheah et al., 2009) and to permissive style in adolescents (Fletcher et al., 1999; García & Gracia, 2009; Kim & Rohner, 2002; Simons & Conger, 2007). In contrast, authoritarian style has been coupled with poor academic achievement in children (Baumrind, 1971, 1991a; Kim & Rohner, 2002; García & Gracia, 2009) and with negligent parenting style in adolescents (García & Gracia, 2009). Again, replicating results in other populations, Argentinean college students had worse academic performance when the mother was authoritarian.

In sum, a curious happening occurs when analyzing from a parenting styles perspective. The parenting style that shows to be associated with worse psychological and academic achievement consequences is the authoritarian one. This is, the presence of high demandingness and low responsiveness. One may think that high demandingness would have an even *worse* influence, no matter the amount of responsiveness perceived. Yet, responsiveness seems to have a protective role and function as a buffer. An example of this is the fact that overprotective parenting had no harmful outcomes associated to it, despite the high demandingness it contemplates. Another evidence of this, and an extremely important revelation, was the difference in academic achievement when analyzing from a dimensional and a categorical perspective. As the reader may recall, academic achievement was higher in students who perceived high responsiveness and also in those who perceived high demandingness. Nevertheless, when both dimensions were considered simultaneously high demandingness showed to have a detrimental effect when not associated with the presence of parent response. This is, the authoritarian style, once more, was the most damaging one.

Positive parenting practices characterized by love, affection, dialogue, not only has a positive effect in different aspects of offspring's adjustment but it also functions as a protective factor when negative parenting practices – demandingness – are also present. Since the effects of the degree of parental responsiveness and demandingness occur simultaneously the central role of parental responsiveness stands out. Intervention on parents is a controversial matter but – if possible – they would improve individuals´ well-being not only in childhood and adolescence, but also in adulthood.

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Chapter 5
Cultural Competences of International Students: Its Role on Successful Sociocultural and Psychological Adaptation

Alejandro Castro Solano and Ines Aristegui

5.1 Introduction

What happens to people who were born and educated in a particular cultural context when they decide to live in a culture different from their own? If culture has a strong influence on human behavior, do people continue to behave in the same way or do they change their repertoire of actions to better fit in the new environment? What factors make some people to succeed and others to fail in this endeavor? This chapter addresses the study of the variables involved in the successful adaptation of a particular group of migrants: international students. From the Positive Psychology perspective, this chapter will focus on the study of those resilient individuals. That is, those people who possess certain type of strengths that allow them to maintain their psychological well-being in a cultural context different from their own and that might at times be adverse for them.

Recent statistics show that by 2010 there were approximately 214 million migrants worldwide. This number represents 3 % of the world's population. Globalization has facilitated contact between members of different cultures, but at the same time, has also caused the collision between different systems of values, beliefs and practices, which in many cases, generates confused and distressful situations for individuals (Furnham & Bochner, 1986).

Currently, the number of international students in the world is the largest in modern history. Foreign students have been characterized as people who voluntary and temporary reside in a country other than their own, with the purpose of participating

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in an educational exchange and the intention of returning to their country once their trip objective is achieved (Lin & Yi, 1997). International students have been called sojourners (Church, 1982). That is, people who migrate from one cultural context to another, for a relatively long period of time – from 6 months to 5 years – in order to perform a particular task. Sojourners generally plan their trip and their return, and their stays are of moderate length (Ward, 1999; Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001). This category also includes business people, students, technical experts, military personnel and diplomats.

Universities in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Trade Development (OECD) countries receive approximately 1.5 million international students. Among them, the United States of America lead the group, followed by England, Germany, France and Australia (Rodríguez Gómez, 2005). Latin America receives a lower number of international students compared to these countries. Brazil, Mexico and Argentina have the highest percentage of foreign students in the region.

Since 2000, Argentina has begun to receive a significant number of international students. These students are mainly from other Latin-American countries, who are attracted by the language, the favorable economic conditions and the prestige of Argentinean universities' level. Currently, international students represent 1.6 % of the university population, reaching 24,000 students. In 2006 foreigners represented only 10,000 students, but it has since doubled in the next 2 years. This data places Argentina in the fourth host country in the Americas after the United States, Canada and Uruguay (OEI), receiving mainly Latin-American students and to a lesser extent, Anglo-Saxon students (Filmus, 2007).

In summary, the migratory phenomenon has significantly increased in recent decades with this trend tipped to increase further. University students' migration is also an important phenomenon, particularly growing in Argentina. On the one side, migration can lead to a series of difficulties as a result of the cultural dialogue between countries with different traditions and values. On the other side, it can be a source of possibilities, both for individuals and societies (Baubock, Heller, & Zolberg, 1996). Taking this into account, Psychology has been contributing to make this process as positive as possible and to diminish potential negative effects.

Acculturation is the primary psychological phenomenon that international students must contend with. This process implies the psychological and cultural changes experienced as a result of intercultural contact (Berry, 2003). Cultural changes include modifications in customs, and economic and political lives of those involved in contact groups. Psychological changes – *psychological acculturation* – involve changes in attitudes toward acculturation process, toward ones' identity and behaviors toward the host culture (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006a, 2006b). In this way, acculturation implies adaptation.

Adaptation can be either psychological or sociocultural (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward, 2004). While *psychological adaptation* is related to the well-being experienced as a result of cultural contact, *sociocultural adaptation* involves the absorption of social skills necessary to adequately function in a complex cultural environment (Ward et al., 2001).

Several studies have aimed to identify predictors of adaptation. Literature has mentioned perceived social support, personality traits and life events as the major predictors of psychological adjustment. In relation to sociocultural adaptation – which involves successful resolution of practical problems in the interaction with members of the host culture – the main factors found to explain it were: cultural distance, cultural knowledge, frequency of contact with members of the host culture and perceived discrimination (Ward, 2004; Ward & Kennedy, 1994). In a recent review of sociocultural adaptation's predictors, Zlobina, Basabe, Paez, and Furnham (2008) added to this list, migrants' educational level, length of stay, age and gender.

If adaptation is not reached, migrants might experience characteristics of *acculturative stress*. This stress occurs when people experience adverse physical and emotional reactions as a result of the complex process of adjustment to an unfamiliar cultural context. Acculturative stress particularly arises from the stress experienced when contrasting values and customs from their own culture with those from the host cultural context (Berry, 2005; Gil, Vega, & Dimas, 1994; Rodriguez, Myers, Bingham, Flores & Garcia-Hernandez, 2002; Williams & Berry, 1991). As some authors have concluded (Ward & Kennedy, 1994), studying abroad might be one of the most stressful events in peoples' lives.

Given that the number of international students is growing in Argentina, a series of research studies were designed in order to study international students' acculturation process, analyzing variables involved in the effective cultural and psychological adaptation. These studies were conducted during 2008–2010 and aimed to respond to *three* basic questions that students might consider before beginning their studies abroad: What should I do to have a successful life?; How prepared are members of the host culture to receive me?, and; Who are the most successful international students?

5.2 What Should I Do to Have a Successful Acculturation?

Until the 1960s, acculturation was believed to be a unilinear process in which immigrants would gradually incorporate aspects of the host culture while losing some aspects of their cultural background (Gordon, 1964). This process was completed once the new culture had been absorbed. During mid-1970s, Berry and his colleagues conducted a pivotal study with a group of minority immigrants, which resulted in an acculturation model that has had a broad international impact, both in the United States and Europe (Berry, 1997). This classic model proposes two separate dimensions of the process of acculturation:

1. Immigrants consider their cultural identity and their customs valuable enough to keep them in the host society (maintenance)
2. Relationships with people or groups of the host society are considered valuable enough to look for and promote them (participation).

These two dimensions create different acculturation strategies, depending on how people face their process. Thus, migrants have four possible responses:

Integration	Migrants try to keep their cultural heritage and also maintain contact with the dominant cultural group
Assimilation	Individuals do not retain their original culture and attempt to maintain contact only with members of the dominant group
Separation	Migrants are able to maintain their original culture, avoiding interaction with members of the dominant group or other groups
Marginalization	Individuals are not interested or able to maintain their original culture but are also unlikely to come into contact with members of the host culture.

Overall, studies conducted with Berry's model of *acculturation strategies* concluded that the integration strategy is associated with both better sociocultural and psychological adaptation, while the separation strategy predicts a poorer adjustment (Zlobina et al., 2008).

What happens particularly in Argentina? In order to assess the acculturation strategies employed by a group of international students who had migrated to complete their university studies in this country, a four-item short questionnaire was designed based on Berry's two-dimensional model (1997; Castro Solano, 2011). This scale was administered to foreign and local students to gather information and cross-validate the results. Two samples of undergraduate students were included in the study (125 international students and 121 Argentinean students from various courses and schools). The effectiveness of the implemented strategies was analyzed by exploring sociocultural and psychological adaptation, academic adjustment, immigrants' perceived discrimination and life satisfaction.

Firstly, results indicate that Integration was the preferred acculturation strategy while Marginalization was the least chosen one. As shown in Fig. 5.1, perceptions of both, individuals who are in the process of acculturation and members of the host culture agreed on this point. Acculturation is achieved when aspects of both cultures are taken into account, preserving valued aspects of one's cultural identity and, at the same time, participating in an exchange with the host culture. This might be the reason why integration has been found to be the most commonly chosen strategy, while marginalization, which implies the rejection of both host culture and culture of origin, has been found to be the least preferred strategy.

Secondly, results from this study also indicate that Integration is the strategy that brings better adaptive outcomes. International students who adopted an integrative style were those who also perceived greater life satisfaction and better adjustment to the academic life (Table 5.1). By contrast, foreign students who chose the Separation strategy, maintaining only aspects of their cultural identity and avoiding contact with the host culture, were those who reported lower levels of adjustment to the country lifestyle – sociocultural adaptation – and perceived more discrimination.

In terms of students' perceptions of immigrants preferred acculturation strategies, both groups, international and local students, tend to agree on their

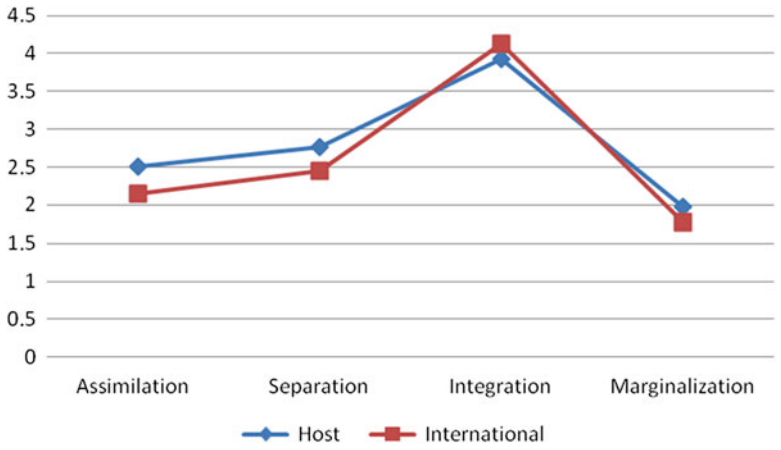

Fig. 5.1 Acculturation strategies chosen by immigrants as perceived by international and host students

Table 5.1 Correlations between acculturation strategies, perceived discrimination and academic, psychological and sociocultural adaptation

Acculturation strategies	Life satisfaction	Perceived discrimination	Sociocultural adaptation	Academic adjustment
Assimilation	.08	.03	.14	.14
Separation	.01	.35**	−.32**	.09
Integration	.27**	−.14	−.03	.22**
Marginalization	−.01	−.09	.01	−.08

** $p < .01$

observations. However, there are some nuances in relation to their perceptions of the acculturation strategies' implementation. Results showed that members of the host culture believe that international students tend to assimilate more or separate more from the new culture than they actually do. However, this pattern of responses observed was similar and consistent in both international and local students. In relation to foreigners' observations about what Argentineans perceive, there were also similar patterns of responses. These findings indicate that preferences for integration, as an acculturative strategy, is accepted and also encouraged by the host culture, as it is believed to result in a better sociocultural adaptation in the long term (Berry, 1997; Berry et al., 2006a, 2006b).

One of the main contributions of this study is to add empirical validation to the theoretical model used. To date, reviewed studies using Berry's model have generally include populations from different cultural characteristics, with a larger cultural distance, while the research conducted in Argentina consisted mainly of a Latin sample of students acculturating to a country that also has a Latin background.

Moreover, there are also few studies that have analyzed perceptions of both groups involved in the acculturation process, immigrants and members of the host society (Bourhis, Moise, Perreault, & Senecal, 1997; Ward, Larissa Kus, & Masgoret, 2008).

As sojourners are not that free to choose any acculturation strategy, as they need to be accepted by the local group as well (Berry, 2003). Literature highlights the importance of taking into consideration both perspectives – migrants and locals – when studying this topic. Particularly, it is important to consider immigrants' perceived discrimination as this variable has shown to be a pivotal moderator in the acculturation process.

It should be taken into consideration that, in the described study, perceptions of both groups involved in the acculturation process were similar. These findings might be explained by the characteristics of the sample. This group of international students had been attracted to conduct their university studies in Argentina by the favorable conditions of the host country. It might be possible that if they have belonged to more disadvantaged groups and the reasons for migration were related to improving their economic conditions, perceptions of both groups would have tended to be less similar. Therefore, intercultural relations problems might have arose and adaptation to the country might have been poorer (Bourhis et al., 1997).

5.3 How Prepared Are Members of the Host Culture to Receive Me?

Most research studies that analyzed relationships between international students and their local counterparts have been done from migrant students' point of view. They mainly have considered quality and frequency of contact, friendship networks and social support networks. Findings indicate that interaction between immigrants and members of the host culture is relatively low. Although international students expect greater frequency of contact with local students they are not always successful in this endeavour (Holmes, 2005; Ward, Berno, & Kennedy, 2000) and this has been traditionally a concern of educators and institutions' managers (Ellingboe, 1998; Smith, 1998). Although frequent interaction between international and local students has been associated with higher levels of psychological well-being and better academic performance for international students which in turn, lead to a more positive adaptation, few studies have explored both foreigners' and hosts' points of view combined.

Local students' perceptions about their international peers vary according to the cultural group or country they belong to. Overall, research studies found a more positive attitude toward students with similar cultural characteristics (Ward & Leong, 2006). For example, it was found that students from New Zealand were more likely to positively perceive their counterparts from Australia and England than their peers from South Africa (Ward & Masgoret, 2005b). Moreover, it was also demonstrated that, based on sojourners' English pronunciation, American students had a more positive attitude toward European students than toward their Chinese and Mexican counterparts. The number of international students enrolled in a class is also an important moderator of local students' perception. Research studies have shown that the higher the rate of international students in a classroom,

Table 5.2 Means and standard deviation for host students' beliefs about international students

Items	Mean	Standard deviation
Number of students in the country	3.83	0.70
Number of students at University	3.74	0.68
Frequency of contact	3.88	0.96
Quality of contact	4.07	0.73

the more negative attitudes and the more frequent discriminatory behavior they received from their classmates (Ward & Masgoret, 2005a).

Members of the host culture's perceptions of their counterparts are an important predictor of effective intercultural contact. Although the role of international students' negative stereotypes has been traditionally emphasized, evidence comes from anecdotal rather than empirical well-designed research. A few studies on perceptions of foreign students indicate that, in general, attitudes toward these students are moderately positive (Haddock, Zanna, & Esses, 1994; Spencer-Rodgers, 2001; Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002; Ward & Masgoret, 2005a). However, it is interesting to mention that some research studies found that international students consider their local counterparts as uninformed about and not interested in their cultures (Mills, 1997; Smart, Volet, & Ang, 2000; Yang, Teraoka, Eichenfield, & Audas, 1994).

With these findings in mind, a study was designed with the purpose of exploring local students' perceptions and attitudes toward their international peers. In order to undertake this study, 182 psychology students from a university with a high proportion of international students (25 %) were recruited. Participants were asked to respond to a questionnaire about their experience with foreign students. Results showed that 40 % of the sample had been in contact with one to five international students while the remaining 60 % had been acquainted with 6–10 students. These results showed that this sample of local students had high frequency of interaction with their foreign counterparts.

The instrument designed for the study consisted of four questions to be answered on a 5-point Likert scale. Table 5.2 presents means obtained for each category after assigning a score from 1 to 5 to each item. These data show that host students think that international students' rate is high both nationally and at the university where they are currently studying. Frequency of contact with foreigners is also considered with high levels and the quality of this contact is evaluated as positive or very positive.

Secondly, local students' attitudes toward international students were assessed both in general and for each ethnic group in particular (Table 5.3). Overall, a favorable attitude toward foreign university students was reported. In particular, South-American students are those who received the higher score on this variable, North-American students received intermediate scores, and Asians and Africans students received the lowest scores.

Results showed that host students present a moderately positive attitude toward international students in general. However, findings indicate that students who come from culturally distant countries are perceived with less positive attitudes than students

Table 5.3 Mean and Standard Deviation for local students' attitudes toward different groups of international students

Attitudes toward ethnic groups	Mean	Standard deviation
Students (in general)	7.63	1.77
South-Americans	7.69	1.73
Europeans	7.63	1.65
Central-Americans	7.60	1.69
North-Americans	7.14	1.72
Africans	7.02	1.96
Asian	6.90	1.96

from closer nations in terms of customs and values. These results are consistent with studies about acculturation process that have found a negative relationship between positive attitudes and cultural distance: the greater the cultural distance the more difficult the acculturation process (Berry, 1997; Bochner, 1981; Furnham & Alibhai, 1985; Ward & Masgoret, 2004). Similarly, and consistent with literature on perceptions of international students (Ward, 2006), foreign students are positively perceived in the Argentinean study. These findings are possibly explained by the frequency of contact and constant interchange that participants had with their international peers. As an extensive meta-analysis of the contact hypothesis (Amir, 1969) indicates, those individuals who frequently interact with foreigners, and also have a positive contact experience, tend to have more positive perceptions about migrants (Pettigrew & Troop, 2000).

Thirdly, in an attempted to verify the theoretical model for the prediction of contact with international students, a study was designed based on Masgoret and Ward's proposal, exploring cultural variables as factors (Ward, 2006). This model posits that perceptions of threat – real and symbolic – govern attitudes toward foreigners (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). These attitudes are also influenced by more distal variables such as intergroup anxiety and attitudes toward multiculturalism. The stronger the multicultural ideology held by the host culture, the greater the acceptance of immigrants and therefore, the more positive the attitudes toward them (Berry, 2006). Additionally, literature has highlighted a strong and positive relationship between intercultural contact and positive attitudes toward immigrants. Those members of the host culture who have more interaction with foreigners in working, academic or social settings, tend to exhibit a more positive attitude toward them and, as a consequence, a reduction of prejudice about their costumes (Pettigrew & Troop, 2000).

Masgoret and Ward's model was empirically tested using structural equation modeling with the sample of 182 host students from the previous study. It was hypothesized that multicultural beliefs and intergroup anxiety would determine both perceptions of threat, real and symbolic, which in turn would influence on the attitudes that favor an effective intercultural contact.

As shown in Fig. 5.2, the obtained model presents a very good fit ($\chi 2 = 17.76$, ns; $\chi 2/gl = 1.48$, GFI = 0.96, AGFI = 0.91, NFI = 0.83, CFI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.06). In relation to the prediction of intercultural contact, it was observed that positive attitudes appeared as the main predictor, with a direct influence on the outcome variable. Social Psychology has repeatedly mentioned the importance of negative attitudes in

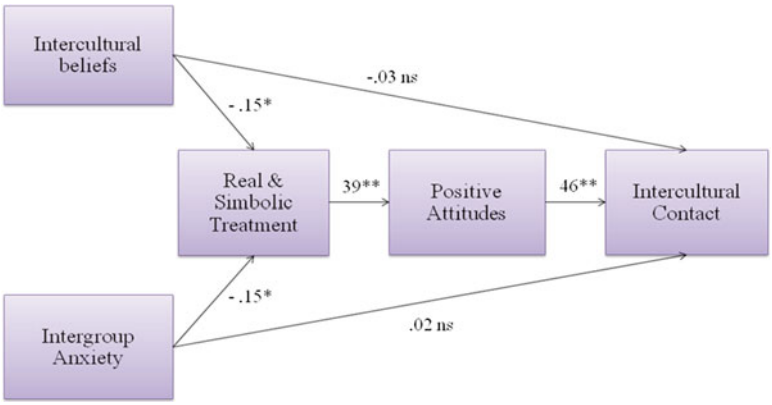

Fig. 5.2 Predictors of intercultural contact for host students

the prediction of intercultural contact (Jackson, Brown, Brown, & Marks, 2001). Additionally, attitudes have been found to be influenced by the perception of threats. The lower the perception of threat, the more positive the attitude and therefore, the greater the intercultural contact. Moreover, threats are also influenced by more distal variables, such as intergroup anxiety. Although in the present study it was possible to verify a positive influence of intergroup anxiety on the perception of threat, its impact was relatively weak and it only explained a small portion of the variance. It was also found that intergroup anxiety did not directly explain intercultural contact, it only played a role mediated by the effect of perceived threats and attitudes.

Several research studies showed that a society that values multiculturalism, which promotes positive attitudes toward integration and enhances cultural diversity, generally manifests greater respect for diversity, greater acceptance of immigrants and a reduction of negative prejudices (Berry, 2006; Berry, Kalin, & Taylor, 1977). In the current model, multicultural ideology had an influence on perceived threats, but did not explain intercultural contact. As in Berry's model, this variable was only explained by multicultural ideology which was mediated by the effect of threats and attitudes. Moreover, these findings are also in line with the results of a model tested by Ward and Masgoret (2006). Although the model of the present study is not identical to the mentioned authors, similar relationships among variables were observed with a lower effect size and explaining a smaller proportion of the variance of intercultural contact.

5.4 Who Are the Most Successful International Students?

To succeed in the immigration process, international students should be able to adapt psychologically and culturally (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward, 2004). While these two types of adjustments are considered separately, they are empirically related. Migrants

Table 5.4 Predictors studied to assess cultural and psychological adaptation for international students in Argentina

Predictive variables	Type	Measures used
Age	Sociodemographic	Questionnaire
Sex	Sociodemographic	Questionnaire
Length of stay	Sociodemographic	Questionnaire
Cultural distance	Cultural	Scale based on Ward and Kennedy (1999), and Zlobina et al. (2008)
Frequency of contact with co-nationals, other internationals and local students	Cultural	Scale based on Ward et al. (2001)
Intergroup anxiety	Cultural	Stephan and Stephan (1985)
Perceived discrimination	Cultural	Berry et al. (2006a, 2006b)
Social support	Psychological	Ong and Ward (2005)
Life satisfaction	Psychological	Diener et al. (1985)
Perceived symptoms	Psychological	Ad hoc Questionnaire

should be able to maintain their psychological well-being similar to their levels prior to the cultural contact (psychological adjustment), while also being able to implement a set of skills or competencies in order to properly function in a culture different from their own (sociocultural adaptation). While both adaptations are important, literature has focused more frequently on sociocultural adaptation.

5.4.1 Cultural, Psychological and Socio-demographic Predictors of Cultural and Academic Adaptation

There is an extensive literature review on predictors of sociocultural adaptation success for international students (see Bochner, 2006 for a complete review). Overall, there are a small number of studies conducted in Latin American countries. Following, a research study conducted in Argentina which aimed to identify predictors of cultural and academic adaptation based on international students' sociodemographic, cultural and psychological variables will be described.

The sample consisted of 217 international students attending various university courses. Their mean age was 24 years old and the majority of students came from other Latin-American countries (86 %). Only a small percentage came from European and Asian countries (14 %).

Table 5.4 presents predictor variables considered in the study. Adaptation measures taking into account for this research were: (a) academic adjustment, assessed by two items which include average grade obtained and self-perceived performance in their studies; and (b) cultural adaptation, assessed by four items which comprise daily life adaptation, quality of the stay and adjustment to the host culture.

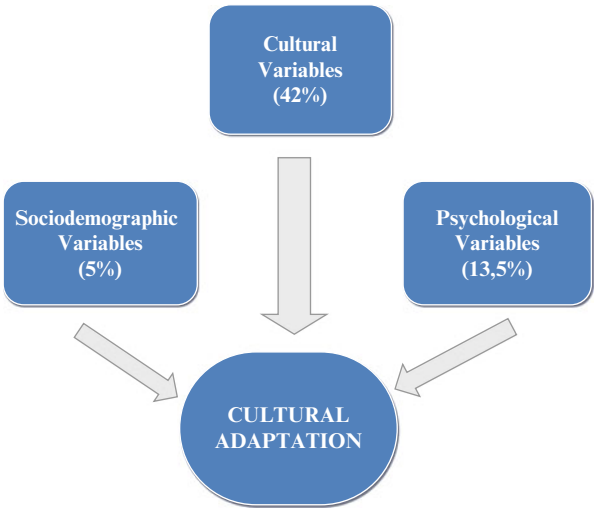

Fig. 5.3 Variance explained by predictors of cultural adaptation

The relationship between predictors and criterion variables – academic and cultural adaptation – was analyzed by two hierarchical regression analyses. Predictor variables were introduced in three steps in order to examine their contribution to the variance. Firstly, sociodemographic variables were introduced (age, sex and length of stay). In the second step, cultural variables were included in the analysis (contact with co-national, local and other international students, cultural distance, intergroup anxiety, and perceived discrimination). Finally, psychological variables were introduced (perceived social support, life satisfaction and perceived symptoms).

Overall, sociodemographic, psychological and cultural variables accounted for 56 % of the variance of sociocultural adaptation (Fig. 5.3). In particular, cultural variables together explained 42 % of the variance of the criterion variable, while psychological predictors provided an additional 13.5 %. Sociodemographic predictors only explained 0.05 % of the variance of cultural adaptation. Standardized regression coefficients showed that perceived discrimination, cultural anxiety and symptoms negatively predicted cultural adaptation. Contact with locals, social support and satisfaction also predicted, although in a positive direction, an effective cultural adaptation. It was concluded that three of the cultural variables introduced were able to predict almost half the variance of an effective cultural adaptation, while psychological variables were able to predict cultural adaptation in a much lesser degree.

As shown in Fig. 5.4, when predicting academic adjustment, cultural and psychological variables together explained 26 % of the variance. While cultural variables explained 12 % of the variance of academic adjustment, psychological predictors contributed an additional 14 %. In particular, sociodemographic variable did not explain its variance (0.01 %). An analysis of the standardized regression coefficients showed that perceived discrimination and intergroup anxiety negatively

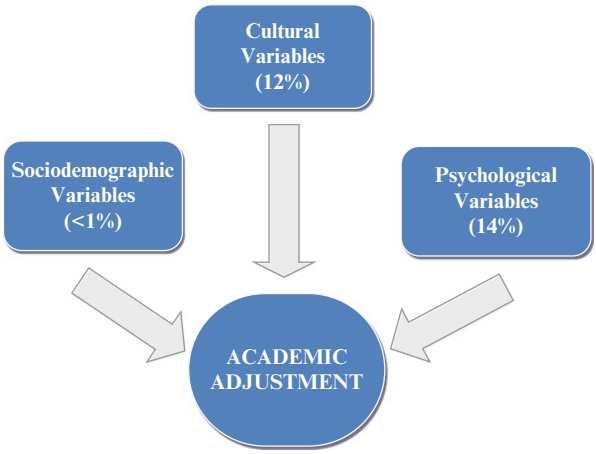

Fig. 5.4 Variance explained for predictors of academic adjustment

predicted academic adjustment while social support and life satisfaction positively predicted this variable.

This study demonstrates the importance of cultural variables in effective acculturation. However, both cultural and psychological predictors had a much smaller weight in relation to academic adjustment.

5.4.2 Strengths of Character, Cultural and Academic Adjustment

Positive Psychology brings the study of virtues and strengths as a sound basis for describing personality. Its study is pivotal as both individuals' – positive emotions – and groups' – positive organizations – experiences are supported by people's strengths of character (Park & Peterson, 2009). Individuals possess different strengths and virtues, in varying degrees, that understood in positive terms are the essence of personality (McCullough & Snyder, 2000). Several empirical findings demonstrated that certain groups of strengths are associated with psychological well-being. These strengths are also associated with academic performance, act as protectors of certain psychological disorders and tend to increase as a result of having gone through traumatic events (Cosentino & Castro Solano, 2012; Park, Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Peterson, Park & Seligman, 2006; Peterson et al., 2008). Keeping these findings in mind, a study was designed in order to identify undergraduate students' strengths of character, analyzing their relationship with psychological and cultural adaptation, as a result of the adjustment to a new cultural context.

The sample consisted of the same students from the previous research, 217 international students, who enrolled in various universities and stemming Latin-American countries (86 %). Strengths were assessed using a self-report questionnaire based on Peterson and Seligman's (2004) classification of 6 virtues and 24

Table 5.5 Correlations among virtues, academic adjustment, sociocultural adaptation and life satisfaction

Virtue	Academic adjustment (r)	Sociocultural adaptation (r)	Life satisfaction (r)
Wisdom and knowledge	.29**	.19**	.17**
Courage	.32**	.21**	.28**
Humanity	.11	.31**	.07
Justice	.20**	.23**	.23**
Temperance	.15*	.18**	.11**
Transcendence	.13*	.18**	.18**

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

strengths of character. This instrument presents opposite self-descriptions, one with the presence of a strength of character and other one with the absence of it (Refer to Chap. 6, for regional data on this instrument). Participants should indicate the degree of similarity to each of the proposed self-descriptions. Additionally, life satisfaction was assessed with the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) and academic and cultural adaptation with an instrument similar to the one described for the previous study.

First, Pearson's correlations were conducted among virtues, academic adjustment, cultural adaptation and life satisfaction. Results showed that most virtues correlate with the three variables related to students' adaptation (Table 5.5). That is, having greater virtues facilitates students' general adjustment. Secondly, three regression analyses were run in order to assess variable relationships, virtues were entered as independent variables and academic adjustment, cultural adaptation and life satisfaction as dependent variables.

When focusing on the prediction of academic adjustment, virtues accounted for 15 % of the variance. An analysis of the standardized regression coefficients showed that *courage and justice* in particular were able to predict academic adjustment. International students who achieved better academic adjustment were those who had the will to reach their goals despite the barriers and obstacles faced. In addition, these students were also more committed to their social group and displayed more equitable behavior.

In terms of cultural adaptation, results showed that virtues explained 12 % of its variance. A detailed observation of the standardized regression coefficients showed that *humanity* was able to predict international students' cultural adaptation. Those students who presented better adaptation to the new culture were those who also cared for others' well-being, acting with benevolence, being generous and promoting fair relationship with others.

When exploring life satisfaction prediction, virtues accounted for 12 % of the variance. An analysis of standardized regression coefficients showed that virtues such as *justice and courage* were able to predict international students' life satisfaction, presenting a similar pattern to the one found for academic adjustment.

In conclusion, the most adapted students were those who better overcame obstacles they had faced and had more energy to achieve their goals (courage). Moreover, they showed greater commitment with their social group (humanity) and displayed more equitable behavior (justice). These results are consistent with the critical task they were meant to develop. A successful acculturation process demands on the one hand, the resolution of practical problems of a psychosocial nature, which require a repertoire of social-oriented behavior. It demands interpersonal skills as those implied by the virtue of justice. On the other hand, when people are not able to adapt to an unfamiliar context acculturation might lead to acculturative stress. In this case, the new cultural context is seen as the main stressor. In this sort of situation, persistence, integrity, vitality and bravery – strength belonging to the virtue courage – are particularly important to achieve acculturation. These virtues, related to the motivation needed to acculturate, bring the perseverance and the will to make a constant effort to overcome obstacles in adverse circumstances.

Although the effect size for the predictions mentioned above are relatively small, this study highlights the importance of considering strengths and virtues in psychological and socio-cultural adaptation when working with international students.

5.4.3 Cultural Sensitivity and Cultural Intelligence as Cultural Competences

To succeed in the acculturation process, immigrants should possess what some authors named as *cultural competences*. Even though there is no agreement on what defines this concept, almost all authors agree on its importance (Cunningham, Foster, & Henggeler, 2002). This construct is relatively new and valuable in areas where it is necessary to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds: organizational leadership, medical professions, counseling, social services and educational contexts (Chi-Yue & Ying-Yi, 2007). Cultural competences include self-awareness of cultural values, knowledge of those who have opposed cultural values or different from themselves, adapting their own behavior to the needs of culturally diverse groups (Ang, Van Dyne, Koh & Ng, 2004; Chi-Yue & Ying-Yi, 2007; Cunningham et al., 2002; Earley & Ang, 2003; Flavell, 1979; Sternberg, 1986).

Following Bennett and Bennett (2004), intercultural competence can be defined as the ability to communicate and interact effectively in diverse cultural contexts. Even though the emphasis is on behavior, this cannot be considered without taking into account thoughts and emotions. Intercultural competences can be divided into two distinct groups: (a) *cultural sensitivity* (cultural mindset), which implies that one is aware of functioning in a cultural context which comprises its own rules and values, often different from one's own. This includes attitudes such as curiosity toward diversity and tolerance of ambiguity. It is an attitudinal and representational domain toward diversity. (b) *intercultural skills* (cultural skill set) which involve the effective display of behavior in a diverse cultural situation. This includes the ability to analyze the interaction, to predict potential mistakes and to adapt behavior according to the context. There are a

series of alternative behaviors that allow people to succeed in a new cultural situation. This domain relates to competencies and requires effective skill implementation. Some authors have named this component as cultural intelligence (Ang et al., 2007).

The basic idea of this two-component model is that knowledge, attitude and behavior must work together in order to succeed in the adaptation to different cultural context (Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman, 2003; Klopf, 2001; Lustig & Koester, 1999). This model posits that a different culture experience becomes more sophisticated when an individual has more opportunities to interact in different cultural contexts, moving from more ethnocentric to more ethnorelative stages. In the latter, one's culture is put into perspective while it is experienced in relation to different cultural contexts.

Next, two research studies are presented. The first study was an attempt to validate a questionnaire based on Bennett and Bennett's (2004) model previously described. The second study consisted of a design of a cultural intelligence test based on Early and Ang's (2003) model.

Three groups of students participated in the design of the cultural sensitivity scale: (a) 105 military students (cadets) who were completing their academic and military 4-years training (mean age of 23 years-old); b) 187 undergraduate students who were enrolled in Psychology (mean age of 27 years-old); and c) 81 international university students who were enrolled in Argentinean universities (mean age of 24 years-old). Some examples of items that belong to the tests are presented below:

Nowadays, it is necessary to understand things from different "cultural" points of view.
The more cultures one knows, the more differences one finds, which is a good thing.
It is possible to hold ones' beliefs while respecting others' values when they are different from one's own.
People should know more about different countries' traditions and customs.
If a person travels for working or educational reasons, it is good to know that there are cultural differences between countries.
It is good to have different opinions among people. If we all think in the same way, it might be boring.

The cultural sensitivity scale was able to differentiate among groups of students with different cultural competencies. So it was expected that students in the acculturation process would be more aware of cultural differences (greater cultural sensitivity) compared to students who had no prior experience of migration nor exposition to intercultural exchange. Previous studies have shown that military students predominantly hold values such as conservation and tradition, with a strong ethnocentric perspective (Castro Solano, 2005; Castro Solano & Nader, 2004). Therefore, it was expected that this group would be the least sensitive to diversity compared to their counterparts. Figure 5.5 presents means obtained for cultural sensitivity in each of the three groups studied.

As can be seen in Fig. 5.5, military students obtained the lowest scores, local students achieved intermediate scores and students in the acculturation process reached the higher scores on cultural sensitivity ($F(2,370) = 58.19$, $p < .001$). Thus, it can be concluded that closer groups have lower levels of tolerance for diversity

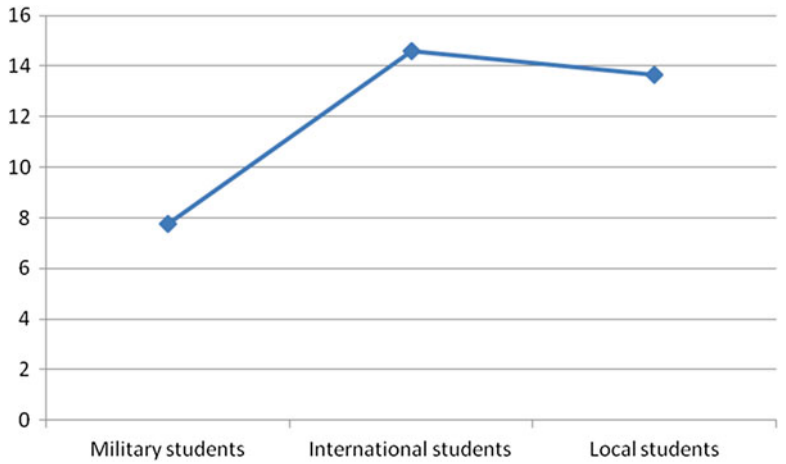

Fig. 5.5 Means for cultural sensitivity by group of student

compared to groups who are more accustomed to having intercultural contact, as international students.

Cultural sensitivity (cultural mindset) would be the first stage in assessing migrants' cultural competences. The more individuals are exposed to different cultural environments, the higher levels of cultural sensitivity they will experience. That is, they would be less ethnocentric and would present higher levels of tolerance to those aspects of the context that are different from, even contrasting to, their beliefs and values. Secondly, effective displayed behavior in a diverse cultural context (cultural skill-set) should be assessed when evaluating individuals' cultural competences. Moreover, it should be considered the manner in which most competent individuals are able to adapt effectively to the new environment.

In order to assess this second stage, a new study was conducted, developing an instrument to measure cultural intelligence, based on Early and Ang's (2003) conceptualization of the concept. These authors defined cultural intelligence as the ability to effectively adapt to a new cultural context, a multidimensional construct which comprises four components:

Metacognitive	Ability to acquire knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity
Cognitive	Knowledge about rules and practices of different cultural backgrounds
Motivational	Intrinsic interest in cultural differences
Behavioral	Flexibility to adapt behavior to a cultural background different to one's own.

With the purpose of validating this instrument, 237 international students enrolled in Argentinean universities were recruited for the study. Mean age of participants was 24 years-old. This test consisted of a series of different vignettes in which individuals had to resolve a situation which involved cultural differences. The aim of this tool was to access to the actual behavior displayed in situations that

Table 5.6 Correlations among cultural intelligence and cultural and adaptation variables

Cultural and adaptation variables	r with cultural intelligence
Intergroup anxiety	−.36**
Attitudes toward multiculturalism	.32**
Frequency of contact	.23
Sociocultural adaptation	.37**

**p < .01

involve intercultural exchange. Participants should respond to a total of 16 intercultural scenarios. Some examples of these descriptions are presented below:

1. You are in the classroom and a question arises related to what the lecturer has just explained. Next to you there are two classmates, one from your own culture and the other one from a different cultural background. (a) you might ask either students as you believe both have understood. (b) you prefer to ask the student from your own culture, as you think he/she will better understand.
2. You have received an invitation to dine out with a group of international students that you have recently met at the university. The chosen venue for the occasion is a typical restaurant from their country. You do not know any of the dishes they mentioned. How would you act in this situation? (a) You would attend but would not feel entirely comfortable. (b) You would order a typical dish and feel confident of being comfortable during the evening.
3. You are in a different country and realize that your outfit strongly differentiates from what other people regularly wear. You decide: (a) continue dressing as you frequently do in your country. (b) going shopping in order to dress as other people.

