

**Immigrant's Subjective Well-Being and in Origin
Acquired Beliefs, Attitudes and Values:
The Analysis of Counterfactual Thinking as a Reliable
Approach.**

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“The good life, as I conceive it, is a happy life. I do not mean that if you are good you will be happy; I mean that if you are happy you will be good.”

- Bertrand Russell

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Although I knew in theory that one day it would be finished, I have to admit that I wondered many times whether that day would ever arrive in practice. But it has arrived. And now I look back on a process in which I have learned so much, worked with very inspirational people and have been surrounded by wonderful friends and family. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them.

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Abstract

In recent years, the academic literature on the well-being of immigrants has expanded far from the study of economic factors by including psychological elements. Subjective well-being and life satisfaction have been constituted as new categories of analysis within the studies of immigration. This study attempts to better understand the adaptative processes of migrants by means of the analysis of their subjective well-being and life satisfaction, and to observe migrants' explanations about how they evaluate psychological elements acquired in origin which have favoured their integration in the hosting society. The scope of analysis is particularized on Brazilian women who immigrated to Barcelona.

Counterfactuals have been used to validate the initial hypothesis. This procedure is seen as an innovative approach to the study of the connections between subjective well-being and immigration experiences. The analysis through counterfactual thinking has proved to be a fruitful method to evaluate immigrants' explanations about their subjective well-being and life satisfaction.

Keywords: Subjective-well being, life satisfaction, immigration, belief, emotion, counterfactual thinking analysis.

Resum

En els anys precedents, la literatura acadèmica sobre el benestar dels immigrants s'ha eixamplat més enllà de l'estudi dels factors econòmics tot incloent-hi elements psicològics. El benestar subjectiu i la satisfacció vital s'han constituït com noves categories d'anàlisi dins dels estudis sobre immigració. Aquest treball pretén entendre millor els processos d'adaptació dels immigrants mitjançant l'anàlisi del seu benestar subjectiu i la seva satisfacció vital, alhora que s'estudien les explicacions dels immigrants sobre com ells mateixos avaluen els elements psicològics adquirits en el seu lloc d'origen els quals han afavorit la seva integració en la societat d'acollida. L'abast del treball s'ha focalitzat en l'estudi de dones brasileres que van emigrar a Barcelona.

Hem fet servir els contrafàctics per validar la hipòtesi inicial. Aquest procediment és vist com una aproximació innovadora a l'estudi de les relacions entre el benestar subjectiu i les experiències dels immigrants. L'anàlisi a través del pensament contrafàctic s'ha demostrat com un mètode profitós per avaluar les respostes dels immigrants quan se'ls ha preguntat sobre el seu benestar subjectiu i la seva satisfacció vital.

Paraules clau: Benestar subjectiu, satisfacció vital, immigració, creença, emoció, anàlisi del pensament contrafàctic.

Preface

Well-being of individuals has been historically associated to material and economic factors. However, new approaches have opened this concept by including relational and subjective elements. The *subjective* concerns cultural values, ideologies, beliefs and emotions, and also people's own perceptions including identity. Academic specialists in this field have defined two new categories of analysis: Subjective well-being (SWB) and Life Satisfaction (LS). These have also been conceptualized in a temporal manner under sequential states of the Present, the Past and the Prospect (Future). In this thesis, we aim to contribute to the knowledge of SWB and LS in individuals by choosing a group of immigrants.

Immigration is an important issue for academic analysis for both practical social, political and humanitarian reasons, on the one hand, and by the fact that this represents an extraordinary source for social, psychological, medical and linguistic knowledge, on the other. Evidence suggests that the psychological well-being of immigrants is related to the outcome established between the system of values and beliefs in origin acquired and those imposed by the hosting society. Scholarly research has acknowledged the importance of culture in the determination of the levels of happiness, and the relationship between cultural values and mental health in immigrants. This work focuses on the understanding of the adaptative processes (acculturation and enculturation) of migrants by means of the analysis of their subjective well-being and life satisfaction in the hosting country in comparison to the alternative of living at home. The scope of analysis is particularized on Brazilian women who immigrated to Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain

The introduction of the analysis of counterfactual thinking (the generation of scenarios of how life would have been) in the framework of this research responds to the manner of how individuals evaluate subjective well-being and life satisfaction. The utilization of counterfactual thinking by migrants is a constant cognitive pattern, as regular comparisons between the current life and the one at the homeland are developed as possible alternatives and their consequences on individual's actual situation.

Finally, and beyond academic considerations, this study has served me to know more about myself as an individual. I am Brazilian born and the fact that the empirical treatment has consisted of a kind of the immigrant's self-evaluation has permitted to better understand my own beliefs and feelings and how they have been constructed both through time and space. I have also discovered that the more one knows about how his/her beliefs and feelings are created the easier is to overcome negative incidents and to take advantage of positive experiences. Thus, at this point, I cannot value my experience as a PhD student only in terms of intellectual development but also by the whole enrichment as a person this voyage has provided to me.

Table of Contents

	Page
Acknowledgements.....	v
Abstract.....	vii
Preface.....	ix
Table of Contents.....	xi
List of Figures.....	xiii
List of Tables.....	xv
Chapter 1 – Introduction and Background.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Immigration and Culture Shock.....	4
The Nature of Well-Being.....	9
Subjective Well-Being, Happiness and Life Satisfaction.....	14
Research on Subjective Wellbeing: The Role of Counterfactual Thinking.....	21
Objectives of the Study.....	23
Notes on Methodology.....	24
The Chosen Group of Analysis.....	27
Thesis Structure.....	28
Chapter 2 – The Migrant Process and Successful Life.....	31
Introduction.....	31
The Migrant Process.....	31
Adaptation and Integration.....	33
Integration and Successful Life.....	38
Acculturation, Identity and Emotional Well-Being.....	41
Chapter 3 – Identity, Culture and Subjective Well-Being.....	49
Introduction.....	49
Defining Identity.....	49
Personal Identity.....	52
Socio-cultural Identity.....	55
The Emotional Element in Identity.....	59
Culture, Identity and Subjective Well-Being.....	63
Chapter 4 – Brazil: A Potential Laboratory.....	71
Introduction.....	71
Brazil: A Country of Migrants.....	72
Foundational Myth and Social Representation.....	73
Brazilian Mentality and Social Practices.....	76
Brazilian Well-Being.....	81

Chapter 5 – The Role of Counterfactual Thinking.....	87
Introduction.....	87
Counterfactual Thinking.....	88
Describing counterfactual thinking: functions and taxonomy.....	93
Evaluative counterfactual thinking and emotions.....	95
Chapter 6 – The Case Study: Brazilian Immigrants to Catalonia/Spain.....	101
Introduction.....	101
Qualitative and Quantitative Research.....	102
Research Instrumentation.....	104
Counterfactual generation task.....	108
Participants and Their Specific Traits: Privileged Though Reached.....	110
Procedure.....	115
Results.....	116
Data Analysis.....	116
Counterfactuals Content/Qualitative analysis: Inferring Causal Attribution.....	123
Discussion of results.....	126
The self-vision: Adaptability and Life Satisfaction.....	129
Chapter 7 – Concluding Discussion and Reflections.....	141
Main Results of the Research Task.....	142
Main Contributions of This Study.....	145
Counterfactual Thinking as a Useful Tool for SWB Analysis.....	145
Counterfactual Causal Attribution and Acculturation vs. Enculturation.....	147
The role of the Patterns of Origin: Cultural Effects, Personal Ties and Individual Life Satisfaction in Immigrants.....	149
Limitations of the Study.....	153
Perspectives for Possible Further Research.....	154
Bibliography.....	157
Books and Articles.....	157
Internet Sources.....	177
Appendixes.....	179
Appendix 1. Questionnaire.....	179
Appendix 2. Notes and Observation Document.....	184

List of Figures

- Figure 1.1. The Procedure of Research
- Figure 1.2. The Triangle of Well-Being
- Figure 1.3. The 3P Model of the Components of Subjective Well-Being
- Figure 3.1. Influences on Individual Identity Creation (Adaptation)
- Figure 3.2. Levels of the Self and Emotional Intensity (Title Adapted)
- Figure 6.1. Summary of Counterfactual Direction Causes.
- Figure 7.1. Main Results and Contributions of the Research Task

List of Tables

- Table 4.1. Average *Ratings* Obtained from the Components Variables of Well-Being Brazil Index.
- Table 4.2. Subjective Well-Being in 52 Countries: 1981–2007.
- Table 6.1. Characteristics of Quantitative and Qualitative Research.
- Table 6.2. General Data of Participants.
- Table 6.3. Demographic Data (A, B, C Questionnaire Blocks).
- Table 6.4. Personal Expectations before Immigrating (Questionnaire Block D).
- Table 6.5. Professional Expectations before Immigrating / Predisposition to Migrate. (Questionnaire Blocks E and F).
- Table 6.6. Global Evaluation (Questionnaire Block G).
- Table 6.7. Personal Experience after Immigrating - (Questionnaire Block H).
- Table 6.8. Personal Experience after Immigrating - Global Evaluation (Ques. Block I).
- Table 6.9. Percentage of Counterfactuals of Each Category in Survey (Open-ended Question and Notes on Interviews).
- Table 6.10. Statistics of Related Samples. Average Frequency of Counterfactual per Participant
- Table 6.11. Counterfactual Direction and Internal/External Cause Attribution.
- Table 6.12. Subjective Well-Being in 52 Countries: 1981–2007.
- Table 6.13. Average Ratings Obtained for the Component Variables of the Well Being Brazil Index.



CHAPTER 1

– INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND –

INTRODUCTION

A great deal of sociological and psychological research is manifestly motivated by the concern for the well-being of the people being researched. Usually, scholars are conscious of the great difficulty to link the world of people's well-being with the specific topic of one's research. Sometimes, these associations are not articulated explicitly in their academic writing. Moreover, it is often difficult enough to fit in one individual empirical analysis a research that needs thousands of inferential tests and their comparison of ones with others. So, sociologists try to build an association of (subjective) well-being with sociological categories such as cultural traits, justice, political freedom, recognition, or integration. Psychologists try to develop their research from the individual point of view, using psychological concepts such as mood, happiness, sadness, mental balance, satisfaction, and so on. Finally, linguistics researchers try to make operative the knowledge that emerges from discourse analysis. The difficulty of finding consistent results has been acknowledged by all members of the research community, but all of them agree about the new potentialities of multidisciplinary approaches. One of the innovative approaches is that of the analysis of counterfactual thinking.

Well-being has been associated historically to the material conditions and was focused on the economic factor. However, new approaches have opened the necessity to expand the concept of well-being by including relational and subjective elements. Moreover, subjective well-being has been constituted as a new category of analysis. With this thesis, and by recalling earlier findings, we try to contribute to the knowledge of subjective well-being in individuals. In this regard, a group of specific immigrants has been chosen. The group of immigrants is generally considered to be important for academic analysis for both, practical, social, political and humanitarian reasons, on the one hand, and by the fact that this group represents an extraordinary source for social, psychological and linguistic knowledge, on the other.

When newcomers set foot in a new country, both they and their hosting country look forward to a swift and successful process of integration. The expectation is for a period of adaptation and adjustment leading ultimately to fitting in and belonging. Indeed, during the migration process, considerable attention is paid to those attributes generally considered linked to successful integration: level of education, skills and training to be brought to the workforce, language proficiency, family members already in the hosting country, and even the notion of 'adaptability.' Certainly, the migrant process and the question of the immigrant adaptation (or integration) have become one of the most



important issues in both the academic and the policy-making debates. Social integration represents for both the individual who migrates and the hosting society a main objective to be achieved in order to create a cohesive, wellbeing society.

Evidence also suggests that the psychological well-being of immigrants is related to the outcome established between the system of values and beliefs originally acquired and those imposed by the hosting society. The final outcome of the tension between the processes of acculturation, on the one hand, and the process of enculturation, on the other, determine the capacity of satisfactory integration and, thus, life satisfaction and subjective well-being (SWB). The individual identity which has been constructed around some specific values and attitudes –some acquired in origin and some incorporated and modified by the integration process- seems to influence the subjective well-being and the general happiness of the immigrant. In this regard, Ed Diener and his colleagues have acknowledged the importance of culture in the determination of the levels of happiness,¹ and other authors have found a relationship between cultural values and mental health in immigrants.² According to this, research affirms that the way the individual identity of the immigrant and that of the members of the hosting society interrelate becomes a positive or a negative factor for integration and, thus, for subjective well-being and life satisfaction.

One of the most important difficulties when doing research about subjective well-being, happiness and life satisfaction becomes the categorization of its constituents in terms of specific ideas, beliefs, attitudes, values, emotions, preferences and mental sets and, consequently, behaviours and performances. Much research is still necessary to be done in order to deepen into the understanding of how these cultural elements and the associated identity are important to the process of adaptation of newcomers in a hosting society. Subsequently, feelings of well-being and happiness related to integration of immigration need also to pay attention to the immigration process itself and the motivations to immigrate. Literature about happiness and well-being include frequently two different levels of analysis. In the first case, when subsistence levels of living are not accomplished, such as house, health, education, and so on, the most valued satisfactory component becomes solidarity. And in the second case, when those standards of living are fulfilled, freedom, personal growth and self-expression become the objectives of immigrants and life's satisfaction sources. Thus, this study intends to deepen in the comprehension of the processes related to the capacity of individuals to integrate in a given society. However, rather than focusing on material factors, this study tries to deepen into the processes that make immigrants fulfil their emotional necessities, and how they use their resources to build up a satisfactory sense of living as full members of a hosting society.

¹ See Diener & Diener, 1995; Diener & Suh, 2000; and Diener, Suh, Smith & Shao, 1995.

² See Angelini, Casi and Corazzini, 2013; Safi, 2010; Baltatescu, 2007; Costigan & Dokis, 2006; Hovey, Kim & Seligman, 2006; and Harker, 2001.

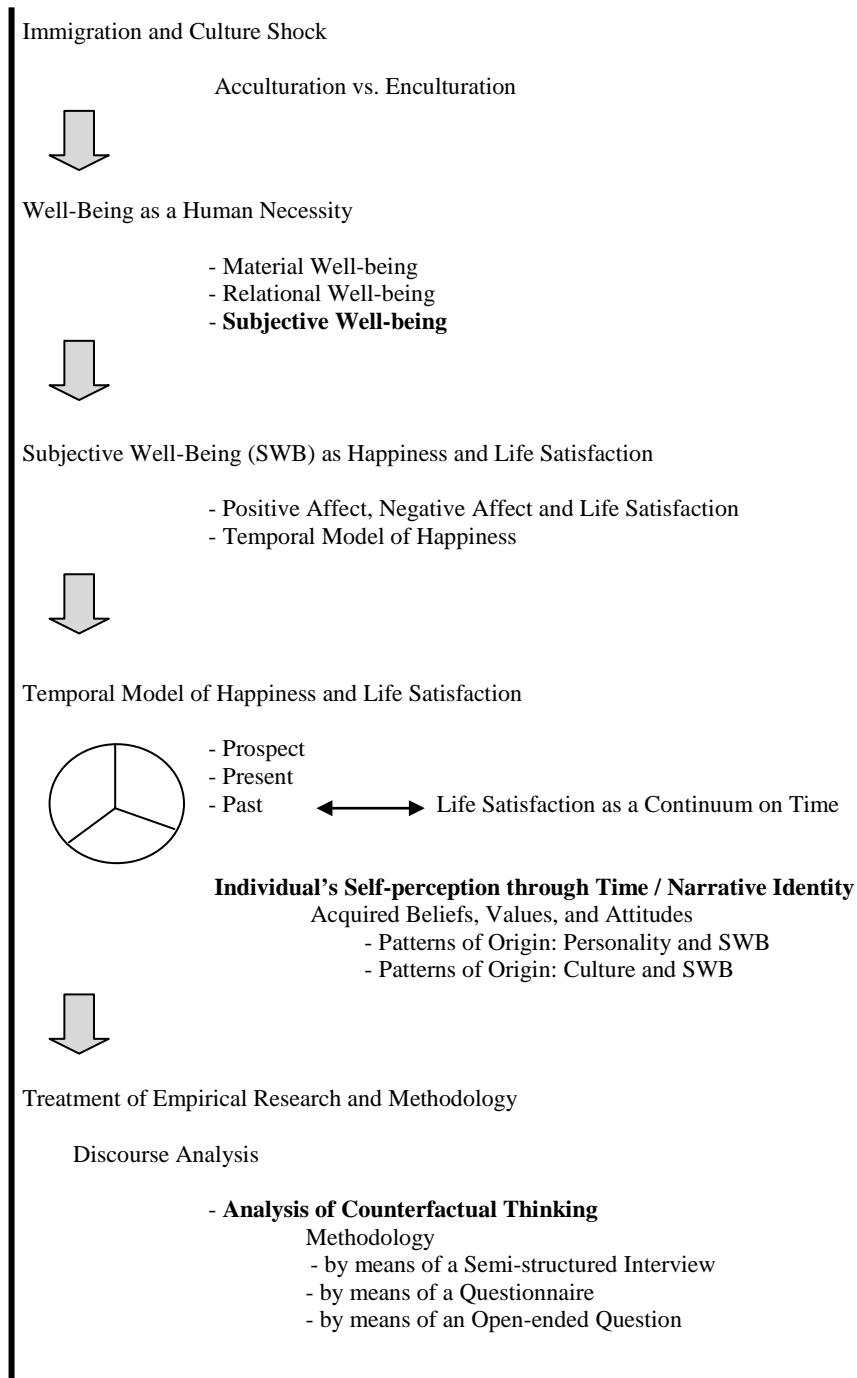


Figure 1.1. The Procedure of Research

An important topic bearing on the strength and weaknesses in the psychological and socio-cultural adaptation of immigrants in the host community concerns the beliefs, values, ideas originally acquired by such individuals prior to their process of migration, and how these mental traits influence their well-being, happiness and life satisfaction in the hosting society. Thus, this study is presented as an attempt to better understand the integration and adaptative processes of migrants by means of the analysis of their life satisfaction in the hosting country in comparison to the alternative of living at home. In



this regard, life satisfaction is understood as a continuum, which comes together with the individual's self-perception (as identity) built as a narrative. More specifically, the aim of this study is to observe migrants' explanations about how they evaluate psychological elements acquired in origin that they believe to be part of their identity (elements of their own self-perception) which, in turn, have favoured their integration in the hosting society.

The novelty of this research is also placed in the framework in which empirical data is obtained: the analysis of counterfactual thinking. Through semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and an open-ended question, this research has attempted to identify correlations between attitudes, values and beliefs, on the one hand, and subjective well-being and life satisfaction, on the other, by using counterfactual thinking constructions embedded in discourses. The use of the analysis of counterfactual thinking is considered to be an innovation in the manner a research project, which aims to evaluate psychological states by using the interface of discourse, is developed. The procedure of research developed in this thesis is shown in Figure 1.1.

The scope of analysis is particularized on Brazilian women who immigrated to Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain. Brazil presents a very interesting field of study on ethnicity and socio-cultural psychology. The processes of coexistence and integration Brazilians face with immigration, and the way they face this social phenomenon present a vast and attractive field for research. The most important feature of Brazilians is '*mestizaje*.' Brazil is one of the richest countries in the world regarding the mixing of ethnic groups. However, more important than their origin, the particular trend of Brazil is the mixture of cultures which has produced, in turn, an open-ended and plural identity. On the other hand, during the last thirty years, Brazil has also become a country of emigrants. But these individuals who emigrate bring with them the tradition of a multicultural environment. Accordingly, taking these elements into account, samples of Brazilian individuals seem to be a very interesting option for empirical research in the field of subjective well-being and life satisfaction as concepts embedded in the socio-cognitive perspective.

IMMIGRATION AND CULTURE SHOCK

Despite the fact that there is no consensus on a single definition of a 'migrant, "migrants might be defined by foreign birth, by foreign citizenship, or by their movement into a new country to stay temporarily (sometimes for as little as a year) or to settle for the long-term."³ Accordingly, immigration is the movement of people into another country or region to which they are not native in order to settle there. Establishing connections between different cultures is as old as history. People raised up in their origin culture have always translocated for different purposes, like business, education or visit and the

³ Anderson and Blinder, 2012: 1.



new society accepted them if they were generous or opposed them if they came for loot or to occupy.⁴ Thus, this dynamics produces physical and emotional responses in these individuals. So, moving from one culture to another can be an exciting experience or, on the contrary, a stressful one. In this group of people crossing cultures and geographies responds to different aims. However, a sense of culture shock seems to appear in all of them.

Certainly, if a transition shock is “a state of loss and disorientation precipitated by a change in one’s familiar environment that requires adjustment”⁵, then, as Geert Hofstede states, a “culture shock is the process of initial adjustment to an unfamiliar culture. It is a more-or-less sudden immersion into a non-specific state of uncertainty where the individual is not sure of what is expected from him or her, nor what to expect from other people. It can occur in any situation where an individual is forced to adjust to an unfamiliar social system where previous learning no longer applies.”⁶ According to Kalervo Oberg, a culture shock refers to the “anxiety that results from losing all of our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse”⁷, and Peter S. Adler refers to it as “a set of emotional reactions to the loss of perceptual reinforcements from one’s own culture, to new cultural stimuli which have little or no meaning, and to the misunderstanding of new and diverse experiences.”⁸ It is in this context that studies on integration of individuals and groups in a hosting society take all their meanings, and a great deal of sociological and psychological research is manifestly motivated by the concern for cultural effects on people’s health, which includes what is known as well-being and life satisfaction.

Within this framework, two concepts have been defined to represent the psycho-social tension that appears on individuals who migrate: acculturation and enculturation. Both can be seen as the opposed/reversing pattern of the other. The concept of acculturation describes the process of cultural change and adaptation that occurs when two or more ethnic groups come into contact with one another. One of the first definitions of acculturation was established in 1936 by Redfield, Linton and Herskovits as follows: “Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals sharing different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups.”⁹ The term refers to cultural change which results from prolonged and direct contact between two distinct cultural groups.¹⁰ The process of adaptation to a new cultural context consists on acquiring beliefs, behaviours and values that are reflective of the majority culture.¹¹

⁴ Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001: 4.

⁵ Bennett, 1998: 216.

⁶ Hofstede, Pedersen and Hofstede, 2002: 22.

⁷ Oberg, 1960: 177.

⁸ Adler, 1975 in Bennett, 1998: 215.

⁹ Redfield, Linton and Herskovits, 1936: 149.

¹⁰ See Berry, 1990a.

¹¹ See Marin, Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal and Perez-Stable, 1987.



High acculturation to the hosting culture has been found to relate to positive outcomes, such as lower rates of school dropout¹² and higher income.¹³

Acculturation has been linked to many outcomes with widely varied styles of investigation.¹⁴ The theoretical models that have guided research in the area of acculturation have evolved over time and have become increasingly sophisticated.¹⁵ In this regard, there is no universally accepted way to conceptualize and measure acculturation and its effects on individuals, families, and communities.¹⁶ While the study of acculturation is not new, much research remains to be done to fully understand the process and its impact on individuals and groups. In our study, we have tried to identify individuals' in-origin patterns of beliefs, preferences and values to test out both levels of acculturation and enculturation.

In 1967, Theodore Graves used the term *psychological acculturation* to describe the effects of acculturation at the individual level. This process involves changes that an individual experiences in terms of their attitudes, values, and identity as a result of being in contact with other cultures.¹⁷ In this regard, John Berry and his colleagues developed a bilinear model of acculturation in which one linearity represented “contact and participation (to what extent should they become involved in other cultural groups, or remain primarily among themselves)” and the other linearity represented “cultural maintenance (to what extent are cultural identity and characteristics considered to be important, and their maintenance striven for).”¹⁸ Thus, psychologically, adjusting to a new culture results in changes of immigrant's values, behaviours, and beliefs toward the hosting country. The degree of acculturation stress experienced typically depends on the amount of behaviour change required during the adaptation process.¹⁹

However, acculturation is a single dimension of a more complex process. The complexity is evident in research findings that show that acculturation is related not only to positive outcomes, but also negative outcomes such as mental health problems and social difficulties, delinquency, poorer diet, and substance abuse.²⁰ In this regard, several psychological explanations have been offered for the different stages immigrants pass through when adjusting to the hosting culture. For example, research developed by

¹² Martinez, DeGarmo and Eddy, 2004.

¹³ Mason, 2004.

¹⁴ Caetano and Schafer, 2000; Fridrich & Flannery, 1995; Koneru, Weisman de Mamani, Flynn & Betancourt, 2007; and Masten, Plata, Wenglar and Thedford, 1999.

¹⁵ Oetting and Beauvais, 1991.

¹⁶ Magaña, De la Rocha, Amsel, Magaña, Fernandez and Rulnick, 1996.

¹⁷ See Graves, 1967.

¹⁸ Segall, Dasen, Berry and Poortinga, 1999. See also Berry in Padilla, 1980.

¹⁹ Schmitz, 2001.

²⁰ See Ekbal, Kohn and Jansson, 1998; Ayala, Baquero and Klinger, 2008; Fridrich and Flannery, 1995; Koneru, Weisman de Mamani, Flynn and Betancourt, 1999; Unger, Cruz, Rohrbach, Risbis, Baezconde-Garbanati, Chen, et al. 2000; Vega, Kolody, Aguilar-Gaxiola, Alderete, Catalano and Caraveo-Anauaga, 1998; and Zemore, 2007.



Niles in Australia found that immigrant groups who preserved their values, traditions and culture (and thus maintained a strong ethnic identity) while partially adopting Australian culture in terms of language, education and societal norms, had a high sense of psychological wellbeing. This author argued that maintaining a strong sense of cultural identity was related to better mental health outcomes.²¹

Closely related to the construct of acculturation is the concept of enculturation. The concept of enculturation describes the opposite –the process of retaining distinct cultural identities, beliefs, and norms of behaviour that distinguish one ethnic group from another. First defined by Melville Jean Herskovits, enculturation refers to the process of socialization into and maintenance of the norms of one's indigenous culture, including its salient ideas, concepts, and values. Enculturation can be associated to the process by which individuals learn and adopt the ways and manners of their respective culture.²² Consistent with this explanation, Kim and Abreu proposed that enculturation could be used to describe the process of (re)learning and maintaining the norms of the indigenous culture, and acculturation be used to describe the process of adapting to the norms of the dominant culture.²³

Enculturation is related to ethnic identity development, whereas acculturation entails adopting a second culture. In other words, enculturation is first-culture learning and acculturation is second-culture learning.²⁴ In this context, first-culture learning involves acquiring one's mother tongue, and adopting traditional dress, food, music and dance, and religious rituals. Enculturation (into own ethnic culture) occurs through parenting styles, child-rearing practices, peer groups, day care, the education system and religious institutions.²⁵

In studying acculturation and enculturation, it is also important to consider the construct dimensions on which the two types of adherence can be observed and assessed. Although the definitions of acculturation and enculturation are relatively clear, the ways in which acculturation and enculturation have been measured vary greatly. José Szapocznik and his colleagues first elaborated on the ways of assessing acculturation and enculturation by proposing that it involves changes in behaviours and values. According to these authors, the behavioural dimension of acculturation includes language use and participation in various cultural activities (e.g., food consumption), whereas the values dimension reflects relational style, person–nature relationships, beliefs about human nature, and time orientation (e.g., present-focused, future-focused, or past-focused).²⁶

²¹ Niles in Lonner, Dinnel, Forgays and Hayes, 1999.

²² Matsumoto and Juang, 2004.

²³ See Kim and Abreu in Ponterotto, Casas, Suzuki and Alexander, 2001; and Kim in Leong, Inman, Ebreo, Yang, Kinoshita and Fu, 2007.

²⁴ Matsumoto and Juang, 2004: 155.

²⁵ Matsumoto and Juang, 2004.

²⁶ See Szapocznik, Scopetta, Kurtines and Aranalde, 1978.



More recently, Kim and Abreu reviewed the items in 33 instruments designed to measure acculturation and enculturation and, based on their finding, proposed that acculturation and enculturation constructs encompass four dimensions: behaviour, values, knowledge, and identity. Behaviour refers to friendship choice, preferences for television program and reading, participation in cultural activities, contact with indigenous culture (e.g., time spent in the country of origin), language use, food choice, and music preference. The value dimension refers to attitudes and beliefs about social relations, cultural customs, and cultural traditions, in addition gender roles and attitudes and ideas about health and illness. The knowledge dimension refers to culturally specific information such as names of historical leaders in the culture of origin and the dominant culture, and significance of culturally specific activities. The cultural identity dimension refers to attitudes toward one's cultural identification (e.g., preferred name is in family language), attitudes toward indigenous and dominant groups (e.g., feelings of pride toward the indigenous group), and the level of comfort toward the people of indigenous and dominant groups. In classifying identity as one of these four dimensions.²⁷ Additionally, these authors pointed out that the four dimensions of acculturation and enculturation are not unrelated to each other. For example, the behavioural and knowledge dimensions may be correlated, as behaviour is likely to be preceded by knowledge, a principle that also applies to other pairs of dimensions.²⁸

Much of the literature on acculturation has focused on placing individuals on a continuum or a single dimension that ranged from absolute adherence to values, beliefs, and behaviours of the hosting culture, to adherence to the values, beliefs, and behaviours of the culture of origin. However, evidence seems to recognize that these are two separate dimensions in which acculturation reflects movement toward a host culture, and enculturation is the process of acquiring and maintaining behaviours and values that reflect an individual's culture of origin.²⁹ In this regard, enculturation is a more recent construct than acculturation and it has been studied less widely. In addition, frequently enculturation is measured by acculturation indicators and procedures, and it is not reported as a separated construct.

