

## Chapter 6

# Happiness in Latin America Has Social Foundations

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## Introduction

Latin Americans report high happiness levels. Positive-affect scores are substantially high both in comparison to other countries in the world and to what income levels in the region would predict. Latin Americans' evaluation of life is also above what income levels would predict. It is clear that there is more to life than income and that there is something to learn from the Latin American case about the drivers of happiness.

There are deeper lessons to be learned from the high happiness situation in Latin America. Our results confirm that currently used development indicators neglect important aspects in life which are of relevance for people's well-being. By appropriately incorporating people's values, subjective well-being measures become highly relevant in addressing development debates and strategies. These measures recognize human universality in the experience of being well, but allow for heterogeneity in the relationship between this experience and its drivers. Heterogeneity emerges from historical processes that shape culture and influence values. Hence, well-being is better assessed by subjective well-being measures than by indicators of its potential drivers.

The happiness situation of Latin Americans can be considered as very favorable, especially when contrasted with commonly used socio-political and economic indicators. These indicators often portray a situation of weak political institutions, high corruption, high violence and crime rates, very unequal distribution of income, and high poverty rates in many Latin American countries. The chapter does suggest neglecting these problems. In fact, happiness in Latin America could be higher if these problems were properly solved. However, the chapter shows that by focusing primarily on these problems scholars and journalists get a misleading impression of life in Latin America. Furthermore, the exclusive focus on problems could lead scholars and journalists to neglect the positive drivers of happiness in Latin America and could induce policy makers to undertake wrong policies by lacking a more balanced and complete view of human beings and societies.

As a matter of fact, even on the basis of traditional development indicators, not everything is problematic in Latin America.

For example, per capita incomes are not low and there is reasonable provision of public goods and an acceptable provision of health and education services in most countries. Many Latin American countries are classified by the United Nations Development Programme as having 'High Human Development'.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, this chapter argues that high happiness in Latin America is neither an anomaly nor an oddity. It is explained by the abundance of family warmth and other supportive social relationships frequently sidelined in favor of an emphasis on income measures in the development discourse. Happiness research has shown that relationships are important for people's happiness; and that positive relationships are abundant in Latin America. Hence, happiness in Latin America has social foundations.

The chapter starts by arguing that Latin America is more than a geographic region: it is the home to a culture which presents particular features that are relevant in generating high happiness. The subsequent section provides a description of the happiness situation in Latin America, showing that Latin Americans enjoy very high positive affective states, as well as evaluative states that are above what income levels would predict for the region. The chapter then moves on to show that happiness in Latin America does suffer from the effects of the many social and economic problems in the region. The life satisfaction of people in Latin America is negatively impacted by corruption, violence and crime, and economic difficulties. An explanation for the relatively high happiness levels in Latin America is provided in the following section, which describes the abundance and relevance of close and warm interpersonal relations in the region. The patterns of interpersonal relations in Latin America differ significantly from those in other regions of the world. The specific pattern of interpersonal relations leads to Latin Americans enjoying high family satisfaction levels and experiencing many daily positive emotions. A more relational sense of purpose in life also contributes in explaining the favorable evaluation of life. Final considerations are presented in the last section.

## Latin America: Not Just a Geographical Region

One could think of Latin America as a collection of countries that happen to be in the same geographical region. However, Latin America is much more than this. It is a distinct culture. Of course, there is considerable intra-regional heterogeneity as well as substantial similarities with other regions of the world, but it is possible to think of a Latin American culture with a clearly recognized way of life where close interpersonal relations and the enjoyment of positive affective states predominate.<sup>2</sup> The Latin American culture emerged from particular historical processes, and some of its features are relevant in explaining happiness in the region.<sup>3</sup>

### The Latin American Region

The Latin American category usually includes those countries in the American continent where romance languages are predominant. On the basis of this vague definition the region incorporates Brazil – where Portuguese is the official language – and 18 countries where Spanish is an official language: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Puerto Rico, another state where Spanish is spoken, is not usually included due to its status as unincorporated territory of the United States; however, it is recognized that Puerto Ricans have a Latin American character. On the basis of a romance-language criterion Haiti – where French is widely spoken – could also be considered as being part of the region. However, its history and culture are very different from those of the Spanish and Portuguese-speaking countries.

It is important to note that many indigenous languages are also widely spoken in the region – such as Quechua, Guaraní, Nahuatl, Maya, Zapotec, Mapuche, Aymara, and others. These languages are particularly important in some countries where the indigenous population is large, such as Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Paraguay, Peru, and Mexico.

The region goes from the northern 32° parallel to the southern 56° parallel (not considering Antarctic territories). It comprises a population

of about 620 million people living in a geographical area of about 19.5 million square kilometers. In terms of population size the largest countries in the region are, by far, Brazil and Mexico, with population figures of 209 million and 129 million people, respectively. Colombia, Argentina, Peru and Venezuela can be considered mid-size countries, with populations in between 50 and 25 million people.

Latin America is not a high income region, and no Latin American country would be classified as developed on the basis of its per capita income level. Some social indicators point towards the existence of many social problems, such as corruption and lack of transparency, high income inequality, and high crime and victimization rates.<sup>4</sup>

As expected, Latin America is a diverse region; there are significant inter-country differences, as well as substantial intra-country disparities. However, there is a general idea of the region as a single entity, and most people in the region can identify themselves as Latin Americans.

### The Latin American Culture

The Latin American identity is not defined by language alone or by sharing a geographic space in the world. The Latin American identity points towards a culture that has emerged from historical processes that have been common to all countries in the region.<sup>5</sup> With the emergence of happiness research and the gathering of happiness information it has become visible that the Latin American way of life is associated with high happiness. The emerging data from Latin America shows that life evaluation indicators are high in relation to what income levels in the region would predict and that positive affect indicators are outstandingly high with respect to the rest of the world. In other words, it seems that the set of social and economic indicators which are commonly used in development studies do not provide a complete picture of the well-being of Latin Americans.

It is the collision of major civilizations which gave rise to the Latin American nations. Christopher Columbus' journeys in the late years of the 15th century and the beginning of the 16th century triggered this process. The European civilizations – mostly Spaniards and Portuguese – collided with the large pre-Columbian indigenous civilizations which existed in the region. Three main

civilizations existed in the Latin American region by the end of the 15th century when the Europeans arrived to the so-called 'new world': the Aztecs, the Incas, and the Mayans.<sup>6</sup>

Archeological evidence shows that the Aztec empire had a population of about 5 million people at the time. The Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan, had about 200,000 people when the Spaniards arrived, a population more or less similar to that of Paris, the largest European city at the time. In addition to the Aztecs, the Mayans, and the Incas, many other groups populated the region, such as the Guarani and Mapuche in South America. The collision of these major civilizations was not a peaceful process; it is a history of battles and impositions, of treason and ambition, of conquering and colonization, of being forced to adapt to rapidly changing social and political circumstances and to understand unfamiliar points of view.

The large indigenous populations were neither exterminated nor segregated, and over time Europeans and indigenous groups mixed, creating "mestizo" (racially mixed ancestry between American Indian and European – usually Spanish or Portuguese).<sup>7</sup> Many Indians died as a consequence of the new illnesses brought by Europeans, and many others died as a consequence of unhealthy working conditions. But it was not in the interest of the conquerors to exterminate the local populations, and some religious congregations fought for the incorporation of the indigenous groups into the new society.<sup>8</sup> It was clear that the Europeans were the conquerors, but the society emerging from this process incorporated both the conquerors and the conquered. A majority of the Latin American population is considered to be "mestizo" and there are large indigenous populations in countries such as Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. For example, in Guatemala, about 50% of the population speaks an indigenous language, whereas another 40% are considered mestizo.

It has been more than 500 years since the beginning of the conquest. Latin American culture has evolved during the 300 years of colonial times and the 200 years of independence times. Many factors intervened in the shaping of the current Latin American culture, and the blending of the values and worldview of the indigenous people with those of Spaniards and Portuguese

is an important one.<sup>9</sup> Coexistence with – rather than dominance of – nature was a central value of many indigenous groups; this value contributes to generate a society that is not as interested in changing the social and natural context as it is in living within it.<sup>10</sup> This leads to a society that has a slower pace of life and that is not so focused on transforming and mastering nature and in generating economic growth as it is in living and enjoying life within the existing conditions.<sup>11</sup> In addition, the extended-family values of the conquerors blended with the communitarian values of indigenous groups – where relatives tended to live together and to be in close contact.<sup>12</sup> This generated societies where interpersonal relations centered in the family and relatives were dominant, with the corresponding abundance of disinterested and collaborative interpersonal relations. In other words, the purpose of the relationship is not motivated by an external task that needs to be performed but by the existence of family ties and the expectation for the relationship to be close, warm, and enjoyable. It could be said that this process leads to societies where the purpose of the relationship is the relationship itself.

The culture that has emerged in Latin America can be characterized by: the focus on the nurturing of warm and close interpersonal relations with relatives and friends, the centrality of the family – both nuclear and extended – an affective regime that values and encourages the experience and manifestation of emotions, the existence of relatively weak civic relationships (those relations beyond family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues), a relative disregard for materialistic values, and weak political institutions.<sup>143</sup> It can be stated that the Latin American culture has a human-relations orientation. These cultural features play a central role in explaining happiness in Latin America.<sup>14</sup> Culture plays a role in the relevance of affective and evaluative aspects in life, in how these affective and evaluative aspects relate, and in the importance some drivers have in explaining them. Affective experiences of being well are highly relevant in Latin Americans' happiness; in addition, affective and evaluative aspects are not highly correlated in the region. Hence, life evaluation measures provide an incomplete picture of the Latin American happiness situation. Furthermore, the variables most often used to explain life evaluations play a

smaller role in explaining affective states in Latin America. In consequence, it is necessary to have a broader perspective in order to get a better explanation of happiness in Latin America. This chapter provides an explanation based on the relevance of interpersonal relations, which are abundant and of high quality in Latin America, and which are not fully captured by commonly-used indicators in the development discourse.