It was hypothesized that students who possessed the ability to adapt to different cultural contexts would obtain high scores on the previously described test. Correlations were run for this measure of cultural intelligence and the following variables: sociocultural adaptation, intergroup anxiety, attitudes toward multiculturalism and frequency of contact with co-nationals and local students. As shown in Table 5.6, cultural intelligence presents moderate correlations with adjustment in general and sociocultural adaptation in particular.

In summary, students who better adapt to host countries are those who are more motivated by diversity and are able to adjust their behavior effectively according to the demands of a changing environment which is different from their own.

5.5 Conclusion

As it has been described throughout this chapter, students who are more sensitive to diversity, have greater abilities to integrate to a new culture, have more frequent interact with others and are also more committed to their social reference group, tend to have a positive cultural adaptation when they decide to study abroad. If, however, students decide to start university studies in countries with different values

and a great culture distance from their own, if they hold to traditional values and tend to view their culture as unique, these students are more likely to be discriminated against and might present poor psychological and sociocultural adaptation.

One might ask what Positive Psychology brings to the study of successful acculturation of international students. Firstly, it is important to consider that not all students would be able to maintain their psychological well-being when experiencing a migratory process. The ability to adapt to different cultural environments, the sensitivity to understand diversity, the skills to build social networks, and the virtues of humanity, courage and justice are the cornerstones of a positive adaptation. However, there are other characteristics related to the environment, rather than personal factors, that have an influence on an individuals' adjustment. A culturally distant context in terms of values or a country that is not institutionally welcoming to immigrants would be obstacles to a successful acculturation process.

The key aspects of a successful immigration develop from an interaction between personal and contextual characteristics. Individuals' strengths do not function independently; the environment might enhance or hold back the adaptation process. In general, Positive Psychology considers that strengths and positive emotions are the result of individuals' characteristics or the outcome of an intentional activity designed to generate them. Under this perspective, the strong influence that contexts have on individuals' behavior might be forgotten.

If country characteristics have an impact on the nature of contact international students have with the host society, and individuals' competences moderate this impact, one might expect great differences in acculturating levels depending on this interaction of these two aspects. Thus, when working with international students, it is important to understand both students' characteristics and cultural background and the uniqueness of the receiving university and society they will immerse in. This interrelationship is essential to achieve an effective adaptation and therefore, to accomplish their academic goals. This successful endeavour would consequently lead to benefits for both sojourners and the host society.

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Chapter 6
Character Strengths: Measurement and Studies in Argentina with Military and General Population Samples

Alejandro C. Cosentino

6.1 Introduction

The study of positive personal traits or character strengths did not start with the emergence of Positive Psychology, but many decades ago. Indeed, in the early twentieth century, the study of moral character was part of the mainstream psychology (McCullough & Snyder, 2000). At that time, the terms "*character*" and "*personality*" were used in similar manner in psychology. Gordon Allport was one of the most important driving forces for the exclusion of the term character and its study from the psychological field. Instead, he proposed the study of *personality,* i.e., the characteristics of individuals from an objective perspective (Cawley, Martin, & Johnson, 2000; McCullough & Snyder, 2000; Nicholson, 1998; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Since the 1940s, both the character term and the character study were almost removed from psychology. However, at the edge of the twenty-first century, an unifying movement for the study of character emerged, led by the creation of the Values in Action Institute (VIA) and the publication of the "Manual of the Sanities" (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), a book developed as the positive counterpart of the manuals of mental disorders. Peterson and Seligman considered the character construct as composed by virtues, strengths and situational themes, in a decreasing level of abstraction (see Fig. 6.1) and developed a character classification of 24 character strengths and 6 virtues (see Table 6.1).

The character classification from the Manual of the Sanities has inspired several research on the association between positive traits and a wide variety of variables such as, genetics (Steger, Hicks, Kashdan, Krueger, & Bouchard, 2007), sex and age (Linley et al., 2007), social groups (Cosentino & Castro Solano, 2012), satisfaction with life (Park, Peterson, & Seligman 2004), personality (Macdonald, Bore, & Munro, 2008),

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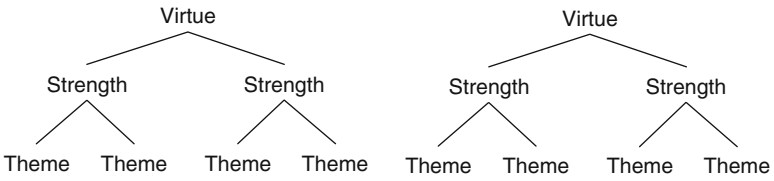

Fig. 6.1 Several levels of abstraction for the character construct (Note: Theme = situational theme)

Table 6.1 Brief definitions of strengths of character from the values in action classification (Peterson & Seligman, 2004)

Character strength	Brief definition
Justice	
Fairness	Make equitable social judgments
Leadership	Lead people in harmony to success
Teamwork	Engage with a social group
Humanity	
Kindness	Help people without utilitarian motives
Love	Be close to people I have affective bounds
Social Intelligence	Know what people wish and seek
Wisdom and knowledge	
Perspective	Have a deep judgment on life
Creativity	Have original and useful ideas
Open-mindedness	Find alternative point of views
Love of learning	Find more and better knowledge
Curiosity	Have a deep wish to experiment and learn
Transcendence	
Spirituality	Consider life has a meaning beyond oneself
Gratitude	Feel and express thanks
Hope	Be convinced that everything will be fine
Humor	Have a cheerful and serene view of life
Appreciation	Feel deep emotions with the sublime
Temperance	
Forgiveness	Become benevolent towards the offender
Self-regulation	Control own responses to stimuli
Prudence	Make decisions carefully
Humility	Let one's achievements speak for themselves
Courage	
Bravery	Do the right thing despite risks
Honesty	Practice what I preach
Persistence	Complete tasks despite obstacles
Zest	Feel alive and effective

Note: *Appreciation* appreciation of beauty and excellence, *teamwork* teamwork or citizenship

academic performance in college students (Lounsbury, Fisher, Levy, & Welsh, 2009), academic and military performance in military students (Cosentino & Castro Solano, 2012), recovery from illness (Peterson, Park, & Seligman, 2006), and posttraumatic growth (Peterson, Park, Pole, D'Andrea, & Seligman, 2008), among cixothers.

6.2 The Strength of Character Inventory

The need to solve a practical problem related to the lack of a scale for studying positive traits in Argentina led to the development of a reliable and valid assessment instrument for measuring strengths of character according to Peterson and Seligman's (2004) classification.

6.2.1 Justification for the Development of the Strength of Character Inventory

6.2.1.1 Not Available Measurement Instrument

We considered several alternatives to solve the problem of not having a reliable and valid instrument to assess character strengths of the VIA classification with the Argentinean population (Cosentino & Castro Solano, 2008b). An imaginable solution was to develop an adaptation of the English or the Spanish version of the instrument developed by Peterson and Seligman (2004). That is, the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS) that assess 24 character strengths. However, it was decided not to use the VIA-IS because: (a) its length, the VIA-IS consisted of 240 items that implies monitor participants to prevent the effect of dispersed attention (Peterson & Seligman, 2004); and, (b) its duration, the VIA-IS demands 1 h approximately with military population (Matthews, Eid, Kelly, Bailey, & Peterson, 2006), that would not satisfy time constraints for conducting a study with Argentinean military population. Thus, it was considered as a reasonable solution to use a brief 24-item measurement instrument consisting of self-nominations that corresponded to the 24 character strengths. These scores tended to converge with its corresponding VIA-IS scale scores (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The developers of VIA-IS have warned against the use of self-nominations, because a simple and abstract label of a trait could be interpreted in an idiosyncratic manner by participants, while explicit expressions of items in a questionnaire, overtly present thoughts, feelings and behaviors that correspond to a given strength. Therefore, we aimed to develop a short measurement instrument to assess the 24 strengths of the VIA classification that exceeded the criticism raised by Peterson and Seligman: (a) it should not be an instrument of self-nomination, and (b) it should include thoughts, feelings, and behaviors representing various manifestations of the character strengths.

6.2.1.2 Complex Items

In a first approach, we were skeptical about solving the problem of developing a short instrument which includes the plethora of thoughts, feelings and behaviors that correspond to a given strength, because measurement instruments are usually developed in a manner where each item consists of a simple sentence that expresses a very specific aspect (Cosentino & Castro Solano, 2008b). However, there is an unusual form to construct assessment instruments – developing items that consist of paragraphs or sentences. For example, such kind of instruments are used to assess personality traits relevant to personality disorders (Harlan & Clark, 1999), types of attachment (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Hazan & Shaver, 1987), or personality dimensions from the lexical hypothesis (e.g., measurement instruments recently developed, Woods & Hampson, 2005; or in the origins of the lexical hypothesis, Cattell, 1947; Fiske, 1949; Norman, 1963; Norman & Goldberg, 1966; Tupes, 1957; Tupes & Christal, 1958, 1961). Particularly, the pioneers of lexical hypothesis included assessment instruments consisting of complex items in several empirical that served as grounded basis for the Big Five personality model. Moreover, instruments of complex items are being used and included in recent studies. For instance, Herzog, Hughes, and Jordan (2010), and Levy and Kelly (2010) used the Relationship Questionnaire (RQ; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) to assesses attachment types; Stroud, Durbin, Saigal, and Knobloch-Fedders (2010), and Wilt, Schalet, and Durbin (2010) used the Schedule for Nonadaptive and Adaptive Personality Self-Description Rating Form (SNAP-SRF; Harlan & Clark, 1999) to assesses personality traits; and Bäccman and Carlstedt (2010) and Want, Vickers, and Amos (2009), included the Single-Item Measures of Personality (SIMP; Woods & Hampson, 2005) to measure the dimensions of the Big Five.

6.2.1.3 Single Bipolar Items

Similarly to the RQ and to the SIMP that present one item per variable, we wanted to develop a new tool to assess the VIA character strengths with a minimum length. That is, one item assessing only one character strength (Cosentino & Castro Solano, 2008b). Several authors – e.g., Harlan and Clark (1999), the pioneers of the lexical hypothesis mentioned above, and more recently Woods and Hampson (2005) who investigate on this model – used measurement instruments with items that consisted of two complex paragraphs or sentences with opposing meaning about personal descriptions. Consequently, we chose this procedure for developing items for the new instrument to assess character strengths. As a result, we developed 24 bipolar paragraph-items consisting of two opposing descriptions. We also had to define the characteristics of the item poles of the new instrument to measure the strengths of character from the "Manual of the Sanities" (Cosentino & Castro Solano, 2008b). Peterson and Seligman (2004) had argued that, in all cases, the focus should be centered on the positive side of character strengths. Therefore, the assessment should be within the positive range, that is, from the maximum presence to a total

absence of a given character strength. Consequently, each item should contrast a pole of presence with a pole of absence of a given character strength. For instance, the description of the presence of kindness would express thoughts, feelings and behaviors of a good person as opposed to the description of the characteristics of a person without kindness, but not the characteristics of an individual with a persistent and pervasive bad attitude.

6.2.1.4 Item Contents

In order to achieve high levels of internal consistency for the contents of each item of the new inventory (Cosentino & Castro Solano, 2008b), the development of description of personal characteristics that compose each item had to be subordinated to both rational and empirical constraints. Its content should validly refer to one character strength and should reliably be associated with empirical studies. This strategy is similar to the procedure used by Harlan and Clark (1999) to develop the SNAP-SRF based on the original SNAP consisting of 375 items; or by Cattell (1947), the intellectual father of the Big Five, who at the beginning of the lexical approach developed 35 descriptive paragraphs from the empirical and semantic analyses of thousands of terms referring to personality traits (Cattell, 1943; Goldberg, 1993). Consequently, with the purpose of developing bipolar items for the new instrument, we analyzed consensual definitions of the character strengths from the "Manual of the Sanities" (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) and read questionnaires derived from these definitions and classification, such as the English and the Spanish versions of the VIA-IS, both online and paper-and-pencil format (Cosentino & Castro Solano, 2008b). Specifically, items that correspond to each of the 24 Revised IPIP-VIA scales (http://ipip.ori.org/newVIAKey.htm) with Cronbach alpha >.70 were adapted and used as a reference for developing each of the descriptions that represent the presence of a given character strength.

Regrading items' wording, we developed paragraphs with simple vocabulary and grammar (Cosentino & Castro Solano, 2008b). To generate bipolar items, we developed for each description of the presence of a given character strength its corresponding description of absence of this strength in which the elements of the sentence describing presence were semantically denied, trying to maintain sequential order, grammatical structure, and lexicon of the original paragraph.

Subsequently, we arranged the 24 bipolar items in a counterbalanced manner (Cosentino & Castro Solano, 2008b). Due to this counterbalance, half of the items would be directly scored and the other half would be reversely scored. Finally, we added below each bipolar item, a 5-point Likert scale where participants had to indicate the degree of agreement with one or the other description, i.e., to the description of an individual with presence of a particular strength or the description of an individual without that strength. We named the new measurement instrument as 'Strength of Character Inventory' (SCI, IVyF in Spanish). Table 6.2 shows an example of the item that measures the character strength of persistence.

Table 6.2 Persistence bipolar item of the strength of character inventory (translated)

When I work, I get distracted and leave my work unfinished. Since I quickly pull out, if an obstacle appears I do not tend to keep doing what I had decided to do until I finish it. So, there are things that I begin that I leave unfinished. Moreover, I do not set goals in life.	When I work, I do not get distracted and do not leave my work unfinished. Since I do not quickly pull out, if an obstacle appears I tend to keep doing what I had decided to do until I finish it. So, there are not things that I begin that I leave unfinished. Moreover, I set goals in life.

6.2.2 General Characteristics of the Strength of Character Inventory

Due to the characteristics outlined above, the SCI is an instrument composed of global direct self-rating items. Paulhus and Vazire (2007) considered this type of inventories as the simplest form of self-report, and its central features are clarity —high face validity— and simplicity. In this sense, Burisch (1984) has argued that there is consistent empirical evidence, not broadly known, that demonstrates that self-rating instruments are, in general, more valid than questionnaires. Moreover, there are other positive aspects of the short self-rating instruments, such as direct communicability; economy in construction and application; and quickness to be filled out by the respondents, implying lower levels of fatigue and boredom for research participants (Burisch, 1984; Paulhus & Vazire, 2007; Robins, Hendin, & Trzesniewski, 2001).

In sum, the SCI consisting of 24 bipolar paragraphs-items, has a 10 % item-length in comparison to VIA-IS, and solve the problem of item interpretation explained by Peterson and Seligman (2004) in relation to short measurement instruments. Moreover, the SCI presents validity and internal consistency of its contents.

The SCI was administered to a pilot sample of 48 third-year cadets of the Argentine Army. Generally, cadets filled out the measurement instrument in less than 30 min and properly understood the items and the structure of the inventory. Subsequently, the instrument was administered to two different groups of college students obtaining similar results.

6.2.3 Psychometric Properties of the Strength of Character Inventory

In the next paragraphs it is shown that, despite being a short measurement instrument, the SCI presents psychometric characteristics similar to the psychometric characteristics observed for VIA-IS of 240 items.

6.2.3.1 Reliability

Firstly, a Cronbach alpha of .85 was found for the scores of the 24 items that measure the 24 character strengths of VIA classification (cf. Macdonald et al., 2008) in a general population sample of 781 individuals (453 women), with a mean age of 40.9 years, *SD* = 16.7 (Cosentino, 2011). This result is similar to the median internal consistency of .77 – with a range from .71 to .90 – observed for a VIA-IS German adaptation (Ruch et al., 2010). It should be highlighted that Cronbach alpha is not necessarily a measure of the dimensionality of participant responses nor indicates the degree to which we are measuring a single construct. However, it is considered an indicator of how participants' responses are associated —i.e., covary— (Helms, Henze, Sass, & Mifsud, 2006). Furthermore, no internal consistency indexes can be calculated for a given strength because the SCI consisted of one item per strength. Consequently, test-retest correlations, which represent the temporal stability of scores, are relevant for assessing the reliability of the SCI (Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003). The median test-retest correlations for 3 weeks for the SCI was *r* = .79, ranging from .72 to .92, in a sample of 123 individuals (70 women), with a mean age of 37.8 years, *SD* = 15.6 (Cosentino, 2011). These indexes of temporal stability are similar to the test-retest correlations observed for the VIA-IS German adaptation: *Mdn* = .78, ranging from .69 to .87 (Ruch et al., 2010).

6.2.3.2 Evidence of Validity

Relationships Between the Strength of Character Inventory and the Satisfaction with Life Scale

It was proposed that, by definition, the character strengths contribute to fulfillment, satisfaction and happiness in a broad sense (Park et al., 2004; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Park et al. have found that all character strengths were directly related to life satisfaction, even after controlling for sex, age, and citizenship (nationality), with a *Mdn* of *r* = .25, with a range from .05 to .53. Similarly, Cosentino (2011) found that all strengths of character (except humility) as measured by the SCI are directly associated with life satisfaction, even after controlling for age and sex, *Mdn* of *r* = .25, ranging from .13 to .57. Moreover, both studies have the same seven character strengths with the highest partial correlations with life satisfaction: gratitude, curiosity, vitality, hope, persistence, love and perspective.

Relationships Between the Strength of Character Inventory with the Big Five Inventory

Peterson and Seligman (2004) have posited that it is very important to consider the relationships between the VIA character classification and the Big Five personality model – developed from the convergence of words related to the

personal characteristics (Goldberg, 1993) – because it makes meaningful the VIA classification. Using the SCI, Cosentino (2011) study character strengths – presented between dashes – associated with the Big Five factors. He found positive relationships with at least medium effect sizes between: (a) all the associations of character strengths with conscientiousness —persistence, zest, self-regulation, hope, honesty—, agreeableness —kindness, fairness, forgiveness, prudence— and emotional stability —hope—; (b) almost all the associations with openness to experience —creativity, love of learning, and appreciation of beauty and excellence—; and (c) most of the associations with extraversion. —social intelligence, humor and bravery—. The associations found between character strengths measured with the SCI and the factors of the BFI are similar to the empirical results of the relationship between the character strengths of VIA classification and the Big Five factors showed by Peterson and Park (2004), and the results found by MacDonald et al. (2008).

Relationships Between the Strength of Character Inventory and the Social Desirability Scale

When individuals describe themselves with culturally appropriate and acceptable —i.e., socially desirable— characteristics, as the strengths of character, some researchers conjecture a possible relationship with the social desirability construct (Cosentino & Castro Solano, 2008a; Crowne & Marlowe, 1964). Peterson and Seligman (2004) have argued that the character strengths are socially desirable. However, these authors have surprisingly sustained that character strengths do not correlate with social desirability. It seems more reasonable to assume that if, by definition, the character strengths are socially desirable; consequently the strengths should tend, in general, to show associations with social desirability. This conclusion can be supported by the results of two studies that showed that more than the half of the character traits are associated with social desirability (Macdonald et al., 2008; Sarros & Cooper, 2006), and an investigation with adolescents that founded similar results (Osin, 2009). In relation to the SCI, all strengths were founded positively associated (*Mdn* of $r = .26$, in the range from .11 to .39) with social desirability measured with an Argentinean adaptation of Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale in a sample of 781 individuals from the Argentina general population (Cosentino, 2011).

6.2.3.3 Convergence with Objective Assessment

Cosentino (2011) studied the relationship between self-report character strength scores and the scores of an objective assessment on this topic. A total of 178 people (99 women) – with a mean age of 32.9 years ($SD = 11.6$) – filled out the SCI, while

178 participants set as observers (95 women) – with a mean age of 32.5 years ($SD = 11.3$) – filled out the SCI in reporting format. Observers had a social bond with the observed participants, they mostly were couples, friends, or family and had known each other for a mean of 13 years ($SD = 12.4$). Correlations between the SCI scores and the SCI informant-form scores showed a mean of $r = .49$, ranging from .35 (integrity) to .75 (spirituality). These coefficients are similar to, and somewhat higher than, those found by Ruch et al. (2010), which showed a median correlation of .40 between the VIA-IS scores and the peer format VIA-IS scores. In particular, both studies agree on the strongest —spirituality and love of learning— and weakest —honesty— score convergences.

6.3 Character Strengths in Argentina Population

6.3.1 Character Strengths in General Population of Argentina

Samples from different countries have shown sex and age differences in character strengths (e.g., Linley et al., 2007; Ruch et al., 2010). Therefore, a study was conducted to determine sex and age differences in strengths of character with Argentinean population.

Firstly, I studied the relationship between character strengths and age, including sex as a covariate (Cosentino, 2011). In general, results showed that the more the age, the greater the character strength presence. More specifically, age is associated with 12 strengths with small-to-medium correlations. There was a positive association between age and character strengths of prudence, spirituality, self-regulation, honesty, appreciation, humility, fairness, gratitude, perspective, persistence and forgiveness; while negative association were found for age and humor. Age also showed positive associations with the character strengths of zest, open-mindedness, and hope, with less than small effect sizes.

I also analyzed the differences in character strengths by sex, using age as a covariate (Cosentino, 2011). In general, it was observed sex differences in strengths of character, and specifically, it was observed that women scored higher than men did on character strengths as follows: firstly, on spirituality, forgiveness, kindness, honesty, and love with small-to-medium effect sizes; secondly, on gratitude, humility, love of learning, and fairness with less than small effect sizes. However, in creativity, men scored higher than women with a small-to-medium effect size. Results of a descriptive discriminant analysis showed that women clearly present higher levels of spirituality, forgiveness, kindness, and honesty than men, but also lower levels of creativity than their counterparts. These results are consistent with the character strengths that shown higher effect sizes in the univariate analyses.

Table 6.3 Relatively higher character strengths of the Peterson and Seligman's (2004) classification in the comparison between military and civilian students

Military	Civilian
Spirituality	Appreciation of beauty and excellence
Social Intelligence	
Love	
Prudence	
Humility	
Self-regulation	
Leadership	

Note: The character strengths showed in this table have small-to-medium effect sizes, with the exception of the character strength in **bold** that has a close-to-large effect size

6.3.2 Comparison of Character Strengths Between Civilian and Military Population of Argentina

Military population is a very interesting group to be studied from the perspective of positive psychology. The Army could be considered as a positive institution because this institution selects individuals with positive traits or stimulates the development of positive traits among its members. Actually, the character is an issue of particular importance in the military field. Firstly, the military doctrine (Ejército Argentino, 1990) and military individuals (Casullo & Castro Solano, 2003) propose that military leaders must have characteristics that are similar to some of the character strengths of the Peterson and Seligman's (2004) classification. Secondly, students' character traits are assessed in the military academy. In contrast to the usual civilian university, the military academy assign a grade for personal characteristics (or positive traits) that is included into the global assessment of cadets' performance, having a significant role for cadets' stay at the military college (Cosentino, 2011).

In view of the importance of positive personal traits for the military area, Cosentino (2011) hypothesized that (a) military college students present higher positive traits than civilian college students; (b) military students close to the course finalization at the military college ("seniors") differ in their positive traits from cadets who recently enter to the college ("freshman"); and (c) positive traits are associated with performance at the military academy – mainly focusing on the last year of courses – because military students who exhibit higher performance had the best adaptation to the entire educational program.

Cosentino (2011) compared the VIA character strengths between military and civilian samples, balanced by age, sex (male), and training (all study years were proportionally present). Results of univariate analyses with social desirability as a covariate are shown in Table 6.3. A descriptive discriminant analysis showed that spirituality clearly maximizes the separation between military and civilian student samples.

The evident higher presence of spirituality in military students in comparison to civilian students (Cosentino, 2011; Cosentino & Castro Solano, 2012) is consistent with results from a study on values conducted in the same military academy. This study

showed that military individuals more strongly agree to tradition and conformity type of values from the Schwartz's theory than civilian individuals (Castro Solano & Nader, 2006; see Schwartz, 2006, for a summary of his theory). Consistently, results of a meta-analysis of studies from 15 countries of monotheistic religious traditions, such as Argentina (Mallimaci, Esquivel, & Irrazábal, 2008), showed that religious individuals mainly agree with that same types of values (Saroglou, Delpierre, & Dernelle, 2004). Finally, the higher presence of spirituality in military students in comparison to civilian students is also compatible with the military doctrine, as spirituality is considered an important characteristic to ensure an effective leadership and a crucial aspect for leadership at critical moments (Ejército Argentino, 1990).

Both, the results of the study conducted in Argentina and the results of Matthews et al. (2006) research in the U.S. consistently show that military students score higher than civilian students in several character strengths. Despite the differences between the Argentina military academy (Castro Solano, 2005) and the West Point academy (Alberts, 2009; Matthews, 2008), military doctrines from both Argentina and the U.S. support moral virtues for the military leadership (Department of the Army, 1999; Ejército Argentino, 1990; Matthews et al., 2006). Thus, it seems that moral virtues for leadership are the key factors underlying the similar results observed in both studies when comparing military and civilian populations.

6.3.3 Comparison of Character Strengths Among Military Students

Because positive traits are so intensely valued by military academies and military students generally present higher character strengths in comparison to civilian students, some question arises: Do individuals with high positive traits tend to enter to military academies or do they develop their character strengths at the military academy? I tried to answer this question by comparing character strengths between freshman and senior military students. It was hypothesized that differences in positive traits between freshmen and seniors will be interpreted as a modification of positive traits due to their stay at the military academy.

A sample of male cadets was selected from the first and the last year of the course (Cosentino, 2011; Cosentino & Castro Solano, 2012). Results from univariate analyses, including social desirability as a covariate, showed that seniors cadets score lower on the character strengths of kindness and teamwork, and score higher on forgiveness than freshmen. More profoundly, a descriptive discriminant analysis showed that seniors clearly present lower levels of kindness and teamwork than freshmen. This difference between freshman and senior military students is consistent with the implicit leadership theories (TILs) of military students before and during their role as a leader at the military academy (Castro Solano, 2006; Castro Solano & Nader, 2008). The TILs of military cadets who had a role as a leader were less cooperative and more egocentric. Consequently, it was hypothesized that cadets have a mental image of a leader that is consistent with the traits they actually have as military leaders.

Due to, firstly, military students score in general higher on character strengths when compared to civilian students, and secondly, the differences in character strengths between freshman and senior military students are not present when military and civilian students are compared, I hypothesized that people with higher positive traits tend to enter in the military academy, having a subsequent adjustment of these character strengths while staying at the military organization (Cosentino, 2011; Cosentino & Castro Solano, 2012). Additionally, this hypothesis is consistent with the idea of character strengths as stable and malleable aspects (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

6.4 Character Strengths and Academic Performance

For decades, performance was a widely studied variable in psychology. Predictors of academic performance are classified as intellectual factors and non-intellectual factors (Castro Solano, 2005). Analytical intelligence was traditionally considered as a performance predictor in educational military programs, but more recently other variables were included into the network of performance predictors. Several studies have found that non-intellectual factors predict the performance of military and college students. Specifically, it was found that personality, practical intelligence, and motivational characteristics are predictors of military performance of Argentinean cadets (Benatuil & Castro Solano, 2007; Castro Solano, 2005; Castro Solano & Casullo, 2001; Castro Solano & Fernández Liporace, 2005).

The positive character traits can be considered as non-intellectual factors. Based on the VIA classification of character (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), a study that used self-reported mean for grades of college students showed that 16 character strengths were associated with academic performance in civilian population (Lounsbury et al., 2009). Moreover, an article reported that perseverance, prudence, and love were associated to higher grades in students (Peterson & Park, 2006). Although there are no many articles on the relationship between VIA character strengths and military performance, one article specifically reported that the character strength of love predicted accomplishments as a leader in U.S. military academy cadets (Peterson & Park).

Cosentino and Castro Solano (2012) studied the relationship between VIA character strengths and objective performance, i.e., grades obtained from the records of an Argentinean military college. They considered two types of performance: academic (similar to academic performance for students in civilian colleges) and military (specific for military students). In order to evaluate the military performance, an averaged score was calculated with (a) the grades assigned by officers who assess several aspects of cadets performance through observation of indicators —such as behavior, military personality, field exercises, ability to lead, among others—, and (b) the grades assigned by military professors who teach theoretical issues on specific military subjects —such as tactics, explosives, among others—.

To study whether the VIA character strengths would predict military and academic performance, these relationships were analyzed in freshman and in senior

military student samples, respectively (Cosentino, 2011; Cosentino & Castro Solano, 2012). Results of these analyses showed that, in general, the strengths of character are associated to performance. These observed results support once again a general hypothesis that states that non-intellectual factors are associated to performance and a particular hypothesis that maintain specifically this association for college military population. However, the results were mixed: simple correlation coefficients showed that both academic and military performance (a) are positively associated with the character strengths of love of learning and leadership, while are negatively associated with the character strength of fairness in freshmen, and (b) are positively associated with the character strength of persistence in senior students.

Another procedure was conducted to study the relationships between character strengths and performances in military students. Cadets with grades above the 70th percentile (high performance) and cadets with grades below the 30th percentile (low performance) were selected to constitute high and low performance groups for the first and for the last year samples. This method was used for both academic and military performance (Cosentino, 2011; Cosentino & Castro Solano, 2012).

A descriptive discriminant analysis showed that, in general, the character strength of fairness makes a consistent contribution to the separation between groups of high and low performance in both academic and military performance, in first year military sample (Cosentino, 2011; Cosentino & Castro Solano, 2012). Particularly, the results showed that (a) for academic performance, high performance group score lower in fairness but higher in love of learning than the low performance group; and (b) for military performance, the high performance group score lower in fairness than the low performance group.

The pattern of results for the relationships between the character strengths and both academic and military performance for the last year sample is clearly different from the pattern of results for the first year sample (Cosentino, 2011; Cosentino & Castro Solano, 2012). Both academic and military performance and the character strength of persistence reliably separates between the high and the low performance groups in the last year courses. That is, cadets with high performance report higher character strength of persistence in comparison to cadets with low performance. I assumed that seniors with higher performance not only show the best adaptation to the military academy but also show the best closeness with the ideal military leader that the military institution supports.

6.5 Summary

The SCI is a short self-report consisted of 24 items to measure the VIA classification of character strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), which items reflects a wide range of manifestations of the character strengths in thoughts, feelings and behaviors. A short instrument for measuring character strengths meets the needs of many researchers who are looking for quicker assessments that imply lower levels of fatigue for individuals.

The comparison in character strengths between military and civilian students showed that military students generally have higher levels of character strengths than civilian students. This difference appears to reflect the emphasis that military doctrine places on the positive traits for their future military leaders.

Although the character strengths are not defined on the basis of outcome variables (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), it is interesting to know what and how positive traits are related to the outcome variables because, among other reasons, they could be part of a network of predictor variables. Empirical studies show that character strengths are related to academic and military performance of military students in Argentina. An interesting finding was that freshman and senior cadets' performance at the military academy in Argentina are mixed: character strengths are both positively and negatively related to performance. Consequently, these mixed results indicate that is necessary to avoid the tendency to overgeneralize across samples. Instead of assuming that anything positive is always positive, it could be better to assume that what is considered as a strength in a particular environment could function as a weakness in another, and vice versa (Aspinwall and Staudinger, 2003). In other words, the association between the character strengths and the outcome variables could vary across populations and contexts.

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Chapter 7
Positive Psychology and Academic Performance: A Brazilian Initiative

Lilian Graziano

7.1 The Brazilian and the Institutional Contexts

From 1995 to 2002, a series of relevant changes occurred in the tertiary education in Brazil, such as public policies that aim at improving the quality of education and incrementing the number of places available in tertiary institutions. The Brazilian government, through the National Council of Education [*Conselho Nacional de Educação*] created the National Course Exam (*Exame Nacional de Cursos*) in order to evaluate tertiary education (Real, 2007). This was a pioneer educational initiative in the country that focused on evaluating available courses mostly based on the analysis of the exams' results. During that period of time, programs that have not met the desired standards have been at risk of being discontinued. These policies mainly affected private institutions, which consequently implemented diverse initiatives to improve the quality of the programs, in general, and the students' performance, in particular.

The institution where I have been teaching was affected in a slightly different way. This is a traditional tertiary institution, founded at the beginning of the twentieth century in Sao Paulo, which offers programs in Business Administration, Economy, Accounting and Trilingual Executive Secretary. Just like most tertiary institutions in the country, when National Courses Exam was implemented, this institution began to develop initiatives aiming at guaranteeing quality of the available programs. In 2002, this institution reached a very good quality status, with programs consecutive scoring with the highest grades at the National Courses Exam. However, the school began to suffer high rate of dropouts by that time.

As mentioned before, the policies implemented by the National Education Council aimed not only at improving the quality of tertiary programs but also at increasing the number of places available. This situation caused an excessive offer

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of places in tertiary education and consequently, this field of education increasingly became a competitive market. It did not take long before students realized that a few blocks away from the institution there would be another institution offering a similar program for a slightly lower cost.

Additionally, the levels of education quality achieved in our institution resulted in demands of greater efforts and dedication from students, particularly from those who previously have presented serious difficulty to follow the program's pace.

It took time to the team of our institution to fully comprehend the scenario. It was decided to ask students to fill-in a form when dropping out from the program. Among other topics, the reasons for leaving the institution were asked in that form. Once the responses were reviewed, it was found that financial difficulty was the main motive for dropping out tertiary education. Students revealed they could not afford paying for the tuition fee.

Considering that some information might be missing from those convenient forms, it was decided to replace them by face-to-face interviews. This new method allowed our team to finally understand the real reasons that had led a significant number of students to leave the institution: Low academic performance and feeling of not being able to follow the program.

This scenario required to take an immediate action to reverse the situation. As a consequence, the Phoenix Project was born.

7.2 The Phoenix Project

Concerned with the high levels of dropout presented in the institution, the Dean of Extension and Development – Dr. Fabio Appolinario – began to plan a new initiative aiming to reach the roots of students' low performance while maintaining the quality of the education achieved. In 2003, Appolinario founded the Educational Technologies Laboratory (LabTEd).

The LabTEd was a laboratory for research and application, closely related to the Department of Extension and Development. The LabTEd's main goal was to develop, to test and to implement processes and educational technologies that lead to a constant improvement on the educational and research quality of the institution. During the period this lab was functioning several projects were conducted, including the main one named: Phoenix Project.

The idea underlying the project was initially developed by professor Appolinario who then, invited me to coordinate its implementation. This decision was made, not only because I was a professor at the institution in that moment, but also because I was working on my PhD dissertation on Positive Psychology. This perspective served as the philosophical grounds for the Phoenix Project.

Before proceeding with project, it was evident the need to conduct preliminary studies and consider, additionally to the areas students need to work on, those factors involved in students' life that might have an effect on their academic performance and desires to continue with their tertiary education.

At that time, there was a consensus in the marketplace that, besides the technical competencies that companies would seek during their recruiting processes, there was a need to identify the so-called soft skills. That is, a set of personality characteristics, habits and individual attitudes that favor social interaction.

Another important aspect to consider was students' socio-economic profile that would place them in a fragile position in relation to their academic performance. Student from lower socio-economic backgrounds might reach tertiary education with certain learning deficiencies and scarce cultural references. Additionally, many of these students also need to work in order to fund their studies, a situation that leads them to attend to evening classes, tired after a full-time day of work. For the success of the program the institution was willing to implement, it was mandatory to address all these variables.

As enrollment in the Phoenix Project was voluntary and one of its aims was to improve academic performance, content-based actions were not taken. Students did not get tutoring or extra exercises from their regular courses as this might only make them feel more tired at the end of the day. The Phoenix Project was delineated as a student-training project aiming to improve academic performance, as well as promoting students' positive emotions. Besides this, the project also aimed at decreasing the rate of academic dropouts.

7.2.1 Project Framework

Since the beginning, Positive Psychology project was conceived as the central philosophy. At that time, several studies have demonstrated the importance of positive emotions on the increase of individuals' social and intellectual resources (Fredrickson, 1998), particularly on students' academic performance (Printich, 2003).

Although the structure of the project was previously defined, the final version was designed when we obtained a deeper knowledge of participants' profile, who initially were thought as students with learning difficulties. Accordingly, an assessment of the participants was conducted in order to better adapt the project to students' characteristics. Two tests were applied at this diagnostic stage: the D2 Test of Attention, developed by Brickenkamp, and the Ross Test of Higher Cognitive Processes.

A total of 42 students were assessed, regarding attention capacity we found that 49 % of the sample presented severe to moderate attention deficiency and a 16 % displayed moderate deficiency; while a 35 % did not present any intentional deficit.

However, the results that caught our attention were those related to the Higher Cognitive Processes test. A 75 % of the students who took the test could not properly establish abstract relationships; 71 % were not able to properly utilize deductive thinking; 52 % presented poor questioning strategies; 47 % could not clearly distinguish relevant from irrelevant information; and 36 % were not able to establish analogies in a satisfactory manner.

Based on this scenario, it was possible to understand not only the roots of students' low performance but also the magnitude of our challenge. After a few

meetings, our team agreed that the Phoenix project would be structured on three main pillars: socio-emotional, instrumental and cognitive.

The *socio-emotional pillar* aimed at improving student's relational capacities, by developing emotional intelligence as well as positive emotions. In this manner, we understood "positive emotions" as the ones that favor approximation, and therefore, living together with others, while the "negative emotions" lead to the opposite outcome (Fredrickson, 2001). Conceived as the main dimension of our project, the socio-emotional pillar was based on Positive Psychology research, especially regarding positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001, 2002) and emotional intelligence (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2002).

The *instrumental pillar* focused on providing students with tools and instruments that could improve their academic performance and their role as student. This pillar includes studying techniques, time management, and manipulation of information received in the classroom, among other strategies.

The *cognitive pillar* was formed with the Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Bloom, 1973) and aimed at developing attention, as well as eight other groups of higher cognitive abilities. It includes developing analogies, deduction capacity, evaluating missing information, establishing abstract relations, sequential synthesis capacity, analysis capacity, questioning strategies, analyzing relevant and irrelevant information.

Accordingly, we developed module with activities for each pillars. The methodology included lectures, discussion groups and practical exercises in which students were encouraged to participate.

7.2.2 Project Implementation

The first step of the project was implemented during the second semester of 2004 and helped a total of 42 students. Participants' recruitment was done through a simple registration and even though the program was promoted as an initiative for students with learning difficulties, there were no restrictions to participate. The only requirement was a mandatory attendance of 100 % of the meetings. As we believed the project would promote a better involvement of the student with the institution, we also set as a goal to reduce the number of dropouts.

In the first stage, 18 meetings of 2 h were held. As the institution required that our activities were suspended during the exam weeks, some modules of the program could not be completed and, in particular, the activities from the cognitive module could not be conducted. Consequently, in this first stage, the Phoenix project only developed the following activities:

- Individual Diagnosis (3 meetings);
- Socio-emotional Module (10 meetings);
- Instrumental Module (4 meetings);
- Program Evaluation and Conclusion (1 meeting).

Table 7.1 Means and standard deviations for academic performance

	Minimum value	Maximum value	Mean	Standard deviation
Mean grade P1	2.318	9.400	6.64901	1.305097
Mean grade P2	5.650	9.000	8.02141	0.750186

The factor that appeared to be a problem at that time becomes an advantage for this chapter. As only the activities from the socio-emotional module were developed – and the cognitive module was absent – the results obtained in this first stage of the project become clearly linked to the influence of positive emotions.

It is also worth mentioning that because it was not an academic research, the indicators chosen to verify the effectiveness of the project were: the academic performance before and after participating in the program; the index of dropout from the institution; and the results of the students' program evaluation. It was necessary to clarify this point as our interest centered on monitoring possible variations of students' attention and cognitive capacity.

7.2.3 Phoenix Project Results (1st Stage/Semester 2, 2004)

Regarding students' academic performance, as shown in Table 7.1 a comparison between the evaluation before the Phoenix program (P1) and after the project (P2) it was found a statistically significant progress on students' performance ($t = -7.973$; $p <= 0.00$). Additionally, it was observed an important improvement on the evenness of grades' distribution of the sample as the *SD* reduced from 1.30 to 0.75.