Another concept that has been developed to support the analysis of immigration is that of biculturalism. Biculturalism is the combination of high acculturation with high enculturation. In this regard, evidence shows that individuals labelled as being bicultural are related to have fewer problem behaviours, higher academic competency, and cognitive advantages such as cognitive and linguistic flexibility³⁰. Biculturalism is also linked to a more varied set of achievement styles.³¹ Achievement styles are the different ways in which people go about reaching their goals. In addition, biculturalism has been found to relate to increased life satisfaction, social support, and psychological

²⁷ Kim and Abreu in Ponterotto, Casas, Suzuki and Alexander, 2001.

²⁸ Kim and Abreu in Ponterotto, Casas, Suzuki and Alexander, 2001.

²⁹ Storino, 2001.

³⁰ Coatsworth, Maldonado-Molina, Pantin and Szapocznik, 2005.

³¹ Gomez and Fassinger, 1994.



adjustment, and better mental health outcomes.³² This evidence suggests that individuals who acquire features of the majority culture in the hosting society (mainly Western countries with high standards of development), while simultaneously maintain their cultural practices receive the benefits of acculturating and the protective effects of enculturation.

In sum, migration exposes individuals to unique developmental and stressing adaptational demands. To adapt, immigrants choose different combinations of acculturation and enculturation strategies the purpose of which is to better adapt to the new situation. The mechanisms that immigrants adopt intend to fulfil as much as possible a personal well-being development, since empirical research suggests that immigration can have an adverse effect on the psychological and physical health of immigrants. Certainly, because migration often requires a significant process of adaptation, involving an intensive use of one's psychological and social resources, it is expected that a relationship would exist between immigration and mental health problems.³³

Migration alone does not necessarily impact adversely on well-being of individuals despite the culture shock is always present in individual's responses. Consistent evidence shows the prevalence of mental health problems amongst immigrants in a number of countries.³⁴ The necessity of empirical research covering a wide range of ethnic groups regarding well-being and mental health have emerged involving governments, policy-makers and scientists. In fact, international organizations have stated the necessity to widen the perspective of human development. So, the standard human development concept dated from the *1990 Human Development Report* (UNDP, 1990) led to growing acknowledgement of the multidimensional nature of development, and to different strategies for moving from promotion of growth to promotion of well-being. Moreover, Amartya Sen's capability's approach³⁵ proposed a normative framework to evaluate individual well-being, social relationships and changes in society. This new point of departure embarked on the task of designing human-centred development alternatives for inclusive well-being, one which went further from economic and income-focused universals, and recognized that the analysis of individual needs must take into account standards of living (standard of health, standard of education, material well-being) and elements of quality of life (quality of health, quality of education, quality of environment).³⁶

³² Rodriguez, 2007; and Shpiegelman, 2007.

³³ See, for instance, Carmel and Lazer, 1998.

³⁴ Australia: Khavarpour & Rissel, 1997; McDonald et al., 1996; and Thompson et al., 2002; Israel: Carmel, 2001; Canada: Dunn & Dyck, 2000; Kopec et al., 2001; and the United States, US: Gonzalez et al., 2001.

³⁵ See Sen, 1981; Sen, 1985; and Sen, 1999.

³⁶ See Bérenger and Verdier-Chouchane, 2007.



THE NATURE OF WELL-BEING

It is generally accepted that the most effective way to maximize happiness seems to change rising levels of economic development. In subsistence-level societies, happiness is closely linked within group solidarity, and religiosity and national pride are important determinants of happiness. However, at higher levels of economic security, the impact of free choice surpasses that of material solidarity.³⁷ In this regard, the fact that socio-economic attainment is not enough for the normal integration and development of immigrants, and that it has been acknowledged the existence of social-psychological costs to those who migrate, the concept of *well-being* has been introduced within the field of immigration studies. Certainly, following the general perspective in human being development, the new findings, as those developed by Richard Easterlin,³⁸ Ed Diener and Shigehiro Oishi,³⁹ amongst others, support the idea that “research on happiness should not just focus on economic growth, but also on non-economic aspects of well-being.”⁴⁰ Furthermore, “the scientific study of well-being has dramatically expanded in recent years. Although as early as 1948 the World Health Organization stated that mental health is more than the absence of mental illness, it was not until recently that psychologists began to systematically study the causes, correlates, and consequences of flourishing mental health and states of well-being.”⁴¹ And this perspective is also being applied to migrants who are willing to integrate in hosting societies.

Well-being emerges as a ubiquitous intellectual concept in the study of poverty, quality of life, health and many other issues, but it remains an ambiguous and erratic concept. Well-being is a complex concept to define. It is an abstraction that covers many aspects of life, embracing at least “well-feeling”, “well-having” and “well-living”. Literature on ‘well-being’ is massive and diverse. A large part nowadays consists of books of advice on how to feel fine, giving more priority to one’s family and other personal relationships, or religion. Apart from this approach, another part of contemporary publication on well-being comes from academic economics which examines a set of concepts based on economic methods with reference to a range of material evidence and indicators. These analysis do research and query assumptions behind the treatment of ‘welfare’ –personal and social– in modern economics. In addition, “another philosophical style reflects less on generalized impersonal social science sources, and more, as done in the Aristotelian or existentialist traditions, on insights from history, fiction, drama, biography and the narrative study of lives.”⁴² Finally, and according to Des Gasper, “a third body of investigation consciously on well-being is the huge

³⁷ Inglehart, Foa, Peterson and Welzel, 2008.

³⁸ See Easterlin, 2005; and Easterlin, 1995.

³⁹ Diener and Oishi in Diener and Suh, 2000.

⁴⁰ Inglehart, Foa, Peterson and Welzel, 2008: 280.

⁴¹ Gallagher in Lopez, 2010: 1030.

⁴² Gasper in McGillivray, 2007: 25.



literature from other social sciences, especially psychology. These use a broader range of evidence and concepts.”⁴³

Within this framework, the category *well-being* seems to refer to whatever is assessed in an evaluation of a person’s situation, or, more fittingly and narrowly, in any such evaluation which is focused on the person’s ‘being’.⁴⁴ The term ‘welfare’ can mean how well people live, or what is done by others to help the needy. In the former usage, ‘welfare’ is typically treated interchangeably with well-being. Thus, the concept of well-being is best seen as an abstraction and can be used to refer to any of many well-evaluated aspects of life.⁴⁵

Given the multiplicity of approaches in defining and theorizing wellbeing, McNaught,⁴⁶ for instance, has attempted to identify and articulate the principle factors and relationships that create what is perceived to be ‘well-being’ through the development of what he terms a *definitional framework* of wellbeing. This framework is predicated on the idea that wellbeing constitutes an area of research and practice that has objective and subjective components, where both need to be taken into account to make analytical evaluations.

The framework broadens wellbeing to a range of domains beyond individual subjectivity and extracts it from customary affiliations with health to incorporate the family, community and society as well as a range of environmental, geographic, socio-economic and political forces. The framework perceives wellbeing as dynamically constructed by its actors through an interplay between their circumstances, locality, activities and psychological resources, including interpersonal relations with, for example, families and significant others. Individuals alter their own accounts of their lives with reference to several domains –individual wellbeing; family wellbeing; community wellbeing and societal wellbeing.

However, a useful manner to organize the concept of well-being in relation to the individual is by means of three dimensions that emerge as a synthesis of the more traditional ways of conceptualising and measuring well-being. In this respect, wellbeing takes account of ‘material wellbeing’, ‘subjective wellbeing’ and ‘relational wellbeing’. Figure 1.2 shows schematically the disposition of the dimensions of the well-being model under the individual perspective. The stimulation of integrative processes for a general well-being acknowledges that focusing on just one or two of them diminish potential understanding. So, individuals’ own perceptions and experience of life matter, as do their relationships and their material standard of living.

⁴³ Gasper in McGillivray, 2007: 25.

⁴⁴ See, for instance, Gasper, 2002.

⁴⁵ See, for instance, Travers and Richardson, 1993 in Ackerman, Kiron, Goodwin, Harris and Gallagher, 1997.

⁴⁶ McNaught in Knight and McNaught, 2011.



The approach derived from this model of wellbeing integrates material, relational and subjective dimensions. The *material* refers to the ‘stuff’ of wellbeing, such as food, body health, shelter and the physical environment. In practical application this typically refers most immediately to economic assets and income, but it should not be restricted to this. The *relational* concerns social interaction, the rules and practices that govern ‘who gets what and why.’ It involves power and (social) identity, the connections between people and also the making of difference between them. It is the arena of action, which brings the material and subjective to life. The *subjective* concerns cultural values, ideologies and beliefs and also people’s own perceptions of their situation.⁴⁷

The triangle of well-being shows interdependence, that is, there is an acknowledgement that material, relational and subjective aspects of wellbeing are intrinsically linked. Thus, this three-dimension model of wellbeing approach adds value to atomized approaches. Thus, wellbeing emerges in the interplay of objective (people’s circumstances) and subjective (their perceptions). The subjective at the apex makes clear that even material welfare or standards of living are derived through values and culture.⁴⁸

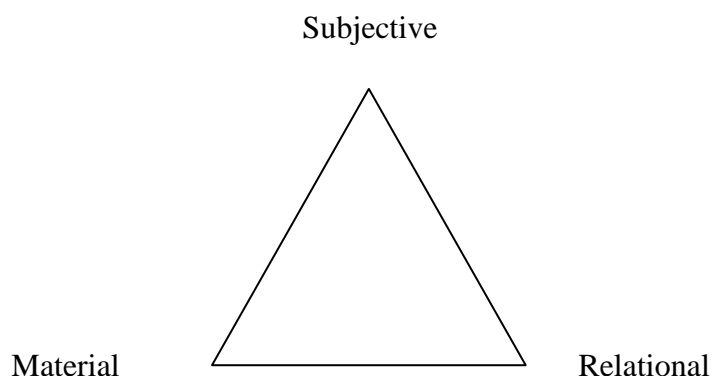


Figure 1.2. The Triangle of Well-being.⁴⁹

Generally, this model of wellbeing represents a coherent way of framing this complexity so that it is more amenable for research thinking. This means that indicators must be thought and developed as belonging to each dimension and, then, finding ways to integrate these into development research design and into monitoring and evaluations systems. The indicators can be found in previous practices or can be designed ad hoc for specific purposes. At this moment it is acknowledged that income-based and human development indicators deal primarily with material and objectively observable (or

⁴⁷ White, 2009:10.

⁴⁸ White, 2009:10.

⁴⁹ Source: White, 2009.



reportable) dimensions of human wellbeing. Since this is a research focus on well-being, there would be necessary to develop a combination of ‘needs satisfaction indicators’, ‘human agency indicators’ and ‘quality of life indicators’.”⁵⁰

While it is an easy task to evaluate the material, the relational and the subjective as different areas of life, or ‘domains’, in an independent manner, the approach of this model stresses that these are in fact interlinked dimensions. So, for instance, land is typically thought of in material terms. However, land only becomes a *livelihood resource* when transformed through the *human* activity of labour, the *social* contracts of ownership or use-rights, and *cultural* meanings and values.⁵¹ In addition, another way to think about the implications of this model is the fact that for any element within people’s well-being, there are potentially three aspects to be considered: what people *have or do not have* (material); what people *do or cannot do* with it (relational); what people *think or feel* (subjective).⁵²

In sum, the analysis of well-being at individual level is an important component for the general analysis of well-being, since the individual becomes the most important active agent as possessing the power and consciousness to interpret and design wellbeing. So, from individual well-being, subjective well-being appears as a new concept to be evaluated. Drawing upon the work of Diener and his colleagues, subjective well-being includes positive and negative evaluations about, for example, work and life satisfaction and affective reactions to life events such as joy and sadness.⁵³ Whilst individuals actively create and interpret wellbeing, it is capable of being influenced by socially defined concepts of wellbeing such as ‘how life should be’ and other standard definitions.⁵⁴

The introduction of the analysis of counterfactual thinking (the generation of scenarios of how life would have been) in the framework of this research responds to this manner of how individuals evaluate subjective well-being and life satisfaction. The making of comparisons and the generation of different alternatives is a natural and frequent way of thinking and, accordingly, counterfactual thinking analysis becomes a reliable and useful tool to better understand the emotional registers of individuals. Individual well-being is multi-dimensional, and it incorporates subjective experiences from different fields of life such as professional career, affect from family and friends, all of them belonging to the emotional and moral experience of life. In this research, we acknowledge that these elements are ‘objectivable’ and, thus, they can be subjected to external observation and measurement. More specifically, from within counterfactual statements, it has been possible to obtain causal attributions in the life’s decisions of individuals under scrutiny. Moreover, the utilization of counterfactual thinking by

⁵⁰ See McGregor in Gough and McGregor, 2007.

⁵¹ See, for instance, White and Ellison, 2007.

⁵² McGregor in Gough and McGregor, 2007.

⁵³ See Diener, Oishi and Lucas, 2003; and Diener, 2005.

⁵⁴ See, for instance, Veenhoven in Eid and Larsen, 2008.



migrants is a constant cognitive pattern, as regular comparisons between current life and the one at the homeland are developed as possible alternatives and their consequences on individual's situation.

SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING, HAPPINESS AND LIFE SATISFACTION

Generally, “the rules of social life establish a framework in which individuals are able to interact with one another and to help each other toward the mutual satisfaction of their goals. But, inevitably, situations occur in which the course of life does not go smoothly and problems arise. The ability to cope with these situations without undue pain to oneself or others is one of the common criteria used for distinguishing “mental health” [.../...] Such a conception assumes that the causes of these psychological disorders lie in the interaction between long-term personality dispositions of individuals and the realities of their life situations.”⁵⁵ Accordingly, the migrant process represents a clear social dynamics in which individuals that migrate experience dramatically the tension between their personal dispositions and the reality of the host society.

The search for a fulfilling accommodation within the social dynamics of the new society represents a normal purpose for those individuals. In this regard, well-being and happiness appear to be as pursuit as it is for the rest of the members of the society. Certainly, “when one looks at the various meanings attributed to the notion of difficulties in living, one particular variable –happiness or a sense of psychological well-being– stands out as being of primary importance, both on a commonsense basis and for historical reasons. Discussions on human happiness, concerning both the best means of achieving it and whether or not it is a proper goal of human activity, have been frequent throughout history. [.../ However] there is still an agreement that happiness and well-being are the goal of men's actions and still disagreement between the “many” and the “wise” concerning what sorts of things make people happy.”⁵⁶

Apart from the material aspects of well-being, “researchers studying well-being have recently begun to explore the potential of integrating the theories and components of hedonic, psychological, and social well-being into a comprehensive model of flourishing mental health.”⁵⁷ In this regard, subjective well-being constitutes the first step-variable and conceptual variable to take into account for the development of this research program. So, in psychological terms, subjective well-being (SWB) is a multi-faceted construct, consisting of several components, such as evaluative judgments of

⁵⁵ Bradburn, 1969: 2.

⁵⁶ Bradburn, 1969: 6.

⁵⁷ Gallagher, 2010.



one's life, positive memories, feeling a purpose in life, optimism, and the relative amounts of positive and negative affect over time. Empirically, however, the facets of this construct coalesce into three distinct components; a cognitive component consisting of judgments of life satisfaction, and an emotional component consisting of high levels of positive affect and low levels of negative affect.⁵⁸

Although those components are empirically correlated, nevertheless they can theoretically be discriminated one from each other. In population studies these three components emerge as distinct but related factors and some studies show different roles for positive and negative emotions in terms of how they relate to life satisfaction judgments in different nations.⁵⁹

Life satisfaction correlates moderately with high positive affect (PA) and inversely with negative affect (NA), but is nevertheless a cognitive judgment that is at least conceptually distinct from affective processes. Life satisfaction shows high levels of stability in adulthood and is most likely difficult, though not impossible, to change in substantial ways. Although life satisfaction to some extent may be influenced by affective states or contextual factors, mostly it represents an integrated judgment of how one's life as a whole is going, and it is based on many different aspects or domains of person's life. The emotional components of positive and negative affects, on the other hand, are much more reactive to situational influences, and more amenable to efforts to manage or remediate these affective states.⁶⁰ Because of this differentiation, and given the stability through time of its empirical results, the concept of life satisfaction can be constructed and defined as a synonym of happiness as many scientists agree.

Nonetheless, happiness is a contested term because of the different interpretations that this has taken along history. As a simple statement it could be said that happiness is primarily a subjective-psychological phenomenon “for which the final judge is whoever lives inside a person's skin.”⁶¹ At present, “the term *happiness* –which is acknowledged to be an evolution of the Ancient Greek term *Eudaimonia*– is a synonym of the psychological elements of well-being. So, over the years the “happiness problem” has been defined variously as an ethical, a theological, a political, or an economic problem. Only recently has it come to be defined as a psychological problem, that is, a psychological concept related to problems of social adjustment.”⁶²

Contemporary research and the change experienced in societies on values and beliefs have put the psychological perspective of *happiness* at the centre of the debate. So, “viewing happiness as adjustment and unhappiness as maladjustment to one's

⁵⁸ Larsen, 2009: 248.

⁵⁹ Larsen, 2009: 248.

⁶⁰ Larsen, 2009: 248.

⁶¹ Myers and Diener, 1995: 11.

⁶² Bradburn, 1969: 7.



environment leads subtly to equating unhappiness with at least the milder forms of mental illness, and happiness with mental health.”⁶³ Thus, this perspective also permits to acknowledge that well-being is a term that embeds both the individual and the society. Well-being as a global concept acknowledges to what extent societies shape and influence individuals as the World Values Survey demonstrates.⁶⁴

Additionally, new research has established a conceptual division about the concept of subjective well-being. On the one hand, there is the hedonic model of well-being. It is commonly referred to as subjective or emotional wellbeing or happiness. This research tradition was pioneered by Ed Diener, whose seminal review paper in 1984⁶⁵ on subjective well-being proposed a model of well-being focusing on an individual’s cognitive and affective evaluations of his or her life. More specifically, “Diener and his colleagues have defined hedonic (or subjective) well-being as the frequent experience of pleasant emotions and moods, the infrequent experience of negative emotions and moods, and high levels of self-reported life satisfaction. Decades of research provide support for hedonic well-being as a reliable and valid conceptualization of well-being.”⁶⁶ On the other hand, “the eudaimonic tradition of well-being focuses on the aspects of human functioning that promote and reflect the pursuit of meaningful life goals. Exemplifying this tradition, Carol Ryff⁶⁷ and colleagues at the University of Wisconsin have developed a model of eudaimonic well-being that is intended to provide a holistic and theoretically grounded model of positive functioning. Specifically, Ryff and colleagues have identified six related but distinct factors that are proposed to encompass the eudaimonic idea: autonomy; environmental mastery; personal growth; positive relations with others; purpose in life; and self-acceptance. This model is an extension of the Aristotelian philosophical tradition, which identified the pursuit of one’s “daemon,” or true self, as the ultimate purpose in life. Recent factor analytic research supports Ryff’s model of eudaimonic well-being and the proposed theoretical distinctions between the hedonic and eudaimonic aspects of well-being.”⁶⁸

The purpose of this thesis is to focus mainly on the developments emerged from the concept of hedonic well-being because it fits much better within its purpose. This is so because there is an intention to associate in a holistic manner the terms subjective well-being, happiness and life satisfaction. Certainly, to date, the hedonic model of well-being has been the most extensively studied. Hedonic well-being is also commonly referred to as subjective or emotional wellbeing or happiness. Moreover, developing the research in this way does not limit its general scope since “despite that hedonistic and eudaimonic traditions in well-being research have evolved from different philosophical and theoretical roots, yet modern day hedonistic (subjective/emotional) and eudaimonic (psychological and social) aspects of well-being appear to be closely related

⁶³ Bradburn, 1969: 7-8.

⁶⁴ World Values Survey: 2013.

⁶⁵ See Diener, 1984.

⁶⁶ Gallagher in Lopez, 2010: 1030.

⁶⁷ See Ryff, 1989.

⁶⁸ Gallagher in Lopez, 2010: 1031.



components of psychological functioning. Although these models have previously been presented as competing alternatives, recent theoretical and empirical work has focused on how these theories and components of well-being complement one another and can be integrated into comprehensive models of flourishing mental health.”⁶⁹

Thus, and taking into account a general view, “research indicates that happiness is not a one-dimensional entity, but rather consists of frequent positive affect (emotions), infrequent negative affect and life satisfaction. Given that the affective and cognitive elements are related, albeit separable, researchers prefer the term subjective well-being rather than the more colloquially derived term “happiness” to *fleet* its multidimensional nature.”⁷⁰ Because of this the introduction of the idea of life satisfaction can be useful. Certainly, “life satisfaction (i.e., cognitive evaluation of one’s life based on self-selected standards) is one of the key components of happiness.”⁷¹

Life satisfaction assessments have been used as part of the evaluation process across a variety of psychosocial, educational, and medical settings. So, “life satisfaction reports incorporate objective standards such as relative income, employment status, and availability of environmental resources with mood states, attitudes, goals and expectations. Given the multiple standards that may be used by individuals, most studies have examined life satisfaction from a global perspective. This perspective assumes a “top-down” approach in which mean global scores presumably reflect individuals’ perceptions of their life quality after taking all relevant life domains into account (e.g., relations with others, quality of living environment, and so on).”⁷²

A number of important characteristics are related to life satisfaction which is useful for the purpose of this thesis. For example, “life satisfaction judgments appear to be relatively stable, yet sensitive to change, thus facilitating researchers’ abilities to monitor differences over time and in response to various life events. Further, and perhaps most important, life satisfaction is not simply a by-product of life events, but influences important life outcomes. For example, life satisfaction has been shown to predict interpersonal, educational, and vocational success as well as mental and physical health among adults. Life satisfaction has also been shown to be negatively associated with multiple risk behaviours in adolescence, including alcohol and drug use, sexual risk taking, aggressive behaviour, victimization, and unhealthy eating and exercise behaviour. Although differentiated from measures of psychopathology, levels of life satisfaction predict how some individuals respond to psychosocial interventions, suggesting that the construct, traditionally of interest primarily to basic science researchers, may be of import to clinical professionals (e.g., applied psychologists) as well.”⁷³

⁶⁹ Gallagher in Lopez, 2010: 1030.

⁷⁰ Gilman, Huebnerb and Buckmana in Lopez, 2009: 582.

⁷¹ Gilman, Huebnerb and Buckmana in Lopez, 2009: 582.

⁷² Gilman, Huebnerb and Buckmana in Lopez, 2009: 582.

⁷³ Gilman, Huebnerb and Buckmana in Lopez, 2009: 582.

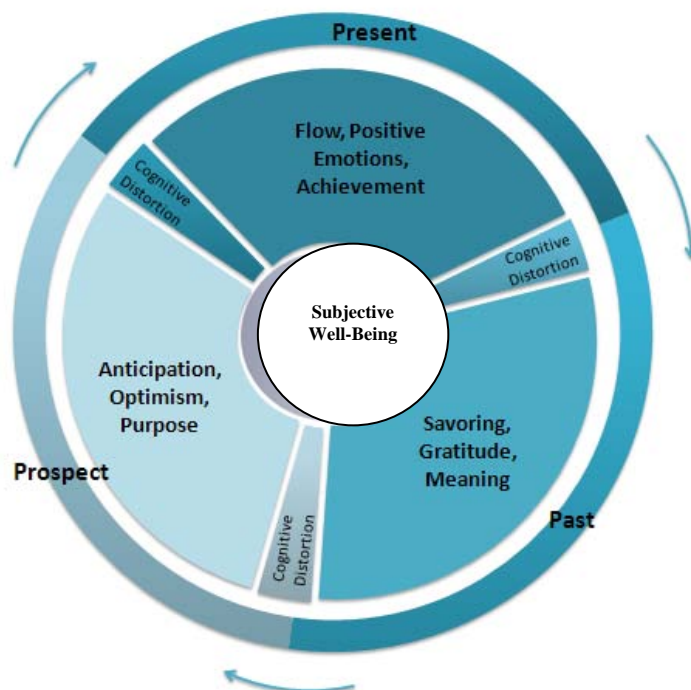


Figure 1.3. The 3P Model of the Components of Subjective Well-Being.⁷⁴

Given the information provided previously, it is interesting to mention the works of Martin E. P. Seligman⁷⁵. In 2002, he proposed a theory of happiness that is similar to Aristotle's eudaimonia. He stated that authentic happiness is a blend of hedonic and eudaimonic elements. He parses authentic happiness into three scientifically manageable components: the pleasant life, the engaged life and the meaningful life. The pleasant life successfully pursues positive emotion about the present, past, and the future. The second component of happy life in Seligman's theory is the engaged life, a life that pursues engagement, involvement, and absorption in work, love, and leisure, in a dynamics that creates a flow in the engagement. The third component of authentic happiness is the meaningful life. It consists of attachment to, and the service of, something larger than oneself, which can be the family, a scientific project, a sport career and so on.⁷⁶ In sum, *happiness* is achieved upon identifying and cultivating one's signature strengths (e.g., curiosity, vitality, gratitude) daily in work, love, and play. Three distinct paths exist. The pleasant path involves experiencing positive emotions about the past (e.g., forgiveness, contentment), present (e.g., joy, ebullience), and future (e.g., optimism, hope).⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Source: Durayappah, 2011: 690.

⁷⁵ See Seligman, 2002.

⁷⁶ Rashid in Lopez, 2009: 73.

⁷⁷ Froh in Lopez, 2009: 456.



According to this approach, a temporal perspective appears regarding the study of happiness. In this regard, it is also interesting to introduce the 3P Model of Subjective Well-Being developed by Adorée Durayappah.⁷⁸ As exposed in Figure 1.3., the construction of subjective well-being is developed in a temporal manner. According to her, “a temporal model of subjective well-being, called the 3P Model, is a parsimonious, unifying theory, which accounts for, as well as unites, disparate theories and measurements. The 3P Model categorizes the components of subjective well-being under temporal states of the Present, the Past and the Prospect (Future). The model indicates how each state is important to a global evaluation of subjective well-being, and how each state is distinct yet connected to the other states. Additionally, the model explains how measures of subjective well-being are affected by cognitive biases (e.g., peak-end rule, impact bias, retrospective bias), which factor into evaluation of temporal states, and meta-biases (e.g., temporal perspective), which factor into global evaluations of life situations.”⁷⁹

This model is very useful because it permits the objectification of the theoretical association of time and subjective well-being, since “the notion of time and temporal perspectives has only recently gained momentum in its association with understanding SWB.”⁸⁰ Nonetheless, the necessity to create this association seems clear “since human brain organizes events into the past, present and future, SWB can also be considered in the past, present and future.”⁸¹ In this case, “the model serves to explain the relationship of momentary experiences with global evaluation and explain discrepancies in moving from one evaluation to the next.”⁸² This 3P Model “evidences the notion that subjective well-being is a temporal component, for we not only desire to pursue happiness (Prospect), but also experience it (Present), as well as protect our previously acquired happiness (Past). Because of this, this model incorporates personal preferences (values, attitudes and beliefs) towards components of SWB and temporal preferences to create individually meaningful well-being that remains relevant as the individual’s preferences evolve and change.”⁸³ The ‘Past-Present-Future’ relation is also the core of identity understood as a life story narrative, one which also includes other possible comparative life alternatives introduced by counterfactual thinking.

In this regard, the usefulness of this modelling in relation to this thesis refers to the acknowledgement of the influence of originally acquired beliefs, values and attitudes into the responses on current individuals’ SWB. Bringing back some patterns of thinking and of feeling from previous stages of own’s life in a manner that produce subjective well-being in the present is a process that occurs in individuals. Remembering refers to a process of self reflection. In this regard, Bryant has suggested that happiness is concerned not just with the ability to feel pleasure but also with the

⁷⁸ Durayappah, 2011.

⁷⁹ Durayappah, 2011: 681.

⁸⁰ Durayappah, 2011: 681.

⁸¹ Durayappah, 2011: 686.

⁸² Durayappah, 2011: 686.