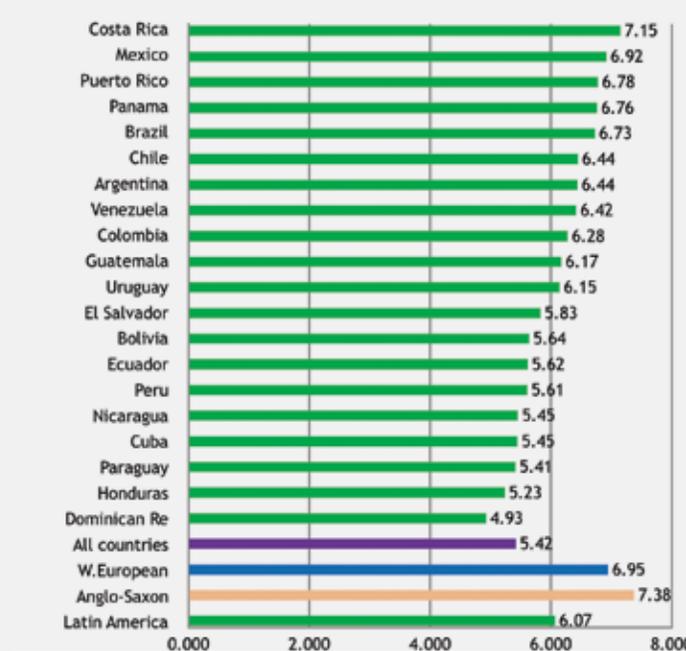
A cultural explanation necessarily relies on comparisons, since the particular features of a culture can only be shown when it is compared to others. In order to portray some Latin American cultural features we will compare them to their counterparts in some Western European and Anglo-Saxon countries.<sup>15</sup> This comparison can highlight the special features of the Latin American culture, at least relative to the Anglo-Saxon and Western European countries. Of course, it is important to state that culture and region are two different concepts that may overlap in some cases but which are not exactly identical. By

associating culture with region one makes the assumption that the particular features of a culture predominate in a specific region, but this does not make these features to be exclusive in and of this region.

## Life Evaluation and Affect in Latin America

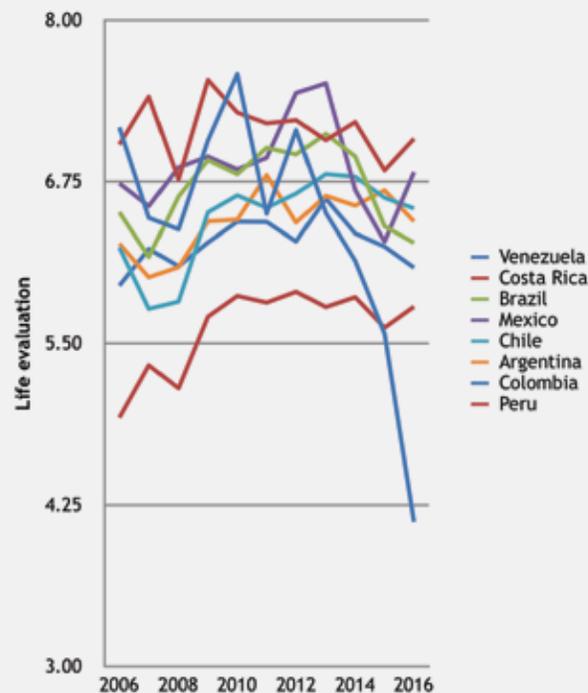
In general, Latin Americans' evaluation of life<sup>16</sup> is high with respect to what income and other social indicators would predict; this finding points toward the existence of an omitted-variable situation in the explanation of Latin Americans' life evaluation. The affective state – in particular positive affect – is outstandingly high in Latin America; as a matter of fact, Latin American countries usually show up in the top positions when rankings are elaborated on the basis of the experience of positive affect. Moreover, the low correlation between affect and evaluation in Latin America points towards

**Figure 6.1: Life Evaluation in Latin American Countries**



Note: Country means. Regional figures are computed as simple regional averages of country means.

Source: Gallup World Poll, waves 2006 to 2016.

**Figure 6.2: Trends in Life Evaluation. Some Latin American Countries**

Note: Country means over time.

Source: Gallup World Poll, waves 2006 to 2016.

the need of incorporating people's affective state when aiming to have an overall assessment of their happiness.

### Life Evaluation in Latin America

Life evaluations in Latin America range from an average of 7.15 in Costa Rica to 4.93 in Dominican Republic on the basis of information from Gallup World Polls from 2006 to 2016 (See Figure 6.1). The simple country average for the Latin American region is 6.07, which is not as high as the average for the group of Western European countries (6.95) or for the Anglo-Saxon countries (7.38), but which is much greater than the simple country average for all the countries in the world (5.42).<sup>17</sup> Given the economic and social conditions in Latin America it comes as no surprise that, on average, life evaluation in the region is much lower than that in the European and Anglo-Saxon countries, which continuously show much better indicators in terms of income, income distribution, income-poverty rates, transparency,

crime and violence rates, and education and health. The high evaluative levels reported by Costa Ricans (7.15) (See Figure 6.1), which are above the average Western European levels, are partially explained by the existence of a relatively good welfare system in the country. There is no army in Costa Rica since 1949, and the country's inhabitants have universal access to health care and primary and secondary education, with the government providing many services that ensure the satisfaction of basic needs for most Costa Ricans, independently of their income.

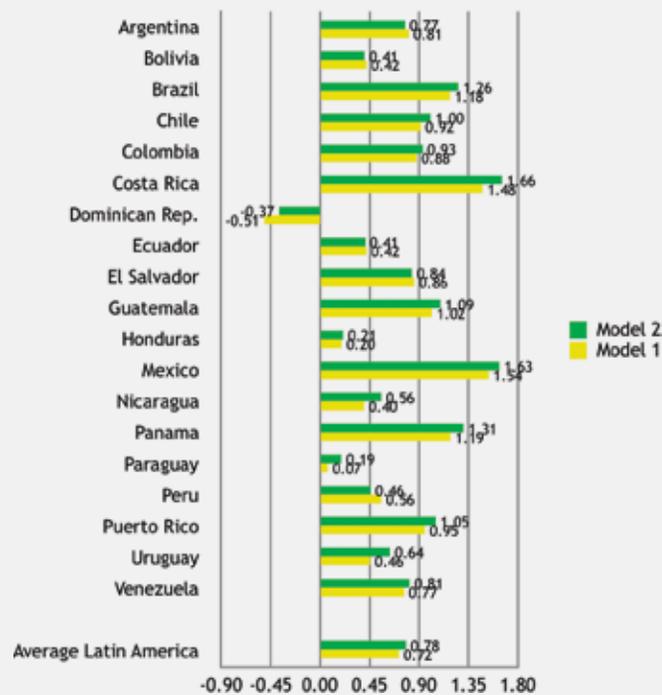
Figure 6.2 presents time trends in life evaluation for some Latin American countries. Venezuela – a country undergoing difficult political, social and economic processes during the past years – shows an astonishing decline in people's evaluation of life, moving from 7.6 in 2010 to 4.1 in 2016. The volatility of life evaluation is also extremely high in Venezuela; as a matter of fact, the average year to year change in Venezuela is 0.67. Peruvians have moved from an average life

evaluation of 4.9 in 2006 to one of 5.8 in 2016; some increase in life evaluation is also observed during the past years in Chile. The largest countries in the region – Brazil and Mexico – show a slightly negative trend in recent years.

One of the main questions regarding Latin Americans' life evaluation is whether it corresponds to the social and economic conditions in the region as they are portrayed by commonly used indicators such as income levels and other socio-economic indicators. Two ordinary least square regression exercises are implemented on the basis of all observations from all countries in the Gallup World Polls surveys from 2006 to 2016 in order to study this correspondence between life evaluation in Latin America and some relevant variables which have been used to explain happiness. The first exercise

(model 1) uses the logarithm of household per capita income as the unique explanatory variable of life evaluation. The second exercise (model 2) adds other explanatory variables such as: count on the help, donated money, freedom in your life, corruption within businesses, and corruption in Government.<sup>18</sup> Figure 6.3 presents the mean of the estimated errors from these regressions for the Latin American countries; as observed, with the exception of the Dominican Republic all other Latin American countries show actual life evaluations higher than those predicted by the global equation. This finding indicates that Latin Americans tend to evaluate their lives above what their income and what the set of commonly used explanatory variables would predict. The simple country average of the estimated error for the whole region is between 0.71 (for model 2) and 0.81 (for model 1). Hence, Latin Americans

**Figure 6.3: Life Evaluation in Latin America. Estimated errors from Regression Exercises**



Note: Estimated errors from OLS regression analyses using all observations in the GWP 2006 to 2016 surveys. Life evaluation as dependent variable, measured in a 0 to 10 scale. Independent variables in Model 1: logarithm of household per capita income, having someone to count on, donated money, freedom in your life, corruption within businesses, and corruption in Government. Independent variables in Model 2: logarithm of household per capita income.

Source: Gallup World Polls, all waves 2006 to 2016.

have life-evaluation levels that are above what would correspond to their situation on the basis of commonly used explanatory variables of life evaluation. This finding suggests that there are some factors which are relevant in explaining life evaluation in Latin America and which are not yet fully incorporated in the available data.

### Affective State in Latin America

Latin Americans report outstandingly high levels of positive affect. A simple average on the basis of five questions<sup>19</sup> in the Gallup World Poll and which are associated to positive affect shows the situation: eight of the top ten countries in the world are from Latin America, as well as ten out of the top fifteen countries. The non-Latin American countries in the top ten are Canada and Philippines (See Table 6.1).

It is important to remark that the outstanding performance of Latin American countries in positive affect does not correspond to the situation in negative affect.<sup>20</sup> In other words, Latin Americans' positive affect is very high, but negative affect in the region is not low –neither in comparison to other countries nor to what would be expected on the basis of the socio-economic situation in the region.

On the basis of information from Gallup World Polls 2006 to 2016 it is evident that Latin Americans enjoy very high positive affect (See Figure 6.4). On average, the simple regional mean for Latin Americans is similar to that for the Anglo-Saxon countries and slightly higher than that for the Western European countries. Some countries like Paraguay, Panama and Costa Rica enjoy very high positive affect.

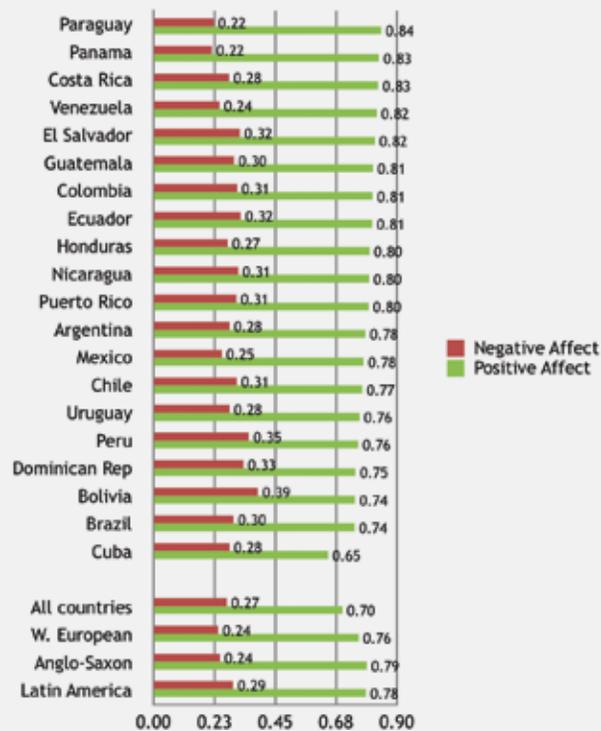
**Table 6.1: Top 15 Countries in the World in Positive Affect. Positive and Negative Affect. Mean Values by Country. 2006–2016**

Rank	Country	Number of observations	Positive affect	Negative affect
1	Paraguay	10995	0.842	0.222
2	Panama	11025	0.833	0.215
3	Costa Rica	11006	0.829	0.279
4	Venezuela	10994	0.824	0.243
5	El Salvador	11008	0.818	0.319
6	Guatemala	11045	0.812	0.297
7	Colombia	10999	0.810	0.308
8	Ecuador	11135	0.809	0.323
9	Canada	11325	0.804	0.257
10	Philippines	12198	0.800	0.364
11	Iceland	3131	0.799	0.217
12	Denmark	10777	0.798	0.193
13	Honduras	10991	0.797	0.273
14	Norway	6010	0.797	0.208
15	Nicaragua	11015	0.796	0.312
	All countries in the world	0.697	0.270	

Note: Positive affect measured as simple average of the following five 'day-before' dichotomous variables: Smile or laugh yesterday, Learn something, Treated with respect, Experienced enjoyment, and Feel well-rested. Negative affect measured as simple average of the following five 'day-before' dichotomous variables: Experienced worry, Sadness, Anger, Stress, and Depression. Positive and negative affect are measured in a 0 to 1 scale.