Regarding the dropout index, among the students participating in the project, no dropouts were registered. Results were not limited to this stage of the project as they remained unaltered during the whole period in which Phoenix was implemented.

In relation to students' evaluation of the project, in the program's last meeting, students were asked to respond to an anonymous survey to assess the project as a whole. This survey was done in a questionnaire-format mainly composed by close-ended questions, but also allowed students to freely comment and give suggestions if desired.

In general, the evaluation of the Phoenix project was extremely positive, obtaining a score of 9 points on a scale ranging from 0 to 10. When students were asked about the importance that the Phoenix program had on their academic performance, 95.5 % of participants responded that it was *important* or *very important*. Moreover, when a similar question was formulated, inquiring students about the importance of the project on their lives as a whole, 95.3 % of participants responded it was *important* or *very important* while only 4.7 % evaluated it as reasonably *important.*

It is interesting to notice that, although students in general enjoyed participating in this program, a 77.2 % considered the performed activities as *difficult* or *very difficult*, and 22.8 % considered such activities as *fairly difficult*. Considering that

at this stage of the project the cognitive module was not developed, and the instrumental module was mainly composed by the simple presentation of tools – rather than the actual activities – for studying and knowledge organization, it is possible to conclude that those exercises where students had found difficulty were related to the development of positive emotions. In this manner, results show that positive emotions can be taken as one's natural ability, and therefore, those who intend to develop and work on positivity should pursue it with effort and dedication.

On the other hand, it is curious noticing that the difficulties faced by students were not enough to make them withdraw from the project or to make them feel relieved when the project was over. This scenario was different from the one we used to observe with students who had withdrawn from the institution.

When inquired about the duration of the program, 80.8 % of participants reported that it was *insufficient* and *somewhat sufficient*, and only 19.2 % of respondents thought that the time programmed it was *sufficient.*

The continuity of the project was another encouraging factor we found. When students were asked about their probable participation in potential extension of the program in the following year, 95.5 % mentioned they would *probably* or *certainly participate* on it, and 4.5 % of the sample was unsure about this. It is worth mentioning that no students said they would *probably not participate* in the potential extension of the project.

7.3 The End of Phoenix Project

Due to the great outcome, the Phoenix Project was also conducted the following year, but this time the complete version of the program was implemented, including the cognitive module. Students were increasingly more involved with the project and it was possible to clearly observe an improvement on their performance. Nevertheless, before we could finish evaluating this new stage, the institution went through a series of administrative changes and the new board decided to terminate all projects developed by the former administration.

Still, there was enough evidence for us to believe in the importance of the outcomes accomplished in a project framed under the Positive Psychology perspective.

The belief that the development of individuals' functional aspects is a key factor not only for the resolution of specific problems but also for the construction of a better society, led us to the foundation of Positive Psychology and Behavioral Institute (*Instituto de Psicologia Positiva e Comportamento, IPPC*), while the Phoenix Project was still being implemented.

At the end of Phoenix Project, the purpose of doing research and disseminating Positive Psychology principles in Brazil was still ongoing. Although much of our efforts aimed at the organizational world, it was possible to know, based on the results achieved, that we would still face other opportunities to apply Positive Psychology in the academic field. This is what actually happened in 2011.

7.4 The Rebirth of Phoenix: Other Applications of Positive Psychology in the Academic Context

Unlike Europe and the U.S., the majority of tertiary programs in Brazil have mandatory courses and a fixed curriculum. This means, in general, that there are not many opportunities to introduce specific content or topics not directly related to the area of application of the course.

Nonetheless, I was given the chance to teach a Positive Psychology course for undergraduate students at Trevisan Business School (*Trevisan Escola de Negócios*). Since its foundation in Sao Paulo in 1999, the Trevisan is well-known for its undergraduate and graduate Business Programs. Conceived as complementary activity, the Positive Psychology course was offered as an elective subject for the first time during the second semester of 2011, with duration of 80 h.

Unlike the Phoenix Project where several issues such as the dropout rate and students' low performance had to be overcome, this time, as the professor in charge I had the autonomy to develop a course in which the content was relevant to students' professional and personal formation. It was the perfect opportunity and for first time in the country, Positive Psychology was officially introduced in an academic program. As it was an elective course, we reached students from three different programs: Accounting Science, Business Administration and Marketing.

This course focused not only on discussing the fundamental principles of this scientific movement, but also on promoting exercises and practical situations in which students could develop their own positive characteristics and emotions. In addition, aiming at graduating future leaders to work for major organizations, we discussed case studies of positive organizations and institutions that shared the Positive Psychology principles.

It is important to note that since the beginning, we presented Positive Psychology as a multidisciplinary movement. We considered essential for our students to feel the freedom of appropriating the knowledge they acquired and being able of transferring it to their own areas of work.

In this course, besides performing exercises to develop positive emotions, we also aim at developing positive characteristics that promote human flourishing and well-being, which ultimately means, the promotion of students' own flourishing.

In this respect, the Positive Psychology course focused on working with personal strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) and on developing an internal locus of control. Individuals' belief that they have control over their lives is an important and necessary feature in order to achieve well-being and to assume an active role in the construction of their personal project of happiness (Graziano, 2005).

The students were highly involved with the course and the activities developed. In addition, classes had a better atmosphere with more proximity among students. I confess, a little embarrassed, that for the first time in almost 30 years of teaching I had learned each student's name. Moreover, this environment brought me closer to the reasons that led me to teaching at the early age of 17 years.

Although it is not possible to say that our Positive Psychology course was the cause of a better students' performance, it worth mentioning that all the students that attended the course succeeded in the rest of the subjects taken in that semester.

Nonetheless, there was no doubt this course was responsible for the increasing interest in Positive Psychology in an institution traditionally focused on Business. The Board of Directors began receiving manifestations of appreciation from students who attended our course and these students spread the word to other students, in such a manner that we had an increasing number of people interested in taking the course in the following semester.

7.5 The First MBA in Positive Psychology in Latin America

Today, 10 years after the Phoenix Project was implemented, I better understand the path taken until Positive Psychology was able to obtain academic acknowledgment not only as a simple ramification of Psychology but also due to its contributions as a multidisciplinary discipline. In other words, it was necessary to firstly introduce it as a mere tool to increase academic performance – as done in the Phoenix Project – in order to able to offer an independent graduate course.

The excellent acceptance obtained by the positive psychology course as well as the increasing interest from the professionals trained by IPPC in expanding their studies in order to apply it in the marketplace, led us to another challenge: The creation of the first MBA in Positive Psychology in Latin America.

This MBA resulted from a partnership between the Positive Psychology and Behavioral Institute and the Trevisan Business School. This is a management program that focuses in training professionals and graduating leaders that, by applying the knowledge of the science of positive psychology, would be capable of transforming institutions in a place for human flourishing.

7.6 Final Considerations

When talking about human development, there are no juxtapositions. When pursuing ideal conditions, several times we are forced to settle what is actually possible. Unfortunately, Brazil fails to set an example of good education; therefore, each and every action aiming at improving its quality is always welcomed. Nevertheless, the urgent character of this improvement demands to take actions immediately. This scenario is one of the reasons why we believe that the best ways to achieve a better education in our country would be precisely, working with the professionals already immersed in the field of Education.

Additionally, if we consider that the desire to have better quality of life is a plausible goal for an increasing number of people; positive psychology is an excellent tool for the discovery and development of what people have best. Thus, Positive Psychology is not only an answer for education but also for the society.

I believe that each educator in the country should identify the opportunities that different contexts offer and afterwards, apply the knowledge acquired in 10 years of studies on Positive Psychology. This means that the work of a positive psychologist is – besides research – to identify opportunities to apply this knowledge in a way that the improvement of academic performance or the promotion of human flourishing is simply a matter of courage. The courage to dare.

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Part III
Positive Psychology and Childhood

Chapter 8
Positive Emotions in Children: Current Research and Future Directions

Laura Oros

8.1 Introduction

Emotions form a dynamic and complex network of cognitive evaluations, subjective experiences, physiological changes, bodily expressions, and behavioral tendencies that are more or less specific to each situation (Fredrickson & Levenson, 1998; Frijda, Manstead, & Bem, 2000). The valence of positive emotions is pleasant, and these emotions are associated with beneficial cognitive, physiological, and behavioral changes (Fredrickson, 2002; Lucas, Diener, & Larsen, 2003; Seligman, 2005). Correlational and experimental studies have found that frequently experiencing emotions such as happiness, joy, interest, serenity, sympathy, and gratitude increases resilience and strengthens certain abilities at different developmental stages (Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2008; Cohen, Doyle, Turner, Alper, & Skoner, 2003; Consedine, Magai, & King, 2004; Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005; Froh, Yurkewicz, & Kashdan, 2008; Johnson, Waugh, & Fredrickson, 2010; Ren, Hu, Zhang, & Huang, 2010; Vaish, Carpenter, & Tomasello, 2009; Wood, Maltby, Gillett, Linley, & Joseph, 2008).

However, it is important to note that positive emotional experiences do not render individuals invulnerable to illness, interpersonal problems, or daily challenges. Instead, by fostering realistic approaches to situations and enhancing problem-solving capabilities, these experiences promote the development and strengthening of resources and abilities that are associated with positive outcomes and successful adaptation to the environment.

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Although studies of positive emotions have been relatively rare in Latin America, there have been attempts to operationalize and study positive emotions in Ecuador, Brazil, Venezuela, Bolivia, Peru, Chile, and Argentina. In Latin America, positive emotions and psychological well-being/happiness have primarily been studied in adolescents and adults in relation to sociocultural and economic variables (Alves de Souza & Ferreira Dela Coleta, 2009; Lacerda Teixeira Pires & Molero Alonso, 2008; Marín Romo, 2009; Reyes-García et al., 2010; Vera Noriega, Laborín Álvarez, Córdova Moreno, & Parra Armenta, 2007); resilience and protective factors (Lillo, 2006; Mustaca, Kamenetzky, & Vera-Villarroel, 2010; Salgado Levano, 2009); health and disease processes (Porro-Conforti & Andrés, 2011); academic settings (Dela Coleta & Ferreira Dela Coleta, 2006, 2007; Mascarenhas & Peluso, 2011; Trógolo & Medrano, 2011); family variables (Meier & Oros, 2012); personality (Regner, 2009a); and social behaviors (de la Vega & Oros, 2013; Regner, 2009b, 2011; Regner & Vignale, 2011), among others.

In the past 10 years, for example, there have been many studies of positive emotions and positive psychology in Argentina (Castro Solano, 2011a; Mariñelarena-Dondena & Klappenbach, 2009). This research has found that positive emotions predict assertive behaviors and reduce aggressive responses (de la Vega & Oros, 2013); enhance the ability to cope with threats (Lillo, 2006; Regner, 2009a, 2009b); make valuable contributions to psychotherapy and education (Arias, Sabatini, & Soliverez, 2011; Camacho, 2005; Chazenbalk, 2005; Moyano, 2011); and are positively related to subjective well-being (Cingolani & Méndez Quiñonez, 2007). These studies have primarily focused on adolescents and adults rather than children. The few studies of children tend to be doctoral theses and unpublished manuscripts.

Because the cognitive, affective, social, and motivational processes that lead to later health or vulnerability emerge during childhood, it is worthwhile to examine the role of positive emotions during this developmental stage. This chapter reviews Latin American studies that have investigated how positive emotions are related to other variables and proposed models for assessing and promoting these emotions.

8.2 Assessing Children's Positive Emotions

The comprehensive measurement of the complex phenomenon of emotion requires multiple methods to capture subjective aspects such as emotional experience, manifest aspects such as emotional expression, and physiological aspects, among other things. These methods include self-reports (e.g., questionnaires or pictorial scales), observers' reports (e.g., parents, teachers, or classmates), measures of facial expression (e.g., movement of facial muscles), and physiological measurements (e.g., blood pressure, body temperature, or increased heart rate; Lucas et al., 2003). Combining methods makes it possible to overcome the limitations associated with a particular method.

An appropriate and frequently employed measure of subjective emotional experience is self-report. Although this type of instrument is subject to distortion, it exhibits psychological and methodological value (Garrido Gutiérrez, 2000).

In general, the assessment of positive emotions has focused on the adult population, and few scales have been developed for children. In Latin America, the following

instruments have been developed to evaluate positive affect in adults: the Positive Emotion Scale (Schmidt, 2008); the Lima Happiness Scale (Alarcón, 2006) and its adaptation for elderly adults in Venezuela (Arraga Barrios & Sánchez Villarroel, 2010); an instrument that evaluates well-being based on three routes to happiness (Castro Solano, 2011b); the Humor Styles Questionnaire (Lillo, 2006); the Positive Emotions Questionnaire (Regner, 2009a, 2009b); the Subjective Well-being Scale for Brazilian Adults (Albuquerque & Tróccoli, 2004); and the Psychological Well-being Questionnaire (*Bienestar Psicológico* – BIEPS) based on the Ryff model (Castro Solano, Brenlla, & Casullo, 2002; Casullo & Castro Solano, 2000). Some of these scales can be used with adolescents, and all exhibit good psychometric properties.

The following scales, which exhibit reliability and validity, are available for assessing the positive emotions of sympathy, serenity, joy, gratitude, and personal satisfaction in children in Argentina.

The Sympathy Scale (Oros, 2006) measures children's perception of their ability to appreciate others' emotions and their interest in others' well-being. It consists of a 3-point Likert scale that can be administered to 6- to 7-year-old children.

The Child Serenity Scale (*Escala de Serenidad Infantil* – ESI; Oros, 2011a) is a brief scale based on external raters' assessment that can be used to complement other measures. This six-item Likert scale has three responses (*yes*, *more or less*, and *no*), and provides information regarding children's ability to regulate emotion and their responses to stressful events. The scale is particularly useful for obtaining information for younger children who have not yet learned to read or write. It is also suitable for use in classrooms in which instructors must provide information regarding large groups of students. Although it might seem difficult for external observers to assess children's subjective experience of positive emotions, research has found a high correlation between observers' judgments and self-reports (Lucas et al., 2003).

The Visual Analogue of Joy Scale (Oros, 2008a), which was designed for younger children with limited language abilities, has also been found to be appropriate for school-aged children (Giqueaux & Oros, 2008). Response options for this Likert scale use attractively shaped and colorful images to capture the attention of younger children. The scale responses consist of a series of drawings of children's facial expressions that are ranked along the joy-sadness dimension, and children are instructed to indicate the expression that best reflects their emotional state. There are separate versions for girls and boys. This alternative scale is appropriate for children who have difficulty understanding the words in a questionnaire and for younger children with limited attentional abilities. Greco (2010) has contributed to this scale by adding questions to explore attributions and behaviors linked to the emotional experience of joy and happiness.

The Gratitude Questionnaire (Cuello & Oros, 2011), which was designed for 10- to 13-year-old children, evaluates children's ability to recognize that another person wants to help him or her, express appreciation through thanks, and motivation to return favors that they have received. In this 16-item self-report instrument, the scale responses (*yes*, *sometimes*, and *no*) indicate the extent to which each item is consistent with the child's emotional experience.

Oros (2014) developed a Positive Emotions Questionnaire for 8- to 12-year-old children in Argentina (see Table 8.1). This 23-item Likert-type questionnaire evaluates joy, serenity, sympathy, gratitude, and personal satisfaction. The scale provides a global positive emotion score as well as scores for each emotion. Scale reliability is satisfactory, with acceptable Cronbach's alpha coefficients for global positive emotion ($\alpha = 0.90$); joy ($\alpha = 0.86$); serenity ($\alpha = 0.75$); personal satisfaction ($\alpha = 0.71$); gratitude ($\alpha = 0.88$); and sympathy ($\alpha = 0.64$).

Table 8.1 Children's positive emotions questionnaire (Oros, 2012)

Please respond to the statements below by marking an X to indicate your response: *Yes, More or less,* or *No*. There are no right or wrong answers, but it is important to be honest. Thank you very much!

	Yes	More or less	No
1. I am a happy person [Soy una persona alegre]			
2. I am grateful to people for what they do for me [Estoy agradecido/a con varias personas por lo que hacen por mí]			
3. Most days of the week I feel calm [La mayor parte de los días me siento en paz]			
4. I appreciate it when others help me [Valoro cuando los demás me ayudan]			
5. I tend to be a calm person [Soy bastante tranquilo/a]			
6. I feel very sad when I see someone get hurt [Me pongo muy mal si veo que alguien se lastima]			
7. If I see a boy or girl cry, I feel like crying too [Si veo llorar a un/a nene/a me dan ganas de llorar a mi también]			
8. I love myself very much [Me quiero mucho a mí mismo]			
9. I can solve my problems without getting upset [Soluciono mis problemas con mucha tranquilidad]			
10. I like to return favors [Me gusta devolver favores]			
11. When someone is alone and bored, I want to go over and play with him [Cuando alguien está solo y aburrido me dan ganas de acercarme y jugar con él/ella]			
12. I have a lot of fun doing the things I do [Me divierto mucho con las cosas que hago]			
13. I am very happy [Soy muy feliz]			
14. I almost always feel calm and relaxed [Casi siempre estoy relajado/a]			
15. Whenever I can, I return the favors I receive [Siempre que puedo, devuelvo los favores que recibo]			
16. I feel that I am valuable person [Siento que soy muy valioso/a]			
17. Even when I have problems, I can stay calm [Aunque tenga problemas, igual mantengo la calma]			
18. I almost always have a good time [Casi siempre la paso bien]			
19. I don't get too upset when I can't do something I want to do [Me quedo tranquilo/a aunque no pueda hacer lo que me gusta]			
20. I feel that I am important [Siento que soy importante]			
21. I feel like hugging or comforting someone who is crying [Si alguien está llorando me dan ganas de abrazarlo o consolarlo]			
22. I like to say thank-you to people [Me gusta agradecerle a la gente]			
23. I'm almost always in a good mood [Casi siempre estoy contento/a]			

The Positive Affect and Negative Affect Schedule – Child version (PANAS-C) provides another instrument to assess children's positive affect that has been validated in Argentina (Schulz de Begle, Lemos, & Richaud de Minzi, 2009). This instrument provides independent measures of positive and negative affect based on the original scale for adults developed by Watson, Clark, and Tellegen (1988) and adapted for children by Laurent et al. (1999).

Giacomoni and Hutz (2008) developed a scale that evaluated life satisfaction in 7- to 12-year-old children. The 6-factor, 50-item Likert scale assesses life satisfaction in the areas of Self, Self-Other Comparisons, Nonviolence, Family, Friendship, and School; responses to the 5-point scale assess the extent to which each item is consistent with the child's emotional experience.

All of the above scales exhibit good psychometric properties and are consistent with existing theoretical models. However, it should be noted that although self-report measures are frequently used, responses to these instruments might be influenced by factors such as social desirability, a tendency to select response extremes, memory, and motivation. Moreover, because some aspects of emotional experiences might not be accessible to consciousness, information from self-report measures should be combined with information from other methods (Garrido Gutiérrez, 2000).

8.3 Correlates of Positive Emotions in Childhood

8.3.1 Positive Emotions and Social Behaviors

Positive emotions might enhance the social interactions of children who frequently experience serenity, sympathy, or happiness. In Argentina, most studies investigating the contribution of positive emotions to children's lives have focused on high-impact factors such as prosocial conduct, aggressive behavior, assertive behavior, and peer acceptance and rejection. Findings have indicated that positive emotions have a salugenic function during childhood.

Isen (2000, 2001) found that positive affect elicited flexible and creative thought patterns that facilitated the identification of a broader range of behavioral options for a particular situation. Based on these findings, Richaud de Minzi and Oros (2009) investigated the extent to which school-age children who frequently experienced positive emotions exhibited greater cognitive flexibility in generating solutions to peer interaction problems. They found that experiencing sympathy and serenity reduced the likelihood of aggressive solutions and that serenity enhanced assertive responses.

These findings were confirmed by de la Vega and Oros (2013), who examined the influence of sympathy and gratitude on social behavior in children and 14- to 18-year-old adolescents. They found that, as sympathy and gratitude increased,

assertive behaviors increased and aggressive behaviors diminished. However, passive social behaviors (e.g., the inability to express desires, opinions and preferences, defeatist attitudes, and avoidance behaviors) were not influenced by these emotions.

Positive emotionality is also associated with prosocial behaviors in children in Argentina. Hendrie and Lemos (2011) investigated the extent to which sympathy was associated with prosocial behavior in 6- to 7-year-old children. Assessment of prosocial behavior was based on children's self-reports and teachers' observations. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) found that both child and teacher evaluations were significantly higher for children with higher levels of sympathy and that the sympathy scale dimensions of appreciating others' emotions and tendency to help were both significant, although (as predicted) the latter exhibited a stronger effect.

Serenity is another positive emotion that has been associated with prosocial behaviors in childhood. Cuello and Oros (2012) examined the influence of this emotion on prosocial and aggressive behaviors in 9- to 13-year-old children. They found that serenity was associated with prosocial behaviors. Children who were calmer were more likely to engage in positive behaviors (e.g., consoling a sad person, helping others with chores, lending toys, sharing candy, and visiting friends). Serenity also appeared to reduce children's physical and verbal aggressiveness. Calmer children were less likely to kick, hit, bite or push others and less likely to engage in lying, mockery or insults.

Giqueaux and Oros (2008) tested the hypothesis that children with higher positive emotionality would be more likely to display appropriate social behaviors and less likely to be rejected by peers than children with lower positive emotionality in a sample of 11- to 15-year-old children. They found that, although the positive emotions of joy and sympathy did not significantly contribute to peer acceptance, they were associated with lower levels of peer rejection. Peers perceived children who were happy and pleasant rather than sad as friendly, sociable, trustworthy, and good company.

In summary, experiencing positive emotions appears to enhance children's social lives by reducing aggressive behavior, facilitating assertive responses to interpersonal problems, enhancing prosocial behaviors, and reducing the risk of social rejection.

8.3.2 Positive Emotions and Coping with Stress

According to Fredrickson (2005), positive emotions promote the ability to establish and strengthen psychological resources for coping with stress. Richaud de Minzi and Oros (2009) tested this hypothesis in a sample of 8- to 11-year-old children in Argentina. Although five positive emotions (joy, personal satisfaction, gratitude, serenity, and sympathy) were assessed, only sympathy predicted successful

stress management. More empathetic children exhibited a greater tendency to positively reinterpret stressful situations, seek outside help to solve a problem, obtain emotional support, and effectively resolve problematic situations. Higher levels of sympathy also reduced the likelihood of disruptive behaviors associated with the loss of emotional control (e.g., hitting, crying, shouting, throwing things, and other violent behaviors), which supported earlier findings that sympathy reduces aggressive behavior.

Oros (2012) found that personal satisfaction also significantly predicted the ability to cope with stress. Children who expressed greater satisfaction with themselves and were proud of their achievements and abilities exhibited higher levels of effective problem solving, were more likely to seek help, and displayed less helplessness.

Serenity is another positive emotion that has been associated with children's stress management abilities. An experimental study (Oros, 2008b) demonstrated that training in physical and mental relaxation techniques promoted serenity and significantly reduced disruptive behaviors linked to stress (e.g., hitting and punching), reduced helplessness, and fostered adaptive responses to stressful interpersonal situations.

These results indicate that children with positive emotionality display cognitive and behavioral patterns that diminish stress and/or resolve conflict in appropriate ways.

8.3.3 Positive Emotions and Family Context

The quality of parent-child interactions has a significant impact on children's mental health because the emotional bond between parents and children can facilitate or hinder children's emotional development (Kerns, Abraham, Schlegelmilch, & Morgan, 2007; Richaud de Minzi, 2010; Sroufe, 2000).

Two unpublished studies have found that the development and expression of positive emotions in childhood was primarily influenced by children's attachment to their parents. Greco (2010) found that 7- to 8-year-old children's joy was significantly associated with their attachment to their mothers. Securely attached children with mothers who were sensitive and responsive displayed more happiness than insecurely attached children whose mothers were less responsive to their needs. These findings confirm the effect of maternal behavior on children's positive emotional development.

Another study of children and adolescents revealed that certain child-rearing practices interfere with children's expression of positive emotions (Meier & Oros, 2012); children with mothers who exhibited a pathological level of control in relationships displayed significantly lower levels of calmness, life satisfaction, and gratitude. The experience of gratitude in children and adolescence was also lower in individuals whose mothers exhibited a highly permissive parenting style. The combination of pathological control, rejection, and father's permissiveness had negative impact on children's positive emotional experience, particularly with regard to calmness.

Two earlier studies demonstrated that family life strongly affects children's experience of happiness and gratitude. Oros and Greco (2009) investigated the most common sources of happiness in 6- to 11-year-old children and found that they attributed happiness to features of their immediate family environment, in particular feelings of being protected, cared for, and loved. Similarly, Oros and Schulz (2010) found that 8- to 10-year-old children were primarily grateful for having a family, siblings, and/or grandparents.

8.3.4 Positive Emotions and Sociodemographic Characteristics

8.3.4.1 Socioeconomic Differences

Oros and Greco (2009) noted that, although both middle-class and working-class children exhibited high levels of joy, there were significant differences between two groups that favored middle-class children. However, it was not possible to identify the source of this difference because many factors are related to positive moods. Some of these are shared among different socioeconomic groups, while others (e.g., strong family bonds, available resources, and good nutrition) are more likely to occur in environments unaffected by poverty (Greco, Ison, & Oros, 2011; Oros & Greco, 2009). The authors also found qualitative differences between the groups in the sources of children's happiness, although these differences were not as marked.

Oros and Schulz (2010) found differences between middle-class and at-risk children in attributions of gratitude. At-risk children were more likely to value material goods such as toys and school supplies, basic necessities such as food and parental employment, the ability to go to school, the ability to play, parental indulgence or the ability to make their own decisions, and prosocial behaviors such as assistance and favors (whether given or received). Although these differences were modest, middle-class children were more likely to value relationships with family members and friends as well as pets.

8.3.4.2 Gender Differences

Studies of children in Argentina indicate that girls tend to be more sympathetic (Giqueaux, 2009; Hendrie & Lemos, 2011; Oros, 2010) and happier than boys (Giqueaux, 2009; Oros, 2010). However, the evidence is less consistent with respect to serenity. Oros found that girls scored higher on this factor while Cuello and Oros (2012) found similar levels of serenity in boys and girls. These inconsistencies might be due to age disparities in the study samples (7- to 11-year-olds and 9- to 13-year-olds, respectively) or to methodological differences. The former study measured children's serenity using teacher reports while the latter study used self-report. Previous research has found significant gender differences in socioemotional variables (e.g., prosociality) for data from external informants but not for self-report data, indicating that these differences deserve further study.

Oros and Greco (2009) and Oros and Schulz (2010) found that gender differences in attributions of happiness and gratitude were significant only for happiness. Boys more often mentioned play and sports activities as the source of their happiness, while girls based happiness on family ties, in particular feelings of being loved, cared for, and protected by significant adults, as well as the ability to attend school.

8.3.4.3 Age Differences

Currently there is insufficient evidence to determine the extent to which age influences children's experience of positive emotions. Hendrie and Lemos (2011) did not find differences in sympathy between 6-year-olds and 7-year-olds. However, because the age differences investigated were modest, this finding is not surprising. Giqueaux (2009), who compared 10- to 12-year-old children and 13- to 16-year-old children, found that younger children had higher sympathy scores.

Oros and Greco (2009) and Oros and Schulz (2010) found that younger children were more likely to attribute happiness to toys, free-time, visits, being cared for, and the opportunity to play, while older children were more likely to attribute happiness to emotional relationships with parents and siblings and the ownership of useful material objects.

The studies in Argentina described above have revealed that the development and expression of positive emotions during childhood is based on social factors such as children's attachment to significant others and social environments, as well as personal factors such as gender and age. Overall, positive emotional experiences during childhood are associated with fewer aggressive behaviors, more prosocial behaviors, less peer rejection, and better stress management.

These results provide empirical evidence for Fredrickson's (2002) model, which proposes that children's experience of positive emotions contributes to the development of personal resources that promote health and well-being. Figure 8.1 presents a model that illustrates and synthesizes these findings.

8.4 Interventions to Foster Positive Emotions

Because the research presented above demonstrates that positive emotional experiences contribute to an individual's personal resources, designing interventions to establish and strengthen these emotional experiences early in life should benefit health and well-being.

Although intervention strategies might primarily focus on vulnerable populations, they would also be relevant for individuals who do not appear to be at risk. Interventions that benefit all individuals should be developed in addition to interventions designed to solve or prevent problems because all individuals might benefit from improving their abilities and achieving their potential (Salmurri, 2004). An adult or child need not have been affected by poverty, domestic violence,

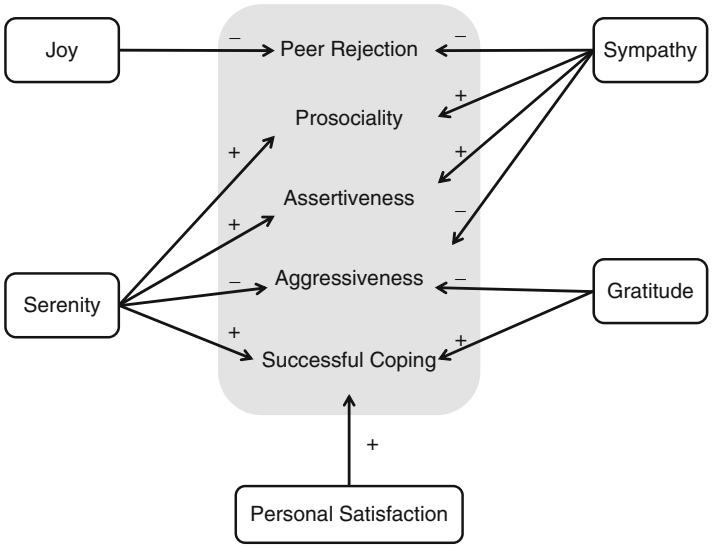

Fig. 8.1 The impact of positive emotions on social behaviors and stress management during childhood

or abandonment to be able to benefit from psychological or educational intervention programs that foster optimal emotional experiences.

To determine the benefits of these intervention programs, it is important to determine the extent to which it is possible to change individuals' emotional experience. Affective responses are limited to a certain extent due to hereditary factors that influence central nervous system functioning, and the genotype establishes the range of emotional experiences for each individual. However, environmental factors can modify emotional experience within the individual's range and maximize an individual's positive emotionality (Lyubomirsky, 2007; Watson, 2005). Moreover, efforts that promote positive emotionality are beneficial despite the phenomenon of hedonic adaptation (Vázquez & Hervás, 2008).

Childhood is a stage of high cerebral plasticity in which cognitive and emotional patterns continue to be established. Interventions should focus on this developmental stage because with the onset of puberty, neural pruning processes identify learning and affective structures that have been used and eliminate connections that have not been sufficiently stimulated (Richaud de Minzi, 2007; Zárate Arguedas, 2011). Psychologists should thus propose and investigate different practices and methods for cultivating and strengthening positive emotionality at earlier stages of development. However, little is known regarding the optimal methods for promoting positive emotionality at different developmental stages. Empirical evidence regarding the optimal frequency, duration, and modality of interventions at different ages is needed because intervention strategies that are effective for individuals at one stage might not be appropriate for individuals at another stage.

Currently, spontaneous initiatives for promoting positive emotions, values, and prosocial behaviors in different settings have been proposed, particularly in education,

due to interest in positive psychology. However, many of these proposals, although interesting and worthwhile, lack the necessary conceptual foundations and empirical rigor. Further scientific and evidence-based interventions are required to create a true applied positive psychology. In Latin America, working groups have developed theory-based emotional intervention strategies and tested hypotheses using experimental designs with control groups. In Argentina, Cingolani and Castañeiras (2011) designed and evaluated a psychosocial intervention program for 15- to 18-year-old adolescents enrolled in school. They used intervention techniques such as dramatization, fables, self-registration, and emotional regulation to improve adolescents' identification and management of emotions, including positive emotions such as life satisfaction. Follow-up assessments confirmed the effectiveness of the intervention (Cingolani, 2010).

We (Oros, 2005, 2008b, 2009) developed a program for strengthening positive emotions in 4- to 9-year-old children, from preschool to the first year of primary school. The intervention was designed within the framework of a larger program for at risk children in Argentina that promoted psychological resilience by strengthening social, cognitive, emotional, and linguistic resources (Richaud de Minzi, 2007).

The intervention to improve positive emotionality was designed to be dynamic, interactive, and systematic. It was applied in the classroom over the course of the academic year by the teacher and/or an outside agent, although it could also be used in clinical settings. To facilitate program effectiveness, teachers received intensive training and continued technical assistance from our team. There were three simultaneous intervention conditions that stimulated positive emotions in the academic environment: (a) direct intervention, (b) indirect intervention, and (c) incidental intervention (Oros, Manucci, & Richaud de Minzi, 2011). The three types of interventions shared the following objectives: (a) teaching children to recognize and distinguish between their own and others' emotions; (b) identifying the emotions typically associated with certain contexts and appropriate ways to express emotions; (c) increasing the frequency of positive moods and enjoyable situations inside and outside of the classroom; (d) using recasting processes to identify positive aspects of disagreeable situations and stimulate the recognition and appreciation of favors and benefits; (e) recognizing and enjoying personal achievements and positive qualities; (f) promoting the development of sympathy and prosocial behavior; and (g) teaching appropriate and socially acceptable strategies for reducing stress and anxiety.

The direct intervention condition involved specific instructional activities that promote positive emotionality during weekly 40-min classroom sessions. These activities were not necessarily related to the day's curricular material. Each session focused on a particular emotion, although other positive emotions might also be included. The intervention activities included narration, structured play, relaxation exercises, dramatizations, cost-benefit analyses, searches for alternative problem solutions, and daily writing exercises. Oros and Richaud de Minzi (2011) provide a detailed description of these activities, which appeal to most children and have been found to have pedagogical and therapeutic value. The indirect intervention condition was based on classroom curricular content and involved associating brief emotion-stimulating activities (e.g., reflection questions, illustrative examples,

graphic stimuli, allegorical accounts, and word play) with relevant conceptual and attitudinal content. This intervention condition, which required considerable creativity and flexibility, was performed throughout the school year on an ongoing basis. The incidental intervention condition involved identifying and employing opportunities to strengthen, stimulate, and/or promote positive emotionality that spontaneously occurred during daily coursework. This intervention condition differed from the other two conditions because it could not be planned in advance and required the instructor or external trainer to be alert to detect opportune moments for implementing the intervention.

To extend children's learning beyond the classroom, the intervention program also included extracurricular activities that involved the participation of parents and other significant individuals to facilitate the transference of strategies and abilities to nonacademic environments, such as the home, neighborhood, and clubs. The goal was to illustrate that what was learned was not limited to the classroom but was a useful tool for other situations. Parents simultaneously participated in a program to promote positive parenting (Vargas Rubilar & Lemos, 2011; Vargas Rubilar & Olmedo, 2011; Vargas Rubilar & Oros, 2011). Working with teachers, children, and parents was crucial for the program's success. Although children are the primary focus, positive emotional development also requires enhancing family and school environments (Magnusson & Mahoney, 2007; Oros, 2011b).

The intervention was applied at different schools in Argentina that enrolled children at risk of extreme poverty. Comparisons of the results of the intervention and control groups as well as 3- and 12-month follow-up evaluations found that the emotional experiences of children participating in the program improved. These findings support the hypothesis that emotional resources could be developed and strengthened through the systematic implementation of appropriate intervention strategies.

8.5 Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Research

Frequently experiencing positive emotions promotes the development of personal resources that predict resilient behaviors in the face of adversity (Castro Solano, 2010). Hence, as psychologists, it is important to determine the extent to which individuals benefit from positive emotions and to design interventions that promote happiness and a more fulfilling and satisfactory life. Fostering positive emotional experiences must start at an early age because the stable emotional, attitudinal, and motivational patterns found in adulthood are established early in life.

This chapter has summarized current research findings regarding positive emotions in children in Argentina. To date, the findings are similar to findings for adolescents and adults elsewhere and confirm that experiencing emotions such as joy, sympathy, gratitude, serenity, and personal satisfaction promotes optimal social functioning and stress management during childhood. Moreover, this

research indicates that interventions can increase the extent to which children experience these emotions.

However, it is necessary to develop more comprehensive and complex models that identify the mechanisms that link the experience of positive emotions to social behaviors. Future research should identify the specific, cognitive, affective, and motivational principles that underlie these processes.

It would also be worthwhile to determine the extent to which children's positive emotionality is related to prosocial behaviors. Rydell, Berlin, and Bohlin (2003) have noted that extremely high levels of positive emotions are associated with negative effects. This issue, although relevant, has not been sufficiently investigated and requires further study.

Because there are also issues related to individual differences in children's positive emotionality, further research regarding the influence of gender and age would be worthwhile.

From a psychometric perspective, measurement scales that provide a theoretical and practical basis for the study of other positive emotions such as love, humor, and hope should be constructed or adapted.

Hervás, Sánchez, and Vázquez (2008) have noted the need to identify the optimal timing and extent of effective interventions. The intensity and frequency of intervention might vary for different groups of children, depending on their developmental level and sociocultural context. The sociocultural characteristics and needs of the target population must be considered when designing, adapting, or implementing intervention programs. In particular, different groups might exhibit different priorities in regard to emotional resources.

Because the same intervention might not produce the same effect for different individuals, it is necessary to determine why some children respond more rapidly and favorably, while some respond more slowly, and why others experience serious difficulties in modifying their affective experiences as well as why some children maintain positive changes while others do not. It is also crucial to identify the personal characteristics, social environment factors, or program features that promote or hinder the development and maintenance of positive emotions.

Because differences in developmental level affect psychosocial development, it is important to compare children's emotional development at different ages to determine the extent to which changes are associated with a particular developmental period.

Intervention strategies should employ new technology such as animated drawings, movies, and audio stories to support teaching activities. Because stories that enhance positive emotions significantly influence children's affective experience and empathetic behaviors (Oros & Esparcia, 2011), technology that can make story characters "come alive" might increase stories' impact.

In summary, this chapter has argued that investigating, assessing, and promoting positive emotions in children is a promising area of positive psychology that deserves further study in Latin America and other regions. To the extent that the discussion of the issues here motivates further study, the objective of this chapter will have been met.

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Chapter 9
Optimal Experience in Argentinean Children and Adolescents

Belén Mesurado and María Cristina Richaud de Minzi

9.1 Introduction

Psychology has traditionally been focused on studying pathologies and dysfunctional aspects of human behavior. Although this brought about accumulated knowledge in this domain, over time there has also been a lack of interest for understanding the processes and mechanisms that underlay the strengths and weaknesses of the human being. Positive Psychology emerged from within this framework as a reaction to a form of psychology strongly "seeped in pathology", which proposed a return to the study of the healthy aspects of psychological (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

The concept of flow was developed and introduced into scientific literature by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1975), who defined it as the mental state of optimal experience which people draw on when they are intensely involved in what they are doing and what they enjoy doing (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). These theoretical developments found a place within positive psychology, a theoretical stream concerned with understanding and building the factors that allow individuals, communities, and societies to flourish (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Relevant to such research interests, optimal experience or "flow" is one of the most rigorously investigated phenomena in the field of Positive Psychology (Asakawa, 2004). The experience of flow is a state of enjoyment, control and focused attention attained when subjectively perceived challenges and abilities coincide.

There are two possible imbalances between challenges and abilities which produce negative experiences: anxiety when challenges are greater than the abilities and boredom when abilities are greater than challenges (Nakamura, 1988).