⁸³ Durayappah, 2011: 710.



capacity to regulate pleasure, find it, manipulate it, and sustain it. The framework of this general model builds on managing and maximizing happiness (as well as minimizing unpleasantness) as it morphs through time.⁸⁴

Our thoughts as individuals are utilized constantly to prepare ourselves for the future, but thoughts contain also the ingredient of memory, that is, the past. Thoughts are used to permit successful behaviour and, in this regard, human beings take advantage of the accumulated ‘knowledge’ provided by life experience. Moreover, “autobiographical memory encompasses memory for significant personal experiences and knowledge of the self and, consequently, is critical for personal identity and psychological wellbeing. Although autobiographical memory, like many other cognitive faculties, has been traditionally viewed as an individual matter and a product of the mind or brain, research in the past two decades has revealed the central role of culture in human cognition and remembering. Recent theories of autobiographical memory have increasingly emphasized the constructive nature of memory in the cultural context, and empirical findings have further accentuated the influence of culture on autobiographical remembering.”⁸⁵ In this regard, Boyer seems to go to the point when he states that “speaking in terms of evolution, vivid memory and imaginative foresight might be crucial cognitive devices for decision making.” However, the question of how is this important to subjective well-being appears in the debate. Individuals constantly base decisions of how their future self might feel on their present and past self. Boyer continues by explaining that memory and imagination may act as a brake on impulsiveness by partially offsetting time-discounting with counter-reward scenarios. Hence, individuals can weigh feelings of the past or future against feelings in the present in order to make a decision for their SWB.⁸⁶ In this regard, a distinction appears between imagining and remembering. The former takes more time than the latter. In relation to this, Russell pointed out that while memory consists of a precoded set of events and values and thus comes quickly, imagination is slower and more deliberate because the event needs to be created from scratch. This implies that the past could influence SWB more than the future because information in the past is easier to access.”⁸⁷

However, it is also acknowledged that cultural effects on people’s attitudes, beliefs and, thus, life satisfaction are difficult to be analysed, checked and measured. However, immigration and cross-cultural studies have contributed in a wide manner to this purpose by permitting the observation of individuals during real life situations of adaptation, integration and day-by-day continuous decision making.⁸⁸ In this regard, evidence shows that “although personality can explain a significant amount of the variability in subjective well-being (SWB), life circumstances also influence long-term levels. Cultural variables explain differences in mean levels of SWB and appear to be

⁸⁴ See Bryant, 2003.

⁸⁵ Wang, 2011.

⁸⁶ Boyer, 2008.

⁸⁷ Russell, 2003.

⁸⁸ See, for instance, Berry in Holtzman and Bornemann, 1990b; and Schmitz in Alder and Gielen, 2001.



due to objective factors such as wealth, to norms dictating appropriate feelings and how important SWB is considered to be, and to the relative approach versus avoidance tendencies of societies. Culture can also moderate which variables most influence SWB. Although it is challenging to assess SWB across societies, the measures have some degree of cross-cultural validity.”⁸⁹

Evidence of cultural effects have been tested and studied in the last years. The fields of investigation on cultural effects are as diverse as their influence on the behaviour, preferences and beliefs of immigrants, even of those of second generation. So, for instance, research on female labour force, participation, fertility, labour market regulation, redistribution, growth, financial development, among others have been explored intensively.⁹⁰ In addition, effects of cultural norms and social values were found at different levels of social activity. There is a famous research which investigated the social behaviour of well-educated individuals: the diplomats of United Nations. The investigation demonstrated the “effect of corruption norms: diplomats from high-corruption countries (on the basis of existing survey-based indices) accumulated unpaid parking violations. In 2002, enforcement authorities acquired the right to confiscate diplomatic license plates of violators. Unpaid violations dropped sharply in response. Cultural norms and (particularly in this context) legal enforcement are both important determinants for corruption.”⁹¹ Taking these fields of research into account, the exploration of Brazilian specific cultural traits became an interesting starting point for this research. In sum, with this 3P Model, the construction of a continuum between past and present facilitates the understanding of memory as an important psychological element of human beings, one which includes both the analytical and the emotional dimensions. So, the study of happiness and life satisfaction with the incorporation of the temporal variable could represent a successful path of research in the years to come.

RESEARCH ON SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING: THE ROLE OF COUNTERFACTUAL THINKING

The main approach in which this thesis operates is that of counterfactual thinking analysis. The analysis of counterfactual thinking is expected to provide a fruitful understanding of how subjective well-being and life satisfaction work among immigrants. In this regard, the analysis of counterfactuals is not specifically a methodology of research but it is an intellectual approach to cognitive production that includes both ideas and emotions. Certainly, in her study Adoreé Durayappah acknowledges the capacity to study subjective well-being by means of counterfactual thinking given that “when making predictions about the future, we consider not only the present but also the transition to the present. [...] Many cognitive biases result from

⁸⁹ Diener, Oishi and Lucas, 2003: 403.

⁹⁰ See, for instance, Fernández and Fogli, 2009; and Fernández, 2010.

⁹¹ Fisman and Miguel, 2007: 1020.



comparisons and the resulting discrepancies. Counterfactual thinking also affects SWB.⁹² Counterfactual thinking can be used as a means of comparison for evaluating the present. [...] In norm theory,⁹³ reality is continuously experienced in a context of relevant counterfactual alternatives, each scenario evoking representations of what could have been and what was expected to be. The easier it is to construct a counterfactual scenario, the more the comparison affects the evaluation of subjective well-being.”⁹⁴

For the purposes of this thesis, the term *counterfactual* refers to alternative versions of the past. The counterfactual basis proposed to participants was the one that referred to alternative scenarios of how their lives would have been if they had not decided to immigrate. With it, we tried to make them evoke their past in comparison to their present and to an alternative life, so that a more accurate evaluation on their life satisfaction and well-being could emerge. Past research has also examined factors that lead to the generation of counterfactuals in response to evaluative stances and emotional aspects, including blame assignment,⁹⁵ outcome valence,⁹⁶ moods,⁹⁷ regret,⁹⁸ shame and guilt,⁹⁹ happiness¹⁰⁰, mood,¹⁰¹ self-esteem,¹⁰² pessimism and optimism,¹⁰³ and categorical cut-off points.¹⁰⁴ These sorts of counterfactual thoughts are pervasive in adult mental life and play an integral role in higher-level cognition such as deductive reasoning.¹⁰⁵ The phenomenon of counterfactual thinking is a normal part of our cognition. As Neal Roese and James Olson stated, “counterfactual thinking is something familiar to nearly everyone. Even if they have not previously heard the term ‘counterfactual,’ people instantly recognize it, once it has been defined for them, as something with which they are intimately acquainted.”¹⁰⁶ In sum, counterfactuals have been implicated in diverse cognitive activities, ranging from simple imagination beyond reality, and fantasy¹⁰⁷ to the exploration of possibilities in reasoning.¹⁰⁸ To summarize, people tend to think not only about the events that actually happened but also how those events might have been different. So, this type of thinking becomes evident when

⁹² See Roese and Olson, 1995b.

⁹³ See Kahneman and Miller, 1986.

⁹⁴ Durayappah, 2011: 693. See also Kahneman and Miller, 1986: 153.

⁹⁵ See, for instance, Miller and Gunasegaram, 1990; and N’gbala and Branscombe, 1995.

⁹⁶ See, for instance, Roese and Hur, 1997; and Sanna and Turley, 1996.

⁹⁷ See, for instance, Roese, 1994.

⁹⁸ See, for instance, Gilovich and Medvec, 1994; Landman, 1987; and Mandel, 2003.

⁹⁹ See, for instance, Mandel, 2003; and Niedenthal, Tangney and Gavanski, 1994.

¹⁰⁰ See, for instance, Medvic, Madey, and Gilovich, 1995; and Johnson, 1986.

¹⁰¹ See, for instance, Sanna, Turley-Ames, and Meier, 1999.

¹⁰² See, for instance, Roese and Olson in Zanna, 1997; Roese and Olson, 1993; and Sanna, Turley-Ames and Meier, 1999.

¹⁰³ See, for instance, Sanna, 1996.

¹⁰⁴ Medvec and Savitsky, 1997.

¹⁰⁵ See Johnson-Laird and Byrne, 1991; and Gilovich and Medvec 1994.

¹⁰⁶ Roese and Olson in Roese and Olson, 1995b:170.

¹⁰⁷ See, for instance, Sternberg and Gastel, 1989.

¹⁰⁸ See, for instance, Byrne and Tasso, 1999; and Johnson-Laird and Byrne, 2002.



migrants make some reflection about their current situation in a host country. Counterfactual thinking is a frequent psychological strategy in migrant's day-by-day life. Possible scenarios of how life would be at homeland in contrast to their actual situation at the hosting society coexist in order to generate emotional stability and life satisfaction. Accordingly, the study of subjective well-being in migrant individuals by means of the analysis of counterfactual thinking becomes a pertinent research option.

OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY

Measuring social variables is not an easy task. Neither when measures are intended to be applied to individuals and the analysis of their psychology. However, it is known that whereas the 'ordinal revolution' in economics has rejected cardinal measurement of utility and interpersonal utility comparisons, the other social science that matches it in scale, psychology, has retained the study and measurement of subjective well-being (SWB). Accordingly, the process understands that SWB is measurable, often relatively little related to material-economic factors, and their results cannot be simply imputable from rational choices –people do not try to maximize their own utility and/or are not very good at it.¹⁰⁹

This thesis has been developed with the idea to what extent people are happy in terms of life satisfaction. As introduced above, then, the theory of subjective well-being appears to be the frame of the research. So, as Bruce Headey and Alex Wearing state, "theory of subjective well-being rests largely on evidence from 'quality of life' surveys, which have now been undertaken in most Western industrialised countries. In all surveys the main measures of subjective well-being are self-reports; scales on which people record their own felt levels of life satisfaction, happiness and positive affect (positive moods). The same surveys often include measures of social background, personality, social networks and satisfaction with particular domains of life (marriage satisfaction, job satisfaction, and so on)."¹¹⁰

The purpose of using this empirical procedure rests on the will to identify the general patterns of and account for the main differences in the levels of well-being. In accordance to this, this thesis follows the idea of measuring variables and elements based on the phenomenon of subjective well-being. Following the established division of happiness, the conceptual scheme works in favour of developing operational measuring for life-satisfaction understood in a temporal perspective. Thus, rather than analyzing the first two dimensions of happiness, positive affect or negative affect, the study focuses on the analysis of life-satisfaction, which needs a time basis construction.

¹⁰⁹ See, for instance, Kiron in Ackerman, Kiron, Goodwin, Harris, and Gallagher, 1997; and Kahneman, 1994 in Ackerman, Kiron, Goodwin, Harris, and Gallagher, 1997.

¹¹⁰ Headey and Wearing, 1992: 6.



Given the difficulty of the study of happiness, life satisfaction and the emotional cost/benefits of immigration, the construction of indicators and the measurement of its levels becomes a complex task. This study has tried to obtain some light on this multifaceted issue by giving our participants some tools to help them to self-assess their experience. Therefore, the key concept in this project, which is believed to be a novelty, is the explicit introduction of the analysis of counterfactual thinking. Counterfactual thinking is believed to be one of the instruments that could facilitate the understanding of how subjective well-being is produced and reproduced within the immigration process.

Accordingly, the main purpose of this thesis is, on the one hand, to account for the participants' background and to better understand how their in origin acquired attitudes, beliefs and values influence their current life satisfaction and subjective well-being as member of the hosting culture and, on the other, to test and to find out how counterfactual thinking can be a useful instrument for the assessment of life satisfaction and subjective well-being as such.

NOTES ON METHODOLOGY

The research procedure focused on individual questionnaire and semi-structured interviews analysis done to Brazilian individuals. Apart from this, this work is developed by means of a multidisciplinary character. It is so not only regarding the sources of theoretical concepts, that is, the use of bibliography that comes from social and cultural psychology, sociology, anthropology, human geography, or philosophy, but also in the way that theory and empirical research is developed. In this regard, the use of both quantitative and qualitative methodology permits the creation of a cohesive understanding made by different source material. Explanations and conclusions have been constructed as a synthesis of the concepts and terms that come from different disciplines of knowledge, as well as the information of tendencies and patterns provided by the analysis of subjects' samples.

Because of this, the methodology used in this work follows the psychological methodological procedures given that “psychological investigations of well-being complement long-standing measures of physical and material well-being with assessments of subjective well-being (SWB). Researchers on subjective well-being, for example, ask people across the industrialized world to reflect on their happiness and life satisfaction. Measures range from multi-item scales to single questions, such as "How satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days? Are you very satisfied? Satisfied? Not very satisfied? Not satisfied at all?"¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Myers and Diener, 1995: 10.



By means of a semi-structured interview, a questionnaire and an open-ended question, participants were asked to think about their current life satisfaction and how the immigrant process could have affected it. Counterfactual thinking was introduced explicitly in the research process by means of an open-ended question. In this regard, the use of the analysis of counterfactual thinking responds to the fact that the construction of discourse incorporates both the analytical and the emotional fields of the individual in the construction of reasoning. Moreover, the generation of orally counterfactual thinking emerged naturally before, during and after interviews –these were conducted before the application of questionnaire– without conditioning initially the thoughts of the participants, and before they had been conducted to it in the second phase of the empirical task. Both the fact that counterfactual thinking is a mechanism that introduces affects and emotions in discourse, and the fact that it emerges naturally among individuals under scrutiny, have given confidence to think about the importance of counterfactual thinking as an interesting and reliable tool to measure life satisfaction. Additionally, this semi-structured interview has served as a technique to obtain complementary information from participants, not only about their past and the motives of their immigration process, but also about their life satisfaction at the current time.

Thus, the aim of this research project with this three-step task has been to bring back up information about participant's past, that is, information about their social and cultural background, their beliefs, feelings, values and norms learned through social practices and society and family's coaching during the years of residence at homeland.

In a technical level of analysis, it is important to note that “the use of self-reports responds to some efficient properties. Firstly, self-reports of global well-being have temporal stability in the 0.5 to 0.7 range over periods from 6 months to 6 years. Secondly, people's self-reported well-being converges with other measures. Those who describe themselves as happy and satisfied with life seem happy to their friends and to their family members. Their daily mood ratings reveal mostly positive emotions. They recall more positive events and fewer negative events. And ratings derived from clinical interviews converge well with their SWB scores. Third, SWB measures exhibit construct validity. They are responsive to recent good and bad events and to therapy. They correlate inversely with feeling ill. And they predict other indicators of psychological well-being. Compared with depressed people, happy people are less self-focused, less hostile and abusive, and less vulnerable to disease. They also are more loving, forgiving, trusting, energetic, decisive, helpful, and sociable.”¹¹²

However, whilst many of the studies of well-being and immigration are valuable as a means of identifying key issues in intercultural phenomena, they are predominantly quantitative and ‘objectivistic in nature’¹¹³, and represent an attempt to predict patterns of adaptation and factors that determine the observed patterns. As new research has demonstrated, such an approach is not enough to explain and present the ‘richness and

¹¹² Myers and Diener, 1995: 10.

¹¹³ Gudykunst, 2005: 25.



fragmentation' of intercultural adaptation –a complex and problematic process in which migrants are engaged in continuous negotiation and mediation with the surrounding environment, self-analysis (of their values and beliefs), self-reflection, and self-reorientation.¹¹⁴ The development of each component of their intercultural competence –attitude, knowledge, skills and critical cultural awareness– influences and is influenced by the development of the others, and is moderated by the environments in which the individual is and has been engaged both the present and the past ones.¹¹⁵

In this regard, it has been thought that developing the empirical procedure by means of a task promoting counterfactual thinking could represent a useful procedure for the analysis of life satisfaction. Counterfactual analysis permits observing the self-reflection of individuals about their life in a kind of lively manner. They are forced to create an alternative world for themselves. This procedure contributes to make people assess their lives, as well as to remit them to the past generating a “continuum”, a time line that helps them to make account of their decisions. Bringing the past back also helps people to learn from it in order to grow. Certainly, this is one of the results of the counterfactual thinking: either to learn or feel relief for the consequences of a situation not having been worse. Bringing the past back also forces the recovering of peoples' learned beliefs, values and norms from family and the social environment, making evident some traits of their cultural origins, and which are embedded in the individual's mentality and behaviour. As a recent study developed by Laura J. Kray, Linda G. George, among other researchers¹¹⁶ expose: “The current research makes clear that counterfactual thinking, the pondering of what might have been, brings us —at least subjectively— closer to answering these timeless questions. Far from rendering reality a low-probability product of random forces, counterfactual reflection extracts meaning from choices, relationships, and pivotal experiences. From reflections in a personal diary to analyses of world history, counterfactual thinking can alter our understanding of life. Mentally veering off the path of reality, only briefly and imaginatively, forges key connections between what might have been and what was meant to be, thereby injecting our experiences and relationships with deeper meaning and significance.”¹¹⁷

As a final note, it is important to acknowledge that the research concerns subjective well-being, and as Myers and Diener pointed out, “for which the final judge is whoever lives inside a person's skin.”¹¹⁸ As a kind of medical diagnosis, researchers take seriously people's reports of their subjective unhappiness (or happiness), especially when supported by converging reports from informants and by observations of accompanying dysfunction (or social competence).¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ Kim in Gudykunst, 2005: 376. See also Kim, 2001.

¹¹⁵ See Byram, Nichols and Stevens, 2001.

¹¹⁶ Kray, George, Liljenquist, Galinsky, Tetlock and Roese, 2010.

¹¹⁷ Kray, George, Liljenquist, Galinsky, Tetlock and Roese, 2010: 116.

¹¹⁸ Myers and Diener, 1995: 11.

¹¹⁹ Myers and Diener, 1995: 10.



THE CHOSEN GROUP OF ANALYSIS

The group of analysis is formed by Brazilians who migrated to Europe and have been hosted as residents for periods from one and a half year to twenty years. As a general picture of the country of origin, it can be stated that Brazil is a kind of melting-pot. Thus, this country seems to be a very wide-ranging society in which concerns about the perception of happiness seem to be appropriate. An evaluation of happiness in Brazil should observe several facts. The Brazilian society is a very complex one, and it includes various levels of economic development. However, the contact and coexistence of individuals of the different levels is a matter of fact. This close contact may generate the appraisal for different elements that characterize feelings of well-being and life satisfaction.

The reason to choose individuals from Brazil is that traditionally social sciences report Brazil as a multicultural society made of the well-known '*mistura brasileira*'. The nation-building process has been done by considering the fact that Brazil was built-up by various types of ethnicities with different origins and traits. Up from the eighties the emigration tendency opened up new possibilities for anthropological studies to the extent that those "multicultural" individuals migrated to different places of the world. Because of this, the option of choosing Brazilian individuals seems to be a useful strategy for deepening in immigration and identity studies. Moreover, as far as we know, studies on Brazilian immigrants regarding their subjective well-being and life satisfaction, and how these are influenced by beliefs, attitudes, and values acquired in the country of origin have not been done. So, this research project is understood, at least partially, as a novelty in this field of research.

Brazilian immigration in Barcelona allows a great deal of possibilities of study since, and as far as we know, it has not been investigated yet. Brazil is certainly an emergent country that combines a Christian individualist west mentality with the Indigenous and African communitarian mentalities. The emigration tendency starts only after 1970/1980 with the economical difficulties Brazil lived. This young phenomenon allows different areas of research and –as far as we know– almost nothing has been done on the psychological socio-cognitive field. Such a mixed population with its mixed cultural values started to emigrate searching for not only the countries of their ancestors, but also looking for different life experiences. In principle, then, there was not a clear expectation about the final result of the migration process.

This thesis has concentrated the analysis on Brazilian female individuals who immigrated to Barcelona. Participants can be described as middle-class individuals for whom the economic security level is given. However, and taking into account the prevention of some scholars about the fact that "self-reported happiness measures have been used by many authors as proxies for well-being and that many, however, remain



sceptical about the use of these variables,”¹²⁰ the study of this group of Brazilian women, who are residents in the Barcelona area, seems to give support to the strong statement, introduced recently in the debate about the impact of the socio-political elements in subjective well-being and happiness: “economic growth, democratization, and these changing cultural strategies actually seem to have raised happiness levels in much of the world. The evidence indicates that these factors were conducive to happiness mainly through their common tendency to increase human freedom, as human development theory argues.”¹²¹ The concepts used in the theoretical part of this thesis permit to develop an empirical framework for the specific study of Brazilian participants in terms of their subjective well-being, their life satisfaction and their sentiment of happiness. Moreover, by using the theoretical approach of Diener and his colleagues, the issue of individual personalities and cultural influences are acknowledged.

THESIS STRUCTURE

Regarding the structure of this thesis, after this introductory chapter this research project is developed into five more chapters and a conclusion. In this first chapter, however, the main purpose has been, on the one hand, to locate this project into the existing literature and its scientific potentialities and, on the other, to introduce the basic theoretical framework with and from which the study of an empirical problem can be developed. Theory, methodology and direction are the research meanings embedded in this chapter.

Chapter 2 introduces an explanation about migration and successful life, developing key concepts such as acculturation, enculturation as well as how these influence subjective well-being and life satisfaction. Chapter 3 develops the concepts of identity, culture and their relationship to subjective well-being and life satisfaction. Chapter 4 explains the general traits of Brazilian society and how this can be a fruitful field for this research. Finally, Chapter 5 develops the main concepts about counterfactual thinking and how it becomes the key element of our research. Discourse analysis is presented as the general framework in which counterfactual thinking analysis is embedded.

In chapter 6, the case study is developed. As explained previously, Brazilians are the chosen group for the case study. However, it is also evident that the participants are not only from the same country but also share many other attributes such as gender, social status and demographic structure of their residence (The Metropolitan Area of Barcelona). Field notes, survey and an open-ended question are the specific techniques used to obtain data. These will be used to identify to what extent personality traits, on the one hand, and cultural influences, on the other, influence the construction of personal happiness and fulfil the life satisfaction of immigrants in the hosting society as

¹²⁰ Alesina and Giuliano, 2007: 12.

¹²¹ Inglehart, Foa, Peterson and Welzel, 2008: 279.



well as will be the instruments to test counterfactual thinking as a useful tool in the research of SWB.

In the chapter of the conclusion, a summary is presented with the idea that immigration and life satisfaction are two concepts that need further evaluation. The analysis in both quantitative and qualitative procedures has been proved to be useful, but it needs further analysis. However, it is acknowledged the ontological assumption that human reality must be seen as both the individuals and the society working together, and this understanding is the base upon which happiness and life satisfaction can be fulfilled. Finally, some thoughts about the theory and methods used in the research process are introduced as a ‘closing’ argumentation about the consistency of this academic work, especially the use of counterfactuals as a ‘new’ approach for the understanding of the relationship between culture and emotions.





CHAPTER 2

– THE MIGRANT PROCESS AND SUCCESSFUL LIFE –

INTRODUCTION

Immigration constitutes an extraordinary social phenomenon by which many disciplines are interested in. With immigration many problematic situations emerge within social and individual contexts, from social discrimination, individual stress and lack of adaptation to successful integration, social recognition and personal achievement. Thus, immigrants constitute a clear group of interest from different perspectives, including their physical and mental health. The topics of well-being and life satisfaction, once security and elementary adaptation is guaranteed, become relevant issues for welfare policy-makers, psychologists and researchers in general. The description of the migrant process and the exposition of how researchers treat this phenomenon in relation to the subjective well-being of individuals who migrate are necessary issues to be presented in this research project.

THE MIGRANT PROCESS

Migration is one of the defining phenomena of our time. International migration is defined as people moving for various reasons to a country other than that of their usual residence, for a period of at least twelve months, so that the country of destination effectively becomes the new country of usual residence. Migration is generally consensual, although it also includes movements prompted by a force of socio-economic or political circumstance. International migration for work is an important reason for trans-national people flows. The international Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, 1990, defines the term “migrant worker” as a person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national.

Available estimates suggest that the number of international migrants has more than doubled in the last 30 years, rising to some 200 million people - or about one in every 35 people on the planet. Many official statistics released by government agencies reflect the culture and history of the country in which they are generated. All aspects of a data collection system—from what data are collected, to the questions asked on surveys and censuses, even to what data are ultimately analyzed and disseminated—are influenced by this same context. Thus, official statistics actually embody socio-cultural influences that can prove to be problematic when attempting to compare data from different



countries.¹²² 80-97 million are estimated to be migrant workers and members of their families - 22 million of who work in Asia. Another 12 million of the 80-97 million are refugees living outside their countries. These figures do not include the estimated 20 million internally displaced persons who are forced to move, or the millions of internal migrants who move from villages to cities and between cities in their own countries. These statistics also exclude the large numbers of undocumented trans-national migrants and trafficked persons. These numbers will inexorably grow because of the impact of globalisation and growing disparities in development between rich and poor countries. Along with a host of other transnational issues, migration is forcing countries to look beyond the confines of state borders in search of global responses that more adequately address the scope of these issues. However, growing international cooperation on migration has coincided with an apparent reduction of legal guarantees offered to migrants in host nations. It appears that cooperation has led more and more states, including those bordering the global North, to adopt increasingly strict controls aimed at impeding the movement of people.

However, defining migration brings also with the necessity to define the concept of citizenship since many consequences applied in relation to such a political concept. Citizenship is one of the key institutions of contemporary societies, at the very core of both democracy and national identity. It gives the capacity to become a full member in legal terms. However, it implies not only inclusion, but also exclusion: citizenship of certain types of people implies non-citizenship of others¹²³. We can classify two types of acquiring citizenship. In general, the majority of people around the world acquire citizenship in one of two ways: “by birth” (*jus soli*) or “by blood” (*jus sanguinis*). Although these are “ideal types”, they remain useful in explaining the divergent outcomes of citizenship policies. In a *jus soli* system, citizenship is based on place of birth. Although there are exceptions to this rule, in general, people born in these countries are citizens, while people born outside are non-citizens. Thus, in a *jus soli* context, the term “foreign born” refers to residents of a country who were born in another country. Foreign-born residents can, under certain circumstances, change their status and become citizens through naturalization. When combined, both place of birth and citizenship status can be used to divide the population into three categories—native-born citizens, foreign-born citizens, and non-citizens—and define who among the foreign born has acquired the full rights and responsibilities bestowed on all citizens.¹²⁴

Despite the fact that the possible acquisition of the status of citizenship may contribute to the stabilization of the life of the migrant, migration itself means a radical change in the life of an individual. Certainly, while citizenship may grant individual rights and a legal identity, solving the balance of factors of culture’s origin, religion and ethnicity are important in order to develop a fulfilling life in the new place of living. Moreover, the emotional content is at the top of the challenges that a person experiences during the migration process. New studies document the emotional negotiations (outside of the

¹²² See Grieco, 2002.

¹²³ Castles and Spoonley, 1997: 1.

¹²⁴ Grieco, 2002: 1.



realm of mental illness) that take place when immigrants confront the changes in their social realities and cultural environments as they navigate through global hierarchies. This is especially the case with transnational migrants for whom the process of adaptation is complex given their multiple sojourns and points of reference.¹²⁵ Moreover, transnational existence has implications for immigrant's identity, since the migrant feels "unperceived realities" that is incapable to rationalize completely. These "unperceived realities" constitute the gap between "what is and what is seen" which leaves many information "unnoticed or unrecognized". And according to evidence, what goes unnoticed here is the emotional experience associated to migration process.

ADAPTATION AND INTEGRATION

Past research on immigration has conceptualised the adaptation of immigrants to their new cultural and social environment as a multifaceted process involving different patterns and strategies.¹²⁶ From a broad perspective, adaptation is a process of change and adjustment to new environmental conditions. Although there is no agreement in research on how to define and measure adaptation while moving from one culture to another, it has been suggested that most migrants go through initial "culture shock", which has significant consequences for their wellbeing.¹²⁷ The extent and outcomes of this "culture shock" and following adaptation may depend on many factors, from cultural distance to migration motivation and expectations.¹²⁸

Adaptation of immigrants can be defined as the process of "fitting in" to the society of settlement and functioning successfully in a new environment. Two distinct aspects of intercultural adaptation have been identified on the basis of past research. The first is sociocultural adaptation, which is based on the culture learning approach and reflects the ability to engage in constructive interaction with a different culture. The other is psychological adjustment, which facilitates the individual's sense of wellbeing, positive appraisal of situations and general satisfaction with life.¹²⁹

The psychological and sociocultural components of adaptation have been investigated within the framework of acculturation theory.¹³⁰ In the context of immigration, acculturation has been conceptualised as a combination of cultural changes resulting from the contact of immigrants with the host population. The categorical model of acculturation, developed by Berry, is based on two dimensions: one refers to the extent to which the culture of origin is being maintained or preferred, and the other refers to

¹²⁵ Parreñas, 2001 in Aranda, 2003: 1.

¹²⁶ Maydell-Stevens, Masgoret, and Ward, 2007: 178.

¹²⁷ Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001: 7.

¹²⁸ Berry, Poortinga, Segall and Dasen, 2002: 12.

¹²⁹ Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001: 24.

¹³⁰ Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001: 24.



the extent to which the new host culture is adopted. On the basis of the interaction between these two dimensions, four different acculturation strategies can be employed: separation, assimilation, integration and marginalisation.¹³¹

- Separation

In the separation model, the monocultural value system of the host society remains untouched and unaffected, while migrants are required to do an absolute minimum of adjustment. The policy or practice consists of separating people of different races, classes, or ethnic groups. The participation of newcomers in society is highly restricted, as too are their rights. The separation or exclusionist model is characterized by rigid and restrictive immigration policies aimed at artificially maintaining the temporary character of an immigrant's settlement. Segregation does not expect migrants to assimilate into the culture of the host society, and has typically applied to temporary migrants. In this model, the monocultural value system of the host society remains untouched and unaffected, while migrants are required to do a minimum of adjustment.