Source: Gallup World Poll waves 2006 to 2016.

**Figure 6.4: Positive and Negative Affect. Latin America, 2006–2016**



Note: Country means in positive and negative affect. Regional averages refer to simple country means in the region. Positive and negative affect are measured in a 0 to 1 scale.

Source: Gallup World Poll waves 2006-2016.

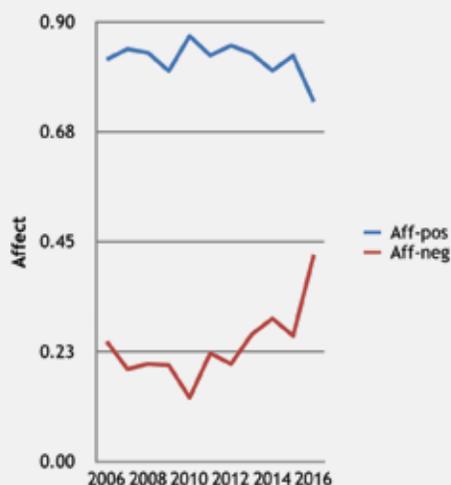
While positive affect is more favorable in Latin America, the reverse is true for negative affect, with Bolivians and Peruvians reporting especially high negative affect.

The information presented in Figure 6.4 corresponds to mean values across all years in the surveys (2006 to 2016). However, some countries show clear time trends and of particular interest is the situation in Venezuela, where positive affect have declined from a top value of 0.87 in 2010 to 0.74 in 2016 while negative affect have risen from a value of 0.13 in 2010 to 0.42 in 2016 (See Figure 6.5). No doubt the complexities of economic crisis, political polarization, high violence, and migration and separation of families are affecting the well-being of Venezuelans.

Positive affect is very high in Latin America and negative affect is also high, but the main

question is whether they do correspond to the levels of commonly used variables in the explanation of happiness. Two regression exercises<sup>21</sup> are implemented on the basis of all observations in the Gallup World Polls surveys from 2006 to 2016 in order to study this correspondence between affect in Latin America and some relevant variables which are often used to explain happiness. The first regression exercise (model 1) uses the logarithm of household per capita income as the unique explanatory variable of affect. The second regression exercise (model 2) adds other explanatory variables such as: count on the help, donated money, freedom in your life, corruption within businesses, and corruption in government. Figure 6.6 presents the estimated errors from these regressions for the case of positive affect, while Figure 6.7 provides the same information for the case of negative affect.

**Figure 6.5: Venezuela. Trends in Positive and Negative Affect. 2006–2016**



Source: Gallup World Poll, waves 2006-2016.

**Table 6.2: Explanatory Power of Some Relevant Variables.<sup>1</sup> R-Squares from Person-Level Regressions.<sup>2</sup> By Region, 2006–2016**

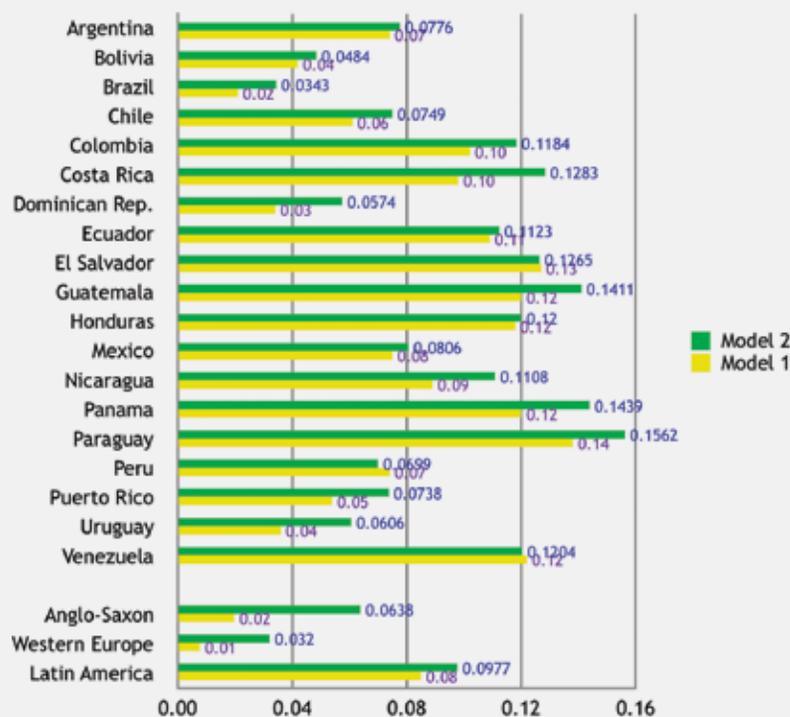
Region	Dependent Variable		
	Life Evaluation	Positive Affect	Negative Affect
Latin America	0.064	0.034	0.031
Anglo-Saxon	0.107	0.064	0.078
Western Europe	0.215	0.094	0.119
All countries in world	0.181	0.072	0.032

<sup>1</sup> List of explanatory variables in regressions: Count on help, Donated money, Freedom in your life, Corruption within businesses, Corruption within government, and Logarithm of household per capita income.

<sup>2</sup> Linear regressions, Ordinary least squares technique.

Source: Gallup World Poll waves 2006 to 2016.

**Figure 6.6: Positive Affect. Estimated Errors**



Notes: Estimated errors from worldwide regression analyses. Positive affect as dependent variable. Independent variables in Model 1: logarithm of household per capita income, count on the help, donated money, freedom in your life, corruption within businesses, and corruption in Government. Independent variables in Model 2: logarithm of household per capita income. Positive affect is measured in a 0 to 1 scale.

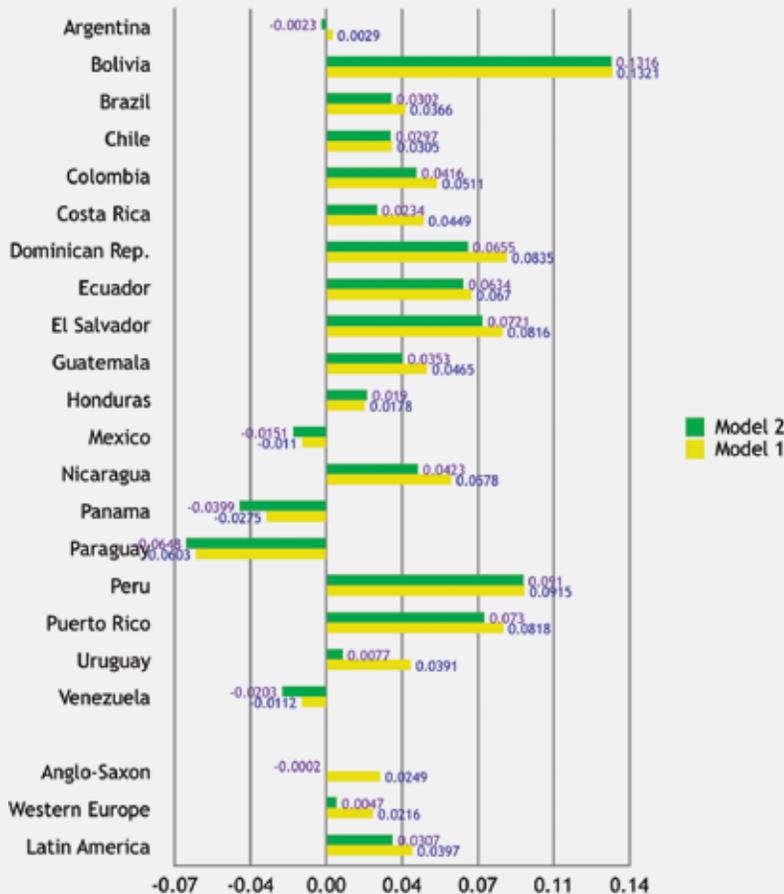
Source: Gallup World Poll, all waves 2006 to 2016.

It is observed in Figure 6.6 that positive affect is very high with respect to corresponding income levels as well as to the situation as described by a group of variables which are often used to explain people's happiness. All Latin American countries show, on average, positive affect levels which are much above what would be predicted. In addition, the regional average in Latin America is much above that in the Anglo-Saxon and Western European regions and, of course, much above the world average (which is 0). Hence, it is concluded that a strong tendency to experience above-expected positive emotions is observed in most Latin American countries. These findings clearly indicate that the set of explanatory variables which are commonly used in explaining happiness is missing some relevant factors which are relatively abundant in Latin America.

Estimated errors for negative affect in Latin America do show a pattern which is closer to the expected one: Some countries show negative mean errors while others show positive mean errors, and the regional average is small -but still significantly different from zero. Hence, it is concluded that a slight tendency to experience above-expected negative emotions is observed in most Latin American countries.

In addition, the explanatory variables of happiness which are commonly used have less explanatory power in Latin America. Table 6.2 presents the goodness of fit (R-square coefficients) for regional regression exercises with life evaluation, positive affect, and negative affect as dependent variables, and with the following variables as explanatory ones: count on help, donated

**Figure 6.7: Negative Affect. Estimated Errors**



Notes: Estimated errors from worldwide regression analyses. Negative affect as dependent variable. Independent variables in Model 1: logarithm of household per capita income, count on the help, donated money, freedom in your life, corruption within businesses, and corruption in Government. Independent variables in Model 2: logarithm of household per capita income. Negative affect is measured in a 0 to 1 scale.

Source: Gallup World Poll, all waves 2006 to 2016.

money, freedom in your life, corruption within businesses, corruption within government, and logarithm of household per capita income. All observations from the Gallup World Poll surveys from 2006 to 2016 are used and regressions are run by region. It is observed in Table 6.2 that the group of independent variables has good explanatory power in Western Europe, but very little explanatory power in Latin America. For example, while this group of independent variables explains about 22 percent of the variability of Western European's life evaluation they do only explain about 6 percent of the

variability of Latin Americans' life evaluation. Similarly, while the group of variables explains 9 percent of the variability of Western European's positive affect - and 12 percent of their negative affect -, they do only explain 3 percent of the variability of Latin American's positive affect - and 3 percent of their negative affect.