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Csikszentmihalyi describes optimal experience as a feeling that one' own abilities are sufficient to face life's challenges, being a directed goal-oriented activity and regulated by norms which, also, provide adequate feedback to know if things are being done well. Concentration is so intense that the individual cannot pay attention to irrelevant things (Csikszentmihalyi, M. & Csikszentmihalyi, I, 1988). Self-consciousness disappears and the sense of time is distorted. Results of recent research indicate that flow experiences represent a distinct state that can be identified not only with self-report data but also on physiological measures (Keller, Bless, Blomann, & Kleinböhl, 2011). The concept of optimal experience is quite linked to intrinsic motivation; activity produces such a satisfactory mental state that the person undertakes it without regard for the external reward and though it requires investing a heavily in terms of energy to reach the given goal.

The state of optimal experience can be lived by all people, regardless of age, sex, culture or economic situation. The authors maintain that it is a universal phenomenon, even when things can be done quite differently (due to cultural influence) in order to reach optimal experience (Asakawa, 2010; Csikszentmihalyi, M. & Csikszentmihalyi, I., 1988; Delle-Fave & Massimini, 2004; Delle-Fave, Massimini, & Bassi, 2011; Hektner, Schmidt, & Csikszentmihalyi, 2007). Although there are numerous studies on optimal experience in different countries around the globe, including the United States (Csikszentmihalyi & LeFevre, 1989; Rathunde & Csikszentmihalyi, 2005), Italy (Bassi & Delle-Fave, 2004, 2011), Germany (Rheinberg, Manig, Kliegl, Engeser, & Vollmeyer, 2007), Australia (Jackson, Kimiecik, Ford, & Marsh, 1998), Spain (Moreno Murcia, Cervelló Gimeno, & González-Cutre Coll, 2008), Japan (Asakawa, 2004, 2010), etc.; research on this topic in Latin America is much scarcer (Mesurado, 2009a; Mesurado & Richaud, 2012).

9.2 Flow-Related Activities in Argentinean Children and Adolescents

Various studies have shown that flow experience is related to doing a variety of activities. Numerous studies have used the Experience Sampling Method (ESM) in order to study the types of activities associated with different subjective experiences (Hektner et al., 2007). For example, a study undertaken with two distinct groups of Italian high-school students, in the late 1980s and early 2000s, showed that optimal experience – a mental state characterized by high challenge perception and ability – was associated with activities such as studying at home, structured leisure, interactions, class work and watching TV (Bassi & Delle-Fave, 2004). Also, studies conducted by Larson and Richards (1991) have shown that American adolescents report higher boredom levels – a mental state characterized by low challenge levels and medium ability perception – in school contexts than when activities were done outside of school. Csikszentmihalyi and Larson (1984) found that when adolescents were in class, they reported lower levels of positive feelings on average, meaning that they general felt more bored, irritable and sad compared to the affective experience of

adolescents in other contexts of their lives. However, studies done by Rathunde and Csikszentmihalyi (2005), comparing flow experience in American students who attend schools with different educational styles – Montessori and Traditional education – showed that adolescents reported a flow experience of 37 % and 30 % respectively when doing academic activities at school and 11 % and 17 % of flow respectively when doing non-academic activities at school.

On the other hand, other tests of flow experience with Australian adolescents used other measurement instruments ("short flow scale" and "core flow scale") across the diverse performance domains, indentifying flow experience in activities undertaken, such as sports, music and school (Martin & Jackson, 2008).

In light of these findings, and with the intention of studying flow experience in Argentinean children and adolescents, a study was designed to be more relevant to Latin American cultural idiosyncrasies and with the goal of studying: (1) whether it was possible for children and adolescents to identify optimal experiences; (2) to identify the type of activity associated with flow. A total of 1,855 children and adolescents participated in the study including students from public primary and secondary schools in the cities of Buenos Aires, Tucuman and Catamarca.

Mesurado's Optimal Experience Scale for Children was used to measure flow (2008). This assessment was performed by presenting the participants with a phrase that evoked a subjective experience of intrinsic motivation, and was based upon Csikszentmihalyi's phrasing (1982). This phrase was as follows: "I am not thinking something else. I am totally involved in what I am doing. I feel good, I do not have pain and I don't seem to hear anything. I am less aware of myself and my problems. I am concentrated on my activity. I think that if my mother call me or phone/doorbell ring, I will not listen to it. When I start, I really do shut out the whole world. Once I stop, I can let it back in again".

Then, the participant was asked whether he/she had had a similar experience before. Afterwards, the participant was asked to pinpoint an activity during which he/she had a similar feeling.

Finally, participants were asked to rate 26 items about flow during his/her experience, 13 of which were semantic differential items related to affective (e.g., happy versus sad, excited versus bored) and cognitive states (e.g., alert versus drowsy, clear versus confused). Participants rated each of the affective and cognitive items on a seven-point scale. The other 13 items were on a Likert scale which measured the perception of achievement (e.g., Were you succeeding at what you were doing?) and ability (e.g., Do you think that you have enough capacity to overcome that challenge?). Participants rated each perception of achievement and ability items on a 5-point scale rating from 1 (disagree strongly) to 5 (agree strongly).

The results showed that approximately 85 % of adolescents – 1,577 children and adolescents, 855 female and 722 male, between the ages of 9 and 15 (mean age 12) – identified flow experiences in their daily activities. Similar proportions of optimal experience – 84.6 % – were reported in the adult population (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Delle-Fave & Massimini, 2004). Table 9.1 identifies activities which allow Argentinean children and adolescents to experience flow more often and feel more intrinsically motivated to undertake them. Most of the

Table 9.1 Frequency of undertaken flow activities

	First activity		
Activity	F	fr (%)	fa (%)
Sports	684	43.4	44.1
Studying	263	16.7	17
Artistic activities	217	13.8	14
Computer	152	9.6	9.8
Meetings and social activities	108	6.8	7
TV	76	4.8	4.9
Games	51	3.3	3.2
Data lost	26	1.6	
Total	1,577	100	100

participants – 79.15 % – reported only one motivating activity allowing them to experience flow, while 16.48 % of the participants named two activities and only 4.37 % of children and adolescents indicated three activities.

After children reported optimal activities, they were asked what they were thinking about while performing the activity. The objective of including this question was to explore participants' self-knowledge while doing optimal activities. Results indicate that most children and adolescents center their attention on the task itself or on the unfolding of the activity (n = 767, 48.59 %), next they mention focusing their attention on achieving success in the activity or the goal that they are pursuing (n = 447, 28.36 %) and lastly, they mentioned centering their attention on themselves and their own cognition and feelings (n = 367, 23 %). A significant difference among self-awareness participants was detected in the flow experience [$F(2, 1575) = 16.49$; $p < .001$]. The main differences observed is that adolescents who focus their attention during an activity on doing it successfully and on the perceived goal have higher levels of optimal experience that those who focus their attention on the unfolding of the activity itself (*t Scheffé* = 4.95, $p < .001$) or on themselves, their own cognition or feelings (*t Scheffé* = 4.10, $p < .001$).

Next, children and adolescents were asked the following question: "Who are you usually with when doing activities that you describe as optimal activities?". The objective was to identify if they tend to do these activities alone or accompanied by other people. The results indicate that Argentinean adolescents tend to report flow most often when doing activities with their friends (n = 466, 29.53 %), secondly with their parents s (n = 323, 20.45 %), when they do activities on their own (n = 289 = 18.30 %), with their sibling (n = 221, 14.05 %), with professors (n = 209, 13.25 %), and lastly, in the presence of strangers, for example, in public (n = 69, 4.34 %). These results seem to indicate that despite the fact that flow is a subjective internal experience, in children and adolescents it is common for the phenomenon to be experienced more often while doing activities with other people and especially their group of friends. A significant difference among types of company was detected in flow experience [$F(5, 1572) = 15.01$; $p < .001$]. The main differences can be observed among adolescents who report higher levels of optimal

experience when doing activities with their friends than when doing them with strangers (*t Scheffé* = 9.96, $p < .001$), when they do activities alone (*t Scheffé* = 8.19, $p < .001$) or when they do activities with their siblings (*t Scheffé* = .10, $p < .001$). On the other hand, Argentinean adolescents reported higher levels of flow when doing activities with their parents than when doing them with strangers (*t Scheffé* = 8.83, $p < .001$), or when they are alone (*t Scheffé* = 7.06, $p < .001$). However, differences in flow experience were not found in activities undertaken with their parents and friends, or with their parents and siblings. These results are inconsistent with Larson's findings (1983), who found that American adolescents feel more open and free, have higher positive feedback and reported significantly better moods when doing activities with friends than when interacting with their parents. It would seem that on this point, Latin American adolescents would show different patterns of subjective experience during their interactions with their family members. The results of our studies with adolescents can be explained by the social and cultural characteristics of Argentina when the family (both the nuclear and extended family) and friendship ties have a great importance. It is common for Argentineans to consider a close friend as a "brother or sister", that is to say that they are considered to be a member of their own family.

Greater closeness to parents – especially mothers –, siblings, and even members of the extended family over friends, as compared to North Americans and Northern Europeans, has been found in Argentinean adolescents. At 15–17 years old, when asked about the 10 people they loved most, 87 % (of the total sample 873) ranked their mothers and 64 % ranked their fathers first or second (Facio & Resett, 2006) and friends were listed in third place, even ahead of boyfriends or girlfriends (Facio & Resett, 2007). On the other hand, studies undertaken by Fasio and Batistuta (1998) indicate that 91 % of a total of 341 Argentinean adolescent reported having a good or very good relationship with their mother and 81 % expressed the same in regards to their father. It is evident that the importance that Argentinean children and adolescents place on family on one hand, and the perception of positive relationships on the other hand, contribute to explaining the high levels of flow reported while doing activities with friends and family members.

9.3 Flow in Soccer in Argentinean Children

There has been an increasing interest in studying positive psychological experiences in the realm of sports, given the recognition of their importance for athletic performance (Jackson & Eklund, 2002). Much research also stresses sports as potential generators of optimal experience and claim that they can be a means of personal self-realization (Kleiber, 1983).

The Characteristics of *flow* dimensions described by Csikszentmihalyi have been identified in the sports world through both qualitative and quantitative research (Jackson et al. 1998). Research done by Stein, Kimiecik, Daniels, and Jackson (1995), shows that not only professional athletes, but also amateurs, experience states of flow while doing athletic activities.

Studies developed by Jackson et al. (1998) indicate that ability perception and intrinsic motivation can be identified as facilitators of flow experience in sports, while anxiety interrupts athletes' concentration, making it more difficult to experience flow. It is likely that athletes with low ability perception experience more anxiety than athletes with high ability perception, which does not favor optimal experience.

Argentinean children and adolescents have special inclination towards practicing sports, especially soccer. While soccer is not the Argentina's national sport, it is deeply rooted in popular culture and is played from very young ages. Soccer was introduced in Argentina by British immigrants in the 1880s, whose club dominated the early era of amateur soccer in Buenos Aires. *El Gráfico* – Argentina's most popular sports magazine – developed the theory that Argentinean soccer had two foundations: the British foundation from 1887 until 1912 and a second native Argentinean foundation, from 1913 on when Racing Club (an Argentinean athletics club) won the first division championship for the first time without a single British player on the team (Archetti, 2008). In the following years, the Argentinean national team began to be consolidated to the point of participating in 15 out of 19 finals in the World Championships, was named champions twice – in 1978 and in 1986– and runners up in 1930 and 1990 (Fédération Internationale de Football Association – FIFA). Given the importance and the passion with which this sport is lived by Argentineans, most boys practice soccer at some point, most of them on an amateur basis, but also some at the professional level. Though in recent years this athletic practice has extended socially to women, it continues to be considered a masculine sport (Conde & Rodriguez, 2002).

It is in this cultural context of the significance of soccer among young people that we propose to study flow experience during the playing of soccer in Argentineans children. Following studies undertaken by Jackson et al. (1998), we propose to study the influence of: ability perception, levels of concentration during the game, anxiety perception and boredom on flow experience.

A sample of 244 boys between 9- and 15-years old (mean age of 12) participated in the study. They were asked: (1) how skilled they believed themselves to be at soccer (ability perception); (2) how focused they were on the game (concentration); (3) how nervous they felt (anxiety perception), and; (4) how bored they felt during the game (boredom perception). These items were measured on a 5-points Likert scale. To measure optimal experience while doing a sports activity, it was used the Optimal Experience Scale for children and adolescents (Mesurado, 2008, 2009b). The results of an Analysis of Variance showed that higher levels of flow during the soccer game was associated with high levels of ability perception [$F(1, 242) = 11.71$, $p < .001$] and concentration levels [$F(1, 242) = 67.17$, $p < .001$ for concentration] (See Fig. 9.1). While children who had low levels of flow experience, experienced high levels of anxiety [$F(1, 242) = -26.87$, $p < .001$] and boredom [$F(1, 242) = -79.52$, $p < .001$] (see Fig. 9.2).

The results obtained through this study show that flow experience in sports is not experienced solely by professional athletes, but also by amateur athletes. These results are in line with studies conducted by Stein et al. (1995). On the other hand,

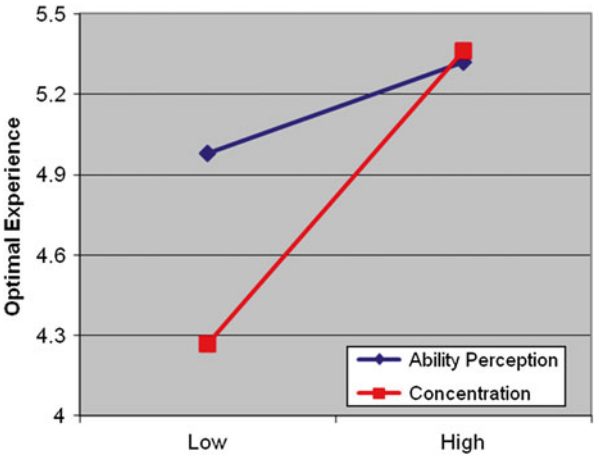

Fig. 9.1 Association between optimal experience, ability perception and concentration while playing soccer

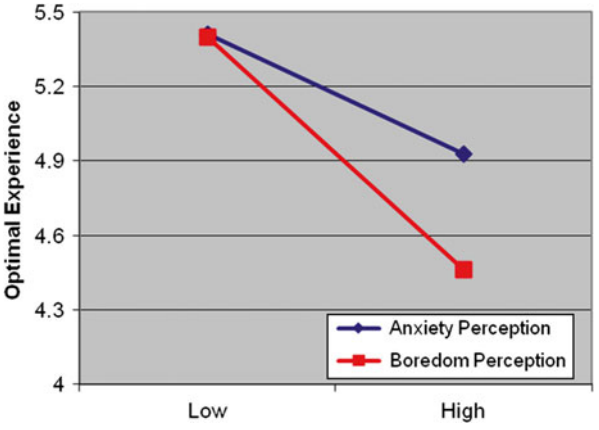

Fig. 9.2 Association between optimal experience, anxiety perception and boredom perception while playing soccer

these studies show that high ability perception in sports – in this case playing soccer – seems to be a crucial factor in facilitating states of flow, as well as high levels of concentration as the game unfolds. When children subjectively perceive that they have sufficient abilities to do well in the game, and focus their attention on playing, the optimal experience in the sports task is facilitated. However, flow experience cannot be reached when the athlete is in a state of anxiety or boredom during the unfolding of the game. It is likely that the state of anxiety encourages the child to focus their attention on themselves or on the tension produced by the game, more than on the activity itself, which would make their experience more difficult. It is likely that boredom appears because the demands of the game are inferior to children's abilities, which consequently produce low levels of flow. Contrary to the optimal state, both boredom and worrying appear as negative emotions.

9.4 Is It Possible to Experience Flow in Pro-social Activities?

Despite the fact that the flow experience has been studied when undertaking different activities, little research has explored flow experience while doing prosocial activities – behaviors intended to benefit others – (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998). In recent years, there has been increasing interest in children and adolescents' positive social behaviors, especially in understanding the characteristics of children who frequently engage in those behaviors (Carlo, Hausmann, Christiansen, & Randall, 2003). Recent interest in this topic is driven by the concerns of educators – parents and teachers – as well as developmental psychological researchers about promoting adaptive social behaviors among adolescents, avoiding the appearance of disadaptive behaviors such as aggressive or addictive conduct, etc. Prosocial behavior is also critical to human development because it affects the quality of interactions between people and among groups (Froh, Bono, & Emmons, 2010).

Recent research seems to indicate that when individuals help others they not only benefit those people but they also benefit themselves. Some studies have shown that prosocial behavior is positively associated with health and well-being (Schwartz, Keyl, Marcum, & Bode, 2009) and with life satisfaction (Froh et al., 2010). Consistent findings have been obtained by Weinstein and Ryan (2010) who, following the theoretical reasoning of self-determination theory, showed that the degree to which a prosocial act is volitional or autonomous predicts its effect on well-being and that psychological satisfaction mediates this relation. On the other hand, another study confirmed that helping interactions, involving more autonomous attributions, were also predictive of positive attitudes toward helpers, positive effect, and felt closeness (Weinstein, Dehaan, & Ryan, 2010).

Summing up, prosocial behaviors seem to be more associated with self-determination – intrinsically motivated-behaviors (Weinstein & Ryan, 2010), as the construct of flow experience overlaps with intrinsic motivation (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). Results of several studies seem to show this, including Jackson et al. (1998) and studies developed by Bassi and Delle-Fave (2012) and Moreno Murcia, Cervelló Gimeno, and González-Cutre Coll (2006) which demonstrated that optimal activity (high challenges and high skills) mostly reported high levels of self-determination (autonomous regulations and controlled regulation).

In line with these finds, in Argentina we undertook a study of the general population with the intention of studying whether it is possible for Young people to identify flow while doing prosocial activities. The study included 454 children and adolescents, 230 females and 224 males, ages 10–16 (average age 12). All of them were students at public primary and secondary schools in the City of Buenos Aires.

To undertake these studies Mesurado's Optimal Experience Scale for Children (2008) was used, with a small modification to the question "Did what is described below ever happen to you while you were doing an activity to help others?". Participants were asked to report whether they had had such experience before and, if they had, to list the associated prosocial activities. Results showed that 72 % of participants reported flow experiences while doing collaborative activities.

Table 9.2 Percentage distribution of optimal prosocial activities

Categories	Percentage (%)
Family context	
The household chores	37
Looking after siblings	9
Miscellaneous activities	4
Community context	
Visiting or providing services to people in need	13
Environmental activities	2
Collecting items for people in need	14
Educational context	
Help other people with homework or with learning	11
Relations social context	
Moral support	10

Table 9.2 summarizes the domain distribution of optimal prosocial activities reported by children and adolescents. Half of the adolescents – 50 % in fact – reported optimal experience in prosocial activities when they were helping their parents or siblings in a family context. In family contexts it was possible to identify activities associated with flow experience such as: (1) *household chores* (e.g. "I often help my mother with household chores", "I wash the dishes", "cleaning the house", "helping my mother with cooking"); (2) *looking after their siblings* (e.g. "I look after my sibling", "playing with or entertaining my siblings"), and; (3) *Miscellaneous activities* (e.g."I wash the car", "doing gardening", "helping my dad in the garage"). In 29 % of the cases, adolescents reported optimal experience in community contexts: (1) Visiting or providing services for people in need (e.g. "I go to a nursery school when I play with the kids and celebrate their birthdays", "I visit residents of a nursing home", "volunteering with a soup kitchen giving food to the needy"); (2) Environmental activities (e.g. "I doing the recycling at my school", "I sort recyclable materials from the trash", "I help injured animals"), and; (3) I collect items for the needy (e.g. "raising money or collecting clothes for poor children", "I knit blankets for people in need"). In school contexts, activities were reported at 11 % (e.g. "I help my classmate with their homework", "I explain math to my classmates when they don't understand"). Finally, social relations contexts obtained the lowest reported proportion of prosocial activities in the studied sample (e.g. "when I console my friends when they are sad", "when I try not to leave my friends alone", "when I listen to their problems and give them advice").

The results seem to indicate that the highest proportion of flow experience among adolescents while doing prosocial activities is centralized in the family domain. Studies by Csikszentmihalyi and Larson (1984) showed that American adolescents spend 41 % of their time at home, while, similar studies done among Italian adolescents showed that their home was the main place where adolescents interacted with family members (90.7 %); in particular, dining room (32.4 %) and kitchen (27.8 %)

were the most frequently reported locations by both genders (Delle-Fave & Bassi, 2000). Though in Argentina we do not have studies that indicate precisely the amount of time that adolescents invest in their family context, it is likely that the amount of time of family interaction will be high, given that Argentinean culture is strongly centered on the family. A study conducted by Facio and Resett (2006, 2011), indicates that family is seen as much more important than other aspect of their life. Higher closeness to parents – especially mothers –, siblings and even members of the extended family over friends has been found once and again in Argentinean adolescents compared to North Americans and Northern Europeans. Family context appears to be the ideal space to develop collaborative behaviors which later translate into the extra-familiar realm.

It is likely that these adolescents can indentify flow experience doing prosocial activities when they invest their effort in searching for shared goals with their family, community and friends. Prosocial activities may be related to flow because they are well-structured and provide immediate feedback.

9.5 External and Internal Conditions of Flow

The presence of the state of flow depends on a combination of external (characteristics of the activity) and internal (characteristics of the individual) conditions (Lewis, 1996; Whalen, 1998). Activities during which subjects tend to have optimal experiences present concrete goals and produce certain level of challenge that permits individuals to adjust or calibrate their capacities. The task produces intrinsic feedback mechanisms and, due to their characteristics, tends to impede distractions (Lewis, 1996). These characteristics, described by Lewis as external conditions that facilitate flow, are present in structured types of tasks. Activities that facilitate subjective experience of flow are those governed by rules that require learning of abilities, establishing goals, producing feedback and making control possible (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). This promotes concentration and, as such, involvement in the task. However, it is important to keep in mind that people do not tend to enjoy an activity while doing it for a long period o time, without increasing its levels of complexity. The imbalance between challenge and ability would bring about boredom when their abilities are much greater than the difficulty of the task, or frustration when the demands of the activity surpass personal abilities (Csikszentmihalyi & Hunter, 2003; Delle-Fave & Bassi, 2003; Massimini & Carli, 1988).

Structured activities are those tasks which imply step-by-step procedures or instructions (Stoner, Freeman, & Gilbert, 1996) and participants or members of a group have a very clear idea of what they are expected to do. Whereas, when tasks are not structured, the roles of group members are more ambiguous (Stoner et al., 1996). It is worth noting that a structured task is not an activity with one sole valid possible solution, little interaction with the environment or with other individuals, but rather

is an activity that includes rules, permits the application of procedures, establishes clear goals and allows for the development of specific abilities or skills.

Unstructured activities consist of spontaneous tasks, whether previously planned or not, but without guidelines. The task in itself does not require fixes rules nor does it imply the development of specific abilities. This is the case of activities such as watching television, going out with friends, among others.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. & Csikszentmihalyi, I (1988) claims that the state of optimal experience can occasionally occur by a mere coincidence of external (cultural, the concrete situation of the moment, special company, etc.) or internal (unique to that personal) conditions. This optimal state during spontaneous occurrences for example, can happen during an interesting conversation with friends or family members, during which each person enjoys the other's presence or the story. However, it is much more probable that an optimal experience is the result of a structured activity than a spontaneous one (Csikszentmihalyi, M. & Csikszentmihalyi, I., 1988).

Structured leisure activities – such as sports, games, arts, and hobbies – merge the fun and well-being with focused attention and engagement (Kleiber, Larson, & Csikszentmihalyi, 1986). Other activities, such as socializing, watching television, reading, and listening to music, provide pleasure and fun without high demands. These activities, defined as "relaxed leisure" (Larson & Kleiber, 1993), do not necessarily represent opportunities for developing specific skills. The crucial aspect distinguishing transitional from relaxed leisure activities is structure – that is, a clear set of rules and procedures that can be associated with personal engagement, concentration, and effort toward meeting challenges and achieving goals (Delle-Fave & Bassi, 2003).

On the other hand, studies done by Csikszentmihalyi and Larson (1978) showed that when adolescents do activities alone they experience, to a greater extent, a subjective negative state of greater weakness, passivity and hostility. These characteristics that are present in the subjective mental state of anti-flow. The association between negative affective states and time spent alone is present, according to Larson and Csikszentmihalyi (1978), in most of the activities that adolescents took on, particularly passive activities such as eating, walking, etc. Studies with Argentinean adolescents had shown that activities done alone were associated with lower levels of optimal experience than when done in the company of others. In the same line, studies done with Argentinean children and adolescents demonstrated a high association between loneliness and the presence of negative subjective experiences, such as depression (Richaud, 2005). While some studies show that Argentinean adolescents generally have low levels of loneliness and isolation (Tapia, Fiorentino, & Correché, 2003), other studies indicate that the percentage of loneliness is 23 % and perceived isolation is 19 % for Argentinean adolescents (Contini et al., 2012).

Mesurado (2009a) conducted a study with adolescents aiming to study the influence of two aspects of external conditions – the type of activity (structured vs. unstructured) and the way of doing them (by themselves vs. with other people) – in the experience of flow. The sample consisted of 801 children and adolescents,

507 female and 294 male, ages 10–16 (average age 12) from Buenos Aires, Catamarca and Tucuman. Structured activities include sports, studying, rules-based games, learning a musical instrument, while unstructured activities comprise free playing, listening to music, meetings with friends and family members, watching television, chatting on the internet. Results showed significant differences in optimal experience between participants who did structured activities and those who did unstructured activities [$F(1, 792) = 29.79$, $p < .001$]. Those children and adolescents who chose intrinsically motivating activities had higher optimal experience levels than those who chose unstructured activities. These results also indicated higher levels of optimal experience among participants when doing activities with other, than when doing them on their own [$F(1, 792) = 17.16$, $p < .001$]. These results also showed that even though both boys and girls experience lower levels of flow while doing unstructured tasks, and that the subjective perception of flow is higher when the unstructured task is done with others than alone. On the other hand, no significant difference was found in optimal experience based on participants' sex or age.

The structured tasks – sports, studying, rules-based games, learning a music instrument – were reported as the most gratifying. In this way, these are not routine activities, but rather always imply an increase in skills. As such, this type of activities allows for perceptions of feelings of mastery and control of the task. It is surprising to discover that young people often report activities that require effort as those that bring greater motivation and allow for more gratifying subjective feelings. Activities that produce enjoyment in the long-run usually require greater effort than those that seek immediate gratification. At the same time, the reward is often delayed for a more or less extended period, depending on the level of arduousness of the proposed goal (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003).

Evidently, external conditions alone do not generate optimal experience, but rather depend on personal abilities, as well as perception and attitude adopted toward the task at hand. Still no activity guarantees the presence of flow or anti-flow experiences. Some people, named as *autotelic individuals*, perceive challenges and involvement in a variety of daily situations, while other people do not (Csikszentmihalyi, M. & Csikszentmihalyi, I., 1988). The word "autotelic" is composed of two Greek roots: auto (means self) and telos (means goal). An autotelic individual is a person who has a strong tendency to find intrinsic motivation and flow in his or her daily activities (Asakawa, 2004). Autotelic adolescents were more likely to show higher self-esteem and lower anxiety, use active coping strategies more often and use passive coping strategies less often, as compared to their less autotelic counterparts (Asakawa, 2010). Some studies have shown that autotelic people reported significantly more positive experiences, were more concentrated, felt more control of the situation, and felt more importance for the future than the non-autotelic people (Asakawa, 2004).

Researching family environments, Rathunde (1988, 1996) has suggested that autotelic personalities are more strongly fostered in family environment referred as "complex family", where support and challenge are simultaneously provided. When adolescents perceive family support, it is more probable for them to get involved or committed to different activities. If they perceive that their parents challenge

them because they believe in their abilities, adolescents tend to achieve positive individuation and achieve the goals that they set for themselves. Longitudinal studies show that parents who raise their children in a way that combines adequate support and moderate challenge levels facilitate their children's capacity to focus their attention on important goals. In particular, parents that achieve this correct balance between a supportive environment and challenge can promote "optimal experiences" or flow in their children (Rathunde, 2001). Mental states of flow are characterized by being developed in a stimulating environment with an adequate balance of goals, personal abilities to face challenges, high levels of concentration and involvement, situational control, and clear feedback (Csikszentmihalyi, M. & Csikszentmihalyi, I., 1988; Massimini & Delle-Fave, 2000; Steca, Bassi, Caprara, & Delle-Fave, 2011).

Recently, Mesurado and Richaud (2012) designed four empirically-tested theoretical models – with a simple of 909 Argentinean children aged 9–12 (average age 11) of both genders (432 boys and 477 girls) – through structural equation modeling with the intention of studying the influence of parental styles on childrearing (characterized by support and demandingness) and personality traits (using the Big Five classification) on flow experience. Two of the models designed aimed to study separately how parental acceptance of both the mother and the father, as well as moderate parental control have an indirect effect on states of flow mediated by functional personality traits (Openness to experience, Conscientiousness and Extroversion). It is worth mentioning that acceptance by Schaefer (1965) is similar to what Rathunde (1996) called support; and moderate control by Schaefer (1965) is similar to what Rathunde (1996) called demandingness. The study has not included agreeableness as we hypothesized that is not theoretically associated with the optimal experience. Agreeableness is instead related to social sensitivity, whereas flow is, according to Csikszentmihalyi (1999) an intrinsic and individual experience. The originally proposed model claimed that parental styles of acceptance and moderate control have a direct effect of flow experience. These "functional models of optimal experience" fit the data extremely well but showed that parenting styles do not have direct effect on flow but rather that effect is mediated by personality traits. However, the functional personality as a whole showed a significant positive influence on flow. These results are consistent with Csikszentmihalyi, M. and Csikszentmihalyi, I. (1988) who posit that there is more than just personality traits in the individual's predisposition to experience flow.

Two other models studied the influence of parental negligence and parental pathological control on flow experiences, mediated by dysfunctional personality traits (Neuroticism). These models were named "Dysfunctional model of optimal experience" and fit the data very well. Results showed that Neuroticisms has a negative influence on flow experience but dysfunctional parental styles do not explain any relation to flow experience with the exception of pathological control. Neurotic personality traits are characterized by psychological uneasiness, which is an emotional problem that obstructs the flow experience. The reason for this may be that high levels of extreme self-criticism and vulnerability may affect both achievement and ability perceptions, as well as the cognitive and affective experiences, which are elements that compose flow states.

9.6 Conclusion

Studies on optimal experience are still scarce in South American countries; however, findings obtained from the studies described, provide clear evidence of flow theory's applicability to Argentinean children and adolescents. These results contribute to the conceptualization of flow as a universal phenomenon.

While these studies are the first to be developed in Latin American countries, the findings of different research projects are in a similar direction as those from global studies. Moreover, there is a relationship with the particular characteristics of the country, such as the association of flow experience to activities heavily practiced by children and adolescents, such as soccer, as well as high levels of flow when children and adolescents do activities with their family members, and when they are done with other people rather than alone.

Though states of flow are amoral and there is evidence that they can be associated with severe psychosocial maladjustment (Delle-Fave et al., 2011), these studies provide preliminary evidence that flow experience can also be associated with prosocial activities that contribute to family, social and community development.

This chapter relayed research conducted in Argentina which studied the internal (parental relationships and personality traits) and external (type of activity and way of doing the activity) conditions of flow, that are of special importance for detecting aspects that could contribute to generating the optimal mental states that, in turn, produce happiness and wellbeing.

More systematic studies on optimal experience in South America are welcomed, as well as transcultural studies that allow us to compare differences and similarities between the flow experience of flow between our countries and other nations.

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Chapter 10
Childhood Prosocial Behavior in the School Environment

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Although the study of childhood prosocial behavior is not new, there has been a recent surge in the number of studies on this topic due to increases in violence and aggression in all social environments. According to the principles of Positive Psychology, the promotion of prosocial behavior involves strengthening a repertoire of alternative behaviors that inhibit negative and antisocial behaviors in children while providing an adequate remedy to the expression of aggressiveness, violence, and indifference towards others.

As previous studies have suggested, there are many positive effects that produce prosocial behavior throughout childhood development at the social, emotional, and cognitive levels. In this chapter, we will analyze why schools provide an appropriate context to promote helpfulness, giving and sharing, verbal comfort, positive appreciation of others, and cooperative behavior. A literature review on this subject will be compared to the results obtained following the implementation of a program directed at promoting childhood prosocial behavior in a school context. These results support the possibility of strengthening prosociality in this environment through the implementation of adequate strategies and models.

Teaching children to cooperate and help others, to share and be altruistic, to accept and forgive others' mistakes, and to show sympathy, empathy, and compassion should be part of any school's objectives to foster children's harmonious and integral development.

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10.1 Theoretical Background

Interest in prosocial-altruistic behavior has a large tradition in the philosophical study of human nature. Plato, Aristotle and other philosophers tried to explain the causes and motivation of prosocial-altruistic behaviors.

The psychological study of prosocial and altruistic behavior is relatively recent. Early on, psychology, along with philosophy, was concerned with the conflictive and negative psychological aspects of a single individual and the feelings that others provoke in that person. Only recently, at the beginning of the 1970s, psychology has begun to focus on positive psychological resources as prosocial aspects.

Taking into account the generalized social concern for approaching the problems of delinquency, aggression, and social indifference that characterized American society in the 1960s, the birth of a new research field had been established (Calvo, 1999; González Portal, 1992; Molero, Candela, & Cortés, 1999). As a result, the 1970s were characterized by advances in research on prosociality, and in the following years new perspectives were developed on the study of altruistic behavior (Calvo, 1999; González Portal, 1992; Molero et al., 1999).

At present, because aggressive and competitive models are becoming increasingly abundant in our society, both researchers and leaders in the fields of education, society, and politics have agreed on the importance of promoting prosocial behavior as a way of inhibiting negative and antisocial behaviors (Roche Olivar, 2011).

10.2 Concept Definitions

There seems to be little consensus on a common definition of prosocial behavior (Calvo, 1999; Fuentes, 1988; Garaigordobil, 2003; González Portal, 1992; López, 1994; Roche Olivar, 1995; Silva, 1998), and the specific differences between prosocial, altruistic, and prosocial-altruistic behavior remain unclear.

López (1994) defined altruism as "the disposition or orientation towards the good of others that is manifested in a number of behaviors" (p. 10) and understood these behaviors as "those that benefit others to elicit or maintain positive effects. Whoever conducts these behaviors does so voluntarily with the intention of helping others and without anticipating short-term or long-term rewards. Lastly, the behavior must carry more external costs than external benefits" (p. 10).

Given the above definition, there remains the problem of considering the benefit produced by such behavior or the motivation that must exist to display altruistic behavior (Ruiz Olivares, 2005). According to Silva (1998), motivation centered on the needs of others is fundamental for determining whether it is in fact an altruistic behavior.

Despite these difficulties, these previous authors adopted two points of view: one position considers that it is necessary to include motivational aspects while the other centers on observable aspects and is operationally defined as "behavioral"

(Ruiz Olivares, 2005). Chacón (1986) established that authors who support a more behavioral definition consider that this type of behavior is defined by its consequences and observable facts rather than by the supposed intention of the individual who performs the behavior. Thus, in this case, the ultimate motivation of the individual is not taken into account because it is an assumed and hypothetical fact rather than an observation (Darley & Latané, 1968; Lumsden & Wilson, 1981; Rushton, 1982; Sorrentino & Rushton, 1981).

The inconvenience of operationalizing the motivation of an altruistic behavior is evident, as these behaviors are not directly observable and it is difficult to establish an objective criterion that discriminates an altruistic motivation from one that is non-altruistic. For this reason, upon evaluating the efficacy of programs promoting prosocial behavior, we chose to work with a construct that omits the altruistic motivational criterion; this approach is broader and covers any type of helpful behavior that creates a positive benefit in another individual, i.e., prosocial behavior (Bastón & Powell, 2003; Roche Olivar, 1997). In other words, we agree with the assumption that all altruistic behavior may be considered prosocial but that not all prosocial behavior may be considered altruistic (Garaigordobil, 1994; González Portal, 1992; López, 1994).

Prosocial behavior is linked to another related construct: the prosocial moral reasoning, which refers to dilemmas where the needs or desires of one person are in conflict with the needs or desires of another people and occur in a context in which the role of laws, norms, authority mandates, prohibitions, and punishments are minimized (Carlo, Eisenberg, Koller, Da Silva, & Frohlich, 1996; Eisenberg, Lennon, & Roth, 1983; Eisenberg, Miller, Shell, McNally, & Shea, 1991).

One definition of prosocial behavior that is generally accepted among different authors is termed "positive social behavior" (Osorio Peña, 2009) and refers to "any action that benefits others and is conducted voluntarily", independently of the motivation that leads to such conduct (Guijo Blanco, 2002).

Roche and his research team (2011) have developed a more extensive definition that not only includes the simplicity of the unidirectional focus of previous studies but also includes the complexity of human actions concerning relational and systemic aspects. This definition tackles more cultural and susceptible dimensions of its application in the social and political field and can be stated as including "those behaviors that, without the search for external, extrinsic, or material rewards, favor other persons or groups (according to certain criteria) or objectively positive social goals and increase the probability of generating reciprocity and solidarity in consequent interpersonal or social relationships, which serves to protect the identity, creativity, and initiative of the individuals or groups involved" (Roche Olivar, 1991). This definition includes the role of the receptor as a criterion of validity and efficacy of prosocial behavior. According to this definition, an action may be considered prosocial if the receptor of the same action has accepted and approved it. In this manner, those actions that can harm rather than benefit another person are excluded. These harmful behaviors include generating relationships of dependence, unintentionally making the other person feel undervalued, or simply when the receptor does not perceive the other's behavior as helpful.

10.3 Classification of Prosocial Behaviors

There have been several attempts at classifying the science behind prosocial behaviors (Ruiz Olivares, 2005), and one of the first authors to classify the different behaviors mentioned in previous research was Chacón (1986). This author reviewed different research studies on this topic and classified, in a very exhaustive list, 26 specific behaviors according to the type of help presented in the studies. The findings demonstrated some overlap in many of the categories where broader behaviors are included with others that are more specific.

Considering the most commonly studied prosocial behaviors, Eisenberg and Fabes (1998) categorized prosocial behaviors as instrumental help, donation, sharing, comforting, and amiability-consideration. Based on previous studies, Masnou (1994) indicated the following as the most frequent prosocial behaviors in children: generosity, goodness, altruism, resistance to lying or the temptation of cheating, and consideration of the wellbeing of others.

Furthermore, González Portal (1992) established a typology based on a situational criterion. Examples of situational criteria include the following: (a) direct vs. indirect help, when the observer, in an emergency situation, offers his help or sees that someone else provides help; (b) solicited vs. unsolicited help, when there is a response to a call for help or an unsolicited initiative is taken; and, (c) in emergency or non-emergency situations, where the limiting situation modulates the explanation more than the personal cost involved in the helping behavior.

Guijo Blanco (2002) proposed a classification of prosocial behaviors based on different studies conducted in children, in which he included broader categories and more specific behaviors (see Table 10.1).

The examples mentioned above are only some of the many attempts at classification, and each contributes data of interest to the clarification and delimitation of the construct.

Last, we present the classification of specific behaviors proposed by Roche Olivar (1998, 2007, 2010, 2011), on which the design of our programs for the promotion of prosociality in the school environment was based due to its suitability for this objective.