- Assimilation

This is a process whereby a minority group gradually adopts the customs and attitudes of the prevailing culture. The assimilationist model intends to establish a kind of equality at its core but it is based on the complete assimilation of immigrants into the dominant society. The foundation of the assimilation approach is a monocultural definition of society. This approach requires migrants to adjust entirely to the values and the rights system of the host society. Migrants are expected to become indistinguishable from the majority population. The approach is based upon the expected outcome of full citizenship.

- Integration

A number of models are used to describe this process of mutual adjustment by migrants and their new host community. Under this approach, which is also known as the "melting pot," both contribute to the common culture while a sense of diversity and cultural heritage is retained. "Two-way" integration is also based on a monocultural definition, but it requires both the migrants and the host society to adjust to each other. The term is also used to refer to the process of bringing people of different racial, ethnic, or cultural groups into unrestricted and equal association in a society.¹³²

¹³¹ Berry in Chun, Balls Organista, and Marín, 2001. See also Berry, 2003.

¹³² Berry, 2001: 619.



Going further, “the term integration must be understood as a process of mutual adaptation between the migrant individuals and the members of the hosting community. In turn, it is primordially established by attitudes and values based on equality and solidarity, and it takes long time to be firmly rooted. Integration entails huge difficulties and it requires immense doses of dialogue and debate. In any case, there is no integration either if it implies submission, or there is no collective denounce against the mechanisms associated to the favouring of marginalization and social exclusion.”¹³³

- Marginalization

This case shows, in one hand, the existence of a low chance or interest in preserving the cultural legacy of the society of origin (deculturation) and, on the other, developing a great lack of interest for having social relations with other members (sometimes because of exclusion or discrimination experiences).¹³⁴

Separation involves maintaining the culture of origin and rejection of the culture of settlement. Assimilation, in contrast, is the strategy “that relinquishes the ethnic heritage and substitutes it with the new, acquired cultural identity. Integration means preserving the heritage together with acquiring some characteristics of the host culture, while marginalisation refers to a rejection of the both the culture of settlement and the culture of origin”¹³⁵. Past research has consistently shown that the strategy of integration predicts more positive outcomes in psychological and socio-cultural adaptation. The three other strategies, and especially marginalisation, are often associated with poor adaptation, which can lead to serious psychological disturbances, including clinical depression, anxiety, and other mental disorders.¹³⁶

Although the above model can be useful in analysing the outcomes of adaptation, the model does not fulfil completely the process of acculturation. A complementary model, proposed by Ward and his colleagues, also “examines the different variables that play a role in the acculturation process. It takes into account personal factors, such as reasons for migration, language fluency, acculturation strategies, and cultural identity, in addition to situational factors, which include length of contact, cultural distance, and social support. This model also incorporates the stress and coping framework, various factors salient for both cultures of origin and of settlement, and psychological and socio-cultural outcomes of acculturation.”¹³⁷ Both models have provided conceptual theoretical frameworks and have directed the current research in terms of key issues related to this process.

¹³³ Vila, 2003: 10.

¹³⁴ Henao, 2008: 56.

¹³⁵ Berry, Poortinga, Segall and Dasen, 2002: 12.

¹³⁶ Berry in Kazarian and Evans, 1998: 42.

¹³⁷ Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001: 51.



Regarding the way host society defines their social model when managing cultural diversity, there is another model well-known as multiculturalism.

- Multiculturalism

The multicultural approach recognizes different value systems and cultural practices within society, revolving around a set of common, non-negotiable core values. For example, democracy, the rule of law, fundamental rights and freedoms, and gender equality. Importantly, the values of diversity and respect for differences are ranked highly in a multicultural approach.

However, these models, as designed, have significant flaws. The separation/exclusionist model isolates communities from the mainstream and stigmatizes those who are viewed as apart from the majority. The assimilationist model requires that one know exactly what an immigrant or minority is supposed to assimilate into, which is often unclear in today's complex and heterogeneous societies. Integration and multiculturalism are very similar, aiming for managed diversity. Multiculturalism differs from integration and assimilation by granting equal rights and opportunities to migrants without their relinquishing other cultural affiliations; although this too is, to a lesser extent, an element of integration, this policy could block a fulfilling social integration. Certainly, while “the multiculturalism model has generally been viewed as the most appealing, it has many detractors in Europe, who view it as an unrealistic or even utopian goal of cultural and racial harmony. These critics often point to the United States as a hopelessly segregated “multicultural” society”.¹³⁸

Finally, there is another model that intends to be a positive option in the new theories of migrant adaptation and social inclusion, that is, interculturalism.

- Interculturalism

This model can be understood as a group of antiracist and anti-segregationist principles from which it is necessary to promote contact and knowledge between different cultural groups in order to favour positive social relations among them. This model suggests the necessity of mutual adaptation and the collective search for solutions that favour social equality¹³⁹. As Ruiz de Lobera points out “interculturalism is based on the recognition of cultural differences in a society”, and proposes precisely “the communication between cultures as a main criterion of institutional articulation.”¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Maydell-Stevens, Masgoret and Ward, 2007: 2.

¹³⁹ Henao, 2008: 60.

¹⁴⁰ Ruiz de Lobera, 2004: 85 in Henao, 2008: 60.



In revisited literature it is possible to find the term *interculturalism* associated to *citizenship*. This association shows not only the necessity for recognition and respect of cultural differences and communication and change between groups, but also it gives relevance to other ‘human’ aspects -such as the social, political, economic and legal issues- that permit a actual equality between the members of a given society in spite of their origin or culture. From this point of view, it is necessary, then, to recognize the participation in equal terms of the different cultural groups in the public space. Only “by combining the recognition of the difference and the intercultural communication it is possible to find the conditions to define the criteria, targets and common valuing which are indispensable for social cohesion. And this is largely the challenge that our democracies are facing nowadays.”¹⁴¹

Nowadays, however, these “static” descriptions could have largely lost their relevance due to changing political realities and social developments. In addition, the lines between the traditional models have blurred as attitudes toward immigrants and minorities continue to evolve. Apart from taking into account the traditional theoretical approaches to the process of insertion of newcomers into societies, it is possible to find new patterns that are product of the new stage of the globalization such as the process of circular migration and transnationalism.

- Circular migration and transnationalism

The movements of migrants, who return to their homeland once or many times over a period of time and are permanently in contact to the society of origin by means of using communication technologies, this is a new social phenomenon that is breaking the “psychological” isolation since it evolves from the fact of enabling a high degree of mobility between borders or *porous borders*.¹⁴²

Each approach defined above is intended to look for different goals in the process of social adaptation. While these concepts have mainly developed in the Western world and in traditional countries of immigration, they cover the range of available options for integration, and can hence be applied to any society. Depending on the existing social hierarchy in a given society, as well as the present forms of migration, countries will need to select and combine elements from these approaches to assemble their specific approach to social adaptation of immigrants.

¹⁴¹ Ruiz de Lobera, 2004: 85 in Henao, 2008: 60.

¹⁴² Bauböck in Bauböck, 1994: 204.



INTEGRATION AND SUCCESSFUL LIFE

Integration is understood as the process of inclusion of immigrants in the institutions and relationships of the host society. The process of integration concerns all aspects of life in a society, and includes migrants as well as the host society. Migration patterns are producing increasingly diverse cultural influences in host societies. These influences can be used constructively while preserving social coherence and unity. Integration measures are generally intended to preserve or re-establish the smooth functioning of a society and to assist people who require support in order to become active participants in economic, social, and cultural life.

Integration of migrants is “a complex idea, which means different things to different people. To some, it is a positive goal, implying equal opportunities and rights for all human beings. In this case, becoming more integrated implies improving life chances. To others, however, increasing integration may conjure up the image of an unwanted imposition of conformity. And, to still others, the term in itself does not necessarily imply a desirable or undesirable state at all. It is simply a way of describing the established patterns of human relations in any given society. Thus, in the latter view, one pattern of social integration may provide a more prosperous, just or humane context for human beings than another; but it is also possible for one pattern of social integration to be markedly different from another without being either better or worse”¹⁴³. To summarize, integration, in a sociological context, refers to stable, cooperative relations within a clearly defined social system. Integration refers “to the inclusion of individuals in a system, the creation of relationships among individuals and their attitudes towards the society. It is the result of the conscious and motivated interaction and cooperation of individuals and groups”¹⁴⁴.

There are several approaches to integration. “No single set of “best practices” would be relevant for all societies. Approaches to integration of migrants set goals that can be positioned on a continuum that ranges from unity (common values and cultural practices) at the one end to diversity (different values and practices) at the other. We will consider successful integration as a process that includes, but is not limited to, the spread of educational and economic mobility, social inclusion, and equal opportunity for newcomers and minorities into the mainstream of a society.”¹⁴⁵ In contrast, poor integration often results in the formation of an ethnically segregated bottom class composed of immigrant groups. Because of these, international norms that guarantee migrants certain basic human rights are relevant to integration because they require policy makers to include these basic rights in their approaches to integration. International norms support the right of migrants to interact economically, socially, and culturally with a host society under the terms of applicable national legislation, while also allowing them to maintain a sense of their own cultural identity.

¹⁴³ Hewitt de Alcántara, 1994: 5.

¹⁴⁴ Lockwood in Zollschan and Hirsch, 1964: 254.

¹⁴⁵ Boyer, 2009: 1.



According to the International Organization for Migration, “integration policies dealing with migration are addressed to the specific circumstances in a given country; no single set of “best practices” would be relevant for all States. Nonetheless, attempts can be made to identify “effective” or “promising” practices that provide a range of options for policy makers to consider for their country-specific approach to integration.”¹⁴⁶ Integration measures are intended to achieve or maintain a State institutions’ vision of a cohesive society and to assist people in society who need assistance to become active participants in economic, social, and cultural life. Since the composition and values of society differ from country to country, the people who are the subject of integration measures may vary.

Generally, when talking about integration theorists tend to develop a perspective based on group approach. A group-based approach recognizes the existence of groups within societies that have distinct needs and rights concerning access to opportunities. This approach focuses on the representative distribution of opportunities and includes the option of positive discrimination (affirmative action). However, when we talk about success in the life of a migrant we must talk about an individual approach to integration. An individual-based approach rejects the concept of groups as bearers of rights. In this approach, every individual has the same rights. Any form of discrimination on the basis of belonging to a group, including affirmative action could be negatively evaluated since affirmative action measures specifically designed for migrants may be counterproductive if they identify migrants as a particular problem group requiring special treatment or assistance¹⁴⁷.

In practice, governments commonly tend to adopt a combination of both individual and group approaches according to the particular situation in their country. Both the migrants and the host society have a direct and long-term interest in the rapid and successful integration of newcomers to ensure that they become constructive members of the community, contributing to its economic, social, cultural, and political life¹⁴⁸.

The integration of diverse societies is a multidimensional, long-term, and nonlinear process. The many factors that come into play make the success or failure of policies a challenge for any policy actor to assess. Nevertheless, “integration is a topic pushed higher and higher on political agendas across Europe. Recent countries of immigration are interested in learning from the ‘best’ practices of their more experienced neighbours, while some of these longstanding countries of immigration are promising a new ‘more effective’ approach in response to the ‘integration has failed’ partisans in public debates. In both cases, prioritising integration raises expectations that policy interventions can ‘manage’ integration by reaffirming certain principles and having a

¹⁴⁶ IOM, 2003: 25.

¹⁴⁷ IOM, 2003: 26.

¹⁴⁸ IOM, 2003: 26.



certain impact on this long-term process”¹⁴⁹. The process of integration concerns all areas of societal life, and refers to the migrants as well as to the host society. Traditional immigration countries undertake longitudinal studies on the experiences of migrants in their host societies. The results of these studies provide a dynamic picture of the experiences of migrants over time and feed into immigration policy decision making, including integration policy¹⁵⁰. Generally, six areas can be identified as sources for basic indicators to measure the success of integration policies:

- Language is a fundamental basis for any interaction within society. Therefore, linguistic integration is among the first necessary steps, and the proficiency level of migrants in the language(s) of the host country provides an important insight into this aspect of integration.

- Integration within the education system is an important condition for the economic integration of migrants and their children who are not yet working. Indicators are the performance of migrants in schools, the choice of schools and universities, as well as the propensity of migrants to carry on in post-secondary and further education as compared to native born.¹⁵¹

- Social integration relates to the well-being and the participation of migrants in the social life of the host society. The health of migrants, as well as their psychological condition, needs to be considered in this context and, by extension, the actual access of migrants to the health system of the host countries. The number of inter-group marriages between migrants and nationals is another important indicator for social acceptance and inclusion.

- Political integration is linked to social integration. Membership in associations, unions, and political parties can serve as an indicator for social and political integration. Migrant organizations, individual participation in elections, and political representation at the local, regional, and national level are additional indicators.

- Economic integration refers to the participation of migrants in the labour market. Indicators include the participation rate of immigrants, for example, the percentage of working-age immigrants who are employed in the national labour market and the unemployment rate of immigrants as compared to the general unemployment rate. Consideration of household income as compared to the national average is also an indicator of economic integration. Comparison of the distribution of migrants in various employment sectors with the distribution of the overall working population provides further information about integration and segregation tendencies.

¹⁴⁹ Economic and Social Council (ESC), 2008: 3.

¹⁵⁰ Economic and Social Council (ESC), 2008: 3.

¹⁵¹ Heckmann, 2008: 3.



- Residential integration. The environment in which the migrants live provides information about the level of residential integration. The area of settlement, the level of regional concentration, and local “ghettoization”, as well as the nature and quality of the housing itself, all show to what extent migrants are separated from the host society, and whether their housing standard is below, equal to, or higher than the average housing standard of the host society.¹⁵²

Since integration is a process, analysis of the level of integration achieved in a society needs to consider the dimension of time. Changes over years and decades can indicate the efficiency or inappropriateness of integration policies. Moreover, it is necessary to distinguish between different generations and different migrant groups because the level of integration may vary between the first, second, and third generations, and some migration groups may integrate more rapidly and more effectively than others.

ACCULTURATION, IDENTITY AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Migration is a catalyst which challenges people to deal with cross-cultural issues. Adjustment and adaptation are the challenges that migrants face, especially at the initial stage of migration.¹⁵³ Adaptation involves long-term change whereas adjustment is short term change.¹⁵⁴ Regardless of who they are, all migrants go through a process of acculturation in varying degrees and forms.¹⁵⁵ ‘Adjustment’, ‘acculturation’, ‘adaptation’, ‘assimilation’, ‘integration’, and even ‘coping’, are words or terms that are used to describe how individuals respond to their experiences in other cultures. Adjustment begins with the process of migration, as when people migrate, they have to adjust to a new culture, in both material and emotional terms. Leaving family, friends and a lifestyle behind can be a traumatic experience or, on the contrary, a case of success. Migrants have to adapt to a new country, a different language, a novel way of life, build a new social circle and establish means for their self-sufficiency, autonomy and successful life experience. In this regard, it seems adequate to introduce the concept of *cross-cultural adaptation*, which is described as a wide spectrum of individuals’ possible responses to a new cultural context ranging from complete adoption to complete rejection of the receiving social values.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² IOM, 2003: 27.

¹⁵³ See, for instance, Massey, Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pellegrino and Taylor, 1993.

¹⁵⁴ See, for instance, Al-Ali and Koser, 2000.

¹⁵⁵ See, for instance, Harris and Moran, 1991.

¹⁵⁶ See, for instance, Eisikovits and Shamaï, 2001; and Sigad and Eisikovits, 2009.



Individual outcomes following cross-cultural adaptation have been studied in terms of two major categories: psychological and socio-cultural.¹⁵⁷ Psychological adaptation refers to “a set of internal psychological outcomes including a clear sense of personal and cultural identity, good mental health, and the achievement of personal satisfaction in a new cultural context.”¹⁵⁸ Psychological adjustment also concerns mental health aspects such as depressive symptoms, mood disturbances, general well-being and satisfaction with life. On the other hand, socio-cultural adaptation refers to “a set of external psychological outcomes that links individuals to their new context, including their ability to deal with daily problems, particularly in the areas of life, and work and school.”¹⁵⁹ Socio-cultural adjustment refers to social competence and ability to interact adequately in the host society. However, both are interlinked since one aspect affects the other. The conceptual framework of these adjustment domains has been developed, amongst others, by Colleen Ward and her colleagues. They argue that psychological adjustment is defined in terms of emotional and affective outcomes, while socio-cultural one refers to behavioural competence.¹⁶⁰ According to them, psychological adjustment can be best investigated within stress and coping abilities domains, while socio-cultural adaptation is conceptualised within social skills and culture competence approach.

The distinction between psychological and socio-cultural adjustments has been conceived based on results from empirical research, which has demonstrated that these categories are strongly associated and the strength of their correlation is influenced by several factors. Psychological adjustment in terms of psychological and emotional well-being is altered by life changes, coping abilities, personality characteristics and social support. Positive psychological outcomes are related to positive experienced life changes, including the ability to cope adequately with the demands in the new culture and relationship satisfaction. As a consequence, low incidence of life changes and adequate social support facilitate psychologically adaptive outcomes.¹⁶¹ Conversely, psychological difficulties are associated with high intensity of migration-related stressors, incidence of life changes, depression and negative coping styles.¹⁶²

By contrast, socio-cultural adjustment, defined in terms of social and behavioural competence is affected by culture-specific factors, such as length of residence in the host culture, interactions with host nationals, cultural distance and language fluency. Successful socio-cultural outcomes are determined by greater amount of contact with own community, greater cultural similarity and improved language knowledge of the receiving society. Socio-cultural difficulties in migrant populations have been linked to a cultural incongruity and less interaction and identification with host nationals.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁷ See, for instance, Berry and Sam in Berry, Segall and Kagitcibasi, 1997.

¹⁵⁸ Berry, 1997: 17.

¹⁵⁹ Berry, 1997: 17.

¹⁶⁰ See Ward and Kennedy, 1999; and Searle and Ward, 1990.

¹⁶¹ See Searle and Ward, 1990.

¹⁶² Kia-Keating, 2006.

¹⁶³ See Ward and Searle, 1991; and Bhugra and Arya, 2005.



In addition to the individual approach, a central topic that bears on the strength and weaknesses in the psychological and socio-cultural adaptation outcomes of immigrant populations in the host community concerns group vitality of immigrant belonging. The notion, which is an important factor of social adjustment, refers to specific behaviours of minority ethnic groups which make them distinctive and collective entity within the majority context.¹⁶⁴ Group vitality accounts for ethnic dynamism and support in terms of socio-demographic attributes, such as immigrants' demographic presence and the sharing of common experiences. Feelings of psychological closeness, while facing similar problems of cultural adjustment are a valuable support for the members of the ethnic group. Generally, immigrant groups that are characterized by low ethnic vitality will experience more stress and psychological difficulties among their members.¹⁶⁵ On the contrary, a minority group that is vital and supportive facilitates positive relationships, social success and successful coping among those members with difficulties of adaptation. This perspective becomes more consistent between small communities than in cases where ethnic groups are bigger and located in dense groups of population.¹⁶⁶ Moreover, evidence shows that minority networks provide social support and increase coping effectiveness.¹⁶⁷ The inter-relationships between ethnic vitality, emotional well-being and social relationships of migrant communities within a host culture promote positive, adaptive psychological and socio-cultural outcomes.¹⁶⁸

Psychological and socio-cultural dimensions of adaptive outcomes in migrant populations have important points in common. The analysis of these factors clearly shows their relevance for adjustment outcomes in minority settings. Evidence shows the existence of specific interdependencies between the two distinctive fields. The framework that includes these two factors provides a useful comparative approach for the research on cross-cultural transition and adaptation. Moreover, immigrant's initial adaptation is influenced not only by family systems, but also by other institutions with which the immigrant and the family system interact. An important fundamental assumption states that cognitive, emotional, and behavioural development is profoundly affected by the immigrant's social position within a socially-stratified society, and by the dynamics developed by the promoting or inhibiting nature of his/her inner parameters, ones which are based on and influenced by family ties, values, beliefs and emotions, or by developmental competencies such as cognitive, social, emotional, linguistic, sociocultural and the ability of coping social strategies.¹⁶⁹

As presented previously, immigration normally implies an adaptation process on the part of the migrant, which implies psychological and socio-cultural dimensions and their mutual interaction. In this regard, it is acknowledged that the socio-cultural element is an important issue for immigrant's psychological well-being. As Colleen

¹⁶⁴ See, for instance, Bourhis, Moise, Perreault and Senecal, 1997.

¹⁶⁵ See, for instance, Bourhis and Dayan, 2004.

¹⁶⁶ See, for instance, Bhugra and Arya, 2005.

¹⁶⁷ See, for instance, Atzaba-Poria and Pike, 2005.

¹⁶⁸ See, for instance, Ait Ouarasse and van de Vijver, 2004.

¹⁶⁹ Garcia Coll and Szalacha, 2004: 82.



Ward and her colleagues describe, “sociocultural adaptation is related to various measures of psychological well-being, including self concept and decreased feelings of alienation [and it has been found that] cultural skill is more strongly related to self-esteem in immigrants than in natives.”¹⁷⁰ This relationship puts into the analysis the other important term of *acculturation*, which has been presented as a key element within the theoretical elements of this thesis. So, acculturation appears to be a necessary concept regarding subjective well-being. Acculturation can be defined as a culture learning process experienced by individuals who are exposed to a new culture or ethnic group and, in general, experience a new culture due to permanent or long-term resettlement and relocation. Acculturation can be defined as “a dynamic and multidimensional process of adaptation that occurs when distinct cultures come into sustained contact. It involves different degrees and instances of culture learning and maintenance that are contingent upon individual, group, and environmental factors. Acculturation is dynamic because it is a continuous and fluctuating process and it is multidimensional because it transpires across numerous indices of psychosocial functioning and can result in multiple adaptation outcomes.”¹⁷¹ However, it is not uncommon, for example, to read sociological and anthropological literature that uses terms such as “incorporation” or “assimilation” to refer to concepts fairly similar to what psychologists address as “acculturation.” Indeed, much contemporary research in sociology and anthropology uses words such as “cultural assimilation” and “cultural integration” to define the acculturation process. This variability in terminology lends itself to confusion not only based on the possible differing meanings but also because there is a difference in emphasis.

As presented in chapter 1, the term enculturation has been associated to acculturation. Both are seen as complementary terms. Consistent with this, scholars¹⁷² have proposed that enculturation be used to describe the process of (re)learning and maintaining the norms of the indigenous culture, and acculturation be used to describe the process of adapting to the norms of the dominant culture. So, enculturation can be seen as the process of retaining the cultural norms of one’s indigenous culture. Similarly, acculturation account for the degree to which a person adheres to the cultural norms of the dominant society.¹⁷³ [...] Current theory of acculturation/enculturation posits a bilinear model that incorporates two continua, one continuum representing a person’s enculturation in one’s indigenous culture and another representing a person’s acculturation to the dominant culture.¹⁷⁴ Within this two-continua structure, various construct dimensions of acculturation/enculturation have been conceptualized, leading to a multidimensional model of acculturation/enculturation. In particular, cultural values and behaviours have long been considered important dimensions of acculturation/enculturation. Some authors have noted, for example, that “there are at

¹⁷⁰ Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001: 205.

¹⁷¹ Balls, Marin, and Chun, 2010: 105.

¹⁷² Kim and Abreu in Ponterotto, Casas, Suzuki and Alexander, 2001.

¹⁷³ Kim, Atkinson and Umemoto, 2001.

¹⁷⁴ Berry, 1990b; Berry in Bouvy, van de Vijver, Boski and Schmitz, 1994.



least two distinct dimensions of acculturation—a dimension of behavioural acculturation, and a dimension of value acculturation.”¹⁷⁵

More specifically, Bryan SK Kim and José M. Abreu¹⁷⁶, reviewed the items in 33 instruments designed to measure acculturation and enculturation and, based on their finding, proposed that acculturation and enculturation constructs encompass four dimensions. These authors proposed the following dimensions: behaviour, values, knowledge, and identity. Behaviour refers to friendship choice, preferences for television program and reading, participation in cultural activities, contact with indigenous culture (e.g., time spent in the country of origin), language use, food choice, and music preference. The value dimension refers to attitudes and beliefs about social relations, cultural customs, and cultural traditions, in addition gender roles and attitudes and ideas about health and illness. The knowledge dimension refers to culturally specific information such as names of historical leaders in the culture of origin and the dominant culture, and significance of culturally specific activities. The cultural identity dimension refers to attitudes toward one’s cultural identification (e.g., preferred name is in Portuguese), attitudes toward indigenous and dominant groups (e.g., feelings of pride toward the indigenous group and pride toward the dominant group), and the level of comfort toward the people of indigenous and dominant groups. To obtain a more comprehensive portrait of the overall adaptation process for ethnic minorities, all four dimensions of acculturation/ enculturation (values, behaviour, identity, and knowledge) are understood to be useful in general research.

Thus, acculturation has been coined “to describe the process of bidirectional change that takes place when two ethnocultural groups come into contact.”¹⁷⁷ Moreover, Graves affirmed that individuals who are members of cultures in contact experience various psychological changes experienced by an individual whose cultural group is collectively experiencing acculturation, and the term *psychological acculturation* was proposed to account for this phenomenon.¹⁷⁸ It is not unusual, therefore, to read in the psychological literature how acculturation is related to a person’s level of adaptability to new social situations. According to John W. Berry, this psychological acculturation represents more accurately what immigrants experience: “the process by which individuals change, both by being influenced by contact with another culture and by being participants in the general acculturative changes under way in their own culture.”¹⁷⁹ According to this, acculturative dynamics is related to factors as varied as the need to learn new behaviours, beliefs, and attitudes and the realization of how different or even incompatible two cultures can be. Moreover, it is arguable that the emotional content is present in the process of acculturation and, thus, it is reasonable to associate acculturation, identity and psychological well-being.

¹⁷⁵ Szapocznik, Scopetta, Kurtines and Aranalde, 1978: 115.

¹⁷⁶ Kim and Abreu in Ponterotto, Casas, Suzuki and Alexander, 2001.

¹⁷⁷ Bourhis, Moïse, Perreault and Senecal, 1997: 27.

¹⁷⁸ Graves, 1967.

¹⁷⁹ Berry, 1990a: 235.



An innovative issue is the recent research on immigration that explores how issues related to acculturation processes, identity formation, and mental health and emotional elements that affect immigrants. Empirical findings have placed a framework that seeks to comprehend all the elements related to the “psychology of immigration”, and particularly the acculturation and identity strategies employed by immigrants in their process of adaptation to the hosting culture.¹⁸⁰ Acculturation as a psychological process is believed to have a crucial role in ethnic minorities’ and immigrants’ adjustment to living in hosting countries, and ethnic identity was recognized as a crucial psychological resource on which the emotional experiences of minority individuals are based.¹⁸¹ By situating the study of the emotional well being -rather than the mental health frameworks- within the adaptation literature, it is possible to broaden our understanding of how adaptation leads to successful emotional integration or emotional dislocation. In this regard, successful immigrant adaptation does not represent an absence of emotional struggles.

The emotional struggles that emerge from migrants are so powerful that adaptation must be understood within this emotional context. So, the importance of emotions in sociological inquiry is not a minor issue. The focus on emotions from a sociological perspective recognizes that “humans are not motivated solely by rational-economic concerns. Emotional attachments to others and affective commitments (e.g. desires, attitudes, values, moral beliefs) influence a significant portion of human behaviour”¹⁸², including the decision to migrate. So, in studies of immigrant adaptation, emotional struggles are acknowledged in order to better understand the whole process of migration. Yet these emotions do not arise out of a vacuum. They are heavily moulded by the history that frames international migration, the social structures and cultural contexts that mediate migration, and the social hierarchies in host and home societies that merge migration as an experience in individual and collective terms. The emotions that stem from these historical structural processes are part of the changing meanings that impact emotional adaptation. The individual’s “decision” to migrate and his/her “decision” to adopt a new identity are elements embedded in their emotional adjustments, one which intend to give meaning to the new situation, and to understand their place, how they fit into this place, and whether this place is “home.”

The emotional struggles that arise out of efforts to reconcile changing meanings are rooted in migrant’s status.¹⁸³ The question of how identity construction impacts emotional adaptation is an issue to be taken into account within the migrant process. Placing emotions at its core ultimately illuminates the contours of the emotional negotiations that are implicit to immigrant adaptation, and underscores how these emotional processes are shaped by structural and cultural features both from the country of origin and the hosting society. Thus, identity and acculturation both through the analysis of values, beliefs and attitudes are related to the emotional well-being of

¹⁸⁰ Berry, 2001: 629.

¹⁸¹ See, for instance, Phinney, 1990.

¹⁸² Thoits, 1989: 317.