It is evident that Latin Americans are outliers in what respect to their experience of positive affect. Latin Americans' positive affect is high in comparison to most countries in the world and also high with respect to what some commonly

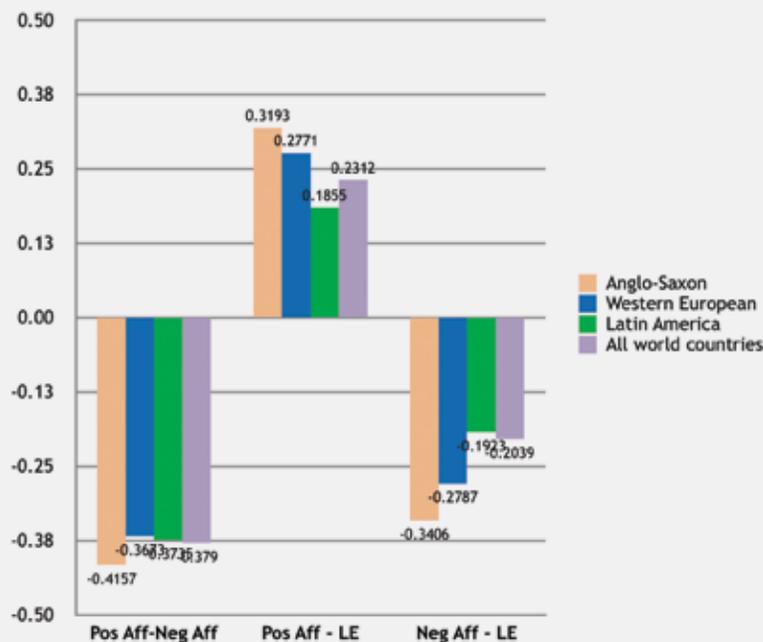
used explanatory variables would predict. A slightly similar result is found for negative affect. Hence, the explanation of happiness on the basis of variables such as Income, count on help, donated money, freedom in your life, corruption within businesses, and corruption within government, seems to be missing some very important drivers, at least for the Latin American case.

Furthermore, the correlation between evaluative and affective states is smaller in Latin America than in other regions in the world. Figure 6.8 shows the simple country means by region for the intra-country correlations<sup>22</sup> between affects (positive and negative) and life evaluation. It is observed that the regional mean for the intra-country correlations between positive affect and life evaluation is much smaller in Latin America (0.19) than in a group of Anglo-Saxon countries<sup>23</sup> (0.32) as well as than in a group of western European countries (0.28). In a similar way, the regional mean for the intra-country correlations

between negative affect and life evaluation is much smaller – in absolute terms – in Latin America (-0.19) than in a group of Anglo-Saxon countries (-.34) as well as than in a group of western European countries (-.28).<sup>24</sup>

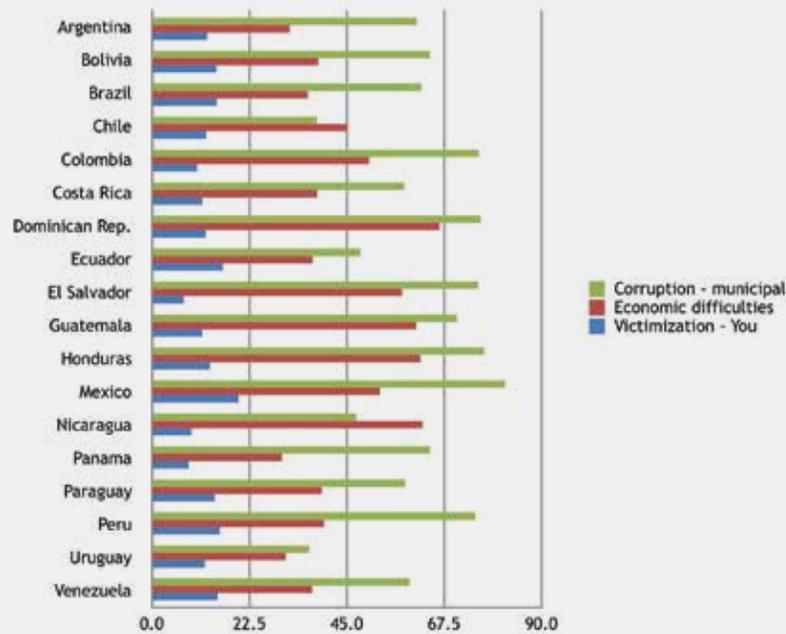
It is also important to state that the regional mean values for intra-country correlations between positive and negative affect are very similar across the regions under study. The regional mean values are -0.37 in Latin America, -0.37 in Western Europe, and -0.42 in Anglo-Saxon countries. In other words, the pattern of personal correlations between positive and negative affects does not seem to vary substantially across regions in the world. However, the pattern of personal correlations between positive affect and life evaluation as well as between negative affect and life evaluation does substantially differ across regions.

**Figure 6.8: Life Evaluations and Affective States. Intra-Country Correlations, Means by Region**



Note: Simple means of intra-country correlations between positive affect (Pos Aff), negative affect (Neg Aff), and life evaluation (LE). Simple means by region.

Source: Gallup World Poll wave 2006 to 2016.

**Figure 6.9: Corruption, Victimization and Economic Difficulties in Latin America**

Notes: Corruption: percentage of people in the country stating that almost everyone or most officials in the municipal government are corrupt. Economic difficulties: percentage stating that income is not sufficient so that they have either problems or big problems to cover their needs. Victimization: percentage of people reporting that they have been victims of crime during the past 12 months.

Source: Information processed on the basis of Latinobarometer 2013. Source: Gallup World Poll wave 2006 to 2016.

Affective experiences are an important substrate in overall assessments of life, and they play a central role in people's aspirations and behavior. The outstandingly high positive affect levels in Latin America, their lack of correspondence to life-evaluation measures, and the relatively low correlation between life evaluation and affective states call for further study of the affective situation in the region. Furthermore, it is clear that the set of commonly used explanatory variables for life evaluation provide an incomplete explanation for both evaluative and emotional happiness in Latin America. An expanded study of affective regimes, emotional communities, and emotional regimes<sup>25</sup> could contribute to a better understanding of how the relevance of affective states in a region is associated to its cultural attributes. The results from this study could help to understand the emergence of communities and societies that value, promote, and have particular attitudes to the experience of positive

affect.<sup>26</sup> In addition, it is also important to further study the drivers of affective states because the nature and dynamics of these drivers could explain the behavior of affect in a society.<sup>27</sup> For example, the abundance of close and intimate interpersonal relations could be a driver for the experience of high positive affect but also, when relations are not going well, of high negative affect.

Some scholars have pointed to the apparent contradiction that emerges when contrasting the socio-economic situation in many Latin American countries with the high happiness levels reported by Latin Americans. The following two sections address this issue and show that there is no contradiction. The next section shows that the socio-economic and political problems in the region do depress people's happiness; however, these problems do not suffice to generate low happiness in the region because Latin America's

social organization promotes and nurtures some drivers of happiness which are not fully captured by commonly-used explanatory variables. The following section elaborates an explanation of Latin Americans' happiness in terms of the importance human relations have in the region, not only as a source of material support but, fundamentally, as a source of positive affect and of non-materialistic purpose in life. In particular, the abundance and the quality of family relations play a crucial role in understanding happiness in Latin America.

### Social, Economic and Political Problems in Latin America and Their Impact on Happiness

Latin America is no paradise; there are many social and economic problems in the region. Some of the problems are structural and emerge from historical processes, such as: weak political institutions, high corruption levels, and high income inequality that magnifies poverty rates in what would mostly be considered as mid-income countries. Other problems have been triggered

by recent processes; for example: the closeness to the largest drug market in the world combined with a wrong strategy that looks to represses production rather than to reduce consumption has exacerbated drug-related violence and has led to alarming crime rates in some areas of Latin America. This process of rising violence is also fostered by weak civic interpersonal relations, high corruption rates, and greater penetration of materialistic values during the last decades.

Figure 6.9 shows some figures on corruption, victimization and economic difficulties which suffice to portray the situation of social problems in the region. The belief that there is some level of corruption at the local and national governmental levels is widespread in Latin America. Country level figures for municipal-level corruption go as high as 82 percent in Mexico; with relatively low figures -beneath 40 percent- in Chile and Uruguay.<sup>28</sup>

Living within some degree of economic difficulty is also common in most countries of Latin America. For example, about 36 percent of Brazilians and 53 percent of Mexicans declare

**Table 6.3: Corruption, Economic Difficulties and Victimization. Impact on Life Satisfaction**

		Coefficient	Prob>t
Perception of corruption municipal level	Almost everyone is corrupt	-0.106	0.000
	Most officials are corrupt	-0.093	0.000
	Not many officials are involved	-0.050	0.045
	There is hardly anyone involved		Reference
Economic difficulties. Problems or big problems to cover their needs	It is not sufficient, has big problems	-0.409	0.000
	It is not sufficient, has problems	-0.242	0.000
	It is just sufficient, does not have major problems	-0.036	0.066
	It is sufficient, can save		Reference
Victimization during the past 12 months	both you and relative	-0.126	0.000
	you	-0.067	0.000
	relative	-0.042	0.003
	none		Reference
	R2	0.116	

Note. Control variables: marital state, gender, age, age squared, education level, language, country dummies.

Source: Latinobarometer 2013.

that their earnings are insufficient to cover their needs. This figure reaches levels above 60 percent in Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Dominican Republic, and it is not beneath 30 percent in any country in the region.

Many people report being victims of crime during the past year; for example, this figure reaches levels of 20 percent in Mexico and it is above 15 percent in Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela and Brazil. The fear of victimization is high in some areas of Latin America, where people have directly been a victim of crime or know of a relative who has been.