1. Physical help, which involves a non-verbal behavior that procures the physical assistance of a classmate to accomplish a determined objective; the beneficiary does not necessarily ask for help, but approves this helping conduct.
2. Verbal help, which consists of a verbal explanation or instruction that is useful and desirable for other people or groups to reach a specific goal.
3. Give and compare, which involves behaviors of giving objects, ideas, vital experiences, food, or possessions to others.
4. Verbal comfort, which involves verbal expressions that reduce the sadness of persons afflicted or in trouble and increase their spirits.
5. Confirmation and positive evaluation of others, which involves verbal expressions to confirm the value of other people or increase their self-esteem, even in front of third parties (positively interpret others' behaviors or excuses and intercede through words of sympathy and praise).

Table 10.1 Types of prosocial behaviors proposed by Guijo Blanco

Category	Specific behavior
Instrumental help	Collaborating with others in an activity
	Looking for a lost object, organizing the classroom, school materials, facilitating the continuity of the activity of a classmate or adult
Non-instrumental help	Offering information
	Teaching skills
	Explaining strategies for successfully performing a task or game
Comfort	To accompany
	Caressing, hugging
	Finding help for another child
	Encouraging verbally
	Expressing concern for others' problems
Donation	Behaviors of giving one's own resources such as toys, food, money, etc.
Cooperation	Offering adequate support (physical and emotional) for the development of a task or reaching a common goal
Sharing	Utilizing communally or offering a scarce resource such as school materials, a snack, toys, etc.
Sharing of benefits	Relinquishing to others part of a prize or reward received for a performed task
Defense	Non-aggressive behaviors that try to avoid mocking, fighting, or take things away from another child

6. Cooperation, which, in contrast to the previous behaviors where there is an initiator or someone who is convinced that the first step must be taken without considering the advantages that such behavior will cause, assumes the expectation of a benefit awarded by the individual with whom he/she cooperates. For this reason, many authors do not include cooperation within prosocial behaviors. If the motivation of the person who cooperates is focused on the good of others, it would be correct to regard this behavior as prosocial behavior. The reciprocity generated from the prosociality would constitute true prosocial cooperation.

10.4 Why Promote Prosociality in the School Environment?

The increased level of violence in schools is a problem that concerns practically all Latin American countries (Krauskopf, 2006). Several studies have shown a high prevalence of aggression in countries such as Argentina, Colombia, Chile, and Mexico (Aguilera, Munoz, & Orozco, 2007; Chaux & Velásquez, 2008; Kornblit, Adaszko, & Di Leo, 2008; Madriaza, 2008). Moreover, the aggression that many students exhibit could have both short-term and long-term academic and psychological consequences (De-Luca, Pigott, & Rosenbaum, 2002; Forero, McLellan, Rissel, & Bauman, 1999; Gladstone, Parker, & Malhi, 2006).

The results of a study conducted by the International Corporation for the Development of Education (ICDE) indicated that Argentina was the leader in school violence among 16 countries in Central and South America. In Argentina, 37.18 % of students were recognized as having received insults or threats, followed by students in Peru (34.39 %), Costa Rica (33.16 %), and Uruguay (31.07 %). With respect to physical abuse, Argentina is also at the top of the list, as 23.45 % of children reported they have suffered from physical abuse, followed by Ecuador (21.91 %) and the Dominican Republic (21.83 %). In all cases, Cuba demonstrated the best results among the entire region. This study also established that such violence negatively influences student performance. Based on a study conducted in Argentina, which included 6,696 students from 167 schools, it was concluded that Argentinean students who are victims of school violence perform 13 % worse on their exams compared to unaffected students.

Violence in the school environment is related to social factors, such as family, community, culture, and the socioeconomic structure of the country. Violence negatively impacts the institutions in charge of facilitating success for future generations, and these institutions are ultimately responsible for contributing resources for the inclusion of youth in world development.

The role of education is fulfilled when education is established as one of the fundamental components for the formation of personal, social, ethical, and citizen groups. Education plays a critical role in the formation of human and cultural capital during childhood development and is an important space for the creation of identity and self-worth (Krauskopf, 2001).

According to the principles of Positive Psychology, which involve generating positive resources before trying to alleviate negativity, schools need a broader and more articulate, contextual way of developing and sustaining constructive patterns of behavior and interaction rather than simply providing measures to handle and prevent the emergence of violent expressions. Such violent experiences occur rarely, and few cases have developed a well-defined approach to address the adequate registry of evidence in an attempt to define which tactics have achieved positive impacts in the development of prosocial behavior.

From the perspective of positive psychology, we considered an approach based on the psychological resources associated with intra and inter-individual well-being, such as prosocial behaviors, in the school context. This approach provides an alternative that does not focus on negative aspects but may revert and inhibit undesirable, disruptive, violent, and aggressive behaviors. The core of this approach then becomes the strengthening and promotion of attitudes, values, and positive actions, displacing the focus of the correction of conflictive behaviors and aiming instead at the development of positive attitudes towards others by promoting behaviors of collaboration and help. There is mounting evidence that behaviors of solidarity and helpfulness may be stimulated and learned. For this reason, they should be promoted within the education system, where children spend a great part of their lives. It is therefore essential to study those aspects that are linked to the development of the education system and to provide teachers with the tools necessary for their efficient promotion.

Schools represent a space where primary connections are made, and these are fundamental for strengthening integral personal development. Furthermore, schools constitute a large context of socialization and an appropriate scenario for children to assimilate their own social values and those social values expected in the environment in which they interact (Gonzáles Almagro, 1993). The development and learning of prosocial behaviors are achieved within the specific conditions of interaction offered by the school, i.e., the interactions with peers and adults. In the school context, professors and peers are figures of great influence over the solidarity and altruistic behaviors of children (Garaigordobil, 2003).

Teachers and classmates are models and agents of reinforcement of the child's social behavior. "The influence of both has been confirmed in several research studies showing that a powerful role model such as a professor, who can reward and who has a close relationship with the children, can positively influence the generosity of the children towards others who are less fortunate" (Garaigordobil, 1995, p. 55). It has also been demonstrated that classmates can influence the will to donate, participate, cooperate, and help others. A group of peers in a school is a source of prosocial behavioral influence, and different studies have found that this environment can be adequate for the implementation of programs for the promotion of positive behaviors. "Teaching children to help, share, and cooperate is one of the goals of the school that aims to foster integral development" (Garaigordobil, 1995).

Today, the promotion of prosocial behavior is not only considered the best strategy for preventing and confronting the growing expression of social aggression and violence, but it also offers protection and serves to optimize mental health (Palau del Pulgar, 2006; Roche Olivar, 1998).

There are many effects of prosocial behavior on the development of a child at the social, emotional, and cognitive levels.

In the social context, prosocial interactions provide the following benefits: (a) prevent and even extinguish violent behaviors; (b) promote group cohesion; (c) stimulate solidarity behaviors in pairs; (d) decrease negative social behaviors; (e) increase the acceptance of group members' tolerance towards individuals of different races and those with physical and intellectual disabilities; (f) improve the classroom climate and interpersonal relationships; (g) increase social abilities; (h) increase the capacity for solving problems; (i) promote moral development; and (j) stimulate and improve communication attitudes and skills.

In the emotional context, prosocial behaviors achieve the following outcomes: (a) positive interpersonal evaluation and attribution; (b) empathy; (c) emotional decentralization; (d) self-esteem; and, (e) enhanced mental health by increasing positive emotions and decreasing negative emotions.

In the cognitive context, activities that promote cooperative learning allow for the following benefits: (a) increase academic performance and memory; (b) promote a more positive perception of the task; (c) increase intrinsic motivation; and (d) stimulate creativity and initiative.

All of these effects are further enhanced because prosocial actions tend to occur reciprocally, demonstrating multiplied results in different interactions (Roche Olivar, 1998).

10.5 An Intervention Proposal Conducted in Schools

At the beginning of 2007, a program was developed in Entre Ríos and Buenos Aires provinces of Argentina to promote prosocial behavior in the school context, with the goal of generating collaboration in a social process of change rather than establishing a simple diagnosis and analysis of reality. This program integrates basic research and intervention. Along with the theoretical development of the prosociality construct, different training programs have been implemented, and many of them have shown positive impacts via their interventions (Garaigordobil, 1995). However, these programs are generally sporadic, developed by a non-teacher professional, and implemented in specific sessions. In addition, there are studies that indicate that external, sporadic, and discontinuous programs produce results that are lost with time (Karoly et al., 1998; Richaud, 2008). The pioneering aspect of the program that we developed is that the majority of the intervention strategies were designed to be integrated in the school curriculum, and many activities were focused on strengthening and promoting prosociality in teacher planning. This approach aimed to assist the teacher with promoting the resource while introducing the curriculum content (e.g., mathematics, language, social sciences, natural science, ethical and citizen formation, etc.). With this strategy, however, the intervention is not circumscribed to the child because it involves parents or caregivers and teachers; without this approach, the results attained in school are diminished, if not lost, when the child returns home (Brooks-Gunn, Byely, Bastiani, & Graber, 2000). The research team works together with teachers inside and outside of the classroom in the form of meetings to advise and coordinate the insertion of activities intended to strengthen and promote prosocial behavior in school planning while also fulfilling curricular content in the classroom. The teacher is first shown how to apply the various strategies and is then observed, supervised, and assisted technically in the implementation of the program.

The work with parents and caregivers is conducted in school rooms through group workshops of a psychoeducative nature. The goal is to strengthen and develop competency in facing problems related to parental function through the delivery of novelty information, feedback from their peers (other parents), homework, and modeling adequate behaviors. Interventions with parents occurs biweekly, and the workshops last 60–90 min. Each session opens with a few minutes of socialization with the participants, with the goal of creating a climate of trust and dialogue. The workshop is then divided into two phases. The first phase comprises the theoretical presentation of the topic by the moderator, which stimulates participation, reflection, and exchange spaces with the parents; and the second phase features practical activities for the application of the presented topic. For example, the promotion of prosociality is elaborated upon to stress the following goals: (a) encouragement of helpful behavior in parents, with the goal that this encouragement will teach and model prosociality for their children; and (b) training parents to promote the development of prosocial behavior in their children (Oros & Vargas Rubilar, 2010; Vargas Rubilar & Lemos, 2011; Vargas Rubilar & Oros, 2011).

Regarding teachers' work, our model proposes that teachers reinforce and stimulate the prosocial behaviors of physical and verbal assistance, giving and sharing, comforting, positively valuing others, and cooperating. Fostering these behaviors depends on three types of simultaneous intervention conditions: direct, indirect, and incidental. Despite this formal distinction, these three modalities are combined throughout daily work inside the classroom.

Direct or focalized intervention consists of weekly didactic activities to promote prosocial behaviors. These activities are carried out in sessions of approximately 40 min each. The activities may or may not be integrated into curricular contents (concepts, attitudes, and/or procedures). Each session is structured according to the following four phases or stages.

1. Psychoeducative stage: Here, students are informed of the goal of the specific behavior to be promoted through the use of the following techniques: (a) explanation of the objectives; (b) analysis of the advantages of the desired prosocial behaviors; (c) brainstorming; (d) debates; (e) readings (e.g., news related to "heroic" figures); (f) analysis of alternatives; (g) oral presentations by the students; (h) idea-sharing sessions; (i) hands-on activities including drawings and murals; (j) activities of written expression including writing and word puzzles; and, (k) true stories or biographies of characters that have demonstrated prosocial behaviors.
2. Central activity: This stage relates to the activity that is used to promote the development of the desired prosocial behavior. Emphasis on cooperative play and storytelling provides the basis to implement the following: (a) activities with objects in which behaviors such as offering, giving, sharing, exchanging, or trading objects with other children are included; (b) cooperative activities; (c) tasks and games involving help, in which the goal is not to contribute to a group goal but rather to help or be helped by another; and (d) activities that evoke empathy, such as looking at or approaching a child with a problem, consoling a child, or comforting a child using various strategies.
3. Final reflection: The goal of this stage is to explore the feelings that were elicited by the central activity and to analyze the costs and benefits of different behaviors and the reactions created in others. The teacher directs the intervention and encourages communication. The teacher also contributes social reinforcement and verbal affirmation of observed behaviors of help, cooperation or dialogue.
4. Tasks of generalization: The goal of this stage is to promote the internalization of prosocial behaviors, extending what has been learned in class to the family and community. In this stage, homework involving prosocial registries or the collection of anecdotes or interviews is assigned.

Next, an example of direct intervention is presented. The objective of direct intervention is to promote prosocial behavior confirmation and the positive evaluation of others, and this action is referred to as "I discover you". In the first psychoeducative stage, a moment of dialogue is established with the children to identify prosocial qualities. This dialogue also explores how giving or receiving a compliment produces satisfaction in ourselves and others and how it is necessary to be

Table 10.2 Example of direct intervention for promoting prosocial behavior of confirmation and the positive reevaluation of others

Activity	"*I discover you*"
1st stage	"Today we are going to work on recognizing the qualities of others. What is a quality? What qualities can someone have? Does everyone have the same qualities?
Presentation of prosocial behavior to be promoted	As an introductory activity, it is proposed that everyone make a list on the blackboard of potential compliments The teacher guides the dialogue, which enriches the correct forms of expression"
2nd stage Description of the activity	The children form a circle, and each one receives a blank sheet of paper. The child's name is placed on the top. After all the children have written their names on the paper, each piece is passed to the classmate on the right. Then, each student writes down a quality belonging to the classmate whose name is on the paper. Only positive adjectives may be used. After this exercise, each child folds the paper so that only the classmate's name is visible and again passes the paper to the right until the paper once again reaches its owner. The teacher takes the papers and, without saying the name of the child, reads the qualities that the classmates wrote. The classmates should guess the name belonging to the qualities. When all the names are discovered, the teacher gives back the paper with the written qualities to the child. Each child then attaches this piece of paper to their notebooks
3rd stage	"Let's take a few minutes for each one of you to read in silence his/her list of qualities
Reflection after the activity	How did you feel during this activity? Was it difficult to think of nice things to say about each classmate? Did you find new qualities about that classmate that you had not thought about before? Were you surprised about the qualities that your classmates saw in you?"
4th stage Generalization	A double task is then requested of the students. Someone in the child's family (dad, mom, brother/sister, grandfather/mother, uncle/aunt, etc.) should add three qualities to the list, and each child should write the nicest quality of each family member and then read the list back to them

attentive to the positive things that others do and the importance of expressing gratitude. The following table shows a summary of the proposed intervention stages (Table 10.2).

Another proposed intervention modality is called indirect intervention. In contrast with the aforementioned modality, indirect intervention is structured according to curricular content. This approach consists of inserting brief strategies for prosocial behavior stimulation in parallel with the development of specific curricular content. This intervention is conducted uninterrupted during the school year, and it requires a greater amount of creativity and flexibility.

An example of indirect intervention includes reinforcing and stimulating cooperation during a language activity that is necessary to meet the 3rd grade Common Basic Contents of encouraging and promoting. Strategies that implement this type of intervention are focused on promoting the following: (a) respect and interest in

the oral and written productions of others; (b) confidence in the child's oral and written expression abilities; (c) participation in different listening and oral production situations; (d) writing non-fiction texts with the specific communication purposes of having a narrative to present characters (while respecting the temporal and causal order of actions and including descriptions); (e) using correct punctuation (e.g., periods at the end of a sentence or a paragraph, commas for clarification and enclosing appositions, and colon usage), spelling, the use of appropriate connectors, and adequate vocabulary for the topic while avoiding unnecessary repetitions.

The purpose of this activity is to write a story in groups. When each group finishes writing their story, each team will designate a team member to read it and share it with the rest of the class. The reflection moment led by the teacher includes questions of the following type: What was it like working as a team to write a story? Was it more difficult or easier than doing it alone? What aspects of writing the story as a group were easier? The purpose of this exercise is for the teacher to continuously reinforce a climate of listening and dialogue.

Last, the incidental intervention is implemented in an opportune manner, which emerges spontaneously in the daily routine either inside the classroom or at recess. The intervention serves as a trigger to strengthen, stimulate and/or promote prosocial behaviors. This intervention modality differs substantially from the other two, given that it is not planned but rather arises from different situations that occur in the school and require the ability of an adult to intervene and detect the appropriate moments to do so. As an example, the adult could positively recognize a child's spontaneous act of help towards a classmate. As noted by Charney and Kriete (2003), "the best teaching, along with that which is planned, is that which is attentive to the opportunity. It does not only use direct instruction, e.g., leading by example and practical structures, but also capitalizes upon the opportunities that arise spontaneously" (p. 86).

Systematic evaluations are conducted prior to, during, and at the end of the program. The purpose of these evaluations is to establish a baseline and develop a precise diagnosis of the specific behaviors that require additional work for each group, to evaluate and adjust the intervention process, and to determine the impact and efficacy of the program. Prosocial behaviors and their negative counterparts (disruption, violence, and aggression) are evaluated through a multi-part evaluation. Different evaluation techniques are used, such as scales, interviews, and observation cards, keeping in mind that obtaining traditional verbal information is often difficult with children (Lemos, 2006, 2010; Silva Moreno, 1995). Information is provided by the child, the teacher, and the person who coordinates the intervention because it is fundamental to include the perspectives of all involved parties.

In a consistent manner, the results continue to support the efficacy of the intervention program, as the results often demonstrate an increased incidence of prosocial behaviors and a decrease in aggressive behaviors among children who participate in the program as compared to those in control groups (See Lemos, 2008, 2009, 2011; Lemos & Richaud de Minzi, 2009). The results are not only quantitatively significant, but the observed qualitative changes are also important, especially with respect to the quality of relationships and the classroom climate, as expressed by the teachers participating in this experience.

10.6 Summary

In this chapter dedicated to prosocial behavior in children, we presented a brief summary of its philosophical theoretical background followed by different conceptual definitions. These definitions addressed the differing perspectives about the inclusion, or lack thereof, of the altruistic/non-altruistic motivational criterion of prosocial behavior. The opinions of the authors who consider prosocial behavior at the margin of motivational aspects were described (Eisenberg, 1982; Roche Olivar, 1998, 2007, 2010, 2011), along with the opinions of those who support including the motivation of the behavior in the definition. The existence of differing opinions was considered to be a differentiating criterion that justifies the use of different terms (Weir & Duveen, 1981; Wispé, 1978). It was clarified that including the motivational criterion does not imply a dismembering of the construct, given that all altruistic behavior is prosocial but not all prosocial behavior is altruistic. Thus, the concept of prosocial behavior was described as a more general term that includes, among different specific interpersonal behaviors, altruistic behavior.

Next, different taxonomies were presented. These taxonomies were proposed for the study of prosocial behavior; some imply more general categories and others are based on more specific behaviors. Other classifications were also described according to motivational and situational criteria. Last, within a taxonomy based on specific behaviors, Roche Olivar's (1998, 2010) proposal was presented, which was considered adequate for promoting certain prosocial behaviors within the school environment.

The importance and adequacy of the promotion of prosocial behaviors in the school setting were indicated, which served to highlight the particular influence that this environment has on the socio-emotional development of children. The school has a social function that is not circumscribed to a teaching-learning process of conceptual contents but rather involves an ideological transmission of values and models of social behavior.

Last, an intervention proposal was presented to promote prosocial behaviors in the school environment. This approach urges the school to assume its potential for social change and transformation and encourages teachers to fulfill their role as leaders in this process. The central focus of this proposal is the strengthening of positive attitudes, values, and actions, and this approach displaces the correction of conflictive behaviors and is aimed at the development of positive behaviors towards others, which reinforces behaviors of collaboration and help.

The results of our study highlight the potential to strengthen prosociality through continuous, controlled, and theoretically founded work aimed at developing adequate strategies and models. This approach requires schools to train teachers with the tools necessary for the efficient promotion of prosociality by working together with children, teachers, and families. Such partnerships are necessary, given that the most effective way to alleviate aggression is the internalization of prosociality. This type of assimilation not only requires a school context that propitiates prosociality but also a society and family that experience prosociality at its core.

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Chapter 11
Promotion of Resiliency in Children in Social Vulnerability: An Approach from Positive Psychology

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11.1 Introduction

Over the last decades the construct of resilience has received increasing attention in developmental psychology (Cicchetti & Garmezy, 1993). It has based the study of development on a strengths model rather than on a deficit and problem-oriented approach. This approach asserts that being born and living in a problematic environment implies a high risk for health and that instead of being centered on the negative aspects that maintain this situation, it is necessary to discover the conditions that make it possible to enter in a virtuous circle that facilitates healthy development. Rutter (1987) and Garmezy (1991) have asserted that more than half of the children living in disadvantaged conditions do not repeat the same pattern in their adult lives. Researchers, however, have generally stressed the negative aspects of disadvantage by listing risk factors and emphasizing their adverse effects on healthy development. Thereby, they were interested in identifying vulnerable children.

Vulnerability is defined as the susceptibility to develop negative behaviours under high-risk conditions (Zimmerman & Arunkumar, 1994). In contrast, resilience refers to avoiding dysfunctional responses to risk and their potential negative consequences (Rutter, 1985). In general, resilience refers to those factors and processes that prevent that risk becomes problem behaviours or psychopathology and

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consequently result in functional outcomes even in the presence of adversity (Zimmerman & Arunkumar, 1994).

Becoming familiar with the characteristics of resilient people allow intervention policies to be designed, reducing exposure to life situations that provoke stress, or reinforcing protective factors as sources of support or affection, communication or the ability to solve problems (Werner, 1989).

11.2 The Social Vulnerability in Childhood

Situations of social vulnerability consist of high level of risk which a child is exposed due to a lack of care for their basic needs (emotional and economic security, protection, education and time dedicated to them), as well as unsatisfied basic necessities (housing, food, drinking water, education and health) which make them face situations of physical and psychological vulnerability (Domínguez Lostaló & Di Nelia, 1996).

The situation of children in contexts of poverty is determined by the socioeconomic and cultural structure of the country, and in particular by the concrete conditions of the families who children live with.

For most children, poverty implies developmental risks (Huston, 1994). Poverty in childhood is related to a series of problems, including: low birth weight, infant mortality, contagious diseases, lesions, and death (Klerman, 1991). Additionally, these children grow up in neighbourhoods with high levels of unemployment and without basic minimums of care for healthy development.

Among other problems, predominate the breakdown of the family, antisocial behaviour, social networks limited to marginal environment, and lack of informal social control of the behaviours and activities of children and adults in the neighbourhood (Wilson, 1996). Children living in situations of social vulnerability often have delays in intellectual development and school achievement. When they start preschool they tend to have lower levels of school-related abilities than children who live in more favourable contexts; their school progress is slower and many end up dropping out (McLanahan, Astone, & Marks, 1991; Ramey & Campbell, 1991).

On the other hand, children living in situations of social vulnerability have high levels of socio-emotional problems and behaviours, including anxiety, social isolation, aggression and delinquency, psychological distress and low self-esteem and self-efficacy (McLoyd & Wilson, 1991). In adolescence, these problems can affect society more broadly in the form of juvenile delinquency, teenage pregnancy and school dropouts (Garbarino, 1992).

The population characterized by social vulnerability faces high levels of illiteracy along with a low quality of life, income, and social participation, as well as a lack of opportunities.

Children at environmental risk show consistent patterns of low attention, high absenteeism and high dropout levels, which inevitably effect performance and achievement.

As asserted by Bradley et al. (1994), young children are particularly susceptible to the adverse effects of social vulnerability and, as such, are more exposed to the combination of risk factors. Both chronic stresses as a poor material and psychological environment, generally characteristic of vulnerable environments, are combined synergistically in a way that they are quite harmless for development (Bradley et al., 1994; Kotliarenco, Cáceres, & Fontecilla, 1997).

11.3 Social Vulnerability and Brain Development

Children that grow up in socially vulnerable families commonly display high cortisol levels that greatly alter brain development (Essex, Klein, Cho, & Kain, 2002; Lupien et al., 2000, 2001). The mediators of stress paths, such as cortisol (of the HPA axis), can influence both brain development and other organs and biological paths, including the immune system (Gilbert & Epel, 2009; McCain, Mustard, & Shanker, 2007).

Experiences in the early years, even *in utero*, affect brain development and establish biological channels that not only influence health through the life cycle, but also through learning and behaviour (Gluckman, Hanson, Cooper, & Thornburg, 2008).

Lack of care in childhood at an early age can lead to poor development and significant behaviour problems. Studies in Romanian orphanages, where children were poorly cared for and given little social interaction, have shown that children who have gone through long period of time living there have significant behavioural problems after being adopted into middle class homes, which contrasts with children adopted shortly after birth. In these studies, children's sterol levels were much higher (Ames, 1997; Nelson et al., 2007).

A recent study about the consequences of mistreatment and stress during childhood have shown its effects on brain structure, which were associated with changes in levels of stress hormones and in levels of the neurotransmitters norepinephrine and dopamine.

These changes can bring about a variety of disorders, including depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, aggression, impulsivity, hyperactivity, delinquent tendencies and abuse of toxic substances. Excessive stress at an early age can interfere with progressive and normal brain development (Mustard, 2010; Teicher, Andersen, Polcari, Anderson, & Navalta, 2002; Teicher et al., 2003).

11.4 Is It Possible to Undo the Effects of Social Vulnerability?

Though there is abundant evidence on the negative effects of social vulnerability, we might ask what makes some people able to function competently in daily life despite their life experiences, whether temporarily or throughout their whole

development (Garmezy, 1991). In this sense, both personal attributes and underlying processes count in overcoming these threatening circumstances (Kotliarenco et al., 1997). Children are as much vulnerable as resilient. The presence of stable protective factors and temporary moderators of various ecological levels can help explaining why certain children behave in an adaptable way and overcome maturing difficulties still in the presence of multiple risk factors. Studies on these resilient children can contribute to identifying what type of support and conditions in their surroundings help them to become productive adults (Epps & Jackson, 2000).

It is fundamental to remember that, given an adequate and facilitative environment, people have the ability for positive change and to develop at least some characteristics of resilience throughout their life.

The personality traits associated with resilience are healing capacities that allow people to "function" well despite great adversity (Klohnen, 1996).

The emergence of an attachment system is clearly a critical basis for competency in our species; consequently increasing strong and healthy ties between children and their caregivers is the key for intervention strategies (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998).

Werner (1996) highlighted the importance of children having relationships with adult caregivers other than their parents. She observed that resilient children seek support from adults who are not their parents, especially teachers, religious figures or neighbours, and that this support is considered to generate resilience. She pointed out that all children, without exception, that successfully overcome difficult circumstances have at least one person who provides them consistent emotional support –a grandmother, older sibling, teacher or neighbour.

Having a relationship of attachment as a foundation, in many families there are protective processes that allow for the raising of healthy and resilient children (Benard, 1992).

Researchers agree that the key protective factor in families is the perceived availability of parental emotional and instrumental support (Beardslee & MacMillan, 1993). A very important goal of interventions is to increase parents' abilities to give children the support they need, which makes the development of a healthy sense of control and mastery possible, as well as mediating developmental challenges.

Protective processes promote the development of coping strategies, or resources to face adverse situations, that are sustained by cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional competencies. These competencies act in an interrelated way.

A fundamental component of cognitive competency is the capacity to plan and form a general panorama and take active steps in managing environmental risks (Rutter, 1987). Executive functions form a complex system referred to the ability of goal anticipation, planning, problem solving, and self-regulation of one's behaviour. They are indispensable both for correct individual functioning and for adequate social interaction (Lezak, 1995; Stuss & Benson, 1986, cited by Anderson, 1988).

Behind the ability to plan, there are complex coping strategies, in a way that problem solving abilities must go along with them. Initiative requires them to have positive future expectations and an internal locus of control.

Linguistic abilities, for their part, their development being closely linked to cognitive abilities, provide the child with the powerful communication and representational instrument at the disposal of the human species.

A critical ability for emotional competency is the ability to delay of gratification. Those who cannot wait due to impulsivity are incapable of accomplishing important goals and reaching ambitious long-term expectations.

Resilient people have high confidence and a realistic level of self-esteem. In fact, competency, confidence and high self-esteem are necessary prerequisites to develop a sense of autonomy, which permits the individual to think and work independently (Werner, 1996).

Gest, Neemann, Hubbard, Masten, and Tellegan (1993) emphasized the importance that the providers of resilience know how to identify the child's characteristics, their environment and their family and social relations, which promote adaptive development under the conditions of risk. From these studies on the natural occurrence of resilience in children at risk, we can learn to create resources throughout early childhood education and preventive interventions.

Family members and extra-familiar adults can contribute indirectly to the socio-emotional resilience of children at risk because of poverty, by providing emotional support to their parents and stimulating parental control (Cowen, Wyman, Work, & Parker, 1990).

Schools also have the possibility of creating such a coherent environment that children that spend at least 6 h a day at school can overcome almost any other thing in life (Edmonds, 1986, cited by Benard, 1992). Garmezy (1987) affirms that the ethos of school and teachers seems to nourish an important protective factor in child and adolescent development: the acquisition of cognitive and social abilities that build the base for survival in a threatening world. The protective process in school has the same three characteristics as that in the home: caring relationships, high expectations and opportunities to contribute with other people (Benard, 1992).

11.5 Some Resilience-Based Programs Done in Latin America

According to a report by the Bernard van Leer Foundation (2002), the topic of resilience in Early Childhood Education Programs was introduced in Latin America in mid-1994 and 1995, through four projects financed by aforementioned Foundation and developed in Chile, Peru, Brazil, and lastly in Argentina.

With the goal of improving opportunities for children ages 0–7 years that live in disadvantaged economic and social conditions, to develop to their maximum innate potential, they developed four programs in Latin America that have been pioneers in the process of discovering how to promote resilience. The four programs work with children coming from indigenous communities in the Peruvian Andes (*Kusisqa Wawa y Pukllay Wasy*), the Argentinean Andes (*Yachay*) and the

shanty towns in Maranhão, Brazil (*Auto-Estima das Crianças Negras*), from birth until 6 years of age.

The four programs work with populations of similar characteristics. All of them identified with cultural traditions as coming from indigenous roots (in the case of the Andean programs) and their African ancestors (in the case of the Brazil program). The four communities where the participants of the programs live are extremely poor, geographically isolated, and lack social services (like healthcare, education, nutrition and public transportation).

Given the participants' particular cultural characteristics of each program, they defined strategies to promote resilience according to the community's cultural identity. In this way, the four programs kept the way each community defined healthy development and adversity. Thus, for example, *Pukllay Wasy* refers back to "Andean Resilience" (Panez, 2000; Ríos & Santa Cruz, 2000), a term that alludes to the concept of resilient adaptation in Andean culture.

Personality attributes and internal protective factors were considered as individual protective factors, for example:

- *Spirituality*, as a construction of the meaning of coherence in the daily life of the extremely oppressed indigenous populations (the *Kollas* in Argentina);
- *Self-esteem* as a protective factor in children of African descent (Brazil);
- *Self-esteem*, autonomy, creativity and mood as factors in early childhood development (Brazil);
- *Mood*, as a protective or defense mechanism in children, promoted through circus techniques (Chile);
- *Self-esteem, autonomy, creativity, and mood*, as protective factors in the prevention of child abuse (Peru).

Family, social, physical and cultural characteristics are considered as environmental and external protective factors, such as:

- *Emotional relationships* (Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Peru);
- *The social support of a support network* (Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Peru);
- *Ethnic identity* (Brazil);
- *Cultural identity* (Argentina and Peru).

They also defined what is understood by adversity, the specific goal of interventions, and what can be considered "normal" human development in their culture. Some examples of specific areas of intervention include child abuse in *Kusisqa Wawa*, post-traumatic stress produced by political violence in *Pukllay Wasi*, early childhood development and protagonism in *Yachay*, and ethno-racial identity in *self-esteem* among *das Crianças Negras.* Concretely, the *Self-esteem das Crianças Negras* and *Pukllay Wasi* programs have identified that they consider a resilient adaptation through "Afro-Maranhense" identity or "Andean resilience", respectively.

Based on a defined strategy, the projects developed conceptual frameworks, choosing external and internal protective factors just as the methodology of play, as a means for promoting the positive response capacity of children and groups.

The conceptual framework used by operational projects in Brazil, Peru, Chile, and Argentina put more emphasis on the promotion of internal factors and their interaction with external factors, thus encouraging the child's abilities for a positive response (Torres Gerosa, 1999). In the adapted conceptual framework, keeping in mind *"The Andean Pattern of Child Rearing"* (Coral, Rios, & Rafael, 1997), the emphasis falls on family and community attitudes for developing abilities –early childhood protagonism– and the generation of a positive response to the environment.

Despite having identified situations of risk and establishing specific objectives, the projects selected similar intervention strategies, though the procedures and contents of the activities vary. In this way, *game activities* are a commonly planned strategy for children (and in some cases for fathers and mothers as well). *Organizing workshops* on specific topics with fathers and mothers is also highly relevant for *Pukllay Wasi, Kusisqa Wawa and Yachay*. On the other hand, in Maranhão, Brazil, the basic strategy for reaching goals is based on a *radio diffusion system* to reach the community.

Another commonly observed point in the different projects is an attempt to establish new models of interpersonal relationships, such as the expression of affection and solidarity.

The fact that the four programs take the cultural characteristics of the community into account is one of the main contributions of the field work done in Latin America, and in this sense, complements to work done in certain industrialized nations.

An analysis of the four programs shows that they have made two important contributions to the field of resilience: (1) the definition of specific interventions in relation to culture, taking the empirically identified risk and protection factors inherent in the culture in which they are working into account; and (2) the coordination of efforts between different interested parties (the family, the community and social institutions) with the goal of achieving the desired resilient adaptation of their interventions, as previously defined. Nonetheless, to obtain the maximum benefits from their work, program should broaden their conceptual framework and consider resilience to be a process (Bernard van Leer Foundation, 2002).

According to Quintero Velásquez (2000), the Colombian context has been worked on from the perspective of the resilience of displaced families (migrants and people excluded from their land and/or culture) and affected by violence.

This author refers that recent work has also been done from this perspective in learning acceleration programs in the health sector, in preventive strategies among children in family health, and in therapeutic communities for drug addicts. At a continental level, this way of proceeding has been used with optimal results in Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Costa Rica and Guatemala, among other countries, when working with marginalized communities with high poverty indices and levels of social exclusion. Resilience begins also to be taken into account in the development and design of public and social policies, to outline actions that bring commitment from all social actors: communities, families, governmental and non-governmental organizations, the private sector, social movements and base organizations (Quintero Velásquez, 2000). However, both those referred and others not mentioned in this chapter, they are very general and do not contribute specific data on intervention strategies, nor about evaluations of their effects.

Since 2004, the *Development of resiliency among children at environmental risk because of extreme poverty* project is carried out in Argentina. It has been underway to research the cognitive, social, emotional and linguistic development of children at environmental risk, and develops strategies to generate resilience, reinforcing their socio-emotional, cognitive and linguistic resources. In a parallel fashion, an intervention program called *Without care children cannot learn or grow. A program to generate resilience among children at risk because of extreme poverty*, thus integrating research and intervention. This program was designed to provide politically-relevant knowledge that could be used to help meet the educational needs of children at high environmental risk.

It is based on three fundamental pillars: children, parents and teachers. It is intensive, because it is integrated with the school curriculum and implies teamwork between researchers and teachers: (a) in meetings outside the classroom to add resources strengthening activities into school planning corresponding with curricular content, and (b) in the classroom and during the entire time of children's school attendance, through the work of a teacher assisted by a researcher who observes their work, the children's answers, and at the same time provides technical assistance if necessary. It is extensive because it was designed so that the same cohort of children can continue throughout school until the age of 18.

It is done at school because there is evidence that external, sporadic and discontinuous programs produce results that are lost with time (Karoly et al., 1998).

When working with socially vulnerable children, it is necessary to perform a precise diagnosis of the specific risk situation and thus of the type of intervention to be implemented. This way, there is no sense speaking of closed programs but of a series of strategies and technologies that could be applied according to the resources necessary to be reinforced and the strengths showed by each of them.

Also, a continued evaluation is done through permanent technical observation in class and transversal evaluations with psychometric techniques about every 6 months.

This program was developed according to two types of work: (1) in three pilot schools, where research work was undertaken, especially about treatment processes, strategies and techniques, and (2) through general training of the teaching staff affected at high-risk schools, on strategies and techniques developed in pilot schools for each age. With this theoretical training and practice approximately 800 teachers, principals and supervisors at initial and primary levels have been reached, in such a way that over 30 schools have been impacted. Theoretical-practical training with teachers from high risk schools in different parts of Argentina, including Buenos Aires, Jujuy, and Santa Fe, among others, provided technical supervision in-person and through an electronic portal so that they could implement interventions in their respective schools. This was carried out in all of the high-risk schools in the city of Junín, Buenos Aires province, through an agreement with the city's Department of Schools.

Part of the proposed treatment includes a program for the development of spoken and written language, and learning through language, developed by Diuk, Borzone, and Rosemberg (2000). Communication in verbal and non-verbal interactions

constitutes the matrix of development processes and the foundation of situations that involve adults and children in diverse joint activities. In such, children's knowledge, values, beliefs and way of speaking are incorporated to reinstate them within the process itself of teaching and learning; they simultaneous acquire a "standard dialect" and concepts and content within origins in different cultures, with the goal of using them in diverse socio-cultural contexts. These activities are undertaken by also involving emotional processes which tend to achieve secure attachment, confidence in others, an attributional adaptive style that ensures the control of feelings and social competency in order to adequately relate to peers and adults.

Within the framework of this program, the adult, along with the concepts of the area of proximal development, scaffolding and guided participation, play a fundamental role, giving support and guiding children in doing tasks and developing emotional capacities, in such as way that all children increase their participation and emotional commitment as they acquire more abilities, but are never placed in a situation of failure.

Failure could lead a vulnerable child to a state of helplessness in which they would reaffirm their feelings of lack of self-efficacy and lack of control of the situation, associated with feelings of depression and loneliness which paralyze or isolate him.

The general situations faced in school consist of the development of activities such as: (1) games with sounds, words and letters; (2) telling personal stories; (3) dialogical reading with stories; (4) dialogical reading of news, expositive texts and other materials, (5) shared writing of tests, at the same time as psychological interventions are being carried out with the use of adequate strategies for the development of supportive emotional attitudes, reattribution of beliefs, and development of cooperative activities.

Among the activities undertaken to strengthen cognitive resources there are strategies to increase reflectivity and planning abilities (Arán Filippetti & Richaud de Minzi, 2011), proposing simple and explicit rules, modeling, and teaching reflective strategies (Arán Filippetti & Richaud de Minzi, 2009, 2010, 2011). The exercises that were used were designed with the goal of creating uncertainty in the answers and stimulating time latency, as a means of encouraging the use of analytical strategies and the reflective style (Arán Filippetti & Richaud de Minzi, 2009, 2012).

It was also gave a role of basic importance to work with positive emotions. For such, each one of the activities was designed in such a way that they could be naturally integrated into the school curriculum. A dynamic, interactive and systematic model was proposed. The sessions took place weekly through a classroom model taught in class with the collaboration of the teacher in charge of the group. The stimulation techniques included positive reinforcement, mental and muscular relaxation, conductive tests, cost benefit analyses, narration, seeking out alternative solutions, auto-referential techniques, music, drawing and planned games (Oros & Richaud de Minzi, 2011; Oros, Richaud de Minzi, & Manucci, 2011).

In each work session the following routine was adopted: (a) opening with an introductory activity on psycho educational goals, (b) an intervention itself with didactic activities, (c) ending with transfer tasks and generalization about things learned in habitual contexts (home-neighbourhood).

Social ability is another resource of great importance that was worked on by following similar steps towards positive emotions. Work was done with children following the expected progression according to age, starting at the age of four with social norms, followed at 6 years of age by strengthening assertive actions, to finally be dedicated to the resolution of interpersonal conflicts through social negotiation (Iglesias, López, & Richaud de Minzi, 2012; Lopez, Iglesias, & Richaud de Minzi, 2012).