¹⁸³ See, for instance, Suárez-Orozco, 2001.



immigrants. Psychological adaptation has been considered an important issue for immigrants' health, as previous research has consistently demonstrated that immigrants suffer from higher levels of emotional distress and poorer mental health than the host populations. Poor adaptation patterns among immigrants relate to increased levels of depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and other psychological problems.¹⁸⁴

Nonetheless, evidence also shows that high levels of psychological distress appear in immigrants in the initial stage of their resettlement. Joseba Achotegui has labelled this emotional suffering as 'the migration mourning'.¹⁸⁵ According to him, "the migration mourning is a partial mourning. This means that it could be understood erroneously as being less important or less intense than the absolute mourning produced by the loss of a beloved person. Nonetheless, evidence has shown that the migration mourning, because it is incomplete, it is, in turn, recurrent and it continues alive along the life of the individual. Furthermore, the migration mourning is intimately associated to personal experiences during childhood, which means that it is close related to psychological issues difficult to assimilate. The migration mourning is associated to many issues. It is a multiple mourning. Probably, no other experience in the life of an individual, including that of the loss of a beloved person, entails such a numerous changes than that of migration. In migration all the elements surrounding the individual are modified, and this alteration is as deeper as culturally distant the migration process is."¹⁸⁶ In this regard, those who later chose the integration strategy of acculturation were more successful and satisfied with their adaptation than those who chose the strategy of separation. Integration, as presented previously, means preserving the heritage together with acquiring some characteristics of the host culture. Within the dynamics of integration, "some degree of cultural integrity is maintained, while at the same time immigrants seek, as a member of an ethnocultural group, to participate as an integral part of the larger society."¹⁸⁷ In other words, cultural adaptation and cultural maintenance are acknowledged to reduce acculturative stress, and integration is seen as the most successful strategy to achieve well-being.¹⁸⁸

Increasing attention to emotions in immigration becomes a necessary research procedure in order to evaluate the general well-being of immigrants. The emotional factor and the will of well-being of these individuals emerge within empirical inference, and it demonstrates to what extent humans are not motivated solely by rational-economic concerns, but also by emotional factors. The reason why people move into another country in order to settle down permanently is to search for a better life, but this includes subjective well-being. Factors that contribute to the process of adaptation are migration motivation, proportion of perceived gains and losses, and cultural identity.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁴ See Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001; Pernice, Trlin, Henderson and North, 2000; and Aroian and Norris, 2002.

¹⁸⁵ Achotegui, 2009: 164.

¹⁸⁶ Achotegui, 2009: 164.

¹⁸⁷ Berry, 2001: 619. See also Berry, Poortinga, Segall and Dasen, 2002.

¹⁸⁸ See Berry and Sam in Berry, Segall and Kagitcibasi, 1997.

¹⁸⁹ Maydell-Stevens, Masgoret and Ward, 2007: 178.



So, this thesis intends to provide evidence regarding a specific group of migrants and to support this new hypothesis.



CHAPTER 3

– IDENTITY, CULTURE AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING –

INTRODUCTION

From the works of Erik Erikson¹⁹⁰ –or even from Sigmund Freud– is central the acknowledgement of the fundamental importance of identity in the health of the individual and how identity is embedded with a dynamic adaptative quality from infancy through to old age. In fact, it was Erikson who was chiefly responsible for making the concepts of identity and identity-crisis key issues for contemporary social and psychological theories.¹⁹¹ Accordingly, identity appears also to be an important category within the study of subjective well-being and life satisfaction. It seems impossible to develop a theory of subjective well-being and life satisfaction without thinking about self and identity issues. This assertion follows the same idea that is exposed in psychiatry and clinical psychology where “approaches view individuals’ mental health as at least partly influenced by positive self-conceptions, high self-esteem, and/or the possession of valued social identities.”¹⁹²

Equally, immigration studies have pointed out the central influence of identity in the process of integration of immigrants. Migrant narratives are replete with indicators of identity, as narrators affirm aspects of their own identity and of the identity of others.¹⁹³ So, identity, immigration and life satisfaction appear to be inter-linked concepts that are dependent one to each other in the process of immigrants’ integration. This chapter introduces the concept of identity in order to complete the theoretical requirements of this study, and with the idea that identity is the container where patterns of originally acquired values, beliefs and attitudes merge for working or not in favour of life satisfaction of the individual.

DEFINING IDENTITY

Identity is proving to be crucially important for understanding subjective well-being and life satisfaction. Despite –or perhaps because of– the sprawl of different treatments of

¹⁹⁰ See Erikson, 1959.

¹⁹¹ See Erikson, 1968.

¹⁹² Thoits in Aneshensel and Phelan, 1999: 345.

¹⁹³ See, for instance, De Fina, 2003.



identity in all disciplines, the concept has gained importance in the studies of immigration. Psychological health is probably the cornerstone of public policies in host countries regarding immigration. For the purpose of this research, identity will be defined adequately by narrowing the scope to the required ideas, emphasizing the relation between the personal and the collective identity and those with the emotional content and life satisfaction.

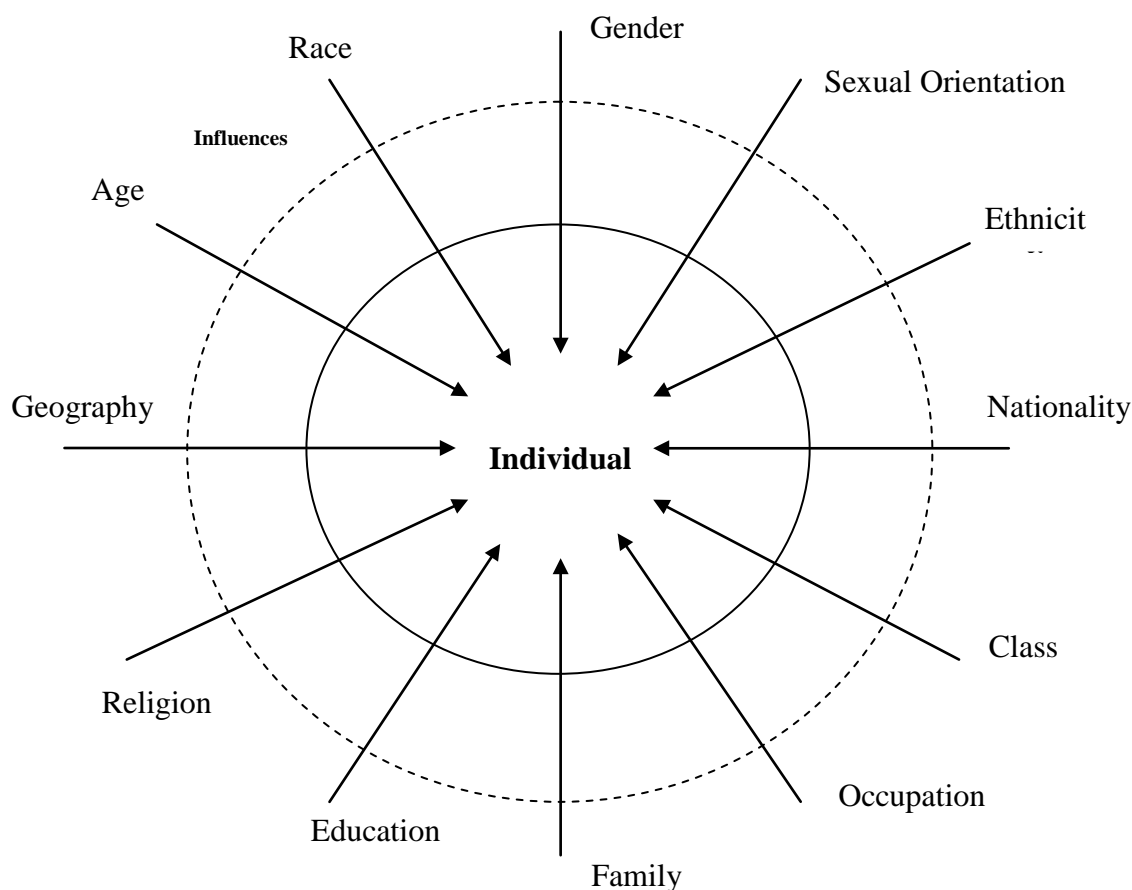


Figure 3.1 Influences on Individual Identity Creation (Adaptation).¹⁹⁴

Individual: The individual is bounded by a 'permeable membrane' through which external influences pass and shape identity.

Influences: The internal and the environmental conditionings that affect the construction of individual's identity. These include the biological predisposition to have some specific traits.

Arrows: Specific features from which the individual's values, beliefs, emotions and attitudes come from or are conditioned with.

¹⁹⁴ Source: Bellucci Buckelew and Fishman, 2010: 2.



Erik H. Erikson, however, developed the idea that identity was made by both individual unchangeable traits and collective characteristics: “The term ‘identity’ expresses such a mutual relation in that it connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself (selfsameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential characteristics with others.”¹⁹⁵ Common to the usage of the term “identity” in the two disciplines was that identity was basically one. Accordingly, the individual’s identity can be seen as a complex unity with the potential of both to contribute to and be affected from the interactions with the social life and the environment. Each identity is shaped by the many social and cultural influences in his or her life to become a distinct human being. Figure 3.1 synthesizes this understanding by making a division with the most accepted typologies of influences. This figure is also in accordance to the definition given by Joseba Achotegui who understands identity as the group of self-representations that allows the subject to feel, on one side, as similar and belonging to certain communities, which share certain values or ideas and on the other side, different and not belonging to others.”¹⁹⁶ “ To mention someone’s identity is to mention a game of similarities and differences; we could refer to this game as a mirrors game.”¹⁹⁷

According to most prevailing theories, identities are seen to be generated in, and constructed through, a kind of internal (self-attributed) and external (other-ascribed) dialectic conditioned within specific social worlds. This holds for both personal and collective identities, which should be understood as always closely entangled with each other (while recognising the serious theoretical problems debated around notions of self, personhood and community).¹⁹⁸ Identities are anchored around a set of values, beliefs, emotions and attitudes that regulate both world’s perspective and behaviour. Identity construction necessarily involves ideas presented as natural, by relying on natural metaphors and fulfilled by personal and collective meaning. In every process of identity construction, a hierarchy of values is deployed as well as the emotions that are attached to them. Without such a value hierarchy and its group of basic hidden assumptions both individuals and communities cannot face up to reality.

The intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual characteristics that comprise individual’s uniqueness are all part of his/her identity. An individual makeup goes beyond physical genetic characteristics and includes many aspects of personality, such as innate talents and abilities, basic orientation toward the world around, learning styles, how the individual process and organize information, and other predisposed tendencies and characteristics. These are all part of the *internal* identity.

Identity formation is an ongoing process from infancy through old age, and that it is a progressive and adaptative process inherent within each human. Identity formation consists on an evolving configuration which gradually integrates “constitutional givens,

¹⁹⁵ Erikson, 1980: 109.

¹⁹⁶ Achotegui, 2002 in Achotegui, 2009: 165.

¹⁹⁷ Achotegui, 2009: 165.

¹⁹⁸ Vertovec, 2001: 577.



idiosyncratic libidinal needs, favoured capacities, significant identifications, effective defences, successful sublimations and consistent roles.”¹⁹⁹ This ‘evolving configuration’, as Erikson explained, responds to inner drives and social pressures that change at different stages in the life cycle. Moreover, the failure to hold an integrated and continuing sense of identity leads to personality breakdown.²⁰⁰ In sum, “man’s need for a psychosocial identity is anchored in nothing less than his socio-genetic evolution.”²⁰¹

Identity involves the *permanence* and *continuity* of *being*. According to Emile Durkheim, two beings coexist inside us. The first one, the *individual being*, represents our private universe, our personality features, our heredity, our experiences and memories, and our personal history. The second one, the *social being*, corresponds to the internalized ideas, feelings, habits, values, and norms that originated in our social group.

It is accurate to say, however, that there is not much consensus on how to define identity; nor is there consistency in the procedures used for determining the content and scope of identity; nor is there agreement on where to look for evidence that identity indeed affects knowledge, interpretations, beliefs, preferences, and strategies; nor is there agreement on how identity affects these components of action. At its simplest, the problem is that in science there is no consensus on how to treat identity as a variable. Accordingly, the consideration of a more instrumental definition of identity is the most adequate strategy in an empirical research project. In accordance to this, two broad conceptualizations of identity can be introduced: (a) personal identity, which deals with who a person is and how this changes over time and (b) the collective socio-cultural identity, which views identity as developing out of social interaction and produces a person’s identification with particular social and cultural group or groups. Collective and individual identities exist and impact on one another reciprocally. In this sense, there is a continuous construction of self both explicitly and through doxa, the world of implicit meanings.²⁰² Both identities develop specific patterns of identification which are introduced below.

PERSONAL IDENTITY

Philosophy was the first human discipline which asked about the concept of identity and more specifically about personal identity. Personal identity deals with the many philosophical questions about us that arise by virtue of our condition of being people or individuals. The most frequently discussion is what it takes for a person to persist

¹⁹⁹ Erikson, 1980: 116.

²⁰⁰ See Erikson, 1968.

²⁰¹ Erikson, 1968: 41.

²⁰² See Bourdieu, 1993.



through time and what it consists of this persistence as identity. Questions such as “What does it exactly mean that we have an identity and autonomy as a person or self?”, or “What is a person or a human being?” are at the centre of the debate.²⁰³

Despite that there are “universals” of the self, different cultures shape the self in different manners and establish its borders in varied ways. Some put emphasis on autonomy and individuality; and others do it regarding affiliation.²⁰⁴ Some others link the self strongly to the position of a person regarding the divine or secular social order; meanwhile others link it to the individual effort or even to luck.²⁰⁵ The self consists in a motion of trying to be different from the others, and it is the gravity centre of all systems of the creation of meaning. So, the self can be understood as the encounter between culture and individual identity. Accordingly, the self should not be seen either as a metaphysical essence or as a thinking subject or as a sum of experiences but as a creature of narration.²⁰⁶ This is the new contemporary perspective of the construction of the self and of identity which is labelled as the *hermeneutical approach*. The *hermeneutical approach* has different faces.²⁰⁷ However, the most interesting framework refers the self as being seen as a narrative construction. The underlying idea is basically that man is a self-interpreting being and that self-interpretation is practiced by telling stories and by listening to stories of others. Human beings have, in other words, no immediate self-knowledge. They know themselves by appropriating what they express and/or perform. By doing so, they become a whole.²⁰⁸ According to Gerrit Glas, the problem with the narrative approach is twofold. First, by putting so much emphasis on wholeness and integrity it cannot account for the fact that there are parts of one’s life that cannot and never will be integrated, for instance, intrusive and painful events and acts for which one can only feel shame. Second, by concentrating on construction the narrative approach does not solve the conceptual problem at issue (i.e., how to account for a self that performs all the construction and interpretation). The author asks that “if the self is the result of a process of construction, who, then, is the self that performs this construction? And if there is no such self, does this mean that the self is an epiphenomenon of a process that takes place behind the subject’s back?”

The narratives that individuals construct about themselves consist of a series of constant adjustments of their past experiences in light of their present and their future. Identity from this standpoint is therefore a *continual re-interpretation of the self*. From this perspective, the self comes into being—derives its shape and form—as it encounters and internalizes the ideological structures of society. This is also why it can be said that identity is not fixed but changing and alive.²⁰⁹ In the field of psychology, the notion of narrative has also been labelled as *life history*. In this sense, “the notion of a life history

²⁰³ Cuypers, 2001: 15.

²⁰⁴ Hazel and Kitayama, 1991: 232.

²⁰⁵ Bruner, 1997: 54.

²⁰⁶ Ricouer, 1992 in Sala, 2007: 14.

²⁰⁷ See, for instance, Ricoeur, 1992; and Phillips, 2003.

²⁰⁸ Glas, 2006:131.

²⁰⁹ Létourneau, 2001: 3.



is tied to the idea that any individual's life can be viewed according to a theoretically posited developmental course that includes predictable landmark events and developmental stages."²¹⁰ Identity is constructed by means of creating a 'history of a personal life'.²¹¹

By embracing the ideas developed by the concept of *the self*, identity can be seen as an unavoidable evolutionary process. So, as Erikson stated, "man's need for a psychological identity is anchored in nothing less than his sociogenetic evolution."²¹² For the most part, our genetic traits are predetermined characteristics that do not change throughout our life. However, since identity is a complex mix of our innate gifts, our predispositions, our hereditary personality characteristics, and the sum total of our experiences, it continues to develop over time as we grow and develop, expand our relationships, and have new experiences. So, identity can be defined as a concept with two components: that of structure and that of process. In one hand, it is possible to state that identity is based on a group of ideas, beliefs, attitudes and emotions that gives form to the personal projection of the individual into the society. To the extent that the latter group can be seen as made of permanent socio-cognitive pieces, it is possible to talk about identity as a structure. Thus, identity is a structure to the extent that we can visualize a clear and definitive representation of the individual by means of ideas, values attitudes and beliefs. On the other hand, and developing a definition from the fields of sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, discourse analysis and social psychology, we can conclude that identity is a relational and socio-cultural phenomenon that emerges and circulates in local contexts of interaction and as a complement of the stable structure located primarily in the individual psyche or in fixed social categories.²¹³

Personal identity is a constructed entity through self-narration and resulting in a definition of the self *with* and *in contrast to an (the) other*. It is first and foremost the expression of a *social practice* in which individuals, engaged in the successive moments of their existence, draw on various references and skills within themselves in order to deal adequately with the conditions which they face as various circumstances arise (people and situations). Whether acknowledged or not, personal identity is therefore a more or less conscious, worked out strategy or scenario to find one's place and one's way in the social reality in which the individual is embedded.²¹⁴ These strategies are developed in order to distinguish oneself (differentiate oneself from others), to complete oneself socially ("be with a significant other"), and to position oneself strategically within a social whole ("be distinct with an other *and* in contrast to an other in order to be positioned in society). So, in practice, identity would be the product of an interminable, never-ending dialectic dynamics and would be synthesized by individuals in their activities (and self-narrative, as we shall see) as they find their way among their

²¹⁰ Linde, 1993: 43.

²¹¹ Linde, 1993: 44.

²¹² Erikson, 1968: 41.

²¹³ Bucholtz and Hall, 2005: 597.

²¹⁴ L  tourneau, 2001: 2.



references (conditioning) and their *expectations* (hopes). Therefore, this framework leads to the concept of preferences. Certainly, our identity is based on own internal values which, in turn, determine our preferences. Preferences can be understood, then, as the dialogue between our inner side and our surrounding world, a dialogue that necessarily introduces the idea of collective, or narrowing the scope socio-cultural identity.

SOCIO-CULTURAL IDENTITY

Socio-cultural identity represents another dimension of identity. It is one of the different forms of the general concept of collective identity. Socio-cultural identity is especially difficult to be defined due to its multiplicity and fluidity of understandings. The connection between social identity and cultural identity becomes clear if both are understood as a form of collective identity based on shared beliefs and practices (social or cultural), such as language, history, religion, education, profession, and the others exposed in figure 3.1 shown above. The general emphasis should be placed on the triple dimension – historical, sociological, and psychological – of cultural and social identities, on their dynamics and relational characters, and on their fluidity, stability and metamorphoses. It is associated with a wide variety of often-conflicting social and theoretical positions. Moreover, the umbrella is not only wide but it can refer to different categories. Certainly, the expression “socio-cultural identity” refers equally well to a property of an individual person (*my* socio-cultural identity) or a property of a group (the identity of *our* society and culture). Psychologists divide on whether socio-cultural identity enhances or competes with personal agency, whether it is something one has or something one does—in other words, whether it is inside, outside, or the same as one’s *self*. Sociologists and philosophers find still other issues connected to the concept of socio-cultural identity, such as whether groups determine individual consciousness or vice versa, and whether selves and/or groups are stable entities or whether they are so fluid and indefinable that one can only name them but never truly know or possess them.

Perhaps, the most influential notion of socio-cultural identity can be obtained from the works of Tajfel and Turner.²¹⁵ Identity, as explained by them, is derived from group membership. Social identity is “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership.”²¹⁶ Socio-cultural identity is developed from the idea of a community and, hence, from the sociability of human beings. It is as basic as other natural impulses, such as eating or procreating.²¹⁷ Accordingly, any community or group is a field of familiarity and security.²¹⁸ A social

²¹⁵ Tajfel and Turner, 1986: Tajfel, 1978b; and Tajfel and Turner, 1979.

²¹⁶ Tajfel in Tajfel, 1978a: 63.

²¹⁷ Rubert de Ventós, 1994.

²¹⁸ Krasteva, 1998: 8.



group is associated with understanding, confidence, common objectives or interests and common activity. There is a very deep ontological longing in people to feel complete, which is manifested itself in a desire to belong to something that is greater than oneself and to participate actively in the life of this supra-individual entity. From the beginning of their lives to the end, “human beings feel a deep need and express an unrelenting desire to belong. They seek to satisfy this need and desire by sharing common references or grand ideas, in which a group of remarkable individuals discover themselves and develop close ties based sometimes on having socialized together, sometimes on some factor that unites them, such as language, and sometimes on manufactured references. Cultures and communities are not fundamentally closed and are instead *places of completion and fulfilment* in accordance to the primary personal values and beliefs.”²¹⁹ Socio-cultural identity is the product of historical processes, that is, customs, inertia and repetition. These allowed human beings both individuals and groups to fix systems of symbols –language, art, religion, etc.- that shape their experience, their behaviour, the point of view from which they understood what surrounded them.²²⁰

Individual’s socio-cultural identities are constructed initially through family, neighbourhood and educational experiences from early stages of their lives. Afterwards, individuals encounter new situations of socialization. Socialization and the constructions of socio-cultural identity begins when individuals come with diverse histories and understandings, and interact within an institutional setting that privileges certain ways of using language, thinking, and interacting over others. Situated environments have their own institutionally and culturally defined categories, ranked hierarchically through the community’s values, beliefs, and practices. Newcomers to these communities enter into a complicated dance in which they present themselves as certain sorts of people (either consciously or unconsciously), while being invited or summoned into certain categories and positions, in part based on how their self presentation aligns with reified categories. Their emergent understandings of what these categories are and the social significance and desirability attached to them—who they can be and want to be in this space—are mediated through filters formed by past histories and experiences.

A socio-cultural group can be understood as “a collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social category, share some emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves, and achieve some degree of social consensus about the evaluation of their group and of their membership of it.”²²¹ In practice, socio-cultural identity allows individuals to stratify their social experiences by linking with various others and groups or communities. Accordingly, socio-cultural categorizations are conceived as cognitive tools that segment, classify, and order the social environment, and enable the individual to undertake many forms of social and cultural action. In doing this, categorization provides a system of orientation for self-

²¹⁹ Létourneau, 2001: 6.

²²⁰ Rubert de Ventós, 1994: 33.

²²¹ Tajfel and Turner in Austin and Worchel, 1979: 40.



reference: they create and define the individual's place in society. Thus, In order to belong to a given social group, individuals need to master the full catalogue of real or imaginary traits of the "in-group" and to correctly differentiate the "in-group" from the "others".²²² "From the social-psychological perspective, the essential criteria for group membership, as they apply to large-scale social categories, are that the individuals concerned define themselves and are defined by others as members of a group."²²³

Socio-cultural identities are neither static nor given, but neither are socio-cultural identities written on a *tabula rasa* in a socio-historical vacuum.²²⁴ The society exists and it influences individuals' identity through images and representations, and meanings are condensed in social representations and help people to construe their experiences.²²⁵ Nonetheless, when cultural patterns change and produce conflicting norms and values, a clash between individual self-identification and inherited collective identification can appear, making confusion in individuals' thinking on which pattern to accept in attempt to define their personal identity. Generally, this pattern can be more severe when so-called universal values and moral principles are played down, giving rise to disorientations of individual identity. Internal self conflict is not supposed to appear when there is continuity between these two fundamental dimensions of identity. However, this is not the case when social circumstances emerge to influence the system of values, beliefs and emotions of the individual, and thus, the level of dialogue and negotiation between these two identities follow an open confrontation between them. "The dynamics of identity lead individuals not only to construct a "self" in which they distinguish themselves from others, but also to perceive their continuity throughout their life span."²²⁶ So, it is challenging to answer the question of what our identity is. The best answer could be that identity "is never a settled matter. It is, rather, a dynamic process based on continuous internal and external dialectic: who we are and who we are for other people. It is a subtle concept which covers personal and social expectations, status, and opportunities. We identify ourselves, identify other people, distinguish ourselves from others and are defined by others."²²⁷

In addition to this process of differentiation, and following the same description introduced above, the origin of identity (*to be the same* and *to be oneself*) is also associated with *multiple identifications* (to be a man or a woman, French or German, bearded or clean-shaven, and so on). Identification is a means for a person to adopt the characteristics of someone else or the patterns of a group. This does not in any way imply that the person loses his/her initial identity. On the contrary, any identification functions to reinforce the stabilization of a given identity. Identifications can be *real* or *imaginary*, *cognitive* (capacity to differentiate, to recognize) or *affective* (identifying to someone else), *individual* or *collective*. Identifications fulfil three essential functions:

²²² Schippers, 2001: 16.

²²³ Tajfel and Turner in Austin and Worchel, 1979: 40.

²²⁴ Coupland in Coupland, Sarangi and Candlin, 2001: 18.

²²⁵ See Jodelet, 1991.

²²⁶ Camilleri and Malewska-Peyre in Berry, Poortinga and Pandey, 1997: 50.

²²⁷ Jenkins, 1996: 4.



constructive, defensive and adaptive. In their *constructive* function, they favour the emergence of a valued self-representation and orient the individual toward positive actions. In their *defensive* function, they allow, at least temporarily, an escape from anxiety, feelings of impotence, and devaluing. In their *adaptive* function, they allow the individual to face external pressures, to remind him/her of identity, to anticipate and to think ahead. Even if it is possible to observe the progressive appearance of these forms of identification during childhood and adolescence, they also develop in the adult, who may activate one or another, depending on the circumstances.²²⁸

The social participant (individual or collective) is never alone when he/she employs identity strategies based on defence, construction, assertion or adaptation. The identifications discussed above imply socialization through education, implementation of social injunctions and integrated behaviours, and the possibility to interact, communicate, and adopt the values and meanings advocated by reference and social groups. Therefore, the identity strategies are a way to associate two functional dimensions of identity the *ontological function*, linked with values, and the *instrumental function*, linked with adaptation. Every culture is supposed to provide congruence between value systems and beliefs and ways of adjusting to the conditions of life. The optimal condition is reached when “the representations and the values to which the individual identifies, through which he gives meaning to his life, are those which allow him to be in harmony with his environment.”²²⁹

In sum, identity is formed both through a subjective, introspective self-definition process undertaken by the individual and through the individual’s perceptions and internalization of the definitions offered or suggested by others, whether these people are close to that individual or remote. Individual identity is the product of a self-definition (or self-narration) process *and* of “external definition” (or “external narration”) by others, whether individually or collectively. It can therefore be said that identity is a *social, cultural, inter-subjective activity* because it is the product of a relationship with the other in which the reference to others is internalized by the subject. Identity is an internalized interaction transformed into self-narration. It is making dialogic intelligibility of oneself; it is a passage through oneself that leads back to oneself after passing through the other and the elsewhere.²³⁰

When identity is formed from both components, the individual becomes more apt to appreciate his/her uniqueness and the full sense of what makes him/her to be a whole entity. The formation of identity is an evolutionary process that balances the internal and external sources of what defines the individual who he/she is. Embracing both parts of identity allows the association with others *and* to be a uniquely individual. The individual is the totality of cultural and societal classifications *together with* distinctive physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual characteristics. It is in this regard that

²²⁸ Camilleri and Malewska-Peyre in Berry, Poortinga and Pandey, 1997.

²²⁹ Camilleri and Malewska-Peyre in Berry, Poortinga and Pandey, 1997.

²³⁰ Létourneau, 2001: 5.



“identity, in the sociological conception, bridges the gap between the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’ - between the personal and the public worlds. The fact that we project ‘ourselves’ into cultural identities, at the same time internalizing their meanings and values, making them part of us, helps to align our subjective feelings with the objective places we occupy in the social and cultural world. Identity thus stitches (or, to use a current medical metaphor, ‘sutures’) the subject into the structure. It stabilizes both subjects and the cultural worlds they inhabit, making both reciprocally more unified and predictable.”²³¹ Not only this but also “the mind creates human culture and at the same time it has its origins in the latter. As Vigotski and Bruner state, in this anthropological conception, the central point is the construction of the meaning which, in turn, is understood as being the link between mind and culture. The construction of meaning implies the possibility to situate adequately each thing, each state, and each action in the cultural context of reality in order to know what they really are. Meanings are «in the mind», but also their origin are situated in culture.”²³²

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT IN IDENTITY

As presented above, in its general definition, identity comprises to different dynamics. On the one hand, there is one that focuses on how social structure influences one’s identity and, in turn, behaviour. On the other, there is the development that emphasizes the internal dynamics of the self that influence behaviour. In both aspects there is an important similarity that regards to emotion in the identity construction process. Taking into account that an identity is a set of meaning attached roles individuals occupy in the social structure (role identities)²³³, identification in groups they identify with and belong to (group identities), and unique ways in which they see themselves (personal identities), the assignation of values emerge in the construction of an identity. Meanings are individuals’ responses when they reflect upon themselves in a role, social, or personal identity.²³⁴ However, these responses produce an internal set of emotions the individual attached to them. Emotions are, thus, elements attached to identity and, accordingly, a connection appears between identity, subjective well-being and life satisfaction. Research in emotions has emerged in recent decades over an array of theoretical frameworks. Social structure and personality, symbolic interactionism and structural social psychology are all three theoretical frameworks within contemporary social psychology that are actively involved in growing research programs examining emotion and its motivation, impact and process upon the self and/or social behaviour. The variety of theoretical characterizations within the research programs suggests some divergence among scholars to the specific placement of the frameworks, but the recent “boom” in emotion research is evident from new literature. In this research project, the introduction of the emotional content on identity will follow the necessities of

²³¹ Hall in Hall, Held and McGrew, 1992.