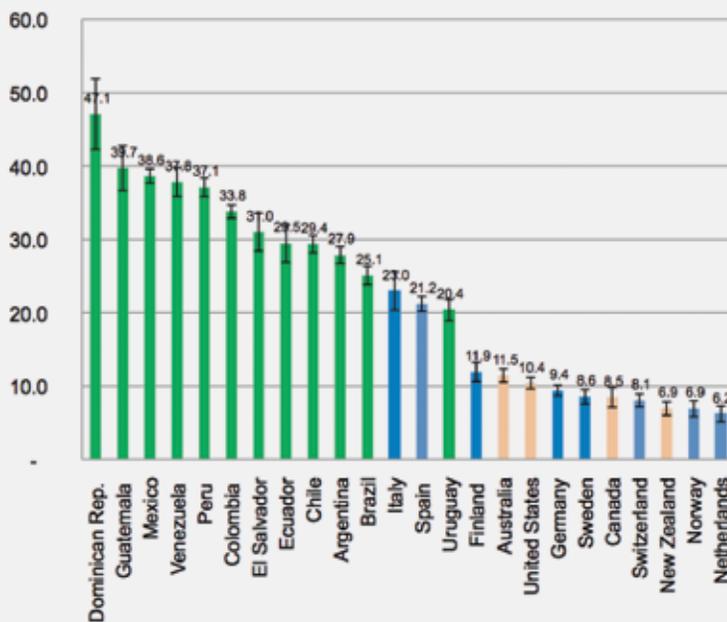
Latin Americans are not immune to the many social and economic problems they do live with. Table 6.3 shows the results from an econometric exercise that studies the impact of corruption, violence and economic difficulties on life satisfaction. It is clear that life satisfaction declines with the presence of perceptions of corruption, with economic difficulties, and with exposure to crime.<sup>29</sup>

The existence of social problems and of economic difficulties does reduce happiness in Latin America, but it does not necessarily imply low happiness. How can Latin Americans experience high happiness levels within this context? There are many positive factors in the region, in particular the nature and abundance of close and warm interpersonal relations. This specific structure of Latin Americans' interpersonal relations allows them to enjoy high levels of satisfaction in domains of life that are particularly important to Latin Americans: the social domain and, in especial, the family domain of life.

### The Importance of the Relational Realm in Latin America

Latin Americans spend much time and resources in the nurturing of interpersonal relations.<sup>30</sup> Some Latin American social thinkers have made a distinction between the realm of relations and the realm of the material world; their research shows

**Figure 6.10: Percentage of People Who Report Living with Parents. Adult People in the World Value Survey**



95% confidence interval

Source: World Value Survey, all waves.

that Latin Americans give greater importance to the relational realm and, in consequence, to the creation and sustain of interpersonal relations.<sup>31</sup> The family – both the nuclear one and the extended one – is a central institution in Latin American culture and it is also an important source of positive affect and of purpose in life.

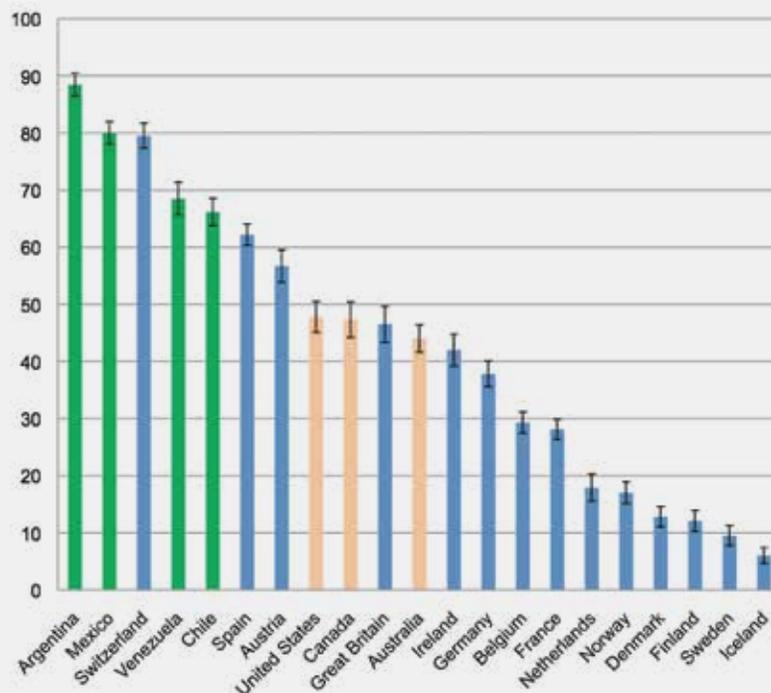
This section shows that the nature of Latin American interpersonal relations substantially differ from those in other regions of the world –in particular from those in Western European and Anglo-Saxon countries. Latin Americans place great interest in nurturing their interpersonal relations, and this implies for the abundance of warm and close relationships that positively impact family satisfaction as well as overall happiness –both from an evaluative and from an affective perspective. Family satisfaction is very high in Latin America, and close and warm relations do also extend to friends, neighbors, and colleagues.

### Living in the Family

Most people grow up in families. But in some cultures it is expected for them to leave their family as soon as they reach adulthood, while in Latin American people tend to live longer with their parents and do not necessarily leave their family when they become adults. By living longer in the family people extend their companionship with those they grew up with, and with whom a close, disinterested, and long-lasting relationship already exists. It is also common to find elder parents living in their adult-children households.

Information from the World Value Surveys (all waves) shows that adult people in Latin American tend to live with their parents in a larger proportion than those from Western European countries and from Anglo-Saxon countries (See Figure 6.10). The simple country average for those Latin American countries in the survey is 33 percent, which shows that one third of people

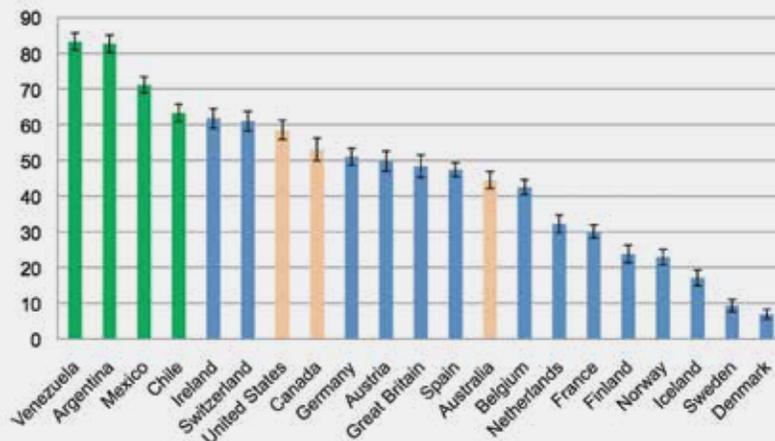
**Figure 6.11: Under School Age Kids: Provider of Childcare. Percentage Who Say Family Members**



Note: Other response options are: government agencies, non-profit organizations, private childcare providers, and employers.

Source: International Social Survey Program's module on Family and Changing Gender Roles IV (2012)

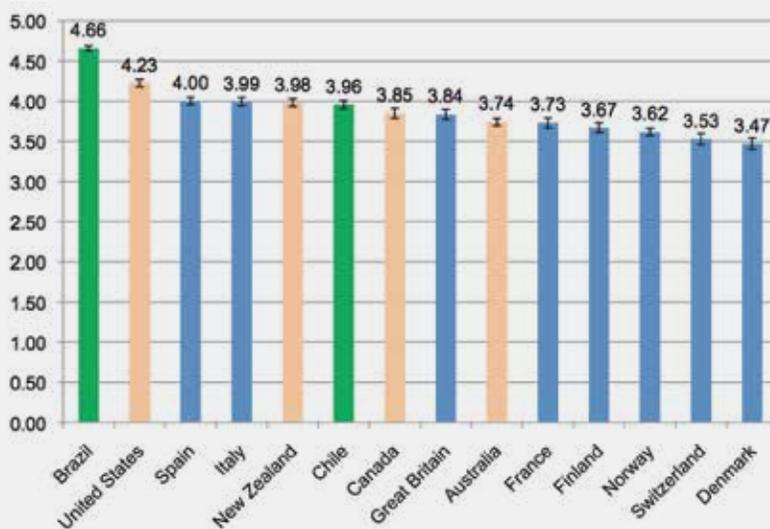
**Figure 6.12: Provider of Domestic Help to Elderly People. Percentage Who Say it is for Family Members to Take Care of Domestic Help for Elderly People**



Note: Other response options are: government agencies, non-profit organizations, private childcare providers, and employers.

Source: International Social Survey Program's module on Family and Changing Gender Roles IV (2012)

**Figure 6.13: Taking Care of Family Before Helping Others. Country Means**



Note: You should take care of yourself and your family first, before helping other people. Response scale: 5 Agree strongly, 4 agree, 3 neither agree nor disagree, 2 disagree, 1 disagree strongly.

Source: International Social Survey Program, Social Networks II, 2001.

who were surveyed reported living with their parents. This figure is only 12 percent for those western European countries and only 9 percent for those Anglo-Saxon countries included in Figure 6.10.

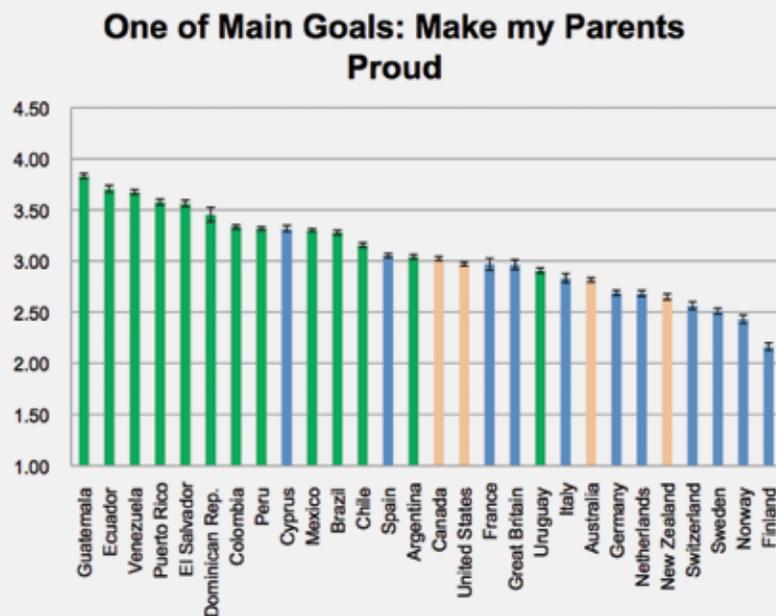
The extension of children’s stay at home as well as the incorporation of the elders in their grown-up children’s households implies an abundance of close and normally supportive interpersonal relationships. When these relationships are gratifying they do contribute to both high life evaluation and the enjoyment of high positive affect; however, in those cases where the intimate relationships become unsatisfactory they may detonate the experience of strong negative affect.<sup>32</sup>

### Taking Care of Children and Elderly in the Family

Family members do also play a central role in child rearing in Latin America, and many elder persons do live with their adult children and their grandchildren and/or do keep in close contact with them.