In the intervention proposal was considered fundamental the inclusion of parents or caregivers and teachers, given that without them the results achieved in school would be reduced, if not lost, when the child returns home (Brooks-Gunn, Berlin, & Fuligni, 2000). Given that the resilience intervention is an integrative process, it is necessary to work in different environments: family, school, neighbour, etc., for which it is essential working with parents to strengthen the pillars of resilience in the home.

To make this possible, a way was sought for parents to help with the work done by teachers as well as psychologists, psycho-pedagogues and social workers in the team.

The resources developed in children were worked on through different experiences, such as baking bread, building a puppet theatre, thinking and doing puppet shows or telling stories to the children. Despite the fact that the main activity that brought parents together changes throughout the year, it was always fundamentally centred on: (I) parents' self-esteem, emotional ties and social abilities, creativity and humour, social networks and sense of belonging, (II) child's resource recognition and perception, communicational style and affection of parents towards children. These aspects were worked on with parents given that children need parents to be sure of themselves, have emotional control, and react adequately to crises, to be able to deal with work with their children. In other words, parents' own self-reflection can help them learn to better perceive and understand their children.

Self-esteem promotion was, of all the characteristics studied, that which served as the transversal axis in all of the meetings.

Putting on a puppet show and filming stories read-aloud have been the experiences with the highest attendance from these groups. It is believed that the common factor of these tasks and one of the mains reasons for their acceptance is related to contact with valued multimedia technology. This access contrasts with the daily realities linked to marginality, and the stigmatization that goes along with it.

Alternatively, video and audio production through digital filming and constructing their own arguments –that in a large part is lost on the marginal urban population – it allowed them to play with images and their histories encouraged the experience of self-esteem (Gentile, Mesurado, & Vignale, 2006).

Another proposed form of intervention was done through participative group workshops where it was tried to strengthen and development competencies to face problems linked to the parental role, by handing over new information, feedback from peers (other parents), assigning tasks and modelling appropriate behaviours (Vargas Rubilar, 2011a, 2011b; Vargas Rubilar & Olmedo, 2011).

The applied modality was based on an ecological framework (Bronfrenbrenner, 1979), that is to say where group learning is applicable to other spheres in which

family members can relate with one another (school, work, community, among others). It has assistance-aimed and preventive ends (Rey, 2006), given that it seeks to satisfy the present needs of families and warn of future problems that could unfold.

Parental interventions were done on a bi-weekly and each workshop had duration of 60–90 min throughout the year. Each session began with a few minutes of socialization among the participants, with the goal of generating an environment of confidence and dialogue. Later, the workshop was divided into two phases. The first consisted in the presentation of a theoretic topic by the coordinator generating spaces of participation, reflection and exchange between parents. In the second phase, a practice activity applied to the presented topic was undertaken. For example, the session specifically proposed the promotion of positive self-esteem centred on two basic axis: (a) encouraging self-esteem among parents, in order for them to teach their children through the vicarious learning a positive self appraisal, and (b) teaching parents strategies to promote the early development of positive self-esteem in their children (Oros & Vargas Rubilar, 2010; Vargas Rubilar & Lemos, 2011; Vargas Rubilar & Oros, 2011).

One of the core objectives of the intervention programs with parents should be the prevention of abusive behaviours and negligence towards children (Rey, 2006). Many inadequate parental practices emerged because of lack of knowledge about appropriate behaviours and difficulties applying alternative (positive) practices of control than those received by these parents in their own homes as children (Richaud de Minzi, 2007a, 2007b, 2010; Richaud de Minzi, Lemos, & Mesurado, 2011; Richaud de Minzi, Mesurado, & Lemos, 2013).

On a final note, the general results of the program were evaluated by coping with conflict, given that the objective was to strengthen children's psychological resources and at the same time guarantee their use in daily life, beyond specific intervention situations, it is hypothesized that they would use the best possible strategy according to the situation of threat that they had to live.

The results indicated that before the task of generating resilient behaviour, children in situations of social vulnerability had differences in relation to risk-free children, in terms of planning development and self-regulation, social abilities, positive emotionality and coping, showing higher cognitive impulsivity, a low capacity to self-soothe and to be grateful, a lower ability to relate to others and a dysfunctional coping style with low logical analysis and cognitive restructuration, and lack of emotional control. In general, the first actions undertaken with at risk children tended to reduce impulsivity, without which other achievements would have been impossible to reach. To make this possible, it was tried to strengthen existing interior language or that which children used in a more effective way, allowing their behaviour to be guided. It is interesting to observe as well that in the case of positive emotions, that high risk children with intervention had an emotional profile similar to that of risk-free children, who have family group that better facilitates understanding, expression, and emotional control. Even in the case of gratitude, at risk children with treatment had much higher values than those who were not at risk, probably given that it is generally a scarcely developed characteristic in the current social milieu. This variable has been worked on especially in this

program, as it is considered fundamental for recognizing the other's interest for oneself, which would facilitate the development of social networks of support based on interpersonal trust. The results indicate that effectively, with the strengthening of attachment, impulse control, social abilities, positive emotions, planning and reflexivity undertaken through the general program, children are able to cope with threat in a more functional way. On the other hand, it is hoped that increasing attachment, and thus a fundamentally emotional regulation, may also stimulate planning and reflectivity which diminishes cognitive impulsivity, the child could better analyze the problem, restructure it cognitively in a positive way, and better control their emotions. At the same time, increasing attachment, positive emotionality, and social abilities makes them more able to trust others and seek help, which would also strengthen them emotionally (more emotional control). Also, using these strategies allowed them to act effectively to solve the problem (Richaud de Minzi, 2007b, 2010, 2012).

11.6 Summary

In this chapter, dedicated to studying the promotion of resilience among children in situations of social vulnerability, in the first place, it was defined the concept of resilience that reversed the sense of interventions based on remedying vulnerability, and start from the person's resources and strengthening, putting emphasis on a strength model rather than on a deficit one.

In a second place, social vulnerability was characterized as a risk for healthy child development, given the mediating effect that play the variables that most times are linked to it, such as physical and mental health problems, economic deprivation, lack of cognitive and mental stimulation in the home, maternal education, greater exposure to stress in the family and social environment, and environmental characteristics in general.

In the third place, it was analyzed how beyond malnutrition and other variables, such as substance abuse (particularly prenatal exposure) and lead exposure, that have been traditionally seen as potentially causal factors of the diminished brain development, one of the most relevant factors in terms of effect on brain development is the product of environmental stress. It hard impacts brain biology, mainly through the influence on the hormonal functioning of the organism, which secretes cortical steroidal hormones, including cortisol.

When then asked if this situation could be turned back, developing resilient behaviour among at risk children, families and schools, learning that some children, despite facing the same risks, have been able to overcome them and even come out stronger. It were identified all the factors and resources considered fundamental to healthy development and it was affirmed the possibility of strengthening them as a means of developing resilience.

Finally, two great works on resiliency developed in Latin America were analyzed fundamentally: that done by the Van Leer Foundation that involved four programs

developed in three Andean zones (Chile, Peru and Argentina) and in the shantytowns in Maranhão, Brazil; and another developed with the support of CONICET and the Argentina Ministry of Science, Technology, and Productive Innovation, in children in high risk situations of urban marginality. In both cases, just as from the resilience perspective and through appropriate culturally-adapted actions and those emerging from the midst of the general community, the school, and the family, the negative effects of social vulnerability can be reverted and the vicious cycle of lack converted into a virtuous circle of strength and empowerment.

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Chapter 12
Social Skills of Children in Vulnerable Conditions in Northern Argentina

Ana Betina Lacunza

12.1 Introduction

The study of social abilities has expanded greatly during the last 50 years, especially in different fields of psychology. According to Kirchner (1997), research began in the 1930s with studies of assertive behavior in children (Murphy, Murphy, & Newcomb, 1937; Williams, 1935) and resurfaced in the 1960s and 1970s in England and the USA with a cognitive-behavioral approach. Early studies focused on the evaluation and training of social behavior associated with psychological disorders. However, over the last decades, this negative conception of social skills has been supplemented with the study of the promotion of social competence and positive qualities such as prosocial and cooperative behavior.

Various evaluations have pointed out that between 7 and 10 % of the general population has some type of difficulty in the expression of social skills, which would be considered as a deficit in social competence (Hecht, Genzwurker, Helle, & Calker, 2005; Hecht & Wittchen, 1988). In Argentina, the 'Mental Health and Addictions Watch System' [*Sistema de Vigilancia en Salud Mental y Adicciones*] estimated in 2010 that over 30 % of the population above the age of 15 suffered from mental and behavioral disorders (Ministry of Health, 2010), which involved a deficit in social skills. These epidemiological data show that social deficits are involved in the genesis and manifestation of such disorders, so that the early identification of social skills is an important factor in the prevention of psychopathologies.

Social skills are one of the most widely studied protective factors in infant-juvenile mental health (Diaz-Sibaja, Trujillo, & Peris-Mencheta, 2007) since a person's ability to use his assertive abilities within the context in which he lives

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allows him to reach a satisfactory social adjustment. In turn, reinforcement from others strengthens a positive valuation of the individual's social behavior, which is reflected in his self-esteem, a very important component of his personality. From a salutogenic perspective, social skills are positive resources, especially those that make possible mutually satisfactory relationships and promote prosocial behaviors. There is a general consensus that assertive abilities and relationships with peers in childhood contribute to an adequate interpersonal functioning and favor the development of reciprocity, empathy, collaboration, cooperation, positive emotions and well-being. In this connection, Segrin and Taylor (2007) suggested that if social skills are associated with positive responses such as gratification, they will strengthen positive relations with others. According to these authors, positive relationships provide a link between social skills and the positive experiences of well-being.

Del Prette and Del Prette (2008) consider that social skills are those social behaviors included in a person's repertoire that contribute to his social competence, favoring the efficacy of the interactions he establishes with others. Although this is a complex construct, there is a consensus with respect to considering social skills as learned behavior (Monjas Casares, 2002) that favors positive relationships (Segrin & Taylor, 2007), increases the possibility of social reinforcement and problem resolution without aggressiveness (Reyna & Brussino, 2011) and expresses a person's feelings, attitudes, desires, opinions or rights in a way that is adequate to a particular situation (Caballo, 2005). Although social competence and social skills were considered synonymous, the former includes these abilities, which in turn are part of adaptive behavior (Gresham & Rechly, 1988). From the point of view of evaluation, social competence is a cumulative measure of an individual's social performance in different situations that are evaluated by significant social agents according to norms, rules and criteria within a sociocultural frame of reference.

As Caballo (2005) points out, social skills are a link between a person and his context, since the social condition that defines a human being highlights his ability to use his social skills. The way in which an individual practices these acquired resourced defines the quality of his social skills. This author points out that a good repertoire of social skills is expressed through assertive behavior, that is, behavior that is fair, efficient and specific for the situation. This implies the development of a balance between inhibited, passive and aggressive behavior, although this implies that on certain occasions the response will be passive or aggressive. We should remember that, as Kelly (1987) pointed out, a socially skilled individual is one that displays efficient behavior within an interpersonal situation, managing to obtain or maintain the reinforcement of his environment.

Social behavior is learned throughout a person's life cycle, so that the ability to relate to others, stand for one's rights, express one's opinions and feelings or face criticism, among other abilities, depends on the process of socialization. Different approaches agree that this process starts at birth (Dunn, 1988; Kaye, 1982), while biological models hold that children may be born with a tendency toward a certain temperament and that their behavioral manifestation would be related to an

inherited physiological bias that could mediate the way in which they respond (Caballo, 2005). In this way, early learning experiences could interact with biological predispositions that would determine certain patterns of social functioning. According to Buck (1991), temperament will determine the nature of the interpersonal socio-emotional environment and will also influence the ability to learn. Thus, temperament would determine emotional expressiveness, which in turn would favor the development of social abilities and social competence.

Although biological aspects are a basic determinant of behavior, especially in early social experiences, the development of social skills depends on growth and social experiences. According to Meichenbaum, Butler, and Grudson (1981), social skills develop within a cultural framework and, consequently, within communication patterns that correspond to a particular culture. Furnham's studies (1979) show how social skills that are relevant in one culture may be irrelevant in others. For example, he mentions that assertiveness is considered in some countries as an index of mental health, while in other cultures is neither promoted nor accepted: "humility, subordination and tolerance are more strongly valued than assertiveness in many cultures, especially in the case of women. Even more, lack of assertiveness is not necessarily a sign of insufficiency or anxiety, although it may be so at times" (Furnham 1979, p. 522).

Although the Social Learning Theory has not proposed a model of social skills, its guidelines allow us to understand social behavior as the result of intrinsic factors (belonging to the subject) and extrinsic ones (belonging to the environment) (Bandura, 1987). For Bellack and Morrison (1982), the guidelines of this theory would account for the early acquisition of social behavior, especially modeling and reinforcement. Children learn behavioral patterns, relational styles and social skills through the modeling and imitation of their parents or caretakers, which are later generalized into other socializing contexts such as the school environment and his peer group. The latter plays a decisive role in the reinforcement of social abilities, especially during adolescence.

This chapter deals with the study of social skills in childhood with an emphasis on the influence of vulnerability conditions. The consideration of vulnerability points back to the fragility of the personal, familiar-relational, political and especially socioeconomic environment of the children involved, which places them within an at-risk population group. Focus is placed on the identification not only of social deficits but also of those social skills that act as protective factors for children. Developments center on three relevant topics: (a) how to evaluate social skills in children, (b) the relationship between social skills and behavioral problems in childhood, and (c) the modification of social behaviors. In order to illustrate the above, empirical studies conducted in a children population in northwestern Argentina are described, the product of a line of research that from 2003 to this date has been developed in the Faculty of Psychology of the National University of Tucuman [*Facultad de Psicologia of the Universidad Nacional de Tucumán*], with grants from the Argentinean National Council of Scientific and Technological Research.

12.2 The Evaluation of Social Skills in Children

If measurement in psychological sciences is difficult since it must reflect the relationships between observable behavior and concepts, this difficulty is even greater in the measurement of social skills. An article published in 1979 in the *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment* describes the controversies and obstacles for the evaluation of these skills. Curran (1979) claimed that social skills are a mega-construct in which one tends to associate a variety of superficially plausible behaviors, so that their evaluation supposes the revision of psychometric theories and methodological strategies that enable the evaluation not only of behavioral aspects but also of cognitive factors and emotional states involved in social skills. According to Caballo (2005), the greatest difficulty in evaluation lies in the social nature of the interactions, in the lack of agreement on the concept of social skills and in the significant external criteria with which to validate the procedures.

The aim of the evaluation of social skills is the identification of interpersonal behaviors, which implies a pre-test/post-test evaluation process, that is, an evaluation before and after the processes of training and learning of social behavior (Monjas Casares, 2002). According to Sendin (2000), during childhood this evaluation is individualized (considering the evolutive level, the cultural factors, the characteristics and the needs of the child), interactive and contextual (because of the context of interaction, the people involved and the relevant interpersonal situations) and informative (because of the relevant diagnostic data for intervention). These peculiarities explain the usefulness of a multi-method and multi-informant approach, which are characteristics pertaining to child psychological evaluation (Forns & Santacana, 1993). Multi-method implies the combination of methods and especially techniques of a quantitative and qualitative nature (interviews, observations, inventories, among others) tending to increase diagnostic precision. The multiinformant condition implies that the information necessary to elaborate the diagnoses should be gathered from different sources of information: parents, teachers, peers, and the child himself. In practice, the multi-method and multi-informant perspective is not the one most often used in the exploration of social behavior because of the context of application, the number of evaluators involved, and the time allowed for the evaluation process, among other reasons. Other arguments mention the obstacles inherent in the definitions of social skills and competences recognized by the scientific community such as the almost exclusive development of specific and unspecific tests or tools only for adults or adolescents.

12.2.1 Formats to Evaluate Social Skills

For Monjas Casares (2002), the most often used tools in child evaluation of social competence and skills are: (a) information from other people (parents, peers, teachers) through scales and questionnaires, (b) direct observation in natural or artificial situations and (c) interviews and self-reports. In school environments, it is common

to use students' output (summaries, oral productions, body language, and drawing), a systematic observation, anecdotes, report sheets and evolution charts. However, the scarce availability of validated tools or the lack of tests for certain age groups has limited the multi-method and multi-informant perspective. A recent study by Reyna and Brussino (2011) showed that the scale of evaluation of social abilities such as a single informant's report is the most usual one in child behavior research in Latin America.

Numerous research teams have conducted studies of the evaluation of children's social skills in Latin America. For instance, the group *Relações Interpessoais e Habilidades Sociais* (RIHS) coordinated by Drs. Almir del Prette and Zilda Del Prette in the University Federal of Sao Carlos, Brazil, designed and validated a multimedia system of evaluation (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2003), sociometric registers (Goncalves & Murta, 2008; Molina & Del Prette, 2007), scales (Bandeira, Rocha, Freitas, Del Prette, & Del Prette, 2006) and observations (Cia, Pamplin, & Del Prette, 2006). In Bolivia, scales were used with both teachers and parents (Pichardo, García, Justicia, & Llanos, 2008) and also with children (Ferreyra & Reyes Benítez, 2011). In Colombia, a survey on aggressive and prosocial behaviors applicable to different informants was validated (Martínez, Cuevas, Arbeláez, & Franco, 2008) as well as a scale for parents concerning the social skills of small children (Isaza Valencia & Henao Líopez, 2011). In Venezuela, an interview for children was adapted within an intervention program on social skills (Amesty & Clinton, 2009). In Argentina, a socio-cognitive test for school children was adapted (Greco & Ison, 2009; Ison & Morelato, 2008), together with a scale for parents and teachers (Ipiña, Molina, & Reyna, 2010, 2011; Schulz, 2008), another one for children at the pre-school level (Reyna & Brussino, 2009), and the design and validation of a behavioral observation scale (Ison & Fachinelli, 1993).

12.2.2 Assessment Tools Developed to Evaluate Social Skills

Two assessment tools were developed to evaluate the social skills of pre-school children between the ages of three and five: a scale for parents or caretakers and an observation register of the social behavior of children within the school context.

12.2.3 Scale of Pre-school Social Skills (SPSS)

This is a scale constructed on the basis of other tools dealing with children social skills, evolution indicators and experts' considerations. The final version of this tool emerged from a validation by judges and from the analysis of its psychometric properties. Three hundred and eighteen parents and/or caretakers of children attending the Primary Health Care Centers (CAPS) in San Miguel de Tucumán, Argentina were involved. The version for 3-year-olds included 20 items ($\alpha = .72$), the one for

4-year-olds 23 items (α=.77) and the one for 5-year-olds 26 items (α=.86). Although exploratory factorial analyses were performed, the solutions were difficult to interpret and implied the elimination of items that assessed significant social behaviors (for instance, children's ability to interact with adults), so it was decided that the scale would have a unifactorial structure, discriminating between children with high or low levels of social skills.

These are some of the items included in the test for different ages:

3 years old

- Can tell his/her name when asked to do so (item 2)
- Says "thank you" in his/her relationships with his/her parents (item 9)
- Mentions praising both parents or one of them (item 10)

4 years old

- Introduces him/herself spontaneously to other children (item 3)
- Asks other children if he/she can help them in their activities (item 4)
- Is kind to his/her parents and other known adults (item 9)

5 years old

- Shows courteous behavior toward other children (uses phrases such as "please", "thank you", "sorry") (item 5)
- Helps a friend in trouble (item 8)
- Can hold a simple conversation with an adult (item 16)

All the versions of this tool explored different areas of social abilities, especially those associated with the child's interaction with his/her primary group and his/her peer group, for example: *mentions approval when other children do something he/she likes* (item 5, 3-year-olds), *adapts him/herself to the games and/or activities that other children are already performing,* (item 7, 3-year-olds); the resolution of conflictive situations with his/her peers (item 5: *mentions approval when other children do something he/she likes*, item 7: *tries to understand the activities other children are performing,* 4-year-old version) and indicators of cooperation and collaboration (item 4: *asks other children if he/she can help them in their activities* and item 9: *is kind to his/her parents and other known adults,* 4-year-old version; item 4: *does small favors to other children,* (item 8: *helps a friend in trouble*, 5-year-old version). The expression of positive emotions toward parents or other known adults (item 15: *mentions praising his/her parents or other known adults (e.g. his/her teacher*)) was also included in this scale.

12.2.4 Register of Observation of Social Skills (ROSS)

Although observation has been traditionally associated with inductive reasoning of a qualitative kind, this register was designed on the basis of a quantitative methodology. In its design we considered the 'Observation Code of Social Interaction'

(*Código de Observación de la Interacción Social*) (COIS) (Monjas Casares, Arias, & Verdugo, 1991) and the observations performed in Maternity Care Centers in S.M.de Tucumán. The tool consists of 12 items, in which the child's interactions or their absence with peers and/or adults are considered. It includes mutually exclusive categories of interactive and non-interactive behaviors to prevent some behaviors from being assigned to the same category. The register explores the inclusion of one or several classmates as well as the nature or the interaction (positive or aggressive) and its expressions (verbal, physical or both).

This version was applied to 89 children aged 4–5 attending public kindergartens in San Miguel de Tucumán (Argentina). It should be noted that the context of evaluation was the playground or the schoolroom when the children were playing.

Validation was based on the judge system. We did not perform another psychometric analysis due to the loss of registered cases during the data collection period. It should be pointed out that the test was administered by an external evaluator so that the observation data would be reliable and not liable to subjective bias from the main evaluator. As Sanz, Gil, and García-Vera (1998) stated, observation implies a series of practical and psychometrical problems, since although the fact that a child approaches another is simple to observe and evaluate, it is also necessary to consider the social validity of this chosen analysis unit and the way to codify it.

12.2.5 Evaluation of Social Skills in Children with Nutritional Deficits

SPSS and ROSS were used to analyze the social skills of 318 pre-school children in a situation of socioeconomic vulnerability living in San Miguel de Tucumán. The children were undergoing pediatric checkups in Primary Health Care Centers (CAPS) and were distributed into two groups: clinical (malnourished children) and control (eutrophic children) on the basis of a review of 733 medical records. The children in the clinical groups showed first degree malnutrition (deficit of up to 20 %) according to the anthropometric weight/size measurement, which started after they were 12 months old. All the children had been born in 2000–2002, the time of a serious socioeconomic crisis in Argentina. At the operational level, two variables defined poverty in the present study: the level of educational and the present occupation of parents or caretakers. The combination of these factors established a higher and a lower level of poverty. The lower level included those parents with formal education above complete primary education and with steady, low quality jobs. The higher level included those parents with a minimum educational level and unstable jobs or jobs related only to social relief programs. The determination of such categories was due to the great heterogeneity of the data obtained in the sociodemographic survey administered together with the SPSS.

The results indicated that both eutrophic and malnourished children had the basic social skills necessary to deal with everyday situations, since no statistically significant differences were observed between them. Despite their socioeconomic

vulnerability, these children were able to acquire a series of social skills. For example, they were able to greet other people, tell their name, adapt to other children's games, praise their parents, tell other people when another child did something that was unpleasant to them, show initiative to relate to unknown peers, display cooperative behaviors and express positive feelings in their interactions with adults (Lacunza & Contini, 2009). However, the mere presence of social behaviors does not determine whether or not a child is socially competent; this repertoire of social skills should be exercised in a specific situation and be positively valued to consider the child's actions as competent. Consequently, the most skilled child is not the one with the greatest number of social behaviors, but the one capable of perceiving and discriminating signals within a given context and choosing a combination of behaviors that is adequate for that particular situation.

In conclusion, according to parental perception, children in Tucumán with and without malnutrition showed the social behavior necessary for daily life, which enabled their psychological adjustment to their immediate context. The social relationships that these children established could be considered as a health protecting factor, insofar as the use of these social skills contributes to their adaptive functioning. It should be remembered that children in situations of poverty must face an environment characterized by uncertainty and stressful stimuli. Although the resources to face those are scarce, this study determined that assertive social skills are capacities that allowed the active adaptation of the children, and therefore act as "shock absorbers" against the negative effects of poverty and social inequality.

In a subsample of children with the two tools (ROSS and SPSS) a statistically low positive relationship ($r = .293$, $p < .01$) was found. This correlation agrees with the findings of Mischell (1968) with respect to the low relation between tests of different nature in the evaluation of components of the personality. Different authors (Achenbach, McConaughy, & Howell, 1987; Grietens et al., 2004) maintain that there usually is a low degree of agreement between the information provided by the different informants from the different contexts (parents and teacher or parents and the children themselves), while the degree of agreement may be moderate when the informants evaluate the child in the same context (e.g. mother and father or different teachers of the same child). This low agreement between informants could indicate that the variable to be evaluated differs according to the various situations and not that the contributions of the different informants are unreliable.

12.2.6 Evaluation of Social Skills of Urban and Rural Children

In a later study we evaluated the social skills of children belonging to urban and rural environments in Tucumán (Lacunza, 2012). SPSS was developed on a sample of 260 children aged 5 who attended public and private kindergartens. The families in the rural environment belong to contexts of low socioeconomic status (SES) and lived in a locality in the north of the province while the urban children lived in San

Miguel de Tucumán, the capital of the province. According to parental perception, urban and rural children with low SES showed a similar profile of social skills, while urban children with high SES were described as having greater social skills than their peers with low SES. Twenty-five percent of urban children and 20 % of rural children with low SES rated above average (percentiles above 75), which allowed us to hypothesize that the social behaviors identified (salutations, relationships with unknown peers, expression of positive emotions, establishing a conversation with an adult, among others) acted as a positive factor of social competence and as a protecting factor against the effects of poverty. Urban and rural children with low SES were observed in the school environment. The application of ROSS showed that rural children differed statistically in their social skills with respect to urban children ($t = -5.64$, $gl = 160$, $p = .000$), although 97 % of the urban children showed positive interactions (relationships through play, activity or conversation) and 38 % initiated the approach, mainly to a peer (78 %). No statistically significant associations were found between the informant report and the observation, which confirms the above statement with respect to the situational specificity of social skills.

12.3 Social Skills and Behavior Problems in Infancy

Numerous empirical studies have demonstrated the connections between social competence and physical and mental health. For instance, a repertoire of assertive social skills is related to high levels of academic achievement and self esteem, emotional regulation and impulse control (Campo Ternera & Martinez de Biava, 2009; Elliot, DiPerna, Mroch, & Lang, 2004; García Nuñez del Arco, 2005; Inglés et al., 2009; Perez Fernandez & Garaigordobil Landazabal, 2004; Rubin et al., 2004). On the other hand, deficits in social skills are associated with a variety of disorders such as anxiety, cardiovascular disease and substance abuse (Semrud-Clikeman, 2007).

Existing literature indicates that problems in interpersonal relationships are found mainly in those children who relate poorly to their peers and avoid social contact and, on the other hand, in those who have violent relations with their peers (Monjas Casares, 2002). These behaviors are associated with inhibited and aggressive styles of interaction that evidence deficient social skills. According to Gresham (1988), two theoretical models can account for these social shortcomings: the deficit model and the interference model.

Social skills problems can be analyzed from two points of view. On the one hand, from the behavioral component of such skills, that is, the aggressiveness or inhibition in the interaction of the child with his/her parents and adults, and on the other, from the cognitive perspective, since the child perceives others with mistrust, according to certain attributes, and reacts with greater aggressiveness or withdrawal. Based on the behavioral dimension, we analyzed the relation between social skills and behavior problems in 185 children aged 5 who attended public and private kindergartens in San Miguel de Tucumán (Argentina). SPSS, the Behavioral Observation Guide (BOG) (Ison & Fachinelli, 1993) and a sociodemographic

questionnaire were administered to parents and/or caretakers. It should be noted that the BOG explores behavior problems such as physical and/or verbal aggressiveness, denial, transgression, impulsiveness, hyperactivity, attention deficit, self aggression, inhibition and peer acceptance. The BOG was designed and validated with a child population in Mendoza (Argentina). With respect to sociodemographic indicators, education, parental occupation and access to goods and services defined SES. Low SES was already described in previous studies while high SES was indicated by completed university studies, managerial jobs, (chiefs, managers), professionals and owners of small and mid-sizes enterprises.

The results show that males in both SESs had behavior problems related to physical and/or verbal aggression and transgression to a greater degree than their female counterparts. Following the proposal of the authors of the BOG, a group of children was formed with those that showed disruptive behaviors (those with percentiles above 75 with respect to physical and/or verbal aggression and denial). Sixty-two percent of the total sample showed this condition.

Children with disruptive behaviors with low SES showed fewer social skills than children with the same problems with high SES. Although disruptive behavior was more recurrent in children with low SES with respect to their peers with high SES, we cannot assert that behaviors related to aggressiveness belong to a certain socioeconomic context. It could be claimed that stressful events in the life of a child such as socioeconomic deprivation and the resulting stress in the parental figures (which influences the type of upbringing) can trigger the apparition of dysfunctional behavior. On the other hand, we observed that 40 % of the children showed behavioral inhibition. Inhibited children with low SES showed fewer social skills with respect to their peers with high SES, although these differences were not statistically significant. If we bear in mind that behavioral inhibition is characterized by fear and isolation in the face of new situations, the child's social deficits concerning peer relations or relations with adults increase his/her anxiety symptoms.

It should be noted that in both cases we observed that the level of social skills was lower than that of their peers without this symptomatology, which allows us to infer that the presence of these abilities acted as protective resources against behavior problems, preventing the apparition of psychopathological disorders.

12.4 Is It Possible to Modify Social Behavior?

According to Del Prette and Del Prette (2008), one of the basic characteristics of social skills is their acquired character. This implies the possibility of increasing the procedural knowledge of how to behave in social situations and how to respond to the multiple demands of the different contexts in which a person acts. In turn, if social behaviors are learned, they can be modified. Children and adolescent intervention programs operating in the fields of prevention and promotion have been designed on the basis of the concept of the modifiability of behavior.

School and family as well as access to other membership groups are privileged environments for the learning of social skills, if these contexts can provide the child

with the positive experiences required for the acquisition of social behavior. We learn from what we see, from what we experience (our own actions) and from the feedback obtained from interpersonal relations; we also learn social behavior from the media as well as from the use of cultural symbols. In conclusion, context, in its multiple meanings (maternal and paternal characteristics, upbringing, and access to material goods such as television or internet, among others) is decisively related to the way in which salutogenic or dysfunctional social skills are learned and practiced.

For Kelly (1987), interventions in interpersonal capacities are functionally justified on the basis of the principles of the theory of social learning. These differ from other psychotherapeutic interventions mainly in their purpose, since they act independently of the etiology of the social deficit, placing emphasis on the positive aspects of the subject and developing skills such as alternative social behavior. Although intervention programs have had different theoretical supports such as humanistic, systemic, cognitive or behavioral theories, the most representative authors (Caballo, 2005; Gil Rodríguez, León Rubio, & Jarana Expósito, 1995) point out that cognitive-behavioral techniques prevail in intervention programs. Techniques such as instructions, modeling, behavior rehearsal and reinforcement, among others, are used in individual or group designs.

Different studies have demonstrated the efficacy of the teaching of social skills to children (Garaigordobil Landazabal, 2001; Michelson, Sugai, Wood, & Kazdin, 1987; Monjas Casares, 2002, 2004). In Latin America, empirical experiences revealed the existence of consolidated and prolific research groups, especially on the subject of childhood. Such is the case of the above mentioned group of Del Prette & Del Prette in Brazil and of other teams in Argentina. For instance, Wainstein and Baeza (2005) studied interpersonal relations in the classroom with a methodology of intervention-action in order to modify dysfunctional teacher-student and student-student relations. Ricahud de Minzi and his team worked on the generation of interpersonal relationships and positive emotions in children in Santa Fe and Entre Rios. After applying the 'Intervention program to strengthen affective, cognitive and linguistic resources in children at risk because of extreme poverty' [*Programa de intervención para fortalecer los recursos afectivos, cognitivos y lingüísticos en niños en riesgo por extrema pobreza*], the team found that interventions showed a remarkable increase in the use of functional coping strategies together with increased impulse control, inhibitory control, social skills, planning and meta-cognition (Richaud de Minzi, 2007). In Mendoza, Ison (2009) worked with intervention programs on attention deficit and cognitive abilities that play a role in the solution of interpersonal problems in schoolchildren.

12.4.1 Intervention Experiences with Children in Tucumán

In 2010–2011 an intervention program for the development of assertive social skills in children in contexts of poverty was implemented in San Miguel de Tucumán (Argentina). In the pre- and post-test stage, the Socialization Battery BAS (Silva Moreno & Martorell Pallás,1983, 2001) was applied in its three versions: BAS-1 for

Table 12.1 Social skills, intervention techniques and play activities applied in the program

Social skill	Intervention technique	Play activity
Social interaction abilities (Start, maintain and end conversations with peers and adults)	Presentation	"Questioning ball" and "We ride a city bus"
	Modeling	"Complete the phrases and discover the message"
	Reinforcement and practice	"Bricolage of friends"
Skills related to feelings and emotions (express emotions as positive affirmations about oneself, express emotions and feelings about others)	Presentation	"Guessing games" and "Puppets of emotions"
	Modeling	Reading of stories Videos on TV characters
	Reinforcement and practice	"What am I like?" (this included individual activity)
Skills to cope with interpersonal problems and resolve them (look for positive solutions to conflicts with peer and adults)	Presentation	"Games with giant dice".
	Modeling	"Games with giant dice"
	Reinforcement and practice	"The stories of Camila, Mariana, Natalia and Javier" (this included individual activity)

teachers, BAS-2 for parents and BAS-3 for teenagers. This technique evaluates facilitating (consideration toward others, self control and leadership) and inhibiting dimensions (withdrawal and social anxiety) of socialization. The self report version was adapted for children under 11 years of age from local samples (Lacunza, 2010; Smulovitz, 2011). Besides, a tool (CABS) concerning assertive, aggressive and inhibited behavior was applied to the participants.

The program included 88 children between 9 and 13 years of age who attended the 4th grade (morning shift) in a public school in San Miguel de Tucumán (the capital city, with approximately 600,000 inhabitants), belonging to an urban poverty context. The clinical group was formed by divisions A and B (59 children) while the control group was division C (29 children). The groups were selected from a population of 687 students enrolled in that school shift. The intervention program was applied to the experimental group during ten group sessions of 60 min each with a weekly frequency. The children in the control group participated in five play-shops focused on Children's Rights, once every 2 weeks and with an approximate duration of 60 min.

The intervention was based on the social interaction skills teaching program (PEHIS) of Monjas Casares (2002), with an active participative methodology. Three social skills were practiced using the techniques of modeling, practice and reinforcement. Each session included group and/or individual play activities with a routine of presentation, play activity and a final discussion. The abilities, techniques and play activities developed are presented in Table 12.1.

Informant reports (BAS-1 and 2) were applied exclusively during the pre-test stage. The teachers completed the BAS only of those students with aggressive behaviors.

On the other hand, parental attendance to the BAS-2 was low. In those cases, administration was individual in view of the difficulties in reading and comprehension. The results showed divergences, since the teachers described male students as more aggressive and anxious than females, while parents described them as more extrovert in social relations, although also aggressive and undisciplined. No statistically significant associations were found between the two tools, with the exception of a statistically negative association between Leadership (BAS-1) and Withdrawal (BAS-2) ($r=-.963$, $p=.037$), that is to say, that students described by their teachers as leaders rated very low in social withdrawal and introversion according to their parents.

It should be noted that the intervention stage had different effects. The clinical group showed aggressive behaviors during the pre-test stage while during the post-test stage an increase in self control to establish social relations was observed, which represents compliance with social norms and rules ($t=-3.3$, $gl=25$, $p=.003$). However, there was also an increase in inhibited behaviors with respect to those identified during the pre-test stage ($t=-3.37$, $gl=25$, $p=.002$). The children in the control group showed lower leadership during the post-test evaluation ($t=2.74$, $gl=13$, $p=.017$) and lower use of assertive behaviors ($t=2.45$, $gl=5$, $p=.057$). Besides, we observed a greater choice of aggressive behaviors with respect to the pre-test stage.

The intervention process included training workshops for teachers so that they would be able to include activities related to the promotion of assertive social skills in the school curriculum. As the teaching staff was the same during the following school year, the children, together with their teachers, continued to perform activities related to these types of skills. That is why they were evaluated again 12 months after the end of the intervention. Although no statistical differences were found between both groups, the clinical group was found to show greater consideration toward their peers in social relations than the control groups, although with increased inhibition behaviors ($F(1, 29)=14.96$, $p=.001$). The children in the control group showed more aggressive behaviors than the clinical group ($F(1, 26)=19.13$, $p=.000$). It should be noted that the decrease in cases in this new evaluation was mainly due to the mobility in enrollment, so that participant repetition and dropout, which are indicators of the educational inequity still found in contexts of structural poverty, should be borne in mind for the interpretation of data.

This empirical experience shows the increase in assertive social skills in children with deficits, particularly in those in the clinical group, which supports the assumption of the present study with respect to the modification of social behavior. Besides, it suggests that the school context is a very important place for the learning of social skills. The school, as a socializing institution, is responsible for the teaching of social skills to students to promote social competence and especially living with others. Besides, the teaching-learning process has as a basic recourse interpersonal relations and interpersonal communication, social skills being an essential resource. We also tried to show how the end of an intervention influences the progress made by the children, as evidenced by an increase in withdrawal behaviors in the clinical group and in aggressiveness in the control group. The evaluation-intervention method described in the present study is in line with the theory and the empirical evidence of other investigations, although it is necessary to consider the limitations of the results presented here.

12.5 Final Considerations

The study of social behavior is relevant for the promotion of the psychological health of children and teenagers. Over the last decades, it has been demonstrated that assertive social skills are a health protecting factor, since they promote healthy child development and prevent the apparition of psychopathological disorders. Authors agree that an assertive individual is one who knows and controls his feelings, can interpret the states of mind of others and is able to operate in his environment, optimizing his life quality. Although the concept of social skills has been used in different theoretical models, its influence on well-being allows us to associate it with the salutogenic approach, especially in the case of those abilities that enable satisfactory relations, relations of trust, belonging, acceptability, cooperation and collaboration.

These abilities allow positive survival, especially in a complex society in which violence and ill being prevail. Bearing in mind that social skills are the basis for mediation strategies, conflict resolution and team work, among other aspects, they contribute not only to adequate interpersonal functioning but also to adjustment and adaptation in childhood and in adult life.

Social skills develop from learning experiences that strengthen assertive behaviors and that, consequently, reinforce the positive perception of the subject with respect to his social competence. As mentioned above, the school environment is a valid and transcendental context for the application of intervention programs that, as Garaigordobil Landazabal (2008) stated, promote cooperative over competitive behavior.

From a positive perspective, social skills are protective resources and promoters of well-being. Although there is a prevalence of studies on social deficits and their effects on different adaptive areas of the child, empirical evidence is also important with respect to the positive role of social interactions in the promotion of positive development and psychological strengths. Seligman (2003) stated that social resources are a precocious power that can act as a barrier against the weaknesses and uncertainties of life.

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Part IV
Positive Psychology, Community and Health

Chapter 13
Positive Communities: Dimensions for Assessment and Intervention

Graciela Tonon

13.1 "Positive Community": The Theoretical Construct

In ancient Greece, the primary meaning of the concept "community" showed that *common* does not necessarily mean "one's own", it goes beyond personal ownership; it concerns everybody, and therefore has a public character (Esposito, 2003). Thus, the reciprocity of giving entails commitment. The political and social organization of the Greeks, the Polis, was founded on the basis of the value of citizenship, hereby the political constitution, as an objective expression of the State, was forging in the community narrow links which unified the divergent forces. The top force of 'the Greek spirit depended on its deep root in the life of the community' (Meza Rueda, 1999, pp. 89–90).