²³² Vila, 1998: 56.

²³³ See Stryker, 1980.

²³⁴ See Burke and Stets, 2009.



understanding the links between identity, immigration processes, emotions and, particularly, ones associated to well-being and life satisfaction.

We view emotions as social and assume that emotions are part of interaction between individuals and others.²³⁵ Understanding that emotions are social antecedents and products of interaction, this does not neglect the biological, chemical, and physiological centrality of emotions²³⁶ that recent developments in the physiological research relate to the socio-emotional experience. Recognizing the limitations of sociological insight into emotions is necessary as there is both a biological and social aspect to emotions. Sociologists must be aware of the line between nature and nurture – emotions research must take into consideration the biosocial elements of such matters. They are interested in the social elements that create, perpetuate, and alter human interaction because of or caused by emotions. The current endeavour conceptualizes emotions and affect as social entities with biological components that remain beyond the scope of our research. Emotions are assumed to be created and recreated through the dynamic process of social interaction and more specifically are assumed to be both the cause and consequence for much human behaviour. Morris Rosenberg, for instance, recognizes that for the individual, emotions are both “ends in themselves and means for an attainment of other ends.”²³⁷ He also recognizes that emotions are involved in social control, role performance, and interpersonal interaction and he points out that “emotions are matters of profound concern for everyone.”²³⁸

In terms of identity, positive emotions are a composite of expressions where individuals many times experience happiness or pride related to each specific role. When related to identity, negative emotions are conceptualized by experiences that individuals label as being accompanied with sadness, anger, or fear. As Peter Burke states, emotions reflect the degree of congruence between the meanings of one’s identity in the situation and the meanings held in the identity standard.²³⁹ Continuous congruence (identity verification) registers positive emotion; incongruence, or a lack of identity verification (in either a positive or a negative direction) that cannot be handled automatically within the self-regulatory system, registers negative.²⁴⁰ Identities that generate positive feelings will be played out more often and will move up in the salience hierarchy, while identities that repeatedly cause negative feelings are less likely to be played out and will move down. In addition, identities that are played out inadequately will generate negative feelings, thereby signalling that the meanings of the self in the situation are not supported by others. Thus, the lack of support from others as to who one is or the lack of identity verification registers negative feelings. The terms *lack of verification*, *identity incongruence*, *identity disconfirmation*, and *identity discrepancy* are used

²³⁵ See, for instance, Hochschild, 1979; Kemper, 1991; Kemper, 1911; McCarthy in Franks, David and Gecas, 1989; Mills, Trudy and Kleinman, 1988; and Rosenberg, 1990.

²³⁶ Robinson, Rogalin and Lynn-Smith, 2004.

²³⁷ Rosenberg, 1990: 4.

²³⁸ Rosenberg, 1990: 4.

²³⁹ Burke, 1991; and Burke, 1996.

²⁴⁰ See, for instance, Burke and Stets, 1999; and Cast and Burke, 2002.



interchangeably throughout to refer to a lack of correspondence between persons' identity meanings in a situation and the identity meanings in their standard.²⁴¹

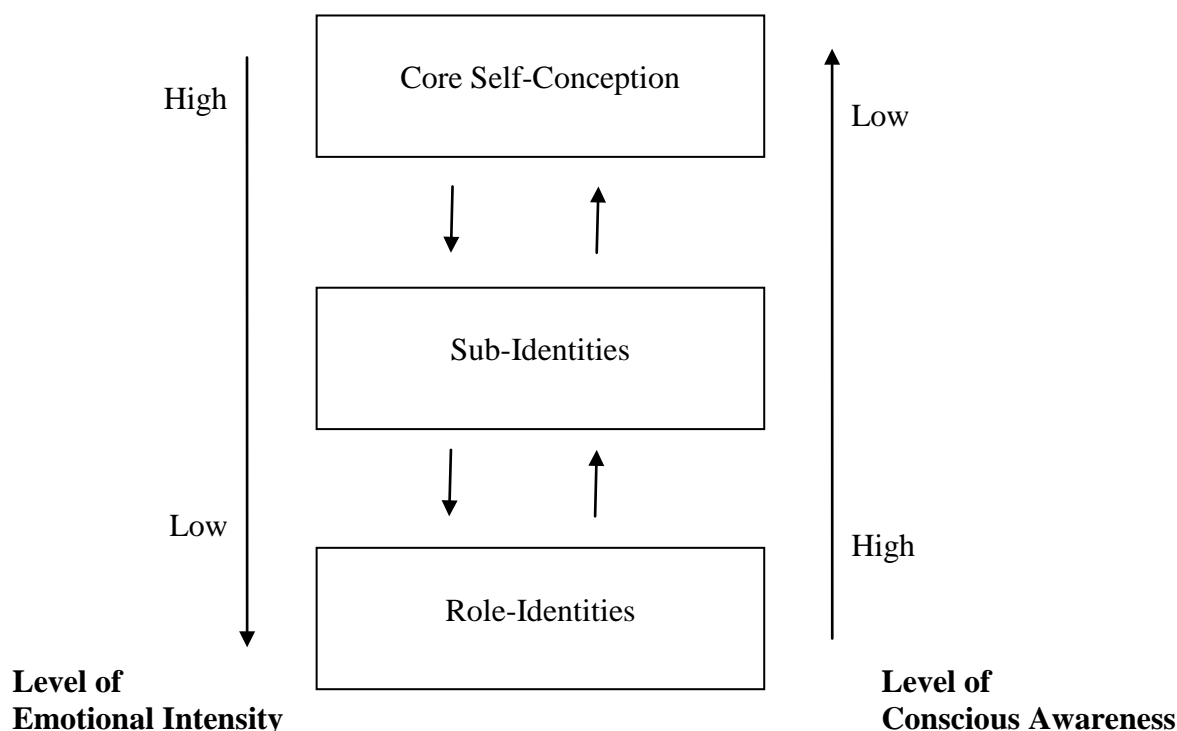


Figure 3.2 Levels of the Self and Emotional Intensity
(Title Adapted)²⁴²

Placing emotions at the level of the individual being is a difficult task. However, locating it in association with the self can help to understand the many other phenomena associated to the construction of identity in emotional terms. Accordingly, it could be said, as Jonathan Turner affirms, that the self is a cognitive and emotional force in the process of socio-cultural interaction. Individuals “carry cognitions about themselves that are emotionally valence; and because these cognitions are emotionally charged, they are more salient and more likely to elicit further emotional responses during the course interaction.”²⁴³ Individuals have the propensity to see their self as an object in virtually every interaction, to store memories and emotions about their self from past interactions, to see the self in imaginatively rehearsing future lines of conduct, and to see and evaluate the self when thinking about the past, the present and the future. In this regard, the self operates on at least three different levels in terms of the intensity of

²⁴¹ See Stryker in Yardley and Honess, 1987; Burke, 1991; and Burke in Kaplan, 1996.

²⁴² Source: Turner, 2007: 103.

²⁴³ Turner, 2007: 103.



associated emotions and in how these emotions can be associated to identity patterns, as outlined in Figure 3.2.

The first level is the core self-conception that persons have about who they are in all situations. These are cognitions about the characteristics of the self, as well as powerful emotions evaluating the self, ones that persons carry from encounter to encounter. Moreover, this core self is typically the basis for thought and reflection about the self outside of encounters. This core self is built up through role-taking with others and seeing their responses to self presentations. From this first level, over time a more stable, trans-situational self emerges by adulthood and becomes the principle gyroscope directing an individual's behaviour and emotional productions. Thus, the core-self is relatively stable, and it represents the basic collage of feelings that persons have about who and what they are, and what they deserve from others in encounters.²⁴⁴

The second level of the self refers to the term sub-identities.²⁴⁵ These “are emotionally valence conceptions that individuals have about themselves in institutional domains and stratification systems. For example, a person will have a sense of themselves as a father, mother, son, daughter, worker, religious worshiper, resource holder [...] A person might, for instance, see the self as a negligent father but a hard worker who brings home resources that assure high rank in the stratification system. Each of these emotionally valenced cognitions –father, worker, and place in class systems– constitutes a sub-identity, and together they lead individuals to see and evaluate themselves as a particular kind of person.”²⁴⁶

Finally, it appears a role-identity or situational identity. These are “the conception that a person has of the self in a specific role within a particular social structural context. To some degree, role-identities fade into sub-identities, but role identities are more situational [...] Indeed, in almost all sets of iterated encounters in corporate and categorical units, individuals develop relatively cognitions and evaluations of themselves in specific roles. As Figure 3.2 emphasizes, individuals have the most cognitive access to role-identities, but these identities are less emotional valenced than either sub-identities or core self-conceptions.”²⁴⁷

As the arrows in Figure 3.2 denoting emotional intensity and cognitive awareness emphasize, the core self is the most emotionally valenced aspect of the self, and yet people often have difficulty putting into words just what this core self entails. Indeed, the dynamics of emotion, memory, and self repression often create unconscious emotions about the self to which an individual does not have easy access. The core self is, therefore, a mixture of conscious and unconscious feelings that have been built up

²⁴⁴ Turner, 2007: 03.

²⁴⁵ See Turner, 2002.

²⁴⁶ Turner, 2007: 104.

²⁴⁷ Turner, 2007: 104.



over a lifetime and, by late adolescence, coalesce into a stable self-conception.²⁴⁸ This self-conception whether or not evolves over an adult lifetime is the latest responsible that looks for emotional balance and, thus, life satisfaction and subjective well-being.

The identification with a particular socio-cultural framework makes people feel they belong and gives them a sense of security. It also provides access to social networks, which provide support and shared values and aspirations. Social networks can help to break down barriers and build a sense of trust between people – a phenomenon sometimes referred to as social capital. This means that social groups are assigned value. Due to the values that are assigned to socio-cultural groups, socio-cultural identities can be experienced emotionally or, in words of Jerome Bruner, “people embody cultural ideas in the form of emotions.”²⁴⁹ Their emotional patterns express and reinforce the prevalent meanings and practices in their cultural contexts and, therefore, implicitly signal their sociocultural affiliations. People’s fit with the modal emotional pattern of the culture in which they engage may thus reflect their levels of sharing and participation in the culture’s meanings and practices. We expect that emotional fit may facilitate a person’s life satisfaction. Individuals’ positive or negative evaluations of their membership in social groups comprising their social identity play a large part in an individual’s self-esteem and, accordingly, well-being and life satisfaction. If an individual has an identity with negative self perceptions, she/he will either attempt to leave the social group which has been negatively evaluated or attempt to make that social group better.²⁵⁰

In identity theory, then, “emotions motivate individuals to play roles in which they receive positive reinforcement, and emotions also inform individuals about the adequacy of their performances and their commitments to identities in the salience hierarchy. Emotions thus drive individuals to play roles in ways that are consistent with normative expectations, definitions of the situation, cultural values, and highly salient feelings about self.”²⁵¹

CULTURE, IDENTITY AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING

Although the pursuit of happiness seems to be a general drive of life, there are strong inter- and intracultural differences in the way people appreciate happiness and in the routes to happiness. Research suggests that cross-cultural comparisons of subjective well-being have some degree of validity.²⁵² “The self stands at the junction of subjective well-being and culture. Culture provides form and shape to the self, which in turn

²⁴⁸ Turner, 2007: 104.

²⁴⁹ Bruner, 1996.

²⁵⁰ Tajfel and Turner in Austin and Worchel, 1979: 40.

²⁵¹ Turner 2013: 337.

²⁵² See, for instance, Suh and Koo in Eid and Larsen. 2008.



influences how individuals feel and think about various aspects of their lives –the central research issue of SWB.”²⁵³ As Ed Diener, Shigehiro Oishi, and Richard E. Lucas state, “although personality can explain a significant amount of the variability in SWB, life circumstances also influence long-term levels. Cultural variables explain differences in mean levels of SWB and appear to be due to objective factors such as wealth, to norms dictating appropriate feelings and how important SWB is considered to be, and to the relative approach versus avoidance tendencies of societies. Culture can also moderate which variables most influence Subjective Well-Being.”²⁵⁴ Moreover, a comprehensive examination of the effects of culture on well-being can be found in empirical research.²⁵⁵ Many of the findings on culture and subjective well-being parallel the conclusions on personality and SWB in terms of differences between nations, and between ethnic groups within nations.²⁵⁶ The findings suggest that there are multiple pathways to well-being and they are somewhat different across cultures, depending on internalized cultural values. What makes people happy might be the fulfilment of cultural values, which they do not necessarily endorse at the explicit level.²⁵⁷

A number of factors might explain why societies differ in mean levels of subjective well-being.²⁵⁸ International surveys of life satisfaction show consistent mean level differences across nations.²⁵⁹ Taking this information into account, the relationship between culture and emotions becomes evident. A group of scholars in this field compared the convergence of several different types of measures of positive affect and negative affect across several cultures. They found that global reports of emotion, experience-sampling-moment reports of mood, and retrospective memories of emotions tended to converge in terms of the relative positions of the cultures. Thus, culture accounted for a significant amount of variance in positive emotions, although not in negative emotions.²⁶⁰

Culture is a complex concept as wide as are their possible meanings. The problem is nicely summarised by Bohannan who stated that “we define culture by whatever purpose we ascribe to it in our theorizing, and are hence allowed to continue on our way without examining it.”²⁶¹ Cross-cultural psychologists, for example, measure the core value orientations they regard to be one of the essential elements of culture. Culture is a relatively small set of basic *beliefs* (knowledge, ideas, theories, convictions, etc.) and value orientations which monitor action.²⁶² Culture systems may, on the one hand, be

²⁵³ Suh in Diener and Suh, 2000: 63.

²⁵⁴ Diener, Oishi and Lucas, 2003: 403.

²⁵⁵ See Diener and Suh, 2000.

²⁵⁶ Diener, Oishi and Lucas, 2003: 410.

²⁵⁷ See, for instance, Heine, Lehman, Peng and Greenholtz, 2002; and Veenhoven, 1993.

²⁵⁸ See Diener and Lucas, 2000.

²⁵⁹ See Inglehart and Klingemann in Diener and Suh, 2000.

²⁶⁰ See Scollon, Diener, Oishi and Biswas-Diener, 2004; Scollon, Diener, Oishi and Biswas-Diener, 2002; and Scollon, Diener, Lucas, Oishi and Biswas-Diener, 2001.

²⁶¹ Bohannan, 1973: 358.

²⁶² Brons, 2005: 118.



considered as products of action and, on the other, as conditioning elements of further action.²⁶³ In this regard, action departs from identity. Culture is learned systems of meanings, communicated by means of natural language and other symbol systems, having representational, directive and affective functions, and capable of creating cultural entities and particular senses of reality.²⁶⁴

Associated to the latter concepts of identity and culture, the concepts of *mentality* and *sociocultural knowledge* appear. Mentality determines how each individual will interpret and respond to social situations and the way that people understand each other in a given situation²⁶⁵. Mentality is “a group of attitudes that emerges by the effect of values and knowledge that individuals, groups and institutions attain as the result of personal experience and cultural inheritance within a dynamic interaction and determines and explains the behaviours, interpersonal relations, tools, processes, structures, and systems used by these actors in order to reach their goals and changes depending on time and place.”²⁶⁶ According to this, there are two primal processes that form mentality. A first process consists of individuals, groups and institutions’ learning from both individual and interactive experiences. A second process is the generational inheritance of the knowledge and values of work mentality as a reflection of the culture. This process associates the term with that of *Sociocultural knowledge*, as we will observe later in the case study through participants’ statements.

Sociocultural knowledge refers to the fact that people not only have personal beliefs about personal experiences, but also share more general beliefs with others, such as other members of the same group, or even with most others in a whole society or culture. Our *sociocultural knowledge* is perhaps the most crucial example of such shared beliefs: It is impossible to understand each other, nor would we be able to speak or to interact with others, without sharing a large amount of knowledge about all aspects of the world and our daily lives. From birth to death people acquire an enormous amount of knowledge, beginning with their language(s) and the principles of interaction, the people and groups they interact with, the objects around them, the institutions of society, and later, often through various forms of media or educational discourse, about the rest of the world. These socially shared beliefs, attitudes, values and emotions form what may be called *social memory*, and that sociocultural knowledge is a central system of mental representations in social memory. *Common ground* would be another synonym. As Teun Van Dijk states, “there is an enormous body of knowledge nobody ever disputes and that is accepted by virtually all competent members of a culture. This knowledge may simply be called the sociocultural *common ground* of a group or culture. These are the kind of beliefs people presuppose to be known in their everyday interaction and discourse, and hence the beliefs that need not be expressed, unless necessary.”²⁶⁷

²⁶³ Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952: 181 in Brons, 2005: 133.

²⁶⁴ D’Andrade, 1984: 116.

²⁶⁵ Bruner, 1997: 119.

²⁶⁶ Aldemir, Arbak and Özmen, 2003: 147.

²⁶⁷ Van Dijk, 1998. 8.



Subjective well-being and life satisfaction appear to be influenced by the personal and the socio-cultural elements of identity, mentality, socio-cultural knowledge and common ground. At the level of the individual, which is the place where SWB and life satisfaction operates, all these concepts can be joined under the term *autobiographical memory*. Moreover, this concept is derived from the idea identity as a narrative.²⁶⁸ As it has been introduced in previous sections, narrative provides an excellent locus for investigating issues of culture, personal life and identity. So, for instance, Brockmeier and Carbaugh point out “the importance of narrative as an expressive embodiment of our experience, as a mode of communication, and as a form for understanding the world and ultimately ourselves.”²⁶⁹ And as Turner notes: “Narrative imagining –story– is the fundamental instrument of thought. [...] It is our chief means of looking into the future, of planning, and of explaining. It is a literary capacity indispensable to human cognition generally.”²⁷⁰ Thus, “autobiographical memory encompasses memory for significant personal experiences and knowledge of the self and, consequently, is critical for personal identity and psychological wellbeing.”²⁷¹

Research in the past two decades has revealed “the central role of culture in human cognition and remembering. Recent theories of autobiographical memory have increasingly emphasized the constructive nature of memory in the cultural context, and empirical findings have further accentuated the influence of culture on autobiographical remembering.”²⁷² Research have shown the effect of culture on autobiographical remembering through affecting information processing at the level of the individual and by shaping social practices of remembering between individuals. Contemporary research has integrated developmental, cognitive, and sociocultural perspectives to examine the mechanisms responsible for the development of identity. Critical evidence has shown that self-construal²⁷³ and emotion knowledge as intrapersonal variables, and parent-child reminiscing as an interpersonal variable play important roles in identity construction and, thus, subjective well-being. Moreover, these both intrapersonal and interpersonal variables themselves are influenced by culture through early socialization practices and parental beliefs and goals.²⁷⁴ Accordingly, subjective well being and life satisfaction can be understood as emerging and developing elements from both the personal self and culture.²⁷⁵

Cultural self-construal may have profound effects on identity. It is assumed that individuals can define themselves either in reference to or in isolation from their social

²⁶⁸ Bruner, 1987: 13.

²⁶⁹ Brockmeier and Carbaugh, 2001: 1.

²⁷⁰ Turner, 1996: 4.

²⁷¹ Conway and Pleydell-Pearce, 2000; and Pillemer, 1998.

²⁷² See, for instance, Nelson and Fivush, 2004; Wang and Brockmeier, 2002; and Wang and Ross in Kitayama and Cohen, 2007.

²⁷³ See Cross, 2014.

²⁷⁴ Wang, 2011.

²⁷⁵ Wang, 2011.



roles and that certain cultures may value one type of self-construal over another.²⁷⁶ Thus, “cultural differences in the predominant forms of selfconstrual affect well-being in two ways. First, whether the self is emphasized in reference to or separate from social roles influences the correlates and causes of SWB. Second, within the ethos of each culture, chronic attention to self versus others influences the frequency and desirability of certain emotions, with implications for overall mean levels of SWB. Thus, the *nature* of well-being is shaped not by self-construals alone, but *in combination with* other values and beliefs specific to each culture.”²⁷⁷ In sum, cultural self-construal affects many psychological processes that, in turn, determine the construction of one’s self and identity.²⁷⁸

A second intrapersonal element which influences subjective well-being is emotion knowledge. This refers to the schematic knowledge of situational antecedents of emotions (e.g., holidays and birthday parties are happy and joyful situations, whereas separation and the loss of a loved one are situations of sadness and grief), and the general construction of the emotional mapping of the individual along years (the relation with common experiences with other individuals or specific but common situations such as going to school or the relation of the individual with neighbourhood).²⁷⁹ It may affect autobiographical remembering, and thus subjective well-being through multiple processes. It may first enable the individual to interpret and understand the emotional meaning of the event situation and thus to perceive its personal relevance or importance and why the event is memorable in the way it is done –by activating positive or negative feelings.

Furthermore, “emotion knowledge may provide an organizational structure that serves to process and represent significant personal event information, allowing it to be well integrated into an existing autobiographical knowledge base and be effectively stored and retrieved.”²⁸⁰ So, “during development, the acquisition of emotion knowledge helps children experience appropriate emotions during specific events, understand the personal meaning of the events, and organize the event information in a structured fashion, thereby facilitating retention of and access to the memories over the long term.”²⁸¹ Moreover, “emotion knowledge is culturally construed and children form their theory of emotions through participating in everyday socio-cultural practices. So, for instance, in Euro-American culture that emphasizes individuality and autonomy, emotion is regarded as a direct expression of the self and an affirmation of the uniqueness of the individual. Middle-class parents are often eager to help children understand and express emotions and feelings so as to raise an “emotionally intelligent” child. In contrast, in many East Asian cultures such as Korea, China, and Japan that put a premium on social harmony and group interests, emotion is often viewed as

²⁷⁶ Kim, and Tov” in Leung, Chiu and Hong, 2011: 154.

²⁷⁷ Kim and Tov in Leung, Chiu and Hong, 2011: 156.

²⁷⁸ Wang, 2011.

²⁷⁹ Wang, 2011: 5.

²⁸⁰ Conway and Bekerian, 1987.

²⁸¹ Wang, 2011: 5.



destructive or even dangerous to ongoing relationships and therefore needs to be strictly controlled. Asian parents are not preoccupied with facilitating emotional understanding in their children but emphasizing psychological discipline and behavioural standards.”²⁸²

In fact, emotion knowledge’s variables become the framework with which surveys of subjective well-being are constructed. So, in research inference participants are expected to complete measures of subjective well-being in terms of explicit emotions. So, in five-item Satisfaction with Life Scale used as a measure of global life satisfaction, participants are asked to indicate how frequently they had experienced positive (e.g., joy, pride, love, affection) and negative emotions (e.g., sadness, shame, anger, fear) in a specific period of time. The sums of the positive and the negative emotion ratings are used, respectively, as the positive affect and negative affect scores.²⁸³

Finally, parent-child reminiscing as an interpersonal variable becomes a key factor in the construction of the emotional patterns of individuals. Socio-interactionist approaches to memory development and identity construction view the emergence of autobiographical memory as a direct result of children’s developing narrative skills that take place in collaboration with significant adults.²⁸⁴ Specifically, parent-child reminiscing teaches children how to represent and reinstate event information in linguistic forms and provides children with the necessary organizational framework around which to structure their personal memories. Furthermore, located in the cultural context, parent-child reminiscing conveys to children cultural norms and beliefs regarding the purpose and importance of remembering the past and models to children culturally promoted ways of remembering.”²⁸⁵

The studies developed by Ed Diener “have contributed to our understanding of cultural differences in subjective well-being in many important ways.”²⁸⁶ According to them, there are strong national differences in citizens’ overall satisfaction with life. Although most people are happy, evidence showed that international differences in subjective well-being are positively correlated with international differences in income, individualism, human rights, and societal equality.²⁸⁷ There are universal predictors of subjective well-being that have been found in several nations, such as extraversion and marriage, but there are also differences between nations. In individualistic nations judgments of subjective well-being are more strongly based on the emotions people experience and their self-esteem, whereas financial satisfaction was a stronger predictor in poorer countries. Life satisfaction is more strongly related to autonomy, feelings of

²⁸² Wang, 2011: 6. See also Wang and Fivush, 2005.

²⁸³ Suh, 2002: 1381.

²⁸⁴ Nelson and Fivush, 2004; and Pillemer and White in Reese, 1989.

²⁸⁵ Wang and Brockmeier; and Wang and Ross in Kitayama and Cohen, 2007.

²⁸⁶ For an overview see Diener and Suh, 2000.

²⁸⁷ Diener, Diener and Diener, 1995.



meaning, and growth in Western cultures than in Eastern ones.”²⁸⁸ Nations also differ in the norms for experiencing positive emotions, with Eastern nations devaluing some positive emotions such as pride and satisfaction.²⁸⁹

If we recuperate the dual mechanism of acculturation/enculturation introduced previously for the immigrant’s experience, we acknowledge that this mechanism is operationalized according to two key (and independent) dimensions identified in literature:²⁹⁰ adoption of receiving culture ideals, values and practices, and retention of heritage culture ideals, values and practices. So, whether immigrant individuals hold onto their heritage culture beliefs more strongly, allow these beliefs to coexist with those of the receiving society, or discard heritage culture beliefs and adopt those of the receiving culture depends on the degree to which the cultural identity is flexible enough to accommodate seemingly incompatible belief systems.²⁹¹ Moreover, this means that the emotional element and the stability and variability of affective experiences of individuals are strongly conditioned by across situations such as migration. As the acculturation/enculturation process may involve both exploring and committing to a potentially expanded set of cultural ideals, beliefs, values and emotions, and the holding onto their heritage culture beliefs, attitudes and values, the coexistence of both elements in whatever manner they develop, life satisfaction will be conditioned by such an equilibrium. This study intends to contribute to the task of adding information to such a contemporary social development in the manner of studying a specific group of people: Brazilian women who migrated to Catalonia.

²⁸⁸ Eid and Larsen in Eid and Larsen, 2008: 9-10.

²⁸⁹ See, for instance, Eid and Diener, 2001.

²⁹⁰ See Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind and Vedder, 2001.

²⁹¹ See Jensen, 2003.





CHAPTER 4

– BRAZIL: A POTENTIAL LABORATORY –

INTRODUCTION

The study of migration and immigrants assumes the existence of a vast variety of profiles and situations. Accordingly, it is necessary to narrow the scope of analysis by means of the definition of specific groups of interests. Accordingly, Brazilian women who migrated to Catalonia have been chosen as the group of analysis. The reason for choosing Brazil as the country of origin is that traditionally social sciences interpret Brazil and its culture through a multicultural point of view, that is, the well-known '*mistura brasileira*'. Brazil was built-up by various types of people with many different origins and traits. Accordingly, this country²⁹² becomes an interesting social laboratory.

Brazil can be considered one of the most diverse and plural countries in the so-called Western world. This society offers many possibilities for social and anthropological research. Certainly, the diversity of origins of its people and the big dimension of its territory and population suggest the opportunity to find evidence of human behaviour that, to a certain extent, could be similar for other countries, contributing to the comprehension of general social patterns.

Up from the eighties, the emigration tendency of Brazilians opened up new possibilities for other group of studies where immigrants are the base of new research. Waves of these “multicultural” individuals have been moving and installing themselves in different places of the world to begin a new life. Because of this, the option of choosing Brazilian individuals seems to be useful for deepening in integration processes, and how well-being and life satisfaction are developed within the context of immigration studies. The purpose of this study is to deepen in the understanding of how in origin acquired beliefs, attitudes, preferences, feelings and values are related to immigrants' integration process and how those are evaluated as positive or negative agents for their current life satisfaction and well-being and life satisfaction.

The concepts introduced in previous chapters will help us to develop an empirical framework for the specific study of Brazilian individuals as immigrants of countries of the Western world in terms of their subjective well-being and life satisfaction. After the introduction of the migrant process and the relationship between culture, identity and subjective well-being, in this chapter we intend to present socio-psychological traits that some researchers associate to belong to and shape/mould Brazilian mentality. We are

²⁹² I am Brazilian born. However, this evidence does not play down the value of doing research into Brazilian society as such.



going to describe some beliefs, attitudes, preferences, feelings and values which are shared among the individuals of Brazilian society despite the acknowledgement of their cultural diversity.

It is the will of this study to account whether in origin acquired attitudes, beliefs, values and emotions have been positive for subjective well-being and life satisfaction of immigrants in their process of integration in the hosting culture.

BRAZIL: A COUNTRY OF MIGRANTS²⁹³

Since its founding in 1500 by Portuguese colonists, Brazil, the largest country in South America with over 201 million people, has had a strong immigrant presence. The composition of the population has been greatly influenced by distinct ingresses of immigrants at different moments in history. Much of this immigration, in turn, has been tied to economic factors.