The International Social Survey Program’s module on Family and Changing Gender Roles IV (2012) asked the following two questions to people from many countries: First, ‘People have different views on childcare for children under school age. Who do you think should primarily provide childcare?’, second, ‘Thinking about elderly people who need some help in their everyday lives, such as help with grocery shopping, cleaning the house, doing the laundry etc. Who do you think should primarily provide this help?’. The information from the survey shows that Latin Americans strongly believe that the family must play a central role in raising kids as well as in taking care of the elder. The simple

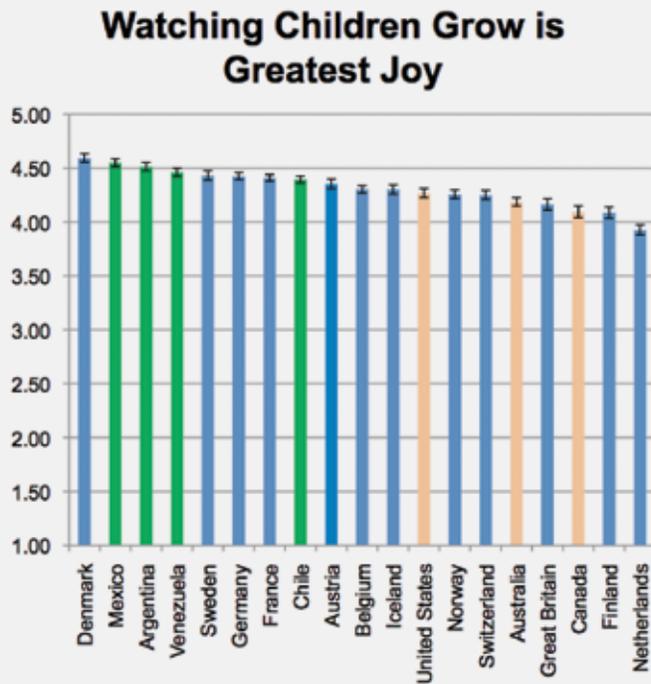
**Figure 6.14: One of Main Goals: Make My Parents Proud. Country Means**



Note: Making parents proud as one of the main goals in life. Response scale: Strongly agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), Strongly disagree (1)

Source: World Value Survey, all waves.

**Figure 6.15: Watching Children Grow is Greatest Joy. Country Means**



Note: Watching children grow up is greatest joy. Response scale: 5 Strongly agree, 4 Agree, 3 Neither agree nor disagree, 2 Disagree, 1 Strongly disagree.

Source: International Social Survey Program's module on Family and Changing Gender Roles IV (2012)

country average for people responding that the family should take care of under-school age kids is 76 percent in the Latin American countries in the survey. The same figure is only 33 percent for Western European countries and 46 percent for Anglo-Saxon countries in the survey (See Figure 6.11).

Similarly, a larger proportion of Latin Americans do also believe that elderly people should be supported by their family members rather than by governmental and private institutions. The simple country average for those Latin American countries in the survey is 77 percent, while this figure is 36 percent in the Western European countries and 52 percent in the Anglo Saxon countries in Figure 6.12.

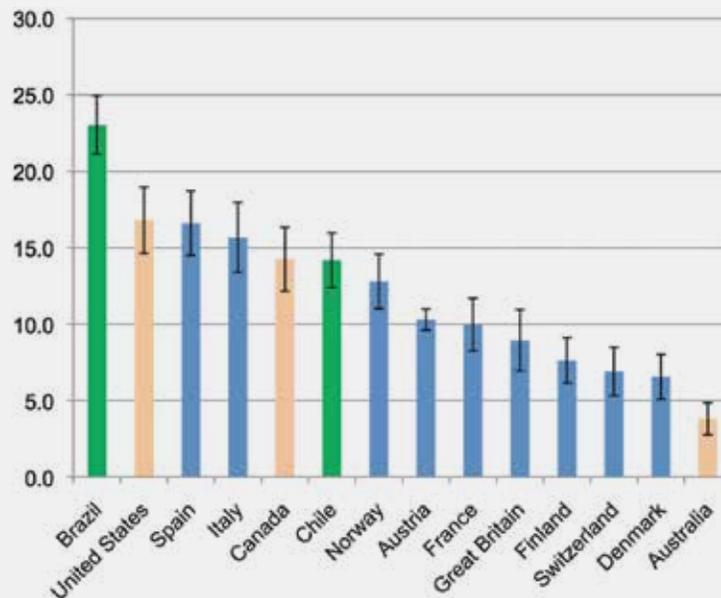
A larger proportion of under-school-age children in Latin America grow up within a family environment and enjoying the close interaction with people who love them and

who are intrinsically motivated to take care of them. Elder people do also frequently enjoy the company of loved ones. Research has shown that there are positive emotional benefits of growing in family environments where parents are present in the raising of their kids.<sup>33</sup>

**Preference for Taking Care of Family**

The ISSP Social Networks II survey (2001) asked people about their degree of agreement with the following statement: “*You should take care of yourself and your family first, before helping other people*”. There were only two Latin American countries in this survey, but the data shows that people in Brazil – Latin America’s largest country – tend to strongly agree with this statement, while in Chile people do agree with the statement (Figure 6.13).

**Figure 6.16: Uncles and Aunts. Visited More than Twice in the Last Four Weeks**



Note: Percentage of people who visited at least one uncle or aunt 'more than twice in the last four weeks'

Source: International Social Survey Programme's block on Social Networks II (2001)

This information does not only show the concern people have for the well-being of family members in Latin America, but it also shows a relative disregard for the well-being of people who are neither relatives or friends. Hence, family relations are relatively strong, but civic relations are relatively weak in Latin America; and this takes place in countries with weak institutional arrangements.

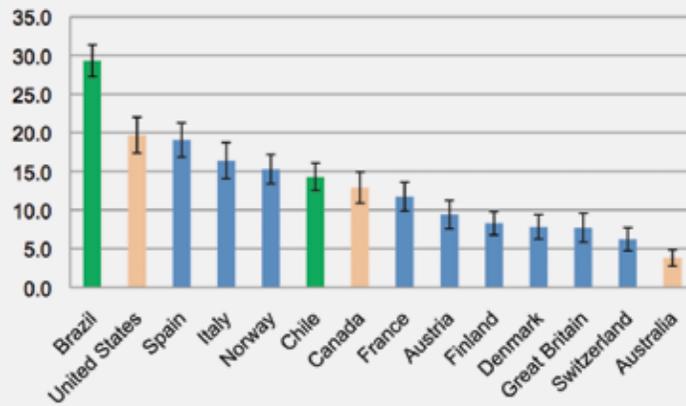
**Life Evaluation Incorporates Family Considerations**

People's evaluation of life, as well as their affective experiences, depends on the attainment of those goals that they consider important. Goals and values play a central role in the relationship between drivers of happiness and happiness itself. The importance of the realm of relations in Latin Americans' way of life does also show up in the greater relevance of some relational goals, such as making parents proud and watching children grow up.<sup>34</sup>

The World Value Survey asks people on the degree of agreement with the following statement: "One of my main goals in life has been to make my parents proud". Figure 6.14 presents the simple averages for the degree of agreement with this statement in many Latin American countries as well as in some West European and Anglo-Saxon countries. It is observed that there is a huge difference in the degree of agreement with this statement between Latin Americans and people from the other two regions under consideration; as a matter of fact the simple country average in Latin America is 3.40, while this figure is 2.74 for the Western European countries and 2.87 for the Anglo-Saxon countries under consideration.

The International Social Survey Programme's Family and Changing Gender Roles IV module does also have a question on the relevance of watching children grow up. To be specific, the question asks for the degree of agreement with the following statement: "To what extent do you

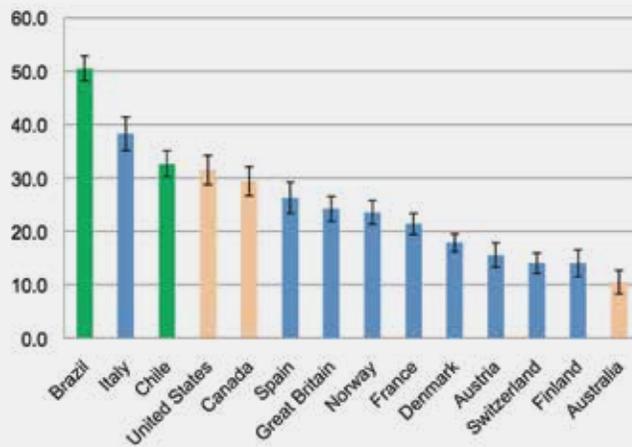
**Figure 6.17: Cousins. Visited More than Twice in the Last Four Weeks**



Note: Percentage of people who visited at least one cousin 'more than twice in the last four weeks'

Source: International Social Survey Programme's block on Social Networks II (2001)

**Figure 6.18: Nieces and Nephews. Visited More than Twice in the Last Four Weeks**



Note Percentage of people who visited at least one niece or nephew 'more than twice in the last four weeks'

Source: International Social Survey Programme's block on Social Networks II (2001)

agree or disagree?: *Watching children grow up is life's greatest joy*". The information presented in Figure 6.15 shows that the nurturing of children is a source of greatest joy in Latin American countries. The simple country average for the Latin American countries in the sample is 4.48, while this figure is 4.29 for the Western European countries and 4.18 for the Anglo-Saxon countries in the study.

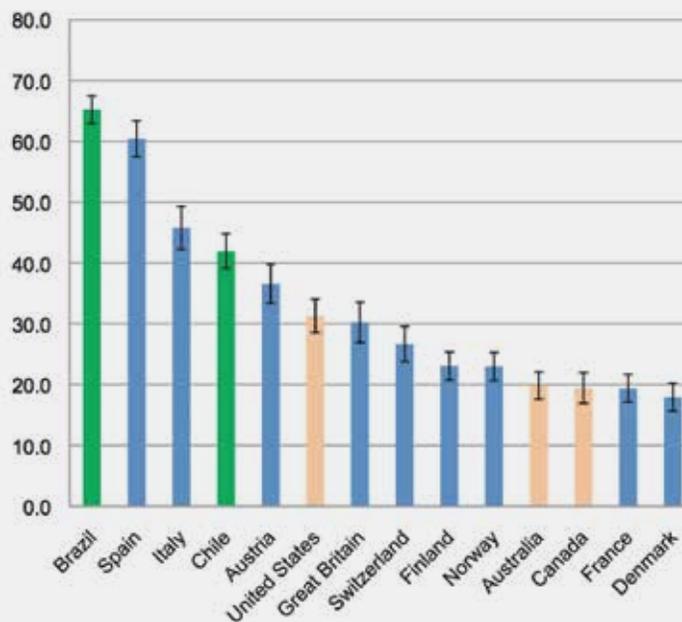
Goals and values do intervene both in the evaluation of life as well as in the triggering of affective states. The more relational-oriented goals of Latin Americans implies for happiness to depend closely on the family situation and on the quality and quantity of family relations.<sup>35</sup>

### The Presence of Extended Family

It is natural for most people to have an extended family: cousins, uncles and aunts, nieces and nephews, grandparents, grandchildren, god-parents and so on. However, the degree of involvement of extended-family members in a person's life may vary across cultures. The