In the twentieth century, Sarason (1974) defined community as a network of mutual support relations in which the subjects perceive themselves as similar to others. This is a recognition of the interdependence with the others, a will to support this interdependence by giving or doing for others what is expected from them, as well as a feeling of being part of a wider, more stable and trustworthy structure. During the nineties, Lo Biondo (1999) stated that the concept of community is specifically related to inter-subjectivity and to matters of sharing.

However, the beginning of twenty-first century has presented us with new models of communities which imply that the traditional concept has changed along with the way people participate in the community (Tonon, 2009). When we refer to the community we are not considering the traditional definition that mainly regards it as the territory that facilitates an identity. Today, the place of residence is not necessarily the space people identify themselves with neither the space where they participate.

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In this sense, Maya Jariego (2004, pp. 188–190) highlights the flow of different types of virtual communities on the internet, that does not need face-to-face contact and is independent of people' geographical residence.

As to the term "positive", Peterson (2006) considers that "positive" is not simply an adjective that merely referred to a positive thing. Thus, it leads us to the question, why positive or positive for what?. The author builds the notion of "enabling" what certain institutions, better than others, make it possible: facilitating and promoting successful results in the individual. In particular, we will consider to a positive community as the one that makes a better life possible to its citizens as compared to other communities.

Finally, we need to consider another point which arises from the observation of everyday life. Community life varies according to the citizen's requirements, depending on whether they reside in the city or in the country, in the urban areas or in a rural context. In this chapter, we will refer to the quality of community life in urban context, including big metropolis and their outskirts or suburbs.

13.2 Satisfaction with Life in the Community

When people are asked about their degree of satisfaction as members of a certain community, the aspects that arise are diverse. Satisfaction with life in a community involves feeling satisfied with different situations: Safety on the streets; social services; interaction with neighbors; infrastructure and facilities; public transport; employment; and public spaces for leisure activities that bring the possibility of meeting with other members of the community to exchange ideas and to discuss common problems and concerns.

In the specific case of satisfaction with life in the community, it is interesting to mention Ferris (2006) who considers that there are two forces that determine life quality: The endogenous ones – mental, emotional and physiological responses to the subject in living conditions – and the exogenous ones – social, psychological, cultural and environmental influences, and social structure.

Royuela, Suriñach, and Reyes (2003) developed a model to study quality of life in the community based on three aspects: Opportunities to progress; existence of social inequities; and, living conditions in the community. The analysis of the opportunities to progress in the community leads to the study of the possibility of improvements on housing and infrastructure; and individuals' opportunities of social mobility and the promotion in the labor and educational fields. The study of social inequities involves identifying the inequalities based on gender, sex, culture, and religion in the community, as well as the situation of migrant populations. Finally, the study of the living conditions in the community, requires the study of: housing (equipment and building structure); public transport; educational services (schools at every educational level, libraries); health system (hospitals, clinics and private physician's offices, health community centers, and drugstores); environment and climate; cultural spaces (cinemas, theatres, cultural centers, bookshops, art galleries,

museums); and spaces for leisure activities and the practice of sports (clubs, sport fields, gyms, parks and squares).

In 2001, Sirgy and Cornwell explored the satisfaction obtained from the interaction between the spaces and institutions mentioned above and the community. This study found that the satisfaction generated by these institutions and spaces was extended to the community. Later, Sirgy, Gao, and Young (2008) developed a study that showed that satisfaction with the community services plays an important role in the community well-being. Well-being was understood as individuals' global satisfaction with the community and perception of quality of life in the community and their own life. They hypothesized that individuals' level of satisfaction with their community would be mainly determined by the public services offered, the non-lucrative services, and, the business that can be developed. It was analyzed individual's levels of satisfaction with the following aspects: Housing; education; local government; health-care system; employment opportunities; public safety; places for religious worship; availability of shops and trades; means of transport; and, places for leisure time activities. The results showed that satisfaction with the community leads people to compromise with it, and, the more satisfied with the community services and living conditions, the higher the satisfaction with the community life (Sirgy et al., 2008).

13.3 Third Places as Positives Scenes in Urban Communities

13.3.1 Characteristics of Urban Communities

In the last decades, in Latin America, cities experienced a vast and intensive growth resulting in the cohabitation of a great number of culturally heterogeneous individuals in small areas. This is the result of the arrival of migrant populations from rural zones and/or from neighboring countries with the aims of obtaining jobs and improving their living conditions (Tonon, 2012). Thus, not only new neighborhoods come into existence, but also the existing ones have become overcrowded.

Regarding the word *urbanity*, Joseph (2002) claims that it refers to both city government and qualities of its inhabitants. However, the author adds that cities were already societies before their leaders' interventions as "*urbanity refers more to the work of the urban society itself than to the result of a legislation or administration*" (Joseph, 2002, p. 28).

This new century reveals characteristics such as, the crisis of the former socialization model based on the existence of public spaces as meeting places for socialization of different social groups, as well as the insecurity inherent to big cities (Svampa, 2002, p. 89). Thus, inhabitants of these cities are learning to walk along and circulate in anonymous spaces: Streets; parks and squares; railway stations; malls and markets; and, different places from those they would daily walk in their original communities; those "areas" where people meet and interact (Seibold, 1999, pp. 472–473).

Urban centers are considered, on the one hand, as the most appropriate territorial contexts for the generation of wealth, employment and innovative environments; but on the other hand, they are related to negative aspects such as environmental degradation, social exclusion, insecurity and traffic congestion (Santos, Martins, & Brito, 2007).

One of the most important problems in urban centers is urban transport. Road congestion is originated by the number of cars, buses and trucks in constant circulation; the insufficient investment in traffic organization and in transportation infrastructure, such as modern highways. All this aspects cause pollution, noise, and delays which damage people's quality of life and reduce leisure time. Hence, the development of other activities in individuals' lives.

In that sense, Joseph (2002, p. 24) emphasizes that sociability in urban village is "as if". Sociability and cities present a tangle of life styles among mixed races with juxtaposed social entities; with negotiated and crossed borders for others, exposed to the neighbors' look. The big city establishes the importance of "the sight", since the inhabitants have vast opportunities of watching each other (considering what a bus or train journey last). People who live in the city combine social mobility with residential mobility. But the inhabitants of the city do not always show an open disposition, they live in a permanent state of alarm and are afraid of being invaded by intruders (Joseph, 2002, pp. 24–29).

> Urbanity and worldliness use two techniques to communicate: On the one hand, the art of keeping up appearances (politeness as a mask for indifference, and reserve to prevent dispersal); and, on the other hand, the word of circumstances (forms of behaviour which are only valid in certain situations in which the idea is evaluated first) (Joseph, 2002, p. 29).

Urban environments are characterized by contradictions as they offer employment opportunities and provide services, but, at the same time, create environmental pollution and lack of personal safety. *The strategies used for cities to operate have positive effects (products originating from the use of economies of scale) and negative effects (resulting from the externalities that increase social and private cost)* (Pichardo Muñiz, 2011, p. 366).

In view of this description, is it possible to conceive the recreation of community meeting places in a big city? Since the end of the 1980s, much has been enunciated on this topic until the concept of "third places" was developed by Ray Oldenburg.

13.3.2 The Third Places

Oldenburg (1989) defines *third places* as those spaces that allow communication out of the first two fields of communication traditionally known: family (in the first place) and work (in the second place). He remarks that these are spaces where people enjoy meeting. Thus, generating a public scene of social interaction provides subjects with a context of sociability, spontaneity, construction of community ties and emotional expression, as well as the possibility of being in contact with reality,

out of the spaces of family and work (Oldenburg & Brissett, 1982, p. 280 quoted in Jeffres, Bracken, Jian, & Casey, 2009, p. 335). Hence, third places offer people a space to rest from daily demands, and generate a sensation of inclusiveness and belonging associated with participation in a social group. In the community, third places promote the strengthening of a social interaction among its members, offering a secure space for formal or informal meetings. Third places are instrumental for the consolidation of local democracy and vitality of the community, as they promote social equality, create habits of public association and offer social support to the people and their communities.

Describing the characteristics of third places, Oldenburg (1989) remarks that these are spaces where every person is well-received as they provide neutral grounds for social and economic interactions. Their paramount activity is conversation,[1] although people go there for a drink, to practice sports or cut their hair. Third places are accessible spaces as they do not expose economic, political or physical barriers; they are nearby, preserve an atmosphere of good humor and inventiveness and, as they are popular, they become a second "home" to the individuals who pass by.

In 2009, Jeffres, Bracken, Jian and Casey developed a hypothesis acknowledging that communities with third places, where people can interact out of their homes and work places, are perceived by their inhabitants as communities with high levels of quality of life. From daily and systematic observation of those spaces where people meet and greet each other, it was possible to conclude that having access to third places increases people's perception about their individual and community quality of life.

Some spaces in urban context that can be considered third places are: bars and tearooms; hairdresser's; spaces for playing sports (gyms, fields and courts); shops and malls; parks and squares; community centers; community political parties; and gas stations, among others. It is worth mentioning that nowadays, people choose to live in certain neighborhoods because of the existence of third places; as well as the infrastructure – schools, medical centers, shops, etc.; public transport access and safety.

The third places are scenarios which prove to be suitable meeting places, where people can make friends and acquire a sense of belonging, at the time of experiencing certain privacy. Besides, this spaces promote the interaction of people from different age-groups as well as the emergence of public figures among members of the community who keep an attentive eye on what is happening in the daily life of the community. But, mainly, third places generate a positive effect on people's mental health and pursuit of happiness. Third places may, therefore, be considered "positives scenarios".

[1] The conversation is defined as a social space in which a public is constituted for coalescence (the ability of two or more materials to fuse in one unique body) of informative sequences (Joseph, 2002, p. 41).

13.4 How to Identify "Positive Communities"?

When it comes to finding precedents in the studying of satisfaction with the community life, Santos et al. (2007) have raised two ways of studying quality of life in urban communities: (1) quantitative studies that statistically measure specific conditions of urban life; and (2) qualitative studies that gather opinions of the members of the community. Their proposal for the study of the quality of life in urban communities has been organized in four dimensions of analysis: quality of life in general (fundamental aspects of the quality of life in the city); quality of life in terms of the development of the city (from the study of specific domains); personal life quality (level of individual satisfaction of every person's life); and, quality of life in the area of residence (in each specific neighborhood of the city).

Later, Pichardo Muñiz (2011, pp. 366–367) described the existence of a group of indexes for the study of urban life quality: (1) some oriented to the assessment of services provided and the conditions and characteristics of the population that has access to those services (Euro-barometer); (2) others rank the best cities to live in (Global Cities Index); and (3) neighborhood studies combining objective data (hedonic prices) and subjective data (satisfaction with life).

Our contention is that the identification of positive communities requires a process which, in its first stage, aims at developing qualitative studies that provide a deep understanding and description of the community. Only then, we will be able to advance in the construction of quantitative indicators that facilitate the measurement and subsequent analysis of the obtained variables.

From previous studies as social workers in different communities, our initial proposal of dimensions of analysis, in order to identify positive communities, is the following:

Satisfaction with	Dimensions
The existence and possibilities of access	Open/green spaces
	Cultural spaces
	Sports and recreation spaces
	Socio-cultural spaces
	Religious worship spaces
The possibility of access to and efficiency of public services	Educational services
	Sanitary services
	Social services
	Public services
Level of access to and equipment of	Housing
	Public Transport
	Shops
	Employment
	Public Security
Levels of	Neighbour's social support
	Citizens' attitudes
Government policies	Local government

Some dimensions of this matrix were first used by a student,[2] who I am tutoring in the writing of her thesis for the PhD Program on Psychology at the *Universidad de Palermo*, Argentina. As part of the process, we have constructed some aspects to be used in her interviews with young people – it is a qualitative study – who live in a neighborhood situated in the boundary between the capital district and the suburbs.

According to the preliminary results, the major points of interest among the interviewed young people were: environment, health, education, employment, public services, public security, social organizations, religion, community festivities, sense of ownership, sense of identity, trust and equality.

Most young people pointed out the existence of green public areas, in terms of "third places", where people can gather, as well as social organizations that defend citizens' rights. Health and Education (two of the social services traditionally provided by the local State) were accessible, though with insufficient resources and infrastructure which has led part of the population to use private services. In terms of employment, they regard their neighborhood as a "family community", with no private enterprises or industries. The only job opportunities left were restricted to working at local commerce or in construction sites. The most serious problems were insecurity in main streets where shops and business are established and noise and air pollution produced by public transport. It is interesting to note, that it is the existence of numerous bus lines in that area what allows neighbors to commute to their jobs in different parts of the city. According to these young people, the best assets of their community were: their neighbors' kindliness and sense of friendship as well as the existence of a "community essence" and its tranquil atmosphere. Additionally, it was mentioned the access to public transport which allows the possibility of working in more distant parts of the big city. Our conclusion is that these features characterize a positive community.

This matrix will, therefore, be more useful if we continue to use it in other qualitative studies, in order to determine whether to include any further dimension or delete others.

13.5 Conclusions: Positive Communities in the Urban Space

The study of positive communities in urban space initially leads to the study of quality of life in urban communities, which implies remembering that the processes of urbanization have, in general, developed in a complex and untidy way. Though urban centers have turned into sources of employment and social innovative spaces, they have also wrestle with the degradation of the environment, social exclusion, traffic congestion and insecurity on the streets.

Third places act as spaces which support the community and contribute to its construction since they are a source of social interaction and discussion, accompaniment and organization. These places act as political forums of spontaneous deliberation and when people develop a sense of ownership, they tend to be more observant and responsible for their communities. Likewise, in moments of crisis, third places act as meeting places and as a shelter for community members.

[2] A PhD candidate named Lucía Zanabria Ruiz.

Finally, if positive aspects of a community are related to the prospects it generates for its inhabitants, and if we consider that the quality of life people perceive in urban communities is positively related to the existence of third places, it can be concluded that the existence of third places promotes the positive aspects of a community.

A community is considered to be positive by its members when the experience of living in it makes people happier, less awkward and with major possibilities of development and freedom that if they were living in other community.

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Chapter 14
Re-inventing School to Develop Active Citizens

Ulisses F. Araujo and Valeria A. Arantes

14.1 Introduction

In the classic article "Positive psychology: An introduction", published in 2000 by Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi in the *American Psychologist Journal*, among many characteristics supporting the creation of a new science named positive psychology, the authors highlight one aspect that, in our opinion, has been neglected by many researchers of this new field of knowledge. This aspect, in general, focuses on the individual traits and the role -and possible applications- of positive psychology at a group level in collective environments.

In the search for delimitating the fields for this emerging science, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) point out that, at a group level, positive psychology should concentrate on civic virtues and institutions that promote individuals to be a better citizenship: responsibility, nurturance, altruism, civility, moderation, tolerance, and work ethic.

Formal education may be the best locus for a social intervention aiming at strengthening positive traits at the individual and collective levels, such as those mentioned above. In this way, an ethic and civic education program, based on positive virtues, should be seriously considered by the society as a core element to impregnate school curricula and community relationships in its daily activities. Educational centers can play an important role in building positive qualities and civic engagement.

In this chapter we will discuss the evolution of education in recent centuries, trying to present the background that set up the current situation of the schools that our

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children and adolescents must attend. This universal schooling paradigm is demanding new approaches for the development of quality in education, and we will try to show how some of the principles, that positive psychology supports, can contribute for this process of re-inventing formal education.

Although we believe that this issue has a worldwide significance, Brazil and its educational standards will be the focus of the experience and the discussions described in the next pages.

14.2 Educational Revolutions and the Re-invention of the School

Formal education had its model structured at the time European national states consolidated principles based on the development of individuals and the society. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it was believed that formal education – one that should be practiced in public spaces – did not need to be extended to all people but only to the children of the socio-economic aristocracy, as they would be responsible in the future for producing knowledge and managing the destiny of the society. This is the same model used in Europe for the creation of universities and has shown a frank expansion throughout the continent since the twelfth century.

According to the Spanish philosopher, Jose Esteve (2002), after the first educational revolution characterized by the creation of instruction houses in the courts of the Egyptian pharaohs – 2,500 years ago – ; the mark of the second educational revolution in human history is the decree of King Friedrich Wilhelm II. In 1787, this decree makes basic education compulsory in Prussia, taking schools' management from the clergy; becoming public; and being organized and managed under the State's responsibility.

In this historical movement, a pedagogical and architectural model of school that placed teachers at the center of the process was formed as a characteristic of the second educational revolution. Teachers were regarded as the holders and transmitters of knowledge, and a large number of students were set under their responsibility. This relationship was almost individualized before. Educational environments were designed based on these principles: small classrooms; teachers occupying a space next to the blackboard marking it the center of the pedagogical activity; and students' desks facing it. According to these concepts, students were positioned to receive the instruction coming from the master.

Despite the emerging industrialization during the nineteenth century, the economic basis of the European societies was predominantly agrarian. As only a minority of the population was able to study, it was possible to develop an educational organization based on selectivity, search for students' homogeneity, and the exclusion of those individuals considered as *different.* That is, students with learning difficulties or conduct problems. The higher the educational level, the more selective it became. Thus, the rationale behind this teaching model was the exclusion of

differences and the search for homogenization. The tools to achieve these processes were based on a criterion that focused on the absence of certain characteristics or skills in students, or even pathological problems on children. The teaching procedures centered on remediative processes that seek to fill the detected faults. The teacher's eyes turned to students with problems any coping difficulty in order to legitimized, based on their disabilities, their exclusion from school.

This was a similar scenario to the one experienced in the field of psychology since its beginnings. This model structured around the pathology has been questioned in recent years by the positive psychology.

Esteve (2002) reports that the idea of an education for everybody has emerged in the nineteenth century. However, it is only since the second half of the twentieth century that, what the author called "the third educational revolution" would consolidate, marked by the end of education policies based on the exclusion of the vast majority of the population and guided by the quest for schooling 100 % of children. A goal that now extends to the high school.

The search for universal education is clearly linked to the consolidation process of the modern conception of democracy in Western nations and its development is not a process devoid of tension. The society democratization, the quest for universal primary education and the increasing expansion of higher education have brought diversity into the classroom, characterized by new populations not sufficiently attuned to the school or academic paradigms. Therefore, one of the current challenges of education is the emergence of the need of dealing with diversity and the interaction among people from different gender and social, economic, psychological, physical, cultural, religious, racial, and ideological backgrounds. Finally, the disruption of the elite education has created what we call a 'different broth of cultures and diversity' in educational settings.

The struggle for equal conditions and the right to inclusion of every person in the schools; the structural changes on the role of knowledge in the contemporaneous society; and the current socioeconomic organization of post-industrial societies, feed a strong debate about the role of education nowadays. Our generation is facing therefore, new challenges involving the adoption of public policies capable of providing access and quality to schooling, but we are also challenged to find different ways to relate education with the knowledge produced by mankind.

As teachers are challenged to seek inclusive methods that lead to respect for differences and cultures and also to appreciate the students' different types of skills and knowledge in the classrooms, positive psychology can contribute to this process. That is, by providing new ways for educators to understand children and teenagers and helping them to promote the development of virtues that enhance their well-being and the pursuit of personal and collective happiness.

We are referring to the need for re-thinking and re-inventing the education in the same way that positive psychology has helped psychology to re-think the basis of its research and professional applications.

So, the model of school that we know, consolidated in the nineteenth century, now has the need to cope with the demands and request of a democratic and inclusive society, characterized by diversity and based on the inter-, multi- and trans-disciplinary knowledge.

This process of re-invention, however, needs to be aware of the tradition and conservation, as these features are essential parts of the social mission of education: to preserve, to transmit and to enrich the cultural and scientific heritage of humanity. Thus, this search for new educational settings cannot be designed as dichotomous, by opposing tradition and innovation. The novelty does not sit on the emptiness but on the experiences of ancient humanity.

What academic and scientific movements attentive to the processes of re-invention of education has understood – without the temptation of simplifying and pointed out the dichotomy – is that the changes need to be built on a new model of education and science considering the dimensions of **contents, methods** and **relationships between teachers and students** in a complementary perspective (Araujo, 2011). The next section introduces how each of these dimensions can influence the re-invention of education.

14.2.1 Educational Contents

Regarding the goals for university education in the twenty-first century, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC & U) established through the 2007 Report four types of learning that should be expected of students: (1) Knowledge of human cultures and the physical and the natural worlds; (2) intellectual skills and practices; (3) integrated learning that synthesizes general and specialized studies; and, (4) personal and social responsibility, including knowledge and civic engagement at local and global levels, knowledge and intercultural competence, ethical thoughts and actions, and skills for learning throughout life.

In this recent document, for all universities in the United States which can be generalized to all levels of education, it is highlighted the concerns on how the technical dimensions articulate with the ethical values in a cross-curricula approach. Otherwise, it would not be achieved the civic engagement, social responsibility and quality in education that are pursued. This is a concern that doubtless can be taken as reference for educational goals in all countries at all educational levels.

Accordingly, the overall education of students – and consequently of teachers' professional training – is put in the spotlight of the education for the twenty-first century. To educate the new generation towards the construction of positive civic virtues and a better citizenship is an obligation of an inclusive, democratic and fair society, and this process demands a new approach at the school curricula. Ethics and citizenship contents should be intentionally introduced in cross-curricular projects at every levels of education.

14.2.2 Methods in Education

There is no way of thinking that the educational process will follow the models erected in the nineteenth century, ending in four walls, temporally limited in the classes schedule and based on a relationship in which someone who has the

knowledge transmits it to others. The ongoing transformations tend to significantly alter these processes in the production of knowledge.

With regard to the methods, it is necessary to rethink the timing, spaces and relationships in education, incorporating the radical transformations that the technological revolution and communication practices has provoked in the democratization process.

The introduction of educational approaches based on "open and distance learning (ODL)", collaborative and cooperative spaces of knowledge production and the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are key elements in this process of reviewing the teaching practices. These tools and perspectives, if adequately employed in the teaching and learning process, can provide conditions for expanding access, but also to promote the quality and success in education (UNESCO, 2009). The possibility to incorporate different languages in educational relationships, supported by multimedia and new ways of conceiving the relationships of teaching and learning can re-configure the roles of teacher and student, opening up different ways to deal with diversity and the calls of society. Thus, we are on the threshold of something different in the mankind history.

In view of other forms of teaching and learning, there are two interdependent poles on this process. On the one hand, the preparation and organization of teaching materials in the form of multiple languages in an interactive relationship with students; and, on the other hand, conceiving the student role in the form of authoring plural, collective and collaborative knowledge productions.

14.2.3 The Relationships Between Teachers and Students

The changes in the role of teachers and students are what set the third line of support for re-inventing school. Authors such as Shulman (2004) and Weimer (2002) show that the teaching-learning must suffer a reversal, leaving such process of focusing on teaching and opening perspectives for learning grounded on the leadership of the learner. That is, breaking up with the dichotomies between "the one who knows everything" and "the one who knows nothing".

In this perspective, the construction of knowledge presupposes an active individuals who intense and reflectively participate on the educational processes, building on their identity and producing knowledge through the dialogue with peers, teachers and the daily culture.

We are talking about an educational model that promotes an intellectual adventure mediated by teachers. This adventure requires hearing the voice of students, promoting the collective and cooperative learning, encouraging their curiosity to question scientific knowledge in everyday life and, above all, providing the conditions to find answers to their own questions in the social context.

Active Learning Methodologies are the core of an approach where the emphasis in teaching is replaced by the emphasis on learning. The Problem Based Learning (PBL), according to Araújo and Sastre (2008), is an active learning methodology that fits well to this new role of education. Mayo, Donnelly, Nash, and Schwartz (1993) posits that PBL is a pedagogical strategy that introduces students to significant and

contextualized situations in the real world. The teacher, as facilitator of the learning process, is responsible for providing resources, guidance and instruction to students, as they develop their knowledge and skills in problems solving.

As a variant of this model, perfectly compatible with its principles, emerges the concept of Project-Based Learning. Graaff and Kolmos (2007) define it as a complex effort that requires the analysis of the target problem. This analysis has to plan and manage the desired changes that are to be conducted in people's surroundings, as well as to organize knowledge and attitudes towards life; and to involve a new and not previously solved task or problem.

Thus, we believe that the adoption of Project and Problem-Based Learning as a model teaching, as well as other active learning methods, combined with Information and Communication Technologies and the concern for personal and professional ethics, appear as powerful tools to form new generations under the conditions required for solid and deep knowledge, aiming at innovation, the transformation of reality and the construction of social justice.

But how all of these complementary dimensions of contents, methods and the relationships between teachers and students can be actually introduced in daily activities at schools? The following section presents an example of an experience developed in Brazil for training teachers to deal with this new educational situation, having the principles of positive psychology as a background.

14.3 Ethics, Values and Citizenship in School: A Teacher's Training Program in Brazil

Seeking to build new educational models consistent with the demands of the re-invention of education, and anchored in the principles of positive psychology that advocates the need to promote an education of civic virtues aimed at strengthening citizenship, in 2011 we offered a graduate program named "Ethics, Values and Citizenship in school (EVC)" at the University of Sao Paulo with a partnership of Virtual University of Sao Paulo (UNIVESP). It was a blended program, 480 h long distributed in 18 months, free of any taxes, and attended by 1,000 teachers from 12 Brazilian cities of the State of São Paulo.

To contextualize the relevance of this initiative in terms of public policy, it should be mentioned that, nowadays, it is a huge effort in Brazil not only to form teachers in a higher education level, but also to training teachers in service in a graduate level. Being the sixth biggest economy in the world, education standards in Brazil are flunking when compared to most countries in the world and even to Latin American nations in worst economic situation. This has become a big issue for the Brazilian development. The PISA[1] – Programme for International Student

[1] *PISA is a worldwide assessment program developed by the OECD – The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.* It aims to evaluate education systems worldwide every 3 years by assessing 15-year-olds' competencies in the key subjects: reading, mathematics and science.

Assessment is a good example for that, since Brazil occupies the position number 49 in reading and science, and 53 in mathematics out of 70 countries in the world. Concerned with this type of social indicators, the government at all its levels, has been implementing public policies to foster teacher's better qualification and making compulsory for basic education teachers (from pre-primary to lower secondary education and adult literacy programs) to get a higher education degree. The special graduate programs designed to improve teacher's abilities and competencies lasted from 18 to 24 months and have become an important tool to face this problem. The program and experience we are presenting in this chapter belongs to this effort of improving the quality of education in Brazil.

Based on a methodological concept that people *learn by doing* and a constructivist epistemology, the main goal of this program was to give teachers the opportunity to meet these new educational paradigms actively experiencing issues of ethics and citizenship in their own reality, using different teaching tools languages and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in knowledge production, and working in collaborative and cooperative groups to solve daily problems of their school community.

Following Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) approach in positive psychology, the course had an interdisciplinary and cross-curricular concept in which the civic virtues, ethics and citizenship contents were the central element of the curriculum. Although it had to be organized in a disciplinary structure due to the university academic by-laws, it aimed at breaking with the traditional subjects when forming teachers, by introducing the Project and Problem-based Learning methodology as the main approach. It was supported by the following subjects:

- The construction of values in Education
- Community and citizenship education
- Health at school
- Human rights education
- Democratic life at school
- Ethics and teaching
- Inclusive Education: possibilities, advances and challenges
- Cross-cutting citizenship themes and Project-based strategies

As can be observed by the title of the subjects, this program seeks to direct students' behaviors and thoughts toward themes of pro-social nature. The contents addressed transcend the limitations of traditional disciplines to deeply work on issues of ethics and citizenship by linking them with knowledge from different areas such as health, education, sociology, philosophy and law.

In the offering of these subjects we had the participation of professionals from different fields of knowledge, who assumed the challenge of dialoguing with other areas but anchored in the cross and interdisciplinary themes of the course. Beyond that, the contents were designed by the course's professors with an approach that integrates theoretical models and teachers' needs of dealing with daily classrooms issues and deliberate about them.

In another pedagogical dimension, rethinking time, space and relationships at school, we have incorporated educational methods based on the "open and distance learning (ODL)," collaborative and cooperative spaces of knowledge production and the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the teaching and learning relationships in the EVC course. In terms of blended learning, the EVC course combined weekly face-to-face meetings with the use of a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) that requested and allowed other forms of relationship with knowledge.

To be really inclusive, influenced by the positive psychology approach, we adopted accessibility as a key element in the e-learning platform. But the meaning of accessibility wasn't directed only to those with disabilities. Based on the assumption that people have different ways of learning and in order to avoid homogeneity, we adopted the convergence of different *languages* and tools in the design of the virtual learning environment. It gives people with different abilities and disabilities the possibility to participate; to interact; and to collaborate in a diversity learning set. In this way, the contents in the e-learning platform were available with redundancy. The same class or support text or project could be accessed in many different ways and forms of organization, trying to respect the diversity in which humankind can learn new things. To exemplify this issue, depending on the interest of the learner, he/she could organize his interaction with the course's contents in a linear timing perspective, or he/she could organize his work by studying each subject at a time, and there were other forms in which he could access the many different contents.

As pointed before, tradition and conservation are key elements in the social mission of education in order to preserve the cultural and scientific heritage. This type of knowledge must be transmitted to future generations and not reinvented every new course or every year. Consequently, we have established that part of the curricular contents should be available through video-recorded lectures in studios and classrooms of the University of Sao Paulo. University's leading experts on the issues addressed in the course were invited to teach recorded classes.

Each of these video-classes was long enough (15/20 min) to schematically present the state of the art and to give students the opportunity to view, review, pause, and take note on the topic, what is not possible in a regular class. A total of 112 video-classes were recorded and available on the EVC e-learning environment and at USP's website *e-aulas* (http://www.eaulas.usp.br).

The subjects were 2-months long, with 14 video-classes in which two of them were delivered to students every week. It is noteworthy that each video-class was recorded also in LIBRAS (Brazilian Signs Language) and closed captioned to ensure accessibility for people with different disabilities.

As a support for video-classes, teachers suggested texts, articles and websites available on online platforms with free access. We highlight that all the students at the University of Sao Paulo have access to the "CAPES' journals website" (http://periodicos.capes.gov.br), a government platform that includes over 30,000 of the main international and national journals in all areas of knowledge. Also, it was

widely used the network SciELO – Scientific Electronic Library Online (http://www.scielo.org), a platform that provides free access to about 1,000 of the major journals published in Portuguese and Spanish.

So, with this approach we avoided the expensive production of exclusive text for the course, recognizing that there is excellent academic material available online. We avoid also something common in distance learning courses, which is the production of texts that summarize important knowledge in simplified language with the assumption that people who attends this type of course has no good academic background; has little time available; and requires summarized texts to study. Finally, unlike traditional models of education where teachers often suggest the reading of one text every week to avoid overloading students, in the design teachers suggested a number of texts every week, giving students the opportunities to study more thoroughly the topics they are more interested in. Thus, a wide virtual library, fully and freely accessible online has been created.

Following the accessibility principles mentioned before, the reading texts were available in the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) of the course in many different ways. The texts could be read on the screen or could be downloaded for later use. But for those who prefer to learn by listening, they were also recorded in a mp3 format, to be downloaded in audio equipment. Another possibility was to use a screen reading software, available to students, which guaranteed both the accessibility to blind people as a different way to appropriate the academic knowledge.

Each week, also aiming at enriching the learning experiences and reflections of students, teachers suggested other videos and films available on the internet, in free well-known platforms like YouTube (www.youtube.com) and vimeo (http://vimeo.com). A good example, suggested in the discipline "inclusive education: opportunities, progress and challenges" was the video "Beautiful dance by 2 amputees to Broken Wings", available on the YouTube (http://youtu.be/mK29iPaQDbg). With this initiative, besides enriching the course practices, it aimed at providing educational materials for students (basic education teachers) to bring them into their classrooms.

The television language and its production peculiarities that account for synthesizing important topics in short chapters was also an important part of this training course for teachers. Starting from problems of everyday life and real situations related to ethics and citizenship issues, journalists interviewed both experts on the subject and people involved on them, in order to provide a broad vision about those topics. UNIVESP TV, a public television channel in the digital band of TV Cultura (a public TV network), was responsible for producing many programs for the EVC courses. All programming of UNIVESP TV has education as its focus and besides being transmitted in an open TV channel; they are available in a special channel at YouTube (http://www.youtube.com/univesptv). The UNIVESP TV produced and aired more than 10 special programs for the EVC program, on topics such as: Education in values (http://youtu.be/hilOC-1ZlEM); Social Representation of Human Rights (http://youtu.be/PrZsHduiv6E); Educational practices in human rights (http://youtu.be/dRtykdQy6Ts); The child that does not

learn (http://youtu.be/V_0noT10qVc); Interdisciplinary and cross-curricular issues at school (http://youtu.be/cNpTwye78Vk); Dyslexia (http://youtu.be/tyyd09_xfTI); Violence in schools (http://youtu.be/Z6lS_WQ0nWg); among others.

It is noteworthy that all these television programs were produced with the framework of the principles of positive psychology, looking for purposeful ways to conceive and deal with issues of citizenship in the classroom, aiming at giving teachers the ability to provide their students with an environment prone to the construction of citizenship' values and personal and collective well-being.

Summarizing this topic, the e-learning platform was designed with multimedia features (built on the Moodle platform) that could support the convergence of different languages in the educational processes. Passing through the languages of television, movies, video-classes recorded in studios and classrooms and texts, but also incorporating the features of audio-text, Sign Language, subtitles, magnifying glass, readers and screen contrasts, we created opportunities for many types of experiences in dealing with the same knowledge, mediated by a digital platform available for freely on the Internet.

Moving forward in the presentation of the EVC experience, we highlight that the adoption of a blended model, which breaks with the traditional classroom spaces but keep them partly, was motivated by the recognition of the importance of personal and interpersonal relationships as an essential language for teaching and learning. Teachers in this case, instead of being the knowledge holders, had to assume a leadership role for guidance and mediation between students and the different sources of knowledge, leaving the role of the educational process under the responsibility of the students.

Project and Problem-Based Learning (ABPP) was the method adopted in the program. Each group of six students, having a central theme of ethics and citizenship as reference, started a project elaborating a research problem to be empirically investigated for 16 weeks. The problem has to be based on important questions of everyday life at schools. The teachers of the course did not define the problems to be studied, what radically changes the learning process, as suggested by Shulman (2004) and Weimer (2002). The projects were developed in 4 h of face-to-face weekly meetings mediated by a trained-teacher who guides and encourages small groups of students. Google Docs was the tool used to foster and organize the collaborative work and collective construction of knowledge. With this tool, which uses the principles of "cloud computing", students could work in the collective report with multimedia features, including, for example, images, videos and graphics for a better explanation of the studies performed.

Thus, after a first semester with a subject like "Construction of ethical values and citizenship", and a second semester with "Values of democracy and human rights in our school," each group has several weeks of studying, mapping and seeking information about how these topics are reflected on schools' daily life. It was then that each group had to formulate a research problem to be investigated in a collaborative and cooperative way during the following months.

To illustrate the efforts of students and teachers in the learning process on issues of citizenship at schools, we can mention some projects designed and developed by groups from a general topic such as "Construction of ethical values and citizenship". Some examples are: How long does teachers' training take to construct citizenship and ethical values in response to the social changes?; How human values can be understood, constructed and experienced at schools?; How can the work with ethics, values and citizenship be ensured at public schools?; How should a collective practice for training of ethics, values and citizenship at school should be?; How conflicts caused by diversity should be managed in the classroom?; Does the genesis of shame in early childhood education influence the moral formation of 5-year-old children?; Citizen ethical training: School curriculum and teacher relationship; School dialogical spaces: Contributions to a civic education; The construction of values in school: The teacher's view; and, Intentionality on teacher's practice towards the construction of moral values, among others.

Basically, the process of Project and Problem-Based Learning, after 16 weeks of collective work, finalized with a scientific report (100 pages approximately), that has included the following steps:

- Brainstorm about the general theme.
- Problem definition.
- Mapping and search for information about the problem.
- Discussion on the methodology to be adopted.
- Development of the research instruments.
- Development of studies and research.
- Literature research.
- Data Collection.
- Data analysis and discussion.
- Report Writing.
- Report presentation and socialization of results.

Finally, it is important to mention that the assessment of the video-classes was done by the production of individual portfolios. So, coherent with the course's principles, each student had to represent through a digital file what they understood in each video-class, using different languages, such as songs, poems, texts, reviews, images, videos, etc. Most of the students, consistent with the principles of collaborative knowledge production, produced their portfolios creating blogs and websites. With this, they could share and get feedback on the knowledge produced not only by their colleagues but also by people from outside the course. We can mention some of these blogs, like those produced by students Nathália (http://nathi-explorandovalores.blogspot.com.br/), Celso de Oliveira Rosa (http://saolucas33.wordpress.com/evc-usp-disciplina-educacao-inclusive/); and Meily Cassemiro Santos (http://meilycass.wordpress.com/).

14.4 Concluding Remarks

Strengthening positive traits at the individual and the collective level through the development of ethic and citizenship education programs based on positive virtues, is a demand of democratic societies that should not be neglected by those involved in the creation of this new perspective in the psychological and educational field: positive psychology.

Damon (2008), an important author of the Positive Psychology, in his book *The path to purpose: Helping our children find their calling in life*, argues that schools have narrowed their focus to language and math skills trying to improve scores on standardized tests. In opposition to this, he defends that schools must prepare students to fully participate in the society, teaching them how to engage in their communities as active citizens.

Delle Fave, Massimini, and Bassi (2011) highlight that positive psychology – aiming at social empowerment, and considering the active interaction of human beings with their cultural context – should support individuals in the pursuit of personal growth through the allocation of psychological resources in activities that open opportunities for individual happiness and positive outcomes to the community.

When presenting the experience developed in the Brazilian context, training teachers to foster positive virtues at the individual level and in the school curricula, we had the school atmosphere and the surrounding community as a target to promote a better citizenship and to encourage the construction of civic virtues such as responsibility, altruism, tolerance to diversity, justice and work ethic. Working in collaborative and cooperative groups to solve daily problems at community schools, with the Problem and Problem-based learning method was an effective way to reach these goals.

Another important aspect treated in this chapter was the discussion about how positive psychology could contribute to help educators to face inclusion and diversity in classrooms. Firstly, we proposed an understanding of the development of western culture that led to the universal schooling, social and democratic inclusion and diversity into the classrooms, describing what Jose Esteve called the three educational revolutions in human history. To this author, the challenge of the third educational revolution is the consolidation in western cultures of the education as a right for every person. This has brought to each classroom, in all the modern nations and in Brazil in particular, gender, social, economic, psychological, physical, cultural, religious, racial, and ideological differences.

This "new" reality is a challenge for a school that used to look for homogenization of its students, with standardized assessments and a type of pedagogy based on teachers as the holders and transmitters of knowledge. In our opinion, the positive psychology movement can anchor the re-invention of school towards the construction of a democratic institution that pays attention to the singularities and strengths of its students, accepting that everyone is different, has the right to be at school and, at the same time, must learn how to live in a community.

To accomplish this goal, driven by the positive psychology field, we believe that teachers have to be formed to pay attention to students' psychological potential and to learn how to foster the construction of positive qualities and civic engagement, helping them to act promoting the development of virtues that enhance wellbeing, aiming at searching for personal and collective happiness.

We have been doing this in Brazil through an intense teachers' training, in a learning by doing perspective, that direct them to re-invent their classroom practice and use diversity as a tool for the individual and collective development, instead of facing it as a problem to be controlled towards homogenization. Changing contents, methods and the relationships between teachers and students is our proposal to forge a new educational process, coherent to the knowledge and technological society being built in this twenty-first century.