Over time, Brazil's governments have encouraged migration entrances to fill its vast territory and boost agricultural production. The first stage, coordinated by Portugal, brought Portuguese migrants and slaves from Africa. In more recent periods, the government implemented policies to encourage migration from Germany, Italy (mostly at the end of the 19th century) and Japan (mostly at the beginning of the 20th century) to interior areas of the southern states of São Paulo, Paraná and Rio Grande do Sul. To this day, economic developments such the Mercosur are driving migration, with undocumented immigrants from neighbouring countries accounting for the majority of new arrivals. The government has no policies encouraging immigration. At the same time, no policy has been created to discourage or prevent illegal immigrants from entering the country.

At the beginning of the second half of the 1980s, Brazilians from various socioeconomic levels started to migrate to other countries in search for, theoretically, economic and social opportunities. High inflation and low economic growth in the 1980s, known as the "lost decade", followed by the government's unsuccessful liberal economic policies in the 1990s, meant that even educated Brazilians could make more money doing low-skilled work abroad. Apparently, the economical factor seems to be the most obvious motivation for the migratory project. However, we should take into account that other factors are also responsible for promoting such an enterprise. Moreover, Brazil, nowadays, is one of the emergent countries with the highest development potential forecasts for the next years. Certainly, the focus of attention is now placed on growing and investments possibilities of so called BRICS countries –

²⁹³ This part of the chapter is based on Amaral and Fusco, 2005.



Brazil, Russia, India, China and South-Africa. This new trend can make the migratory tendency diminish in the next future²⁹⁴.

By the 1990s, over 1,8 million Brazilians were living outside the country, mainly in the United States, Paraguay, and Japan, but also in Italy, Portugal, the United Kingdom, France, Canada, Australia, Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Israel. There were no specific policies implemented by the government to encourage or discourage this emigration process.²⁹⁵ According to the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) remittances from Brazilian emigrants were estimated at \$ 5,2 billion in 2003.

FOUNDATIONAL MYTH AND SOCIAL REPRESENTATION

When trying to define a human society, the simplest way is to state it as a group of human beings organized in system where material elements are combined with ideational ones. The key element that differentiates humans is that the organization of such ideational and material components is mediated by symbols. Symbols are the relevant characteristic that defines human beings as what they are. Symbolic manifestations are not only transmitted by spoken language but by an infinite of procedures. According to Ernst Cassirer, different symbolic forms are art, language, scientific knowledge and myth.²⁹⁶ Of all of them myth has become a world of its own given the complex reality that this concept embeds.

Myth and historic stories are a kind of world itself. Myth is an ideologically marked narrative which purports to give a true account of past, present or predicted social events and which is accepted as valid in its essentials by a social group.²⁹⁷ Myths represent mental maps for individuals to make sense of the world surrounding them,²⁹⁸ provide practical guidance in addressing relevant problems,²⁹⁹ and elicit powerful emotional responses through its narrative form and dramatic structure, grandiose content, the amplification effect of collective participation.³⁰⁰ This is achieved not in the first place through *logos*, reason, but through imagination, for reason itself only becomes possible on irrational premises.³⁰¹ Anthropologists concluded that myths satisfy much better certain social functions than erudite means, making evident the

²⁹⁴ New data from the Interior Ministry states that many Brazilian that have been living abroad for years, now are taking the decision to be new repatriates and establish their next stage of their lives in Brazil. See <http://www.brasil.gov.br/>

²⁹⁵ Amaral, 2007: 3-5.

²⁹⁶ See Bottici, 2007 and Cassirer, 1965.

²⁹⁷ Flood, 2002: 44

²⁹⁸ Edelman, 1967.

²⁹⁹ Tudor, 1972: 123.

³⁰⁰ Flood 2002: 36. See also Cassirer, 1946; and Blumenberg, 1985.

³⁰¹ Blumenberg, 1985.



apparent superiority of mythical thought over other channels –in this case, the erudite one– when trying to transmit some types of collective messages in contemporary societies. In accordance to this, myths and their social expressions evolve in parallel to the evolution of the society.

Myths are used to reinforce collective identity. Mythical language and collective stories are ideological concepts that work as a mechanism that reinforces the sense of collectivity. In this regard, it is possible to find at least three vital functions of mythical thought in unacquainted population. Firstly, mythical thought allows explaining history –real or imaginary- of a given group. Secondly, myths allow creating certain modalities of social culture which would be difficult to be transmitted by other means. And, thirdly, myth gives sense to things that apparently lack of it. Myth is a way to give the world a meaning that it has not; myths give meaning to human existence.

Myths contribute to the construction of a community by drawing its members together in a shared web of meanings. In this way, they can reinforce the role of existing institutions and the position of some members of the community, but also sanction social segmentation and political hierarchies, and even embolden oppositional groups.³⁰² Myth functions as an explanation, but the narrative form distinguishes it from a straightforward answer to an intellectual question about causes. The function of explanation and the narrative form go together, since the imaginative power of the myth lends credibility to the explanation and crystallizes it into a memorable and enduring form.

The relation between myth and the identity of the individual is essential to make sense of all types of social practices, social symbols and social characters. In the case of Brazil, it is possible to talk about myths, and especially as a young country they are about a myth of origin or a foundational myth. A foundational myth “is the one which never ceases finding new ways of expression, new languages, new colours and ideas, so that the more it seems to be something else, the more it is the repetition of itself.”³⁰³ The importance of the foundation moment lies on the fact that this very moment becomes everlasting and turns to be the guideline of its own history. The foundation emerges from the society at the same time as it creates the society. The subsequent ideologies to the original moment are fed by representations generated by the foundation, allowing, this way, the perpetuation of the myth with a new face.³⁰⁴

In this regard, Brazilians are aware of the new born character of their society and how they are entrenched to an origin which they associate to the Brazilian foundational myth. The Brazilian foundational myth is, thus, re-edited within the daily construction of the collective identity, promoting a positive self-representation and also permitting

³⁰² Flood 2002: 37.

³⁰³ Chauí, 2000: 5.

³⁰⁴ Chauí, 2000: 5.



the coexistence with and the tolerance to the huge social differences. “It is the imaginary solution to tensions and conflicts that do not find ways to be solved at the reality level.”³⁰⁵ Whether we agree or not, according to Chauí there seems to be a common ground about Brazil that could be summarized as follows:

1. Brazil is a gift of nature and God, a rich country in natural resources, a country where no natural catastrophes occur (there are no hurricanes, no volcanic activities, no snowfalls, etc.).
2. Brazilian people are pacific, generous, happy and sensual, no matter how suffering they might be.
3. Miscegenation is a thorough practice in the country, where no prejudice, racial or religion discrimination exists. There is no discrimination to class, rather to the ones who are indolent.
4. It is a welcoming country *par excellence*.
5. It is a country marked by regional contrasts, what justifies its economical and cultural plurality.³⁰⁶

In addition, the power of this representation is tough enough to enable, at an imaginary level, the conciliation of the conflict unity-division, the coexistence of contradictory positions concerning social reality. Accordingly, it is possible that the same individual who asserts that “Indians are ignorant, black are lazy, north-eastern Brazilians are underdeveloped, Portuguese are stupid and women are naturally inferior, can at the same time declare to be proud of being Brazilian because Brazilians have no prejudices and belong to a nation³⁰⁷ born out of the mixture of races. As well, and taken as an example, in one hand, an individual can express being indignant about the existence of the “*meninos de rua*” and their murder, the waste of non-cultivated extensions of land and the massacre of those with no land; on the other, but concomitantly, this claims to be proud of being Brazilian because they are a pacific and non-violent people”.³⁰⁸ This representation permits, afterwards, the creation of a positive self-image, as a strategy to equalize conflicts, which have very difficult solution. It permits conciliation at a certain extent. As we shall go on exploring more concretely in this chapter, the question of conciliation is an imperative need and one of the fundamental traits of the Brazilian society. In many places of her texts, this author develops her writing as follows: “... The foundation peculiar trait is the way it places the transcendence and immanence on the founding moment: the foundation appears as emanating from society (the nation, in our case) and simultaneously, engendering the society (or nation) from the one it emanates. That is why, we refer to foundation as myth...”³⁰⁹ This is proof of the prudence that all

³⁰⁵ Chauí, 2000: 5.

³⁰⁶ Chauí, 2000: 4.

³⁰⁷ Chauí, 2000: 5.

³⁰⁸ Chauí, 2000: 4.

³⁰⁹ Chauí, 2000: 5.



these authors take into account when they develop academic research about the type of human group that the Brazilians constitute.

In sum, the foundational myth repeats itself in terms of its own generated representations, recreating central beliefs with new forms. On one hand, a country blessed by God and an exuberant nature regenerates the idea of perfection of an original paradise. On the other hand, the idea that the Brazilian people are essentially good, as an inherence of their origin inhabitants renews the myth of the “good Indian” and maintains at the same time the positive image of the current people. Moreover and also associated to the idea of original perfection, the firm belief that the country projects itself to a brilliant future remains in continuous perpetuation. The hope of a future associated to the perfection of the foundational moment form a *continuum* possibility-realization, intention-certainty, that reveal another basic belief associated to the myth³¹⁰. The common expression “*vai dar certo*” expressed by every single Brazilian individual is a significant example of how this particular face of the myth is still very at hand. Present and future join together, perhaps, softening the present moment. A present focused on the hope of great prospects: Brazil, the country of the future.

BRAZILIAN MENTALITY AND SOCIAL PRACTICES

As presented in previous chapters, within the relationship between the individual and culture in a society, the concept of *mentality* appears. The term *mentality* has been used, from the beginning of the 20th century, to define those social structures that are expression of culture but are also part of the collective mental constructs. Mentality is “a group of attitudes that emerges by the effect of values and knowledge that individuals, groups and institutions attain as the result of personal experience and cultural inheritance within a dynamic interaction and determines and explains the behaviours, interpersonal relations, tools, processes, structures, and systems used by these actors in order to reach their goals and changes depending on time and place.”³¹¹ Mentalities give immaterial identitarian tools to collectivities. Mentality is the combination of different traditions, beliefs, habits, ideas which characterize the society, its mode of thinking and actions of the whole community. Thus, the term *mentality* can be seen as being smashed and fragmented ideology.³¹² Mentality and mental attitudes determine how each individual will interpret and respond to social situations and the way that people understand each other in a given situation.³¹³

According to this, there are two primal processes that form mentality. First process consists of individuals, groups and institutions’ learning from both individual and

³¹⁰ Fanjul, 2002b: 82 in Santos, 2005: 132.

³¹¹ Aldemir, Arbak and Özmen, 2003: 147.

³¹² Vovelle in Samuel and Jones, 1982: 9.

³¹³ Bruner, 1997: 119.



interactive experiences. The second process is the generational inheritance of the knowledge and values of work mentality as a reflection of the culture. This process associates the term with that of *tradition*. This is generally treated, in sociology books, as simple doings of non formal social groups. So they seem as simple social activities. However, tradition is an institutionalized texture of something continuing in time. Hence traditions and social mentalities are DNAs of a socio-cultural structure. “Traditions and customs must be received as the rules shaping the social life style. As these processes are in a dynamic interaction between each other, it is very hard to determine the more effective one and to pinpoint the intersections and distinctions between these processes. However, societies inherited knowledge and values have a greater effect on social practices and mentalities because they are accumulated over the centuries in order to answer the needs of variable factors like time and place and passed over from one generation to the others.”³¹⁴ Along history, Brazil as a group has developed their own mentalities and social practices. The expression of a *social practice*, in which individuals are engaged in the successive moments of their existence, draw on various references and skills within themselves in order to deal adequately with the conditions which they face as various circumstances arise in the social context (people and situations).³¹⁵ Social practice involves knowledge production and the theorization and analysis of both institutional and intervention practices.³¹⁶

According to Roberto DaMatta and David Hess, it is important to consider that Brazil is a country where Western culture has mixed and mingled with non-Western cultures for centuries. So, in this sense, it may represent an example of the future for the United States and other countries.”³¹⁷ According to these authors, Brazilian culture involves a complex negotiation in which the traditional values of hierarchy and personalism permeate even the most modern institutions. The Brazilian Puzzle is emblematic of the new era in Brazilian studies in which Brazilian scholars are leading the way. Many of the authors draw on the work of the Brazilian anthropologist Robert DaMatta, who has questioned the perspective of observers from developed Western countries. DaMatta argues that they often project their own categories onto Brazilian society, and instead he suggests that Latin Americans and other peoples develop their own theories rooted in their own unique experiences. In this way The Brazilian Puzzle contributes to the end of an era of Brazilianists and the decolonizing of area studies.

Moreover, “this mixture of Western and non-Western, as well as modern and traditional, is what those authors call the *Brazilian puzzle*, or what DaMatta called the *Brazilian dilemma* and to what many Brazilians call the *Brazilian reality*. [...] Catholics also believe in or practice African religions; the political and economic institutions operate through personal relationships as much as general rules; and the music, food, social relations, and- in general- tastes are as deeply shaped by Africa and Native America as by Europe. [...] *Diversity* is really *not* the best word for describing Brazil

³¹⁴ Brons, 2005: 138.

³¹⁵ Létourneau, 2001: 2.

³¹⁶ See Smolka, 2001.

³¹⁷ DaMatta and Hess in DaMatta and Hess, 1995: 2.



and Brazilians; *mixture* is better. Brazil is a nation of the mixing of races (miscegenation); religious (syncretism), and cultures (diasporas, borderlands).”³¹⁸

DaMatta’s approach to Brazilian culture “departs from Tocqueville’s legacy of comparative analysis has influenced a number of twentieth century thinkers, among them the anthropologists Ruth Benedict (1946) and Louis Dumont (1980). Dumont’s comparative studies focused on two key dimensions for comparing values, social structures, and patterns of social relations across societies: hierarchy and equality, and holism and individualism.”³¹⁹

In this regard, “the concepts of holism and individualism are closely related to those of hierarchy and equality. In a hierarchical society everyone occupies a definite position in the whole. [...] People’s identity is rooted in their association with a particular position in society; [...] DaMatta uses the terms *persons* to describe this category of identity, in which one is defined by one’s position in a family or in a hierarchically ordered social group. In contrast, in an individualistic society identity is rooted in one’s own life history and choices. [...] In this regard, people are individuals linked more by the rules of the game, which are assumed to apply to all (or universally). Although in an individualistic society people certainly have personalistic loyalties, one’s identity as an individual rather than as a person tends to have the upper hand. Likewise, in a personalistic (or what DaMatta calls a *relational*) society there are domains that operate according to individualistic and egalitarian principles, but in general personal loyalties tend to have the upper hand.”³²⁰

DaMatta “rejected the model of two Brazils, in which a traditional culture located in the lower classes of the cities and in the rural hinterlands is opposed to a modern Brazil in the upper classes and the big cities. [...] In other words, societies like Brazil are not divided into social classes, groups, or sectors that can be labelled either modern or traditional, Western or non-Western, egalitarian or hierarchical, individualistic or holistic, and so on. Instead of working with an *either-or* model, DaMatta opts for a *both-and* model. In other words, DaMatta argues that both tendencies are present in any number of social groups, institutions and practices.”³²¹

As part of his argument “that Brazil is an intermediary society, neither modern nor traditional, but emphatically both, DaMatta also developed the analysis of intermediary terms or symbols that dramatize the Brazilian situation. [...] In short, personal relationships (including those with the spirits) form the flip-side of official hierarchies (church, state, race, gender). Personalism is more than a cultural system that gives people a social address in a hierarchical society; it is also a resource that people can use

³¹⁸ DaMatta and Hess in DaMatta and Hess, 1995: 2.

³¹⁹ DaMatta and Hess in DaMatta and Hess, 1995: 5.

³²⁰ DaMatta and Hess in DaMatta and Hess, 1995: 7.

³²¹ DaMatta and Hess in DaMatta and Hess, 1995: 8.



to get around the official rules of the hierarchical society. Of course, personalism does not work the same way for everyone. The networks of the weak are usually smaller and less influential; whereas the networks of those at the top of the hierarchies are usually much larger and more influential. As a result, although personalism can be used as a resource to subvert hierarchy, as an overall system it ends up reproducing the general hierarchical order.”³²²

Certainly, a strategy to subvert hierarchy is the *jeitinho brasileiro*, one of the most well-known Brazilian social practices, recognized as being a specific social practice of the Brazilian society. The concept of *jeitinho* brings a central clue to the Brazilian culture comprehension as far as this notion has a relation with a relevant characteristic of the Brazilian society: the importance of personal relationship.

Accordingly, Brazilians, mainly the ones of the middle and middle-upper classes occupy the place of the person and also enunciate from this position. Even though being part of the group, Brazilians consider themselves “persons” in the first place, adopting, therefore, easily the position of the outsider. This consideration allows two different positionings: the one of not being submitted to the same laws and rules and, also being the observer, the judge of the situation. This attitude also permits talking about the people involved in the situation without considering oneself as part of it.³²³ A clear example of this attitude of positioning oneself out of the group can be seen in the case of racism in Brazil, a non-equalitarian society, where prejudice is blurred. Though a deeper analysis of racism is not our purpose, it is interesting to mention it here as an example of some of the Brazilians’ way of behaving. A recent study with students of the University of Paraíba revealed that almost the totality of the 120 participants of the survey state that there is racism in Brazil. However, the majority do not consider themselves as being racist³²⁴. The participants recognize the existence of racial discrimination, but they neither make themselves responsible of it, nor do they affirm to belong to the group which states this prejudice.

Likewise, the social practice represented in the popular expression ‘*estar em cima do muro*’ (not assuming a clear and definite position), vastly recognized and used by the Brazilian society is justified once distance in relation to the group’s ways of being and acting is adopted. This distancing attitude, similarly, allows avoiding conflict. Giving a flat, round *no* by answer in Brazil is a seldom practice. Brazilians prefer the utilization of the know expression ‘*tudo bem*’ (everything is all right), avoiding conflict and not showing a negative attitude and feeling towards any situation in the beginning.

No doubt stands, that the *jeitinho* and its implications do not define a people’s character on its own. However, it does stand as a model social practice which entails an important

³²² DaMatta and Hess in DaMatta and Hess, 1995: 12-13.

³²³ Santos, 2005: 120.

³²⁴ Camino, Silva, Machado and Pereira, 2001: 13.



relational dynamics of the Brazilian society. It is a dynamics that shows a common pattern: *conciliation*, a key-concept of a society that tries to join together rather than splitting apart.³²⁵ Conciliation is, in this extent, a central notion to what the Brazilian character refers. An open identity as the Brazilian, in continuous construction, brings within the peremptory necessity of cohesion and unification, the practice of *jeitinho*, “*a arte de se ser mais igual que os outros*”, in Barbosa words, shows it very visibly. In sum, the *jeitinho* in Brazilian society can be seen as a mechanism of social survival that enables a culture that values personal relations to sustain traditional patterns of behaviour emphasizing warmth and cordiality³²⁶ as well as the conciliation between the individual necessities and the norms or laws imposed by the society. It is a way of finding a meeting point where both parts can be maintained without a breakage, avoiding conflict and searching for agreement.

In terms of the emotional content, Brazilians focus their interest intensely not only to the personal relations, but rather on the way inter-relations take place. As we have commented, cordiality and conciliation are musts of the Brazilian society, thus, high attention is paid to the manner things are said and how affable encounters are. Brazilians have a very positive representation of themselves as warm, happy, nice and receptive people. Brazilians are very sure and proud of their ability with the relationships, what is deeply entrenched within the use of the *jeitinho* in order to seek and maintain the good atmosphere during socialization.

So, “perhaps the most well-known of DaMatta’s study of mediation is his discussion of street, home and other world (1985). For DaMatta, those spaces are less physical or geographical places than symbols of moral universes. The space of the home is identified with the hierarchical and personalistic moral world, whereas that of the street is egalitarian and individualistic. Of course in Brazil the two worlds of home and street interact considerably. [...] Furthermore, DaMatta argues that the two worlds are mediated by a third space: the other world. The other world is the symbol of a space in which both moral systems come together. [...] It may be worth pointing out that the house/street dimension is also polarized in terms of race, class, age and gender. [...] As a social space, the home- and institutions modelled on the home, such as the church and the workplace- are places where the relations among family members and servants institute the familiar hierarchies of race, class, age and gender. Servants in middle class households are generally people of colour, and the father/husband is the titular head of the household.”³²⁷ Like DaMatta affirms: “At home, each one has his own place in the Brazilian socialization space. We were educated in spaces which entail well defined hierarchies: the cleaner, the clothes ironer, the clothes washer. They are the last slavery echoes and clientism that run through the Brazilian society. This cognitive, emotional frame is in our minds. When people go to street, into the traffic, for instance, you find a very uncomfortable situation: obeying in Brazil is an inferiority symptom.”³²⁸

³²⁵ DaMatta, 1986: 101.

³²⁶ Duarte, 2003: 7.

³²⁷ DaMatta and Hess in DaMatta and Hess, 1995: 13-14.

³²⁸ DaMatta, 2010.



On the other hand, “the street is a different sort of place, where these hierarchies are suspended. [...] In short, the street is the location of inversions and therefore a place of excitement and danger.”³²⁹ In DaMatta’s words: “In the street, the disorder sense of shame does not belong to us anymore rather to the state. We clean our homes ritualistically and get the street dirty without embarrassment. We, Brazilians, are not really able to project the house onto the street in a systematic and congruent manner, but only when we recreate in the public space the same familiar and cosy atmosphere. The others are invisible in Brazil. We are not trained at home or school to see the other as a colleague, as a subject that same the same right to use the public space. For us, it is the other way round. The public space belongs to who occupies it first, with the most aggressiveness. We were brought up with the vision that the home is enemy of the house, as if the world of the street would not follow the same home rules of home, the rules of welcome and protection. So, we have not learnt to be equalitarian. Equality for us is less important than freedom.”³³⁰ So, in Brazil, the relationship between *home*-understood in the Western countries as privacy and individual rights- and *street*-understood as public and community responsibilities- is overlaid with the conflict between personal obligations (*home*) and personal freedom and individual autonomy (*street*).”³³¹

So, DaMatta “provides a solution to the Brazilian puzzle. He sees it as an artefact of the narrow dichotomies that North America and Europeans use when describing Brazil, because Brazil does not fit into the neat categories of modern or non-modern, Western or non-Western.”³³² According to DaMatta, Brazil is a country with the capacity of combining height and low; heaven and earth; weak and powerful; human and divine, past and present. It is a modern society that is still attached to the past because you cannot kill the child that existed inside you. You can not kill the old habits so easily. You modify the old habits, making them establish a dialogue with the new ones, with new collective necessities. In order to change our behaviour, we have to move from inside out. [...] Brazil is a country that became Republican without abandoning the Aristocracy.”³³³

BRAZILIAN WELL-BEING

In Brazil, life satisfaction and well-being have being studied lately under a wider point of view relating not only economical factors, but also other relevant indicators for the individuals, such as family, nets of relationship and so on. Following initiatives as the

³²⁹ DaMatta and Hess in DaMatta and Hess, 1995: 13-14.

³³⁰ DaMatta, 2010.

³³¹ DaMatta and Hess in DaMatta and Hess, 1995: 13-15.

³³² DaMatta and Hess in DaMatta and Hess, 1995: 26.

³³³ DaMatta, 2010.



WVS, Brazilian researches have started to perform more detailed and thorough studies on life satisfaction and the society well-being. “The creation of indicators to measure citizens’ levels of well-being is something that the nations and the international institutions have been long looking for. The knowledge of the progress and development of their people is fundamental. About two years ago, the teachers of the *Finances Institute of the FGV/EAESP* got together with the *MyFunCity* and the movement *MaisFeliz*, interested in studying the citizen’s level of well-being. Aware of various existing indexes around the world, they understood that simply repeating the already known indicators would not be enough, once the Brazilian people have their own characteristics that shall be considered. The group decided to create a methodology that would allow the obtaining an own Well-Being Index for Brazil. Their objective is that this indicators’ set allows the generation of Public and Private Policies that tries to improve people’s well-being level. In this sense, the WBB© turns up as a researches agenda focused in the identification of the importance that such life aspects have in a happy life.

The first report shows the Well-Being Brazil Index research results relating to the city of São Paulo. The report brings the level of people’s relevance and satisfaction in relation to different life aspects, including 68 questions gathered in 10 indicators: Health, Education, Public Security, Public Institutions, Environment, Transport and Mobility, Family, Professional and Financial Life, Consumption and Relationship nets. The set of results allows the knowledge of the São Paulo’s population composition, in socio-economical terms and the people’s perception relating to their most various day-by-day relations.”³³⁴ Table 4.1 resumes the main results of the research.

Another researcher, the economist and professor Eduardo Giannetti da Fonseca, has been dealing with the *Happiness – Life Satisfaction – Well-Being* subject in Brazil. About the relation money / happiness in Brazil, he states that accordingly to what have been investigated, as the average per capita rate of a country grows, so does subjective well-being; but only till a certain point. After that, this relation disappears. For countries that come from a very low level at the beginning of the growing process, the increase of the average per capita rate per inhabitant has a strong relation with the happiness growth. Up from the point, when the country achieves a certain level of income- around US\$ 10 thousand average per capita income per inhabitant a year- the relation between economical growth and subjective well-being becomes very weak. [...] In Brazil, the average income is around US\$ 7.500 a year. So, Brazil still has some space to grow with subjective well-being material gains, but not much.³³⁵ Accordingly, Table 4.2 shows the growth of Subjective Well-being index, Happiness and Life satisfaction in Brazil in the last 20 years.

³³⁴ Mendes Da Silva, Gallo Garcia and Motoryn, 2014: 2.

³³⁵ Da Fonseca, 2006.



Table 4.1. Average *Ratings* Obtained from the Components Variables of Well- Being Brazil Index.³³⁶

Well-being variables	Average <i>Ratings</i>		
	Relevance	Satisfaction	Performance
Family	4,688	3,842	0,846
Relationship nets	4,515	3,612	0,903
Consumption	4,521	3,299	1,223
Health	4,721	3,323	1,398
Professional and financial life	4,775	3,298	1,476
Education	4,552	3,068	1,483
Environment	4,563	2,821	1,742
Public Security	4,624	2,694	1,930
Transport and mobility	4,609	2,574	2,034
Public Institutions	4,561	1,831	2,729

Note: Prepared by the WBB© group based on data collected in São Paulo city between November 10th to 30th, 2013. N = 786. Note: This table shows the answers presented (average ratings in a scale 1 to 5) for the satisfaction and relevance in relation to the 68 well-being indicators, organized into the ten components variables of the WBB©. It is possible to confirm that the variable *Family* presents the best performance, once the relevance and satisfaction ratings are closer to one another than the ones found in other nine variables. On the contrary, the Public Institutions variable, according to the same criteria, shows the worst performance.

It is an illusion to believe that “a country with a US\$ 20 thousand average income per habitant has the half of the happiness of a country that has US\$ 40 thousand average income per habitant due to two main reasons. On one hand, the vital necessities of consumption are covered and the person has adapted to the new standard of comforts. On the other, there has been a crescent importance given to the relative position. [...] Giannetti evokes Petronio, author of *Satyricon*, where a millionaire of the ancient Rome affirms: *The only beings which interest me are the ones that provoke envy to the low people, just because I have them.* He reminds that the relative position in the society is more important than the absolute income level, when individuals measure their happiness.” [...] There is a huge competition in the society for positional beings, which give some kind of difference valued by the other members.³³⁷

³³⁶ Source: Mendes Da Silva, Gallo Garcia and Motoryn, 2014.

³³⁷ Da Fonseca, 2006.



Table 4.2. Subjective Well-Being in 52 Countries: 1981–2007.³³⁸

Country and Year	SWB index	Happiness	Life satisfaction
Brazil (1991)	2.24	2.06	7.39
Brazil (1997)	2.23	1.97	7.15
Brazil (2006)	3.25	1.76	7.65

Moreover, when asked about the levels of inequality and poverty of the Brazilian society and its relation to happiness, Giannetti states that inequality is not bad for itself, but that inequality exacerbate the power of the money. Things shine with more intensity for those who are in the dark. If a person has little money, his/her worth becomes exacerbated to his eyes, in his imagination. The person starts to imagine that if he had money, all his life problems would be solved, but they are not. The ones, who do not have money, end up to hyper-value it and the ones, who have it, also exacerbate its value, because this gives them a huge power in the society.³³⁹

There are “several researches about happiness in Brazil, and what seems most surprising about subjective well-being is the following: if you ask a Brazilian if he considers himself happy, almost 70% will say they are, independently from the income rate or age. But if you ask to the same participants if the Brazilians in general are happy, only 25% will say so. That is, there is no consistence between what each of the parts think of its own respect and what those same parts think about the whole, to which they belong to. It is as if Brazil would be smaller than the sum of the parts. Giannetti believes this to be this way because people use different metrics to evaluate their happiness and other people. When they look to themselves, they think of their internal world, about their own subjectivity. When they look around, they look at their life conditions. And then, obviously, they have no way to imagine how people living in such precarious state can be happy.”³⁴⁰

To summarize, we should evoke the contributions of Ed Diener about evident differences in subjective well-being when referred to cultural specificities. In doing so, we could acknowledge the existence of a kind of a Brazilian mentality. In accordance with this, we can state that there are strong national differences in individual’s life satisfaction. In this sense, Brazilians seem to positively correlate well-being with family and social relations, besides the fact that they positively value the latest improvement of their well-fare conditions. Accordingly, extraversion appears to be as related to the positive appraisal of social relations, and as a developed ability. Being a stereotype or a cultural bias, Brazilian happiness, non-conflictive strategy of solving problems and

³³⁸ Source: Inglehart, Foa, Peterson and Welzel, 2008: 282.