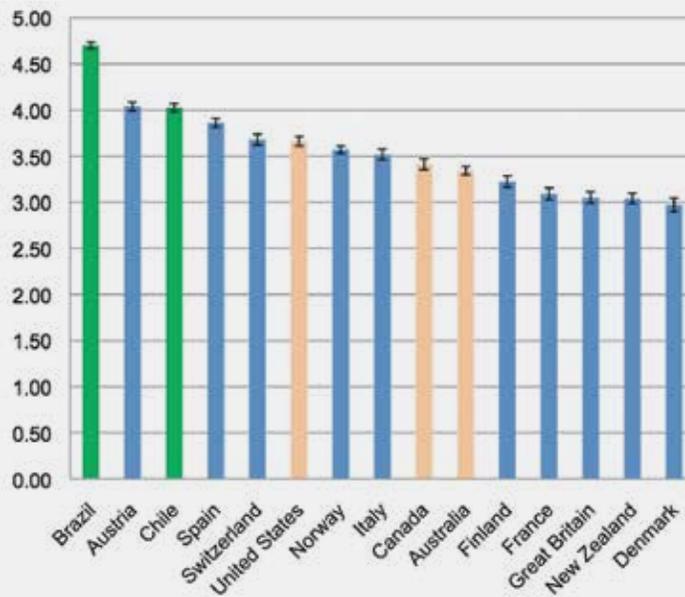
International Social Survey Programme's Social Networks II (2001) asked people about how often they have been in contact with the following kind of relatives in the last four weeks: Uncles and aunts, Cousins, and Nieces and nephews. Only two Latin American countries are present in the survey: Brazil and Chile, and it is important to note that Chile usually performs relatively low within the Latin American ranking of these kinds of interpersonal relations. Figures 6.16 to 6.18 show the percentage of respondents who say that they visited their relative *'More than twice in the last four weeks'*. It is observed that the extended-family is quite involved in the daily life of Brazilians. The interaction with the extended family in Chile is also much above of that in the Western European countries in the survey. Hence, the involvement and interaction with members of the extended family is quite high in Latin America. Research on the relationship between quantity and quality of relationships with relatives and life satisfaction is scarce – probably as a consequence of these relationships being relatively scarce in those countries where

**Figure 6.19: Visit Closest Friend Daily or at Least Several Times a Week**



Note: Percentage responding daily or at least several times a week

Source: International Social Survey Programme's block on Social Networks II (2001)

**Figure 6.20: People Better Off Should Help Friends**

Note: Country averages; people who are better off should help their friends. Response scale: 5 Agree strongly, 4 agree, 3 neither agree nor disagree, 2 disagree, 1 disagree strongly

Source: International Social Survey Programme's block on Social Networks II (2001)

major research is undertaken –; however, some findings suggest that this kind of relationship may contribute to people's happiness.<sup>36</sup>

### Close Relationships with Close Friends

The realm of close interpersonal relations in Latin America extends beyond the nuclear and extended family. Friends are also highly involved in the daily life of Latin Americans, and friends are expected to play an important role not only in bringing emotional and economic support but also in sharing daily life.

The International Social Survey Programme's block on Social Networks II (2001) has a couple of questions regarding the involvement and support which is expected from friends in different countries of the world. Two Latin American countries are included in this survey: Brazil and Chile.

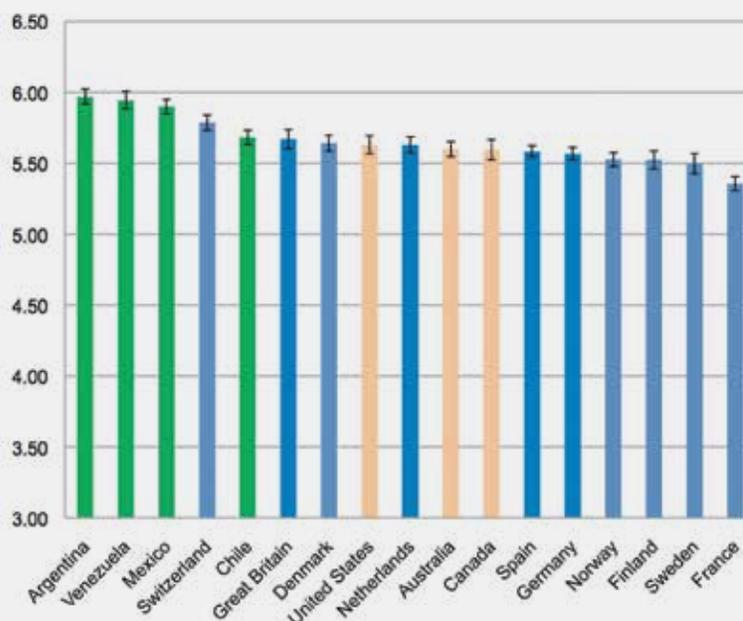
The first question asks how often people see or visit their closest friend. Figure 6.19 shows the percentage of people who report seeing or visiting their closest friend daily or at least

several times a week. It is observed that this percentage is very high in Brazil and it is also high in Chile.

The second question asks people about their degree of agreement with the following statement: "People who are better off should help friends who are less well off". Figure 6.20 shows that in the two Latin American countries in the survey there is wide agreement about expecting friends who are better off to help those who are less well off.

Data from other sources, such as the BIARE-Mexico (National Statistical Office survey on self-reported well-being) and the United States' General Social Survey show that people in Mexico gather more often and more frequently with relatives and with friends than people in the United States. For example, 77 percent of people in Mexico state that they gather with relatives at least several times per month, while this figure is of 53 percent in the United States. Regarding gathering with friends several times per month, the figure is 68 percent in Mexico and 45 percent in the United States.

**Figure 6.21: Family Satisfaction**



Note: Satisfaction with family, country means. 'All things considered, how satisfied are you with your family life?' Response scale: Completely satisfied (7), very satisfied (6), fairly satisfied (5), neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (4), fairly dissatisfied (3), very dissatisfied (2), completely dissatisfied (1).

Source: International Social Survey Programme's module on Family and Changing Gender Roles IV (2012)

### High Family Satisfaction in Latin America and its Importance for Happiness

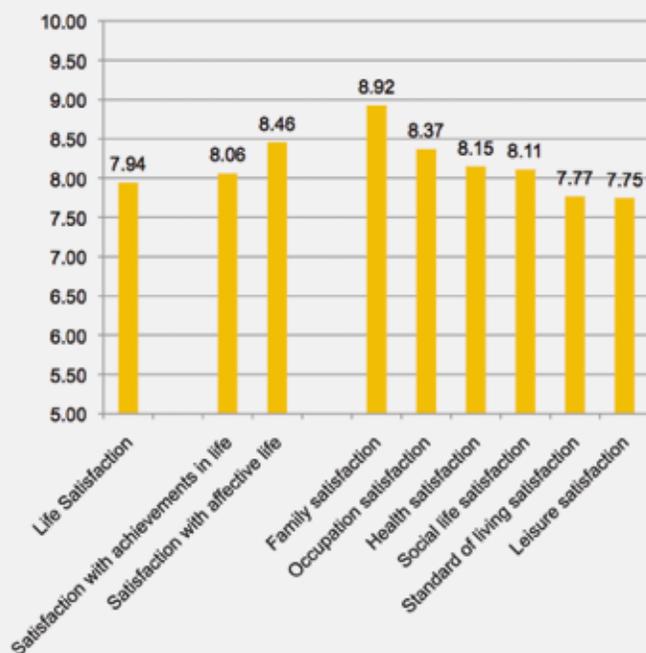
Given the nature of interpersonal relations in Latin America and the centrality of the family it should come as no surprise that family satisfaction is very high in the region. The International Social Survey Programme's module on Family and Changing Gender Roles IV (2012) has a question on family satisfaction: 'All things considered, how satisfied are you with your family life?'. The response scale is categorical and in this chapter it is treated as cardinal in a 1 to 7 scale for descriptive purposes, where 7 is associated to a 'completely satisfied' response. Figure 6.21 shows country means for family satisfaction in Latin America, Western Europe and Anglo-Saxon countries. The simple country average for the four Latin American countries in the survey is 5.87, which is much higher than the average for the Western European countries in the graph (5.58) and for the Anglo Saxon countries (5.60)

High family satisfaction is of the greatest relevance in explaining high happiness in Latin America, both in terms of evaluation of life as well as of enjoyment of positive emotions.

### An Illustration from Mexico

Mexico's National Statistical Office (INEGI) has recently started measuring subjective well-being indicators in order to have better assessments of people's situation. A large representative survey (about 39,000 observations) implemented in 2014 provides information about: life satisfaction, satisfaction with achievements in life, satisfaction with affective life, family satisfaction, standard of living satisfaction, health satisfaction, leisure satisfaction, occupation satisfaction, and social life satisfaction. All variables are measured in a 0 to 10 scale. Figure 6.22 presents descriptive statistics for these variables; it is observed that Mexicans report very high levels of family satisfaction and that their satisfaction with affective life is higher than that with achievements in life.

**Figure 6.22: Subjective Well-Being Information. Mean Values, Mexico 2014**



Note: Satisfaction measured in a 0 to 10 scale.

Source: BIARE survey 2014, Mexico's National Statistical Office (INEGI)

**Table 6.4: Domains of Life Explanation of Satisfaction with Affective Life and with Achievements in Life. Mexico 2014. Ordinary Least Square Regression**

	Satisfaction with achievements in life		Satisfaction with affective life	
	Coefficient	P>t	Coefficient	P>t
Family satisfaction	0.085	0.000	0.428	0.000
Standard of living satisfaction	0.273	0.000	0.192	0.000
Health satisfaction	0.132	0.000	0.052	0.000
Leisure satisfaction	0.098	0.000	0.039	0.000
Occupation satisfaction	0.137	0.000	0.055	0.000
Social life satisfaction	0.085	0.000	0.105	0.000
Intercept	1.520	0.000	1.107	0.000
R_squared	0.359		0.321	

Source: BIARE survey 2014, Mexico's National Statistical Office (INEGI)

Relatively low levels of satisfaction are seen in the standard of living and leisure (free-time) domains of life.

Table 6.4 presents the main results from an econometric exercise that aims at explaining satisfaction with achievements in life and with affective life on the basis of satisfaction in domains of life.

It is observed that family satisfaction has, by far, the largest impact on the satisfaction with affective life of Mexicans. Family satisfaction is also statistically significant in explaining satisfaction with achievements in life; however, in this case the standard of living has a much larger coefficient. It seems that interpersonal relations matter for both affective and evaluative aspects of life, but they count more for the former than for the latter.<sup>37</sup>

## Conclusions

Latin Americans report high happiness levels. Positive-affect scores are substantially high both in comparison to other countries in the world and to what income levels in the region would predict. Latin Americans' evaluation of life is also above what income levels would predict.