In the program presented, having the e-learning platform with multimedia features as a digital mediator, the convergence of different languages and the Project and Problem-based learning approach were the instruments we developed to respect the different ways people have to learn and to promote cooperative and collective learning towards active community work on ethics and citizenship issues. In some way, this pedagogical organization synthesizes the need to change contents, methods and the relationships proposed to re-invent education. The examples mentioned before are good indicators that we are accomplishing these goals.

Our hope is that this perspective, clearly based on the positive psychology paradigm, becomes a movement so interwoven into the routine of the schools that will be recognized as a natural process that helps to shape a new generation of students and citizens.

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Chapter 15
The Influence Relations Among Three Traditions of Well-Being and Social Support, and the Associations with Age and Health

Lucia Helena Walendy de Freitas

15.1 Introduction

America is a young and multicultural continent, and Brazil is a particular South American country shaped by a singular and multicultural society. Since colonial times until today – 500 years approximately – Brazilian families have resulted from many ethnic blends. Thus, many families have been composed from a mix of two or more cultural groups: Indigenous, Europeans, and Africans resulting in syncretistic culture which often synthesizes collectivist and individualist beliefs and behaviors within the same family. Delle Fave, Massimini, and Bassi (2011) affirm that people are deeply influenced by their heritage and their cultural produce differences in both the meaning and the importance that people attribute to collective norms, daily activities and social roles.

Regarding social conditions, despite the visible social advance, in Brazil there is still a small but significant part of the population (6 %) which is living in impecuniousness conditions, such as very poor and risky neighborhoods (*favelas*). Still remains in the country a large unequal income distribution (IBGE, 2010). In terms of social support and strategies to improve well-being among this population, religious and spiritualist groups have fulfilled an important role. In general, religiosity and spirituality are fundamental aspects of many Brazilian individuals as they constitute a resource that facilitates people's ability to cope with their hardships and help them to find meaning in life.

The Constitution from 1988, based on the idea of Brazil as a secular State, officially separated government from religious institutions and guarantees the freedom for individual religious practice. Brazilian laws forbid any kind of religious intolerance. As a result, religiosity in Brazil is diverse and characterized by syncretism.

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The census of Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (2000) showed that people profess Catholicism, Protestantism, Spiritism, African Religious Denominations, Jehovah's Witnesses, Buddhism, Mormonism, Messianism, Judaism, Islamism, as well as Spiritualism and Esoterism. There also are people without spiritual or religious beliefs, agnostics and atheists.

Delle Fave et al. (2011) state that the process which attributes meaning to daily events is influenced by both cultural and religious contexts. They noted that religion has a multifaceted role on promoting well-being during stressful situations, such as death or serious disease within the family. However, there are only a few studies that focused on the influence of religiousness on well-being. Thus, it is possible to theorize that the cultural and religious syncretism that characterized Brazilian people might consist on responses to face their environment, which at the same time could be influencing their perceptions of well-being, social support and health. The design and implementation of social support programs with focus on well-being, at organizational and institutional settings, can be facilitated if there is previous knowledge of the factors influencing well-being. A significant body of research has already been developed (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008; Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999); however, as Delle Fave et al. (2011) suggested, it is necessary to conduct studies across different cultures in order to identify cultural differences and similarities on the experiences of well-being.

15.2 The Well-Being Traditions and Related Concepts

In Positive Psychology, the concept of well-being has developed under two different perspectives: the hedonic and the eudaimonic. Regarding the hedonic perspective, the subjective well-being as defined by Ed Diener has been highlighted; while the psychological well-being concept as defined by Carol Ryff has been related to the eudaimonic perspective (Delle Fave et al., 2011; Ryan & Deci, 2001). *Subjective well-being* (SWB) is a concept that reflects the global experience of positive reactions to life situations, and includes components such as life satisfaction and emotional experiences. *Psychological well-being* (PWB) refers to the self-perception of engagement with the challenges of life and includes six components: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance.

According to Diener, Scollon, and Lucas (2009), subjective well-being is defined as a multifaceted concept that is popularly conceived as happiness. This concept includes the judgments of life satisfaction and evaluations of emotional responses that people make on daily life events. Life satisfaction includes judgments concerning specific life domains such as satisfaction with work, relationships, health, recreation, purpose, and other important domains, and also includes judgments about global life satisfaction, that is, the satisfaction with current life, with *the* past, with *the* future, desire to change life, meaning, and other relevant points. Emotional responses (positive and negative) include affective evaluations concerning pleasant emotions

such as joy, *happiness*, contentment, and evaluations concerning unpleasant emotions such as *anger* and sadness (Chmiel, Brunner, Martin, & Schalke, 2011; Diener & Ryan, 2009; Diener et al., 1999; Diener, Scollon & Lucas, 2009; Pavot & Diener, 2008).

Regarding the causes of subjective well-being, emotional dimensions are partially influenced by thoughts and life-styles, as well as by levels of life satisfaction that are influenced by perceptions and judgments that people have about their goals, health, social support, spirituality, and meaning of life (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008). On the other hand, studies suggest that higher levels of positive emotions and life satisfaction significantly improve satisfaction with the major life domains – such as work, relationships and health – and attributes, propensities, and behaviors related to psychological functioning such as likability, creativity, coping, positive perceptions of self, sociability, and prosocial behavior (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005).

Keyes, Shmotkin, and Ryff (2002) showed that SWB and PWB are two distinct concepts which are significantly and positively related. The psychological well-being concept emerged based upon humanistic theories that involve formulations concerning human development and existential challenges of life, and it is defined in terms of the degree of psychological functioning (Diener, Scollon & Lucas, 2009; Keyes et al. 2002; Ryan & Decy, 2001).

Psychological well-being theorists consider six dimensions that represent six different ways in which people act as they are faced life challenges and strive to positively function. Psychological well-being involves self-perception of engagement with existential challenges of life, and involves autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance (Keyes et al., 2002). Autonomy is defined as self-determining and independent thinking, ability to resist social pressure, and ability *to* regulate one's own behavior from within. Environmental mastery is considered as the sense of mastery and competence in managing the environment; controlling the complex array of external activities; making effective use of surrounding opportunities; and, the ability to choose or create contexts suitable to personal needs and values. Personal growth involves feelings of continuous development, growth and expansion; openness to new experiences; and, the ability to realize one's own potential. Positive relation with others is defined as the levels of satisfaction and reliability with relationships; levels of concerns with others' well-being; and levels of empathy, affection and intimacy with others. Purpose in life is defined as the beliefs about goals, sense of direction, and purpose in life as well as the feeling of meaning in present and past life. Self-acceptance is considered as the positive attitudes towards oneself; acknowledgement and acceptance of multiple aspects of the self, – including good and bad qualities –; and, levels of positive feelings about past life.

Studies on religiosity and spirituality are based upon several definitions and concepts. Many definitions refer to the sacred, the transcendent and the meaning attributed to life. According to Hill and Pargament (2008), the term spirituality refers to the subjective side of religious experience. Nelson (2010) affirms that spirituality refers to the experiential and personal side of the relationship with the transcendent, whereas religiosity usually indicates distinctive activities and specific life styles, emotions, habits, practices, purposes, commitments, and beliefs and ways of thinking.

Frankl (1998) affirms that there is an unconscious spirituality the individual that leads him to search for God. In his theory, the human being is composed of biological, psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions. The biological dimension corresponds to the body; the psychological dimension is composed of mental processes related to the desire for pleasure, power, learning and conditioning. The social dimension is related to the culture, institutions, and relationships; while the spiritual dimension refers to the ability to make choices (free will and responsibility); to assign value to things; and, to give meaning to different situation and to life in general. According to Frankl (2003), the desire for meaning underlies and structures every situation of human life. In daily life, people find the strength to face their existence based on a worldview that unconditionally affirms life and gives them a sense of meaning. In this theory, the essential human motivation is the search for the meaning in every situations of life. Aspirations, goals, emotional reactions and satisfaction are lead by the meaning of life.

The term *spiritual well-being* (SPWB) has been defined by Christopher G. Ellison as the relationship that people have with the transcendent, and the levels of appreciation and importance attributed to life. Spiritual well-being is conceived focusing on the transcendent and meaningful aspects of religiosity and spirituality. According to Ellison (1983), SPWB includes two components: (1) *existential*, beliefs and feelings concerning how someone appreciates and gives meaning to life related to the meaning of life; and (2) *religious*, beliefs and feelings related to God. Ellison (1991) showed that individuals with strong religious faith report higher levels of life satisfaction, greater personal happiness, and fewer negative psychosocial consequences of traumatic life events.

Another important factor that is associated with well-being is *social support perception* (SSP). It is always valuable to remember Cobb (1976) which defines social support as the resources that someone receives from others leading that person believe that he or she "is cared for and loved, esteemed, and a member of a network of mutual obligations". Cohen and Syme (1985) added that social support corresponds to the specific informational resources provided by others or that is potentially available. According to Cohen and McKay (1984) these supportive resources aim to protect someone from the effects of stress and there are three types: instrumental or tangible, informational or cognitive assessment and emotional support. The tangible support consists on financial aid, care and other forms of material assistance. It is noteworthy that the tangible support is effective only when it does not cause embarrassment or loss of freedom that accentuates the stress. The informational support is defined as the information that can help a person to evaluate the stressor in a more benign and less threatening way. The emotional support is defined as the informational resources that help people to improve their self-esteem and the feelings of belonging to a group. Studies have shown that these supportive resources have a positive influence on perceptions of health and well-being.

Besides, it is important to highlight that the human species have survived and have evolved through cooperation and mutual support. According to Cobb (1976), social support begins in the womb with the support of maternity, followed by the birth and a new life that begins, and continues throughout the development and transitions of life cycles. That involves a process which conducts to well-being

variations throughout life cycles. In this line, theories based on the Lifespan Development paradigm consider age as a key factor for behavior constancy and change throughout life. Within this perspective, the Socio-emotional Selectivity Theory posits that as people grow older, they tend to select targets, situations, and social bonds that give them significant emotional experiences. Consequently, their social and emotional functioning is similar or better than younger adults. Studies have shown that the frequency of negative emotions decrease as people grow older and that elderly people try to keep their mind more attentive to positive memories and information, as well as they tend to not pay attention to negative information (Charles & Carstensen, 2010).

Carstensen, Mayr, Pasupathi, and Nesselroade (2000) conducted a research that showed that the frequency of positive emotions do not correlate with the age elderly people maintain positive emotional levels similar to those experienced by younger people; however, the frequency of negative emotions decrease proportionally. Around 60 years-old, the levels of frequency of negative emotions stabilize as older people maintain more constantly the absence of negative emotional states. Consequently, older people tend to be more satisfied with life and experience lower levels of negative affect.

Despite social support is an important factor for well-being in adulthood and old age, studies have shown that other factors contribute to the positive emotional states of aged people. Some of the suggested factors that influence the quality of life in old age are personality, coping ability, adaptability, engagement styles, early childhood experiences, and attachment styles as well (Charles & Carstensen, 2010).

The associations between health and other factors have been analyzed based upon two perspectives. The first consists of the objective health which concerns to the biological indicators of health and the second consists of the perception that people have regarding their health. According to Diener et al. (1999) health self-perception is better than objective health for assessing its relationship with subjective well-being.

Studies have shown that higher well-being levels are associated with higher levels of health (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008), and that high levels of subjective well-being – such as life satisfaction, absence of negative emotions, and positive emotions – is related to better levels of health and longevity (Diener & Chan, 2011). In the same line, psychological well-being is positively associated with biological indicators of health, and lower levels of disease indicators (Ryff, Singer, & Love, 2004). According to Hill and Pargament (2008), there are evidences that religion, spirituality and health are significantly associated but the reasons for these associations are unclear, as they have not received much attention academically.

Studies on social support interventions have also shown that supportive resources are associated with better levels of health and well-being (Rodriguez & Cohen, 1998), and according to Cohen (2004), supportive relations improve health. Gallagher and Vella-Brodrick (2008) showed that social support significantly contributes and positively influences well-being.

Regarding basic psychological approaches, well-being has been analyzed using models from different research traditions. Among other theories, the cognitive theory considers that the attention, interpretation and memory compose the

interpretative process which people use in their daily life; while the "top-down" model sustains that the global features of personality or an inherent propensity influences the way a person reacts to different events. According to the "top-down" model, happy people have a positive disposition that leads them to predominantly feel well in different life situations. Based on these two theories, happy people would have a predisposition to give more attention to positive stimuli, and to interpret and to remember events from a positive perspective (Chmiel et al., 2011; Diener, 1984; Diener & Ryan, 2009).

Ellison's concept of SPWB refers to transcendental and existential meanings that people attributed their lives. The concept of PWB of Ryff refers to both attitude and feelings that people attribute to themselves and their social relationships. The concept of SWB of Diener refers to satisfaction and both positive and negative emotional reactions to life events.

Based on those theories and concepts mentioned above, we can consider that the transcendental and existential meanings which people attribute to life is an important factor that influences self-attributed attitudes and feelings, and at the same time, these attitudes and feelings influence people's life satisfaction and emotional reactions.

15.3 Brazilian Research upon Well-Being, Social Support, Age and Health

It is important to highlight some of the research developed in Brazil under hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives on well-being, spiritual well-being, social support, age, and health.

Based on a research with expatriated employees, Ribeiro (2009) found that there is a positive relation between the levels of subjective well-being, and the levels of emotional support received from their families, friends and relatives.

Rabelo and Neri (2006) have studied Brazilians who suffered from vascular brain accidents and they concluded that the patients had smaller levels of subjective well-being than healthy people. However, their health improved as they were able to continue their productive activities; to have good cognitive capability; as well as they experience high levels of positive emotions and perceive effective social support.

Walendy de Freitas's (2009) study with unemployed workers who took part in social support program in religious institution showed that there is an association between age and social support. Young people (less than 30 years-old) perceived higher levels of social support than their older counterparts. Despite reducing the perception of social support, people over 50 years-old experience less negative affect than younger participants. This study has also shown that emotional support positively influences satisfaction with life and positive affect and also has revealed that men are more satisfied and express more positive affect than women. These study results suggest that organizations which are searching for well-being development should take into account social support programs and strategies that consider age and

gender differences; and highlight the importance of social support on positive emotional states.

A study conducted by Neri (2001), with men and women aged from 59 to 85 years old, showed that as people grow older they tend to be more satisfied and to have a predominance of positive affect. In the same line, Otta and Fiquer (2004) have studied the effect of age on the feeling of well-being, and found that older people are more satisfied with their lives than younger ones.

Queroz and Neri (2005) investigated the relations between the psychological well-being and the emotional intelligence with both middle aged and elderly people. Results showed that there is a significant and positive relationship between emotional intelligence and self-motivation, self-acceptation, purpose, personal growth, and mastery; and that men scored higher than women on self-motivation and self-conscientiousness.

Marques (2003) has investigated the interrelation between the spiritual well-being and the general health. Results showed that there is a significant and positive correlation between health and spiritual well-being and confirmed that spirituality can make an important contribution to health promotion and disease prevention. The application of this study points toward the need of inclusion of spirituality in the health conception combined with biological, psychological and social domains.

Faria and Seidl (2006) have investigated some coping strategies, including the religious coping in people infected with HIV/AIDS. They found that both the emotion-focused coping and the problem-focused coping strategies are negative predictors of positive affect; and that religious coping is a strong and positive predictor of positive affect.

Hoffman, Muller, and Frasson (2006) studied the perceived social support, spiritual well-being and the psychosocial consequences of cancer diagnosis and medical treatment in a group of women with breast cancer. The results showed that social support was perceived as mainly proceeding from the closest relatives. Additionally, it was found that spiritual well-being was an important coping resource, and the religious dimension in particular, was the most important one. It was concluded that health services need to respect and understand woman with breast cancer as a whole, in its bio-psycho-socio-spiritual aspect, and to be more effective in support actions.

15.4 The Purpose, Procedure and Results of the Present Study

The studies previously mentioned show that well-being and social support are positively associated with age and health, and suggest that there could be relations of influence among the three traditions of well-being: subjective, psychological, and spiritual, and among these three traditions of the well-being and the social support. If we relate the top-down, cognitive and Frankl theories to each other, it is possible to suppose that the meaning that people attribute to their lives explain, in a substantial part, the attitudes and disposition have to positively interpret and react to life events.

Table 15.1 Distribution of business and professions (n = 205)

Business	Professions	%
Professionals at university level self-employed	Engineers, architects, clinical psychologists, physicians, translators	22.9
Companies producing goods	Director, administrator, manager, position and salaries analyst, human resources analyst, office assistant, production assistant, stock clerk, general assistant	17.1
Schools	Teachers, professors, educational supervisor, other school staffs	16.6
High school self-employed professionals	Technician on mechanics, technologists, occupational therapists, masseurs, hairdressers, artisans, podologists	9.3
Logistic company	Preparing young people for first job – Adolescents apprentice program	9.3
Journalism, telecommunications	Broadcaster, audio technician	6.3
Advertising	Manager, assistant and consultant events	4.9
Store	Pharmaceutical, sellers	3.9
Public service	Governmental employees	3.9
Environmental management company	Environmental engineer, consultant, environmental manager, biologist	2.4
Bank	Finance manager, business consultant, bank clerk	1.9
Computer services company	System analyst, programmer	1.5

In this way, it is possible to establish a model where SPWB is an antecedent factor for both PWB and SWB, and PWB is an antecedent factor for SWB. Besides, considering social support as a factor which sustains and facilitates well-being, it can be positioned in this model as an intermediary factor that influences the relations among SPWB (meanings), PWB (attitudes), SWB (life satisfaction and emotional reactions).

On the other hand, based upon those studies and theories it is possible to hypothesize a reverse model, i.e., people who are satisfied with their lives and have a positive affective balance are more predisposed to have positive attitudes to themselves and attribute positive meanings to life. Thus, it is also possible to establish another analysis model where SWB precedes both PWB and SPWB, and the social support perceptions are also considered.

With the purpose of verifying these associations and the influence relations, 205 workers from São Paulo City (65.4 % female and 34.6 % male) participated in this cross-sectional research conducted between August 2010 and February 2011. Table 15.1 shows the distribution of business and professions of participants.

The average age was 40.7 years old ($SD = 16.3$). Regarding marital status, 40 % was single; 41 % married; 12.7 % divorced; 7 % widowed; and 4 % had other types of bonds. Participants professed several religions, such as Spiritism (23 %); Catholicism (20.6 %); Spiritualism or Ecumenism or belonging to more than one religious group (13.9 %); Evangelicals or Protestant Reformation (10.8 %); Afro-religions (2.0 %); among others. An 11.2 % reported that does not have religion but believes in God.

Workers were requested at working area and by internet to respond to a questionnaire that includes five self-report scales developed and validated for Brazil.

1. *Health status*: graded as 1 = bad; 2 = satisfactory; 3 = good.
2. *Positive and negative affect*: it was measured with the scale developed and validated by Siqueira, Martins, and Moura (1999) which consists of 14 items that assess frequency of positive and negative affect. Participants have to report how they felt in daily life (nothing = 1; seldom = 2; neutral = 3; many times = 4; extremely = 5). This scale is composed of positive affects dimension (α = .87) which measures the frequency of emotions such as *contentment, happiness, joyfulness*, and of negative affects dimension (α = 0.88) which measures the frequency of emotions such as *irritation, depression, discouraged*.
3. *Satisfaction with life*: it was assessed with the scale developed and validated by Siqueira, Gomide Junior, and Freire (1996), composed by 15 items (α = .84). This scale measures the frequency that the participant has felt satisfied in daily life in a 5-points Likert scale (1 = very dissatisfied; 3 = neither dissatisfied nor satisfied; 5 = very satisfied). Questions assessed satisfaction with physical disposition, relationships, work, leisure time, and financial conditions; as well as questions related to the ability to do the things someone wants to; expectations with the future; and with accomplishments in the past.
4. *Social support perception*: the scale developed and validated by Siqueira (2008) was used. This consists of two dimensions which measures the frequency that participants perceive outer support in daily life (never = 1; sometimes = 2; many times = 3; always = 4). The dimension of emotional support (α = .92) has 10 items, such as "when I need I have someone who": "Celebrates with me my joys and accomplishments"; "Understands my problems"; "Consoles me when I'm sad". The dimension of practical support (α = .91) have 19 items (informational and instrumental) such as "when I need I have someone who: Helps me to solve a practical problem"; "Lends me something I need"; "Clarifies my doubts"; "Gives suggestions about my future".
5. *Psychological well-being:* was measured with a scale developed and validated by Queroz and Neri (2005) that consists of 13 items (α = .88). Participants had to grade phrases that best represent how they see themselves, ranging from 1 = very little to 5 = extremely. Item examples are: "others describe me as a generous person and that I am willing to share experiences"; "I feel that I am able to decide for myself what is right"; "I can meet the multiple responsibilities of my daily life"; "I like many aspects of my personality".
6. *Spiritual well-being:* was assessed with a scale developed and validated by Marques, Sarriera, and Dell'Aglio (2009). It has two dimensions and levels of agreement or disagreement upon 20 statements, (being 1 = strongly disagree and 6 = strongly agree). The religious dimension has ten items (α = .92) such as: "I cannot find much satisfaction in private prayer to God"; "I believe God loves me and cares for me"; "I have a significant personal relationship with God". The existential dimension has ten items (α = .85) such as: "I feel that life is a positive experience"; "I am worried about my future"; "I believe there is some real purpose to my life".

Table 15.2 Descriptive statistics of studied variables (n = 205)

Variables	*M*	*SD*	Scales	Scale central point	Difference[b]	*t*
Subjective well-being:						
Positive affects	3.46	0.61	1 to 5	3	0.46	10.985**
Negative affects	2.06	0.69	1 to 5	3	−0.94	−19.490**
Global life satisfaction	3.62	0.86	1 to 5	3	0.62	10.281**
Satisfaction life domains	3.44	0.68	1 to 5	3	0.44	9.188**
Affective balance	1.41	1.15	−4 to 4[a]	0[a]	1.41	17.501**
Psychological well-being	3.96	0.58	1 to 5	3	0.96	23.604**
Spiritual well-being:						
Religious well-being	4.99	1.19	1 to 6	3.5	1.49	17.897**
Existential well-being	4.74	0.81	1 to 6	3.5	1.24	21.881**
Social support:						
Emotional support	2.97	0.69	1 to 4	2.5	0.47	9.873**
Practical support	2.73	0.67	1 to 4	2.5	0.23	4.785**

Note: Student comparison test: indicator of significant difference between mean of variable and central point of respective scale

**$p < 0.01$

[a]Inferred based on the limit of scales: positive minus negative affects

[b]Difference between average of variables and central point of respective scales

Table 15.3 Correlations between variables of study *r Pearson* (n = 205)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Positive affects	–									
2. Negative affects	−.57**	–								
3. Affective balance	.87**	−.90**	–							
4. Global life satisfaction	.53**	−.43**	.54**	–						
5. Satisfaction life domains	.62**	−.54**	.65**	.66**	–					
6. Psychological well-being	.57**	−.49**	.60**	.54**	.43**	–				
7. Religious well-being	.12	−.16*	.16*	.15*	.11	.17*	–			
8. Existential well-being	.53**	−.57**	.62**	.57**	.56**	.56**	.39**	–		
9. Emotional support	.30**	−.26**	.32**	.26**	.44**	.36**	.22**	.36**	–	
10. Practical support	.29**	−.22**	.29**	.28**	.43**	.29**	.22**	.32**	.84**	–

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 15.2 demonstrate that Brazilian workers have high levels of well-being and of social support perception. It is noteworthy that the affective balance is significantly high, showing that the emotional states in daily life are predominantly positive.

The bivariate correlations presented in Table 15.3 reveal that the three traditions of well-being are significantly associated with each other, and with social support. These associations give support to important inferences. When any factor of well-being is increased, other factors are also increased and consequently the global well-being is significantly increased. The significant correlations among all dimensions of well-being and between well-being and social support are in

Table 15.4 Correlations between study variables and age (n = 205)

Variable	Age
1. Positive affect	.15*
2. Negative affect	−.31**
3. Affective balance	.27**
4. Global life satisfaction	.12
5. Satisfaction life domains	.26**
6. Psychological well-being	.22**
7. Religious well-being	−.04
8. Existential well-being	.28**
9. Emotional support	.07
10. Practical support	.02

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$

Table 15.5 Means of variables as function of age groups – ANOVA test ($n = 205$)

		Age group (DUNCAN)					
Variable	F	16–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60–88
Negative affects		**2.21**	**2.23**	**2.25**	2.16		
	5.118**				2.16	1.86	
						1.86	**1.61**
Affective balance		**1.16**	**1.26**	**1.02**	**1.28**		
	3.805**	1.16	1.26		1.28	1.69	
						1.69	**2.03**
Satisfaction life domains		**3.31**	**3.39**	**3.21**	**3.37**	3.54	
	3.389**					3.54	**3.81**
Existential well-being		**4.31**	4.66	4.56			
	3.457**		4.66	4.56	4.88	4.88	
			4.66	4.56	4.88	4.88	**5.06**

Note: One-way ANOVA: POST HOC Duncan multiple comparisons
**$p < 0.01$

accordance with the results obtained in other studies (Ellison, 1991; Freitas, 2009; Gallagher & Vella-Brodrick, 2008; Keyes et al., 2002; Rabelo & Neri, 2006; Ribeiro, 2009). Moreover the results of this study suggest the existence of influence relationships as Diener and Biswas-Diener (2008) affirm. Thus, these results support the hypothesis on the influence relations among the three types of well-being and between well-being and social support.

Taking into account both well-being and social support, variations as a function of age are presented in Tables 15.4 and 15.5. It is possible to notice that as people grow older they tend to be happier; to have higher levels of psychological functioning; to experience more positive feelings; and to report higher levels of existential beliefs. These results are in line with the studies of Neri (2001), Walendy de Freitas (2009), Freitas (2009) and Carstensen et al. (2000) who found that the frequency of positive emotions is not associated with age as elderly people keep positive emotional levels similar to those experienced by young people, and that the frequency of negative emotions decreases proportionally around 50/60 years old. Besides, the

Table 15.6 Means of variables as function of self perceptions of health – (ANOVA Kruskal Wallis Test)

		Health self perceptions		
Variable	Chi-Square χ^2	Bad (n = 20)	Satisfactory (n = 73)	Good (n = 112)
Positive affects	19.844**	3.02		
			3.37	
				3.60
Negative affects	28.896**	2.70		
			2.16	
				1.88
Affective balance	28.797**	0.32		
			1.21	
				1.73
Global life satisfaction	12.948**	3.23		
			3.45	
				3.79
Life satisfaction domains	26.875**	2.93		
			3.26	
				3.64
Psychological well-being	18.182**	3.68		
			3.80	
				4.11
Existential well-being	15.882**	4.22		
			4.59	
				4.93
Emotional support	9.957**	2.69		
			2.86	
				3.10
Practical support	10.434**	2.47		
			2.60	
				2.85

Note: POST HOC: Mann-Whitney test: two-independent-samples tests
**p < 0.01

present study reveals that participants who are 19 years-old or younger reported significantly lower levels of existential well-being than older people who are 60 years-old or more.

The similarity of these results with other studies suggests that this tendency for predominance of positive states in old age is a universal feature which arises when the adequate social support is available over the life.

Considering well-being and social support variations as a function of self-perceived health, as presented in Table 15.6, higher the levels of subjective, psychological and existential well-being, as well as social support are significantly associated with better levels of perceived health. Religious well-being did not show significant differences between means as a function of health. These results are in accordance with Diener and Chan (2011) who found that high

Table 15.7 Partial least square-path modeling (PLS-PM): model hypothesized 1 (n = 205)

Dependent variables	Predictor variables	β	t^a	Variance	
				Partial	Total
Subjective well-being	Spiritual well-being	0.395	6.665	0.407**	0.531
	Social support	0.128	2.286	0.011*	
	Psychological well-being	0.370	6.218	0.113**	
Social support	Spiritual well-being	0.366	5.688	0.134**	0.134
Psychological well-being	Spiritual well-being	0.466	7.732	0.280**	0.305
	Social support	0.172	2.545	0.025*	

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$

[a]bootstrapping = level of significance process

levels of subjective well-being – such as life satisfaction, absence of negative emotions, and positive emotions – are associated with better levels of health and longevity. According to the finding of Ryff et al. (2004), there is a relationship between psychological well-being and biological indicators of health. These results are also in line with Hill and Pargament (2008) who affirm that there are evidences that religiosity, spirituality and health are significantly associated with each other; with Marques (2003) who found that there is a significant association between spiritual well-being and general health; and with Faria and Seidl (2006) who found that the positive religious coping is a strong and positive predictor of positive affect. Additionally, results of this study are similar to those studies that found that social support interventions show that counting with supportive resources are associated with better levels of health (Hoffmann et al., 2006; Rodriguez & Cohen, 1998).

Regarding influence relations, two hypotheses were tested using the Partial Least Square-Path Modeling (PLS-PM). The adjusted model (1) presented in Table 15.7 shows that spiritual well-being is a factor which has a significant and positive influence on well-being. That is, just under half of subjective well-being variation is explained by existential and spiritual beliefs and feelings – such as being calm about the future; believing life is a positive experience; having a real purpose; becoming satisfied in prayer; and, feeling God takes care and loves him or her. Besides, just over a quarter of the variation of psychological well-being is explained by these existential and spiritual beliefs and respective feelings.

This model also shows that existential and spiritual beliefs explain a small however significant amount of social support variation; and that both social support and psychological well-being explain a significant part of subjective well-being. Besides, this model highlights that the influence of social support on both psychological and subjective well-being is very small but has a central and intermediate function in the relationship between the transcendental and existential beliefs and well-being. These influence relationships are in line with Diener and Biswas-Diener (2008) findings that revealed that subjective well-being is partially influenced by individuals' ways of thinking and living; social support perceptions; and, spirituality and meaning of life. Results are also in accordance with

Table 15.8 Partial least square-path modeling (PLS-PM): model hypothesized 2 (n = 205)

Dependent variables	Predictor variables	β	T[a]	Variance	
				Partial	Total
Spiritual well-being	Subjective well-being	0.506	7.735	0.416**	0.442
	Psychological well-being	0.219	3.360	0.026**	
	Social support	0.112	1.645	0.002	
Social support	Subjective well-being	0.398	6.392	0.158**	0.158
	Psychological well-being	0.155	1.796	0.015	
Psychological well-being	Subjective well-being	0.620	14.165	0.385**	0.385

**$p < 0.01$

[a]bootstrapping = level of significance process

Gallagher and Vella-Brodrick (2008) who showed that social support significantly and positively influences well-being.

The results of the present study show that Brazilians workers consider spiritual and existential beliefs as a very important aspect of their life, and it was found that it produces a relevant influence on their well-being.

On the other hand, model adjusted (2) displayed in Table 15.8 shows that subjective well-being positively influences both psychological and spiritual well-being and social support perceptions. That is, positive emotions, satisfaction with specific life domains, global satisfaction and lack or low levels of negative emotions are responsible for explaining just under half of the positive variations of the spiritual well-being; over a third part of the variations of psychological well-being; and a considerable part of positive variations of social support perceptions. In this model, social support does not influence spiritual well-being and is not influenced by psychological well-being.

These two models highlight that the influence of subjective well-being on psychological well-being is larger than the influence of psychological well-being on subjective well-being. This difference could be explained considering that developing a good psychological functioning is not always pleasurable. However, happy people who enjoy the life and have more predispositions to develop positive self-perception – in terms of the ability to have autonomy over decisions and to decide what is right – meet multiple responsibilities in daily life and have a self-appreciation of many aspects of their own personality. These results are in line with Lyubomirsky et al. (2005) who showed evidence that higher levels of subjective well-being significantly can improve major life domains and attributes, propensities, and behaviors related to psychological well-being.

Finally, these two tested models, which are illustrated in Figs. 15.1 and 15.2, reveal significant influence relations between the studied variables and point a recurrent cycle: people who experience higher levels of positive existential and spiritual beliefs, have higher levels of psychological functioning; higher levels of feelings concerning to the help from others; and are happier. On the other hand happier people also tend to get more help, to have higher levels of psychological functioning and to have more positive feelings and beliefs about God and life.

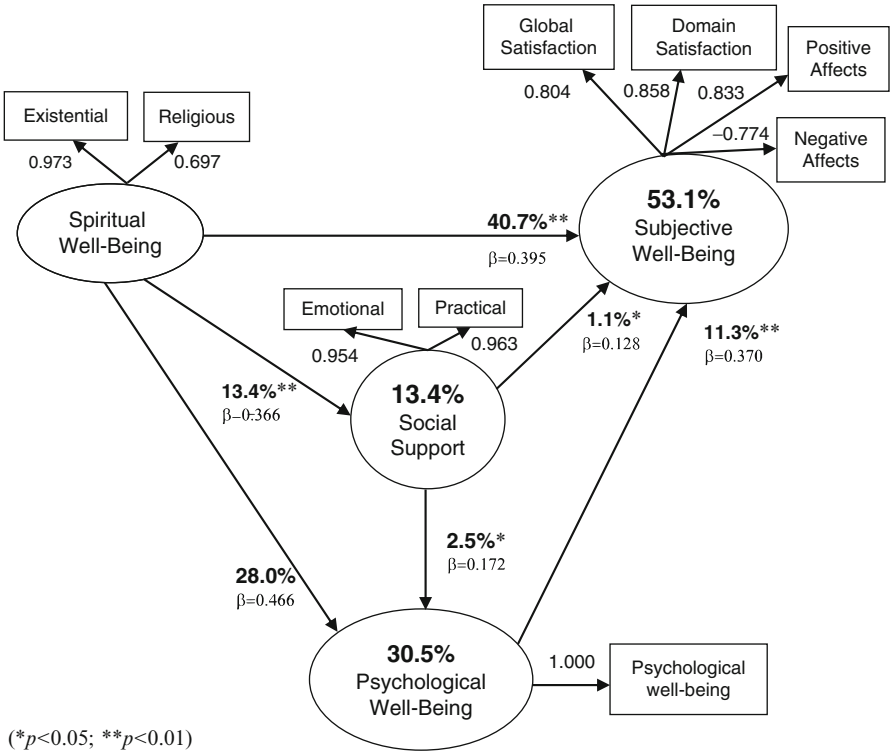

Fig. 15.1 Adjusted model 1 (n = 205)

15.5 Conclusions

This study with Brazilian workers which aimed to analyze the relations among well-being, social support, health and age contributes to Positive Psychology in the Latin American context as well as the design of organizational and clinical interventions focused on improving individuals' well-being.

Firstly, this study presents a significant contribution regarding the associations between age and well-being. The results that strongly coincide with previous studies showed that as people grow older they tend to be more satisfied with life and have lower levels of negative emotional states than younger people. This positive tendency plays a major role on both organizational and clinical success of Brazilian interventions with a focus on well-being. In other words, it is supposed that the presence of elderly people in organizational context can increase a positive atmosphere, and that clinical processes can be facilitated if these particular conditions to stimulate their tendency for higher levels of well-being are considered. These outcomes also suggest that this positive trend may be a universal feature which is activated when a proper social support is received.

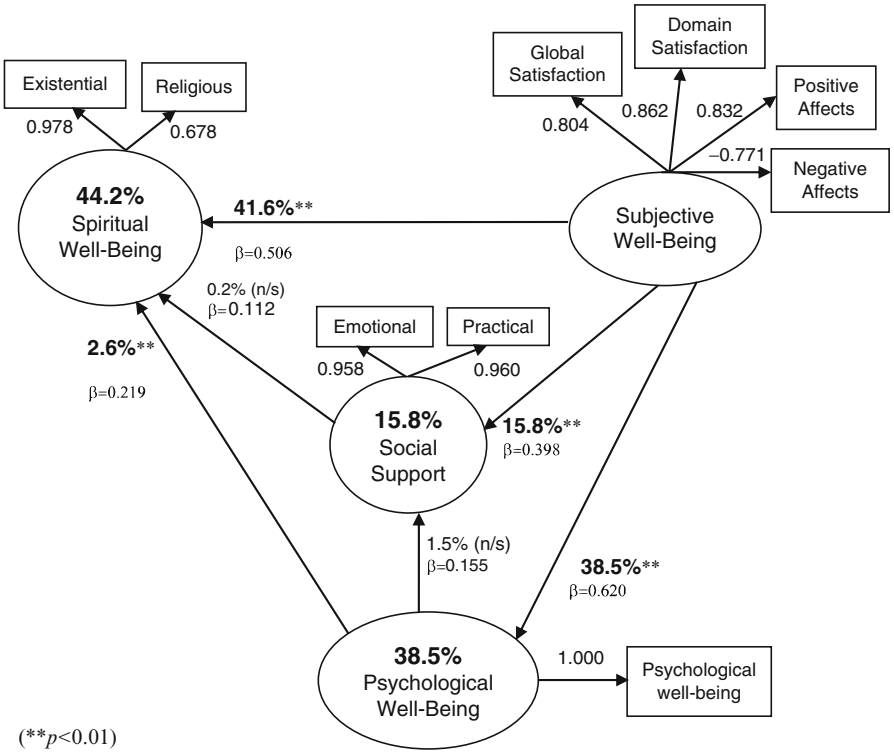

Fig. 15.2 Adjusted model 2 (n = 205)

Secondly, this study also shows that there is a significant positive association among levels of self-perceived health; social support perceptions; and well-being. These associations highlight an important inference: Highest levels of health are associated with highest levels of both social support perceptions and well-being. Based on this, it is possible to consider that the implementation of social support strategies which focus well-being at both organizational and clinical contexts can considerably increase Brazilian workers health.

Thirdly, this study shows that transcendental and existential beliefs that compose the spiritual well-being positively influence both psychological and subjective well-being and social support perceptions of Brazilian workers. It means that workers who have positive beliefs about life also have good levels of psychological functioning, satisfaction with life, positive emotional states, good levels of social support perceptions, and low levels of negative emotional states. On the other hand, this study also shows that subjective well-being positively influences both psychological and spiritual well-being, and social support perceptions. It means that workers who have good levels of both satisfaction with life and positive emotional states also have good levels of psychological functioning, positive beliefs about life and social support perceptions.

In addition, the present study also highlights the important role that social support plays on well-being. Under this point of view, this study shows that social support has a relevant function as an intermediary role in the relationship between well-being and transcendental/existential beliefs. Social support perceptions slight and directly influence both psychological and subjective well-being. The analyses also reveal that social support perceptions are also significantly and positively influenced by the transcendental and existential beliefs but social support perceptions do not exert influence on these beliefs. It means that workers who have higher levels of positive beliefs about life also higher levels of acknowledgement of the help from other that they received. However, this acknowledgement does not change their experience of transcendental and existential beliefs.

Thus, it is possible to suggest that Brazilian interventions on social support at both organizational and clinical settings, that aim at reducing dissatisfaction, negative emotional states, and low performance of psychological functioning, could get significant changes and even revert these negative states if Brazilian workers have the opportunity for the thoughtfulness and expressiveness of their transcendental and existential beliefs about the meaning and appreciation of life.

Finally, this study shows that Brazilian workers who have positive beliefs about life and perceive that an adequate social support is available for them become more satisfied; more emotionally positive; and also more able to improve their psychological functioning in a recurrent encouraging cycle. Through this cycle, essential beliefs increase both social support perceptions and well-being while higher levels of well-being increase the positive beliefs and social support perceptions, and so on.

Thus, it is possible to think that the strong, significant and reciprocal influences found in this study are also valid for other Latin-American countries whose histories are similar to the Brazilian context. The similarities and differences which go beyond the Latin American context should be analyzed.

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