Many social and economic indicators portray Latin America as a mid to low income-level region with high poverty rates, great income inequality, high violence and crime rates, and high levels of corruption. How can Latin Americans be so happy within a context that may look somehow unfavorable? This chapter has shown that the happiness of Latin Americans is diminished by their many social and economic problems and that, in fact, happiness could increase if these problems were properly addressed. However, it would be a big mistake to assume that these problems overwhelm the daily lives of Latin Americans. In fact, it would be a focusing-illusion bias to assume that Latin Americans must be unhappy because there are some problems in their life. In fact, the daily life of Latin Americans is not constricted to the consequences of income poverty, institutional corruption, income inequality, crime and violence, and other problems. This chapter shows that there are many positive factors that contribute to the happiness of Latin Americans; in particular, the abundance and quality of close,

warm, and genuine interpersonal relations. The specific structure of Latin Americans' interpersonal relations allows them to enjoy high levels of satisfaction in domains of life that are particularly important to Latin Americans: the social domain and, in especial, the family domain of life. It explains the outstandingly high positive affect in the region as well as the above-expected evaluative states.

The Latin American case shows that the abundance and nature of interpersonal relations is an important driver of happiness which deserves further attention, as was emphasized in Chapter 2 of *World Happiness Report 2017*. Happiness research that focuses on evaluative measures may risk underestimating the importance that close, warm and genuine interpersonal relations have in people's happiness because their impact is larger on affective than on evaluative states. Happiness in relational-oriented societies may be better portrayed by overall assessments of life that incorporate information from both the evaluative and the affective substrates.

There are many lessons from the Latin American case to the development discourse.

First, it shows the need of going beyond objective measures when aiming to assess people's situation. Subjective well-being measures provide better assessments of the experience of being well people have and contribute to a better understanding of their actions. Subjective well-being measures better incorporate the values people have and which are relevant in assessing their lives; because values differ across cultures this subjectivity constitutes an advantage when making cross-cultural assessments of people's well-being.

Second, the Latin American case does not ignore the importance of income, but it clearly shows that there is more to life than income. The development discourse should neither confuse persons with consumers nor well-being with purchasing power.

Third, the Latin American case shows that genuine, warm, and person-based interpersonal relations substantially contribute to happiness. The development discourse has neglected these relations in favor of instrumental ones, which

may have a larger impact on economic growth but not on people's happiness. By objectifying other people, instrumental relations are not as gratifying as genuine ones.

Fourth, it is not only acceptable for but also expected from public policy to focus on solving social problems; however, such policies will not succeed in raising happiness if they neglect the positive aspects of social life, and if they follow a partial rather than integral view. In fact, policies should not focus only on eradicating problems but also on strengthening those riches Latin Americans currently have.

## Endnotes

- 1 According to the Human Development Report 2017 Mexico, Costa Rica, Panamá, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil and Uruguay are classified as 'High Human Development'. Chile and Argentina are classified as 'Very High Human Development'. Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Bolivia and Paraguay are classified as 'Medium Development'. Haiti, which has a different history, is the only country in the region classified as 'Low Human Development'.
- 2 Rojas (2012a), Beytía (2016, 2018), Yamamoto (2016)
- 3 Rojas & García (2017)
- 4 Puchet et al. (2012), Rojas (2012b), Casas-Zamora and Carter (2017), O'Donnell (1999), Gasparini and Lustig (2011), Jaitman (2017), World Bank (2011)
- 5 Culture is neither static nor fully determined by past events and the concept involves extreme simplification and homogenization (Holler, 2014); however, it is relevant to explain the phenomenon of high happiness in Latin America.
- 6 It is important to recognize that the Mayan civilization had seen better times in the past.
- 7 Bushnell et al. (2017) mention the following factors promoting the mixing of Europeans and Indians in Latin America: The relatively scarcity of Spanish women in the new territory induced male Spaniards to quickly mixed with indigenous women. Inter-ethnic mixing was no alien to Spanish conquerors and colonizers as a result of the recent history of coexistence of Moors and Christians in the Iberian Peninsula. The idea of accumulating wealth before marrying was common among Spanish men, and the custom of having illegitimate children was already widely spread in Spain at the time of conquest and colony. In addition, the indigenous civilizations had social hierarchies, with many male and female Indians enjoying high social status.
- 8 Las Casas (1945, 1951, 1967), Díaz del Castillo (1955), León-Portilla (2014), Estrada (2009)
- 9 Bonfill (1994), Morandé (1971, 1985), Zea (1971, 1985), Larrain (1971), de Imaz (1984). It is important to remark that the blending of values and worldviews does not necessarily imply the complete integration of Europeans and indigenous groups; many studies show that even today there is some discrimination on the basis of the skin color (Ortiz et al., 2018)
- 10 Noguera and Pineda (2011), Ángel Maya (1995, 2002, 2006)
- 11 Acosta (2008), Gudynas and Acosta (2011)
- 12 Esteinou (2004), Arizpe (1973), Gonzalbo (1996, 1998), Gonzalbo and Rabell (1996)
- 13 Díaz-Guerrero (1979), Germany (1965), Díaz-Loving et al. (2008).
- 14 Rojas & García-Vega (2017), Yamamoto (2016), Beytía (fc), Velásquez (2016), Martínez Cruz & Castillo Flores (2016), Mochón Morcillo & de Juan Díaz (2016), Ateca-Amestoy et al. (2014).
- 15 The specific countries which are included in the Western European and Anglo-Saxon lists may vary across analyses due to the availability of information. However, in general the Western European classification makes reference to the following countries: United Kingdom, France, Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Italy, Sweden, Greece, Denmark, Austria, Cyprus, Finland, Iceland, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Norway, Portugal, and Ireland. The Anglo-Saxon classification makes reference to the following countries: United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.
- 16 Life evaluation is measured on the following question from the Gallup Polls: "Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to ten at the top. Suppose we say that the top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you, and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time, assuming that the higher the step the better you feel about your life, and the lower the step the worse you feel about it? Which step comes closest to the way you feel?" The response to the question is based on an imaginary 11-point scale whereby 0 designates one's worst possible life and 10 denotes the best possible life respondents can imagine for themselves.
- 17 Figures are computed using information from the Gallup World Poll waves 2006 to 2016. The survey includes 166 countries and regions.
- 18 If you were in trouble, do you have relatives or friends you can count on to help you whenever you need them, or not? (1=yes, 0=no). Donated money to a charity (1=yes, 0=no). Whether the respondent is satisfied with the freedom to choose what do to with his or her life in this country (1=yes, 0=no). Whether the respondent thinks there is corruption in businesses (1=yes, 0=no). Whether the respondent thinks there is corruption in government (1=yes, 0=no).
- 19 The five dichotomous variables are: Smile or laugh yesterday, learn something, treated with respect, experienced enjoyment, and feel well-rested. The questions in the survey ask whether this affect was experienced the day before.
- 20 Negative affect is assessed as the simple average of the following dichotomous variables in the Gallup World Poll: Experience worry, Sadness, Anger, Stress, and Depression. The Gallup survey asks whether the person experienced the emotion the day before, with a Yes or No answer.
- 21 The regression exercises use an ordinary least square technique, which means that the independent variable is treated as a cardinal one.
- 22 By intra-country correlations we mean the correlations between affect and life evaluation based on differences across persons living in the same country.
- 23 Canada, United States, Australia and New Zealand.
- 24 It is also possible to estimate regional correlations based on country mean values of life evaluation, and positive and negative affect. It is found that these correlations do also differ across regions. For example, the correlation between country means of positive affect and life evaluation is 0.87 in the Western European region and only 0.29 in the Latin American region. Similarly, the correlation between negative affect and life evaluation is -0.90 in the western European region and only -.36 in the Latin American region. This finding basically indicates that by knowing a Western European country's life evaluation mean it is possible to predict with high confidence this country's positive and negative-affect means; however, this would not be possible for Latin American countries, where a relatively high life evaluation is not necessarily associated to a relatively high positive affect or a relatively low negative affect in a country.

- 25 Sterns and Sterns, 1985; Rosenweim, 2002; Reddy, 2001.
- 26 Holler, 2014; Villa-Flores and Lipsett-Rivera, 2014; Rivera, 2000. It may also be interesting to note that a study of human language found that Latin American languages show the greatest positivity in comparison to other languages in the study. The authors state that “Mexican Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese exhibit relatively high medians” (Dodds et al., 2015; p. 2390) in perceived average word happiness for 10 languages under study.
- 27 Rojas, 2013; Rojas and Guardiola, 2017.
- 28 Some international data shows that corruption in Latin America is comparatively high. Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index (CPI) goes from 0 (highest level of perceived corruption) to 100 (lowest level of perceived corruption). The mean value of the CPI for Latin American countries is 37.9, which is slightly lower than the mean value for the world (42.9) and much lower than the value for Western European countries (74.8) and for the Anglo-Saxon countries (81.2). This means that Latin America’s perceived corruption level is higher than the world average and much higher than those levels in Western Europe and the Anglo-Saxon countries, according to data from 2016 of Transparency International. Uruguay, Chile and Costa Rica present the lowest levels of perceived corruption in Latin America, while Guatemala, Nicaragua and Venezuela present the highest levels.
- 29 Country-level studies suggest that negative events such as corruption and victimization trigger negative affect and reduce life evaluation (Leyva et al., 2016)
- 30 In some towns of Mexico people do also spend a lot of time and resources nourishing their relationship with the dead ones. The night before The Day of the Death (November 2nd) the living ones gather in the cemeteries with their dead relatives in order to celebrate and eat together. Relatives are always present, even after they have died.
- 31 Díaz Guerrero (1997)
- 32 See Leyva et al., 2016. It may be stated that in terms of the experience of affective states close, warm, and disinterested interpersonal relations provide greater mean returns but also greater risk.
- 33 For the importance of parent-child relationships see Noble and McGrath (2012) and O’Brien and Mosco (2012) For a review of many studies on the emotional benefits of family relationships see Kasser (2002) For an in-depth study of the importance of parent-child relationships for life satisfaction over the life course see Layard et al. (2013) and Clark et al. (2018)
- 34 Germani (1965); Díaz-Guerrero (1979); Yamamoto (2016)
- 35 Domains-of-life studies in Latin America show that the family domain is crucial in explaining life satisfaction as well as its evaluative and affective substrates (Rojas, 2006, 2012c)
- 36 On the basis of information from the United Kingdom Powdthavee (2008) finds that frequency of contact with relatives -as well as with friends- does make a significant impact on people’s happiness. Powdthavee concludes that “the estimated figure is even larger than that of getting married . . . It can compensate for nearly two-third in the loss of the happiness from going through a separation or unemployment”. Nguyen et al. (2016) also find that the frequency of contact with family members has a positive impact on life satisfaction, happiness and self-esteem; however, the delimitation of family members is not clear in the study. There is also some research finding out that inter-generational family relations are very relevant for the well-being of elder people (Katz, 2009) Of course, there is also an ample literature on relational goods which emphasizes the importance of interpersonal relations without providing an in-depth study of specific kinds of family relations (Gui, 2005; Gui and Stanca, 2010; Becchetti et al., 2008) Relatedness is also considered a basic psychological need by Deci and Ryan (1985), while Grinde (2009) elaborates an evolutionary argument about the importance of community relations for people’s well-being.
- 37 Life satisfaction is highly correlated with both satisfaction with affective life (0.42) and satisfaction with achievements in life (0.46).

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