³³⁹ Da Fonseca, 2006.

³⁴⁰ Da Fonseca, 2006.



flexibility are present in people's beliefs about themselves. Those specific cultural values and beliefs (in combination with self-construals) shape the nature of well-being. The necessity of coexistence with many different others in Brazil generated a *sui generis* mentality that permeates the whole society, one which considers diversity to be the element that is shared by the whole community. Furthermore, the research of Brazilian subjective well-being indicators will count with this specific trait: cultural fusion. Finally, it is important to note that Brazilian citizens' life satisfaction indicators are based not only on financial/economic satisfaction. As an emergent country, judgments of subjective well-being are leading to the emotions related to autonomy, feelings of meaning and growth. Moreover, this search for freedom, as DaMatta states, has been a tradition in Brazil, and not only a result of going beyond the minimum income that permits seeking the contributors for a more personal life satisfaction.





CHAPTER 5

– THE ROLE OF COUNTERFACTUAL THINKING –

INTRODUCTION

By examining the current situation of methodologies applied in psychology, and language sciences, this research project explores the possibility of using counterfactual thinking analysis as a tool to evaluate the self-perception of subjective well-being and life satisfaction among immigrants. Our attempt is to use the analysis of counterfactual thinking as a procedure to facilitate the emergence of in-origin beliefs, preferences and values and their role in subjective well-being and life satisfaction of immigrants.

Given that the analysis of counterfactual thinking represents somehow a novelty in the study of the production of emotional responses among immigrants, this research will follow the common procedure established when hypothesis are verified by empirical evidence. So, this research will follow four common stages that are overlapping, but broadly distinct. Firstly, the generation of hypothesis represents the initial step of the research process. Secondly, coding appears as the next step in the process. The main aim of coding is to make the analysis more straightforward by sifting relevant materials from larger corpus. In traditional terminology it is a form of data reduction; it is a preliminary that facilitates analysis. At this stage in the research the coding is inclusive, but coding can continue cyclically throughout the research process as ideas are refined and the understanding of the phenomena changes.³⁴¹

Thirdly, analysis begins when all the information is organized. In order to develop this stage, a number of procedures are developed: first, the search for patterns. Looking through the corpus of coded materials it is possible to identify a pattern and how regular this pattern is; second, it is needed to analyse the consistencies between the different identified categories and structures of knowledge. If contradictions appear, these can suggest that the initial hypotheses are too weak to be considered and a new general approach can be introduced; third, it is necessary to account deviant cases in which surprising next turns appeared. It is important to note the significant role of deviant cases in the validation of findings. Deviant cases are often the most analytically and theoretically informative. They can show whether a generalization is robust or it breaks down; and, finally, when necessary, it could be useful to take into account other kinds of material. There is an infinite set of alternative materials that can be used for comparison. These analytical tasks neither necessarily develop sequentially nor all of

³⁴¹ Potter in Camic, Rhodes and Yardley, 2003: 83-84.



them are possible or appropriate in any particular case. They are indicative of the sorts of analytical procedures that researchers go through.³⁴²

The fourth and final step in the research process is the validation of the analysis. Ultimately, the quality of the research is derived from the ability to assess coherence between categories and empirical data, that is, that the researcher provides a framework where claims are accountable to the detail of the empirical materials, and that these empirical materials are presented in a form that allows readers to make their own checks and judgements. Long consideration has been given to the type of data to collect and the most appropriate methods and approaches to gather information. In this regard, the task design of our study, composed of a brief interview, a questionnaire and an open-ended question, was expected to produce counterfactual statements which, in turn, were thought to provide evidence of emotional frameworks -namely subjective well-being and life satisfaction. In doing so, the analysis of counterfactual thinking is understood to be an adequate research approach as it permits the evaluation of emotional (cognitive) aspects of individuals. In this study, we have intended to operate with the former division of four stages focusing on the analysis of counterfactuals, and by acknowledging that these can help us to unveil and understand personal subjective experiences. So, counterfactual thinking is seen as a useful strategy in increasing the reflexivity of mental states, and therefore contributing to understand better subjective well-being and life satisfaction. In accordance to this, next pages introduce an explanation of the analysis of counterfactual thinking.

COUNTERFACTUAL THINKING

The main approach with which this research operates is counterfactual thinking analysis. The analysis of counterfactual thinking is expected to provide a fruitful understanding of how subjective well-being and life satisfaction works among immigrants. In this regard, the analysis of counterfactuals is not specifically a methodology of research but it is an intellectual approach to cognitive production that includes both ideas and emotions. Certainly, in her study Adoreé Durayappah acknowledges the capacity to study subjective well-being by means of counterfactual thinking given that “when making predictions about the future, we consider not only the present but also the transition to the present. [...] Many cognitive biases result from comparisons and the resulting discrepancies. Counterfactual thinking can be used as a means of comparison for evaluating the present. [...] Counterfactual thinking also affects SWB.³⁴³ In norm theory,³⁴⁴ reality is continuously experienced in a context of relevant counterfactual alternatives, each scenario evoking representations of what could have been and what was expected to be. The easier it is to construct a counterfactual scenario, the more the comparison affects the evaluation of subjective

³⁴² Potter in Camic, Rhodes and Yardley, 2003: 84.

³⁴³ See Roese and Olson, 1995b.

³⁴⁴ See Kahneman and Miller, 1986.



well-being.”³⁴⁵ People tend to think not only about the events that actually happened but also how those events might have been different. So, this type of thinking becomes evident when migrants make some reflection about their current situation in a host country. Accordingly, the study of subjective well-being in migrant individuals by means of the analysis of counterfactual thinking becomes a pertinent research option.

There has been a very large amount of research on reasoning with counterfactuals³⁴⁶, and on what sort of constraints are found on the types of counterfactual thoughts people are likely to generate in a variety of circumstances.³⁴⁷ Counterfactual thinking has been shown to play a role in many cognitive processes such as causal ascriptions,³⁴⁸ deductive reasoning,³⁴⁹ creativity,³⁵⁰ preventability ascriptions,³⁵¹ suspicion,³⁵² perceived control,³⁵³ repeatability³⁵⁴, victim compensation,³⁵⁵ expectancy violation,³⁵⁶ normativeness of the outcome,³⁵⁷ and regulatory focus.³⁵⁸ Additionally, past research has also examined factors that lead to the generation of counterfactuals in response to evaluative stances and emotional aspects, including blame assignment,³⁵⁹ outcome valence,³⁶⁰ moods,³⁶¹ regret,³⁶² shame and guilt,³⁶³ happiness³⁶⁴, mood,³⁶⁵ self-esteem,³⁶⁶ pessimism and optimism,³⁶⁷ and categorical cut-off points.³⁶⁸ These sorts of counterfactual thoughts are pervasive in adult mental life and play an integral role in higher-level cognition such as deductive reasoning.³⁶⁹ The phenomenon of counterfactual thinking is a normal part of our cognition. As Neal Roese and James

³⁴⁵ Durayappah 2011: 693. See also Kahneman and Miller, 1986.

³⁴⁶ See, for instance, Byrne, 2002.

³⁴⁷ See, for instance, Kahneman and Miller, 1986; Byrne, 1997; and Markman and Tetlock, 2000.

³⁴⁸ Lipe, 1991; McGill and Klein, 1993; and Wells and Gavanski, 1989.

³⁴⁹ See, for instance, Johnson-Laird and Byrne, 1991.

³⁵⁰ See, for instance, Hofstadter, 1985.

³⁵¹ See, for instance, Mandel and Lehman, 1996.

³⁵² See, for instance, Miller, Turnbull and McFarland in Zanna, 1990.

³⁵³ See, for instance, Markman, Gavanski, Sherman and McMullen, 1995; and Roese and Olson, 1995c.

³⁵⁴ See, for instance, Markman, Gavanski, Sherman and McMullen, 1993.

³⁵⁵ See, for instance, Macrae, 1992; Macrae and Milne, 1992; Miller and McFarland, 1986; and Turley, Sanna and Reiter, 1995.

³⁵⁶ See, for instance, Sanna and Turley, 1996.

³⁵⁷ See, for instance, Miller and McFarland, 1987; and Miller, Turnbull and McFarland in Zanna, 1990.

³⁵⁸ See, for instance, Roese and Pennington, 1999.

³⁵⁹ See, for instance, Miller and Gunasegaram, 1990; and N'gbala and Branscombe, 1995.

³⁶⁰ See, for instance, Roese and Hur, 1997; Sanna and Turley, 1996.

³⁶¹ See, for instance, Roese, 1994.

³⁶² See, for instance, Gilovich and Medvec; Landman, 1987; and Mandel, 2003.

³⁶³ See, for instance, Mandel, 2003; and Niedenthal, Tangney and Gavanski, 1994.

³⁶⁴ See, for instance, Medvic, Madey and Gilovich, 1995; and Johnson, 1986.

³⁶⁵ See, for instance, Sanna, Turley-Ames and Meier, 1999.

³⁶⁶ See, for instance, Roese and Olson in Zanna, 1997; Roese and Olson, 1993; and Sanna, Turley-Ames and Meier, 1999.

³⁶⁷ See, for instance, Sanna, 1996.

³⁶⁸ Medvec and Savitsky, 1997.

³⁶⁹ See Johnson-Laird and Byrne, 1991; and Gilovich and Medvec, 1994.



Olson stated, “counterfactual thinking is something familiar to nearly everyone. Even if they have not previously heard the term ‘counterfactual,’ people instantly recognize it, once it has been defined for them, as something with which they are intimately acquainted.”³⁷⁰ In sum, counterfactuals have been implicated in diverse cognitive activities, ranging from simple imagination beyond reality, and fantasy³⁷¹ to the exploration of possibilities in reasoning.³⁷²

People often respond to events in their lives by considering alternative scenarios of “what might have been”. The process of generation these thoughts are called “counterfactual thinking”³⁷³ because it involves the mental simulation of events that are “counter” to the facts that actually happened. Counterfactual thinking is the mental comparison of a factual situation to a simulated alternative one. They are epitomized by the phrase “what might have been,” which implicates a juxtaposition of an imagined versus factual state of affairs. Counterfactuals are cases of possibly valid reasoning from premises that are false in actuality³⁷⁴, and require the comparison of reality to a model-based alternative. People understand a counterfactual statement by keeping in mind two possibilities from the outset: the conjecture and the presupposed facts.³⁷⁵ The term *counterfactual* derives from philosophical writings in which the logical status of possibility and probabilistic reasoning were closely scrutinized.³⁷⁶ The philosophers of language were the first theorists of the mind to label the counterfactual; they defined it as an expression of antecedent and consequent, in which the antecedent proposes a condition that is false in the actual world, and the consequent states an outcome of that antecedent.³⁷⁷ Counterfactual thinking is a concept in psychology that involves the human tendency to create possible alternatives to life events that have already occurred. It relates to something that is contrary to what actually happened. According to Roese, “the term *counterfactual* means, literally, contrary to the facts. Some focal factual outcome typically forms the point of departure for the counterfactual supposition. Then, one may alter (or *mutate*) some factual antecedent and assess the consequences of that alteration. Thus, counterfactuals are frequently conditional propositions and, as such, embrace both an antecedent and a consequent.”³⁷⁸

For the purposes of this thesis, the term *counterfactual* refers to alternative versions of the past, that is, counterfactual does not refer to future prospects but only to negations of

³⁷⁰ Roese and Olson in Roese and Olson, 1995b: 170.

³⁷¹ See, for instance, Sternberg and Gastel, 1989.

³⁷² See, for instance, Byrne and Tasso, 1999; and Johnson-Laird and Byrne, 2002.

³⁷³ Kahneman and Miller, 1986; Kahneman and Tversky in Kahneman, Slovic and Tversky, 1982; Roese and Olson in Roese and Olson, 1995a.

³⁷⁴ See Fauconnier and Turner, 2003.

³⁷⁵ See Byrne, Segura, Culhane, Tasso and Berrocal, 2000.

³⁷⁶ Epstude and Roese, 2008: 168.

³⁷⁷ See, for instance, Lewis, 2001.

³⁷⁸ Roese, 1997: 136.



established fact.³⁷⁹ Counterfactual thoughts are constructions that refer to events that never happened in reality because they pertain to hypothetical events that could have occurred in the past. In everyday life, an individual's counterfactual musings often take the form of a conditional proposition, in which the antecedent corresponds to an action and the consequent corresponds to an outcome (e.g., "If only I had studied, I would have passed the exam"). Counterfactual thoughts about what might have been involve the mental comparison of an actual situation with a simulated alternative, and its importance is so huge that they have been studied both by philosophers³⁸⁰ and psychologists.³⁸¹

When people imagine how things would or might have been different, they tend to focus on particular sorts of events to mentally undo in their construction of alternatives. They tend to focus on actions rather than failures to act³⁸², at least in a short-term.³⁸³ They focus on exceptional rather than routine events³⁸⁴, dynamic rather than static events³⁸⁵, and controllable rather than uncontrollable events.³⁸⁶ The focus of people's counterfactual thoughts also tends to be influenced by the order in which the information is presented to them. On the one hand, people tend to undo the first event of a causal chain and this tendency has been called the causal primacy effect.³⁸⁷ On the other hand, they tend to undo the last event of an independent temporal sequence, and this tendency has been called the temporal order effect.³⁸⁸

Counterfactuality is a phenomenon associated to ideas, and counterfactual scenarios are a form of mental representation that may include actors, agents, events, and relations. A scenario is unified, it may be elaborated, it may be the topic of discourse, and it may change as discourse proceeds. However, "language provides the cues that enable to understand the partitions between fact and counterfact when discussing imagined scenarios. Imagined scenarios that contain counterfactual facts have a special ability to express causal relations between events and actions. Counterfactuals are structurally equivalent to logical propositions called *conditionals*, contained both an antecedent (e.g., being integrated in a hosting country) and a consequent (e.g., having a life

³⁷⁹ See, for instance, Hoch, 1985; and Johnson and Sherman in Higgins and Sorrentino, 1990. For anticipatory counterfactuals (or "prefactuals") and anticipatory regret, see, for instance, Anderson, 2003; Byrne and Egan, 2004; and Sanna, 2000.

³⁸⁰ See, for instance, Lewis in Rescher, 1973.

³⁸¹ See, for instance, Byrne in Medin, 1997; Kahneman and Tversky in Kahneman, Slovic and Tversky, 1982; and Kahneman and Miller, 1986.

³⁸² See, for instance, Kahneman and Tversky in Kahneman, Slovic and Tversky, 1982.

³⁸³ See, for instance, Byrne and McEleney in Shafto and Langley 1997; and Gilovich and Medvec, 1994.

³⁸⁴ See, for instance, Kahneman and Miller, 1986.

³⁸⁵ See, for instance, Kahneman and Varey, 1990.

³⁸⁶ See, for instance, Girotto, Legrenzi and Rizzo, 1991.

³⁸⁷ See, for instance, Wells, Taylor and Turtle, 1987.

³⁸⁸ See, for instance, Miller and Gunasegaram, 1990.



satisfaction). Once in mind, these alternatives versions of past events may influence a range of judgments and affective reactions.”³⁸⁹

While not all counterfactuals express causation, most counterfactual scenarios do seem to develop causal relationships. Generally, counterfactuals are associated with the form of the “if/then” conditional statement. Conditional sentences have a bi-clausal structure, with the first clause or protasis beginning with “if” and expressing the antecedent, and the second clause or apodosis featuring an optional “then” and expressing the consequent. Therefore, counterfactual scenarios are not only an aspect of thinking, but they intimately tied to language and communication. So, in our everyday lives, we do not just think about counter-to-fact scenarios, we describe them to each other. Counterfactuals are a creative element of all types of discourse. For this reason, language provides a natural starting point for investigations into counterfactuals.³⁹⁰

Counterfactual scenarios are not flights of fancy, but integral parts of conversation and narrative communication. Counterfactuals serve a purpose in discourse because they can function rhetorically and allow people to communicate a perspective on the past. This rhetorical role is most obvious in statements that not only present a counterfactual, but also include an evaluation of the imagined scenario. In these examples, the counterfactual not only presents a creative scenario, but provides a vehicle for expressing an opinion about that scenario. Counterfactuals are a recognizable feature of vastly different types of discourse. There are other possible differences as well – counterfactual scenarios may take on very different properties in different settings. They may be quite short or as long as an entire novel. The differences in the scenarios themselves, and the contexts in which they occur, may seem to prevent any integrated research on the phenomenon. In part, this assumption may seem to have emerged from the fact that some researchers have been interested primarily in the linguistic nature of counterfactual expressions, while others have been interested primarily in the cognitive operations involved in counterfactual thinking. In this regard, the utilization of both counterfactual thinking analysis and discourse analysis in this study appears to be consistent.

In this study, during the interview, counterfactual thinking appeared as having been constructed as a ‘naturally occurring talk’, that is, a talk which is not completely researcher-induced (as we will show later in the case study). The phenomenon of immigration produces a clear dichotomy between past and present, and the natural production of counterfactual thinking among immigrants can be seen as a research advantage. Accordingly, the information produced in the first research stage can represent a fruitful product when analysed in combination with the other two stages developed subsequently, ones that have applied properly to produce counterfactual statements from participants.

³⁸⁹ Roese and Olson, 1993: 199.

³⁹⁰ See Fauconnier and Turner, 2003; and Roese and Olson, 1993.



Describing counterfactual thinking: functions and taxonomy

Counterfactual reasoning, an attempt to understand the causes of past events by imagining alternatives to reality, is an essential ingredient of our everyday cognition. Counterfactual situations are frequently depicted through language. Counterfactual thoughts may serve important psychological functions for the individual.³⁹¹ They can be constructed not only negatively and as sources of bias, but also they are seen as useful or adaptive elements for certain purposes and under certain circumstances. In a functional analysis, such global benefits may explain the genesis, pervasiveness, and situational variation of counterfactual thinking. “Two distinct functions of counterfactual thinking have been supported by a range of research. First, such thoughts may serve a *preparative* function; that is, they may illuminate means by which individuals can prepare for the future and, accordingly, improve their lot. Thus, if a student who failed an exam realizes that he would have passed if only he had studied more, he has identified a causally potent antecedent action that may be subsequently deployed to enhance future performance. Second, counterfactual thoughts can serve an *affective* function; that is, they may be used to make oneself or another person feel better.”³⁹² As introduced previously, counterfactuals have been considered as a coherent phenomenon with both linguistic and cognitive dimensions. By providing a more careful analysis of some properties related to counterfactual scenarios can enrich the understanding of counterfactual themselves.

In literature, counterfactuals are classified according to the direction of comparison.³⁹³ The generation of alternative scenarios that are better of what actually happened is referred to as “upward counterfactual thinking,” (e.g. whereas the generation of alternative scenarios that are worse than what actually occurred is labelled “downward counterfactual thinking.”³⁹⁴ Two samples extracted from this study would be as follows: “If I hadn’t immigrated, I would be working as a university teacher”, in the case of upward counterfactual thinking; and “I wouldn’t have learnt new ways of thinking, if I had stayed in Brazil”, in the case of downward counterfactual. Some researchers³⁹⁵ have highlighted the distinction between upward and downward counterfactual thoughts. Crucially, “counterfactual thoughts are often evaluative, specifying alternatives that are in some tangible way better or worse than actuality. Better alternatives are termed *upward counterfactuals*; worse alternatives are termed *downward counterfactuals*. When upward counterfactuals focus on personal choice, the resulting emotion is termed *regret*, which itself has spawned a large literature emphasizing biased judgment and decision making.”³⁹⁶ Upward counterfactual thoughts occur when an individual compares the current reality to a better possible world. Upward counterfactuals tend to reduce people’s satisfaction. On the other hand, downward counterfactual thoughts

³⁹¹ See Roese and Epstude, 2008; and Roese, 1997.

³⁹² Roese and Morrison, 2009: 20.

³⁹³ Roese and Epstude, 2008: 178.

³⁹⁴ Markman, Gavanski, Sherman and McMullen, 1995.

³⁹⁵ See Medvec, Madey and Gilovich, 1995.

³⁹⁶ Epstude and Roese, 2008: 168.



occur when an individual compares his or her own outcome to a worse possible alternative. Downward counterfactuals tend to boost satisfaction and produce emotions ranging from increased joy to a sense of relief because one avoided the alternative outcome.³⁹⁷

Many studies have revealed that counterfactuals are generated most frequently following a bad outcome, or goal failure.³⁹⁸ Specifically, ‘upward’ counterfactuals consider how a situation could have turned out better and thus serve a preparatory function to learn from mistakes. ‘Downward’ counterfactuals describe how a situation could have been worse, serving an affective function to make a person feel better. Psychological studies have indicated that there are considerable regularities in the sorts of counterfactuals people generate most readily, despite the infinite number of ways that past events could have happened differently. Their counterfactual thoughts tend to mentally undo the most recent event in an independent sequence. A temporal order effect has been proposed to explain why, for example, an individual is judged to be lucky when a good outcome is described after a bad one, or why a second penalty in a football match is well rated after a first one that was poorly rated.³⁹⁹

The consideration of counterfactuals as scenarios embedded within a particular individual perspective permits to understand their role in fictional narratives. Fictional narratives provide, in turn, the acknowledgment that counterfactuals embeds meaning. Certainly, “the quest for meaning has been a driving force throughout human history and an enduring concept in psychology”⁴⁰⁰, and it is known that “people do not think based on syntactic structures. Rather they do it based on the semantics ones.”⁴⁰¹ In this context, as Roese and her colleagues introduce, “*meaning* can be seen as the emergence of a personal narrative identity characterized by connectedness, purpose, and growth. Constructing stories about past events –why they occurred and what they led to– is important because it provides “causal, temporal, and thematic coherence to an overall sense of identity.”⁴⁰² By reflecting on how knowledge, relationships, and events from one’s past are interrelated, personal meaning emerges.⁴⁰³

The most common forms developed by counterfactuals, the conditional expressed as an “if/then” proposition⁴⁰⁴ often develops a causal relationship as part of its meaning. The theme of causal attribution provided crucial information in this study as far as it

³⁹⁷ See, for instance, Epstein and Roese, 2008; Markman, Gavanski, Sherman and McMullen, 1993; and Medvec and Savitsky, 1997.

³⁹⁸ See, for instance, Roese, Sanna and Galinsky, 2005.

³⁹⁹ See, for instance, Teigen, Evensen and Samoilow, 1999.

⁴⁰⁰ Roese, Kray, George, Liljenquist, Galinsky and Tetlock, 2010: 106-107.

⁴⁰¹ Segura, 2004: 49.

⁴⁰² Singer, 2004: 442.

⁴⁰³ Roese, Kray, George, Liljenquist, Galinsky and Tetlock, 2010: 106.

⁴⁰⁴ See Kahneman and Tversky in Kahneman, Slovic and Tversky, 1982. See also Byrne, 2007; and Kahneman in Roese and Olson 1995.



permitted us to deepen into the nature of beliefs, values and meaning-making related to subjective wellbeing and life satisfaction. Evidence on a broad range of psychological literature shows that there is a robust relationship between counterfactual reflection and meaning-making. Counterfactual thinking facilitates the construction of meaning.⁴⁰⁵ Undoing the past and considering alternatives (“what ifs”) is a natural tendency when trying to figure out why things happened the way they did.⁴⁰⁶ So, “constructing counterfactuals may instead increase the perception that life’s actual path was meaningful, because the contrast underscores the opportunities, relationships, and achievements that would not have occurred without these key elements in one’s life narrative. Just as counterfactual thoughts forge connections to create coherent solutions to problems, it is expected that mentally undoing pivotal events would aid the construction of personal narratives. By illuminating the subsequent course of life’s events, counterfactual reflection connects the dots and thereby makes the mutated events more meaningful and significant in one’s history and life.”⁴⁰⁷ Furthermore, “psychological well-being rests on an appreciation of how disparate experiences coalesce into coherence. [...] In other words, asking “what would my life be like if this pivotal experience had not occurred?” facilitates understanding of the event’s significance in the big picture of life.”⁴⁰⁸ In sum, counterfactual thinking and its cognitive processes is seen as benefiting individuals in their lives. Counterfactuals serve a preparative function, and help people avoid past blunders.⁴⁰⁹ Counterfactual thinking also serves the affective function to make a person feel better. By comparing one’s present outcome to a less desirable outcome, the person may feel better about the current situation. And this is precisely the purpose of this thesis, that is, to figure out how subjective well-being is developed among immigrants.

Evaluative counterfactual thinking and emotions

Psychologists have established a connection between counterfactual thinking and normal cognitive development, emotions (like relief and regret), and causal attribution.⁴¹⁰ This psychological account provides vast insight into the cognitive and emotive dimensions of counterfactuals. Counterfactual scenarios depend on comparison, providing a natural outlet for the expression of evaluation. Speakers can align themselves with either actual or counterfactual scenarios when making their judgments, and a variety of cues besides “hope” and “wish” are available for making evaluations. When describing counterfactual scenarios and their role in discourse, the term *evaluative stance* needs to be introduced. Evaluative counterfactuals are considered as embedded cognitive scenarios that represent the perspective of an individual speaker. The comparative nature of counterfactual scenarios makes them particularly open to the expression of evaluation in the form of *evaluative stance*.

⁴⁰⁵ Roese, Kray, George, Liljenquist, Galinsky and Tetlock, 2010: 107.

⁴⁰⁶ See Sanna and Turley, 1996.

⁴⁰⁷ Roese, Kray, George, Liljenquist, Galinsky and Tetlock, 2010: 107.

⁴⁰⁸ Roese, Kray, George, Liljenquist, Galinsky and Tetlock, 2010: 106-107.

⁴⁰⁹ See Olson and Roese in Walker and Smith, 2002.

⁴¹⁰ See Roese and Olson, 1995a.



Evaluative stance can be seen as comprehensive concept, which allows the introduction for a value-based judgment of a scenario. Evaluative stance can be weakly or strongly bound with associated emotions.

The term *evaluative stance* indicates the speaker's expressed attitude toward a defined focal scenario. The evaluative stance is described as an evaluation of a counterfactual space, and as the relationships between evaluation and emotion in counterfactual expressions. Expressions such as "good thing" and "too bad" are considered as case studies of evaluative stance in everyday discourse.⁴¹¹ The evaluation is an indication that the scenario is "good" or "bad" in contrast to reality. The speaker creates a counterfactual scenario, or an exploration of an unrealized alternative, and passes a judgment on whether the scenario would have been better or worse than what actually happened. Evaluative counterfactuals that are highly contingent convey a perspective on the past that can influence how the past is viewed. Evaluative counterfactuals that are embedded within a particular perspective demonstrate that counterfactual scenarios convey a particular person's attitude, and also extend the counterfactual analysis to the full range of discourse, including fictional narratives.

Evaluation is a primary tactic that allows individuals to recruit cultural values in passing judgments about people, events, actions, etc. These values reflect criteria or standards that may be held very broadly or more narrowly by specific groups within a culture, at times requiring the speaker to defend the criteria for an evaluation when the audience cannot be expected to readily accept it. Evaluative stance, on the other hand, can reflect personal taste or cultural values, or a combination of both, depending on the specific discourse situation. Evaluative stance conveys not only cultural values but also personal preferences and perspectives. So, some expressions of evaluative stance introduce subject's views of a particular scenario that seem rooted in his/her own best interest. The speaker may evaluate a scenario not because it would have been good *per se*, but because it would have been good for him/her. Additionally, evaluative stances can present the view that the speaker's views of a particular scenario seem rooted in a more culturally-defined system of values, rather than in his/her own best interest. Nonetheless, the expressed "culturally defined system of values" may align quite well with the speaker's own personal preference, so it is not always easy to determine whether personal preference or cultural values are primarily represented by a specific evaluative stance. In some cases, the personal preference expressed may actually be at odds with cultural values. Generally, the evaluative stance is used to describe judgments made by a speaker, with the understanding that the criteria justifying the judgment may be either personal or cultural, or can include both of them.⁴¹²

The evaluative stance expressed toward a scenario may be positive or negative with a focus on the counterfactual space, or positive or negative with a focus on the actual space. The scenario that is described in the statement is the focal scenario. Thus, there

⁴¹¹ Harding, 2004: 9.

⁴¹² Harding, 2004: 15.



are four possible combinations of evaluative stance and focal scenario. In one case, a positive evaluative stance may be expressed toward the counterfactual state of affairs. This situation is demonstrated in the example, “It would have been better if she told me.” Alternatively, the speaker may make a negative evaluation that focuses on the actual scenario, as in the example “It was worse that she kept the information to herself.” As noted previously, the positive and negative evaluations of connected counterfactual and actual scenarios are conversely related.⁴¹³

Another pair of converse evaluations arises when the counterfactual scenario is negatively evaluated. Instead of saying, “It would have been better if she told me,” for example, a speaker might instead state that “It would have been worse if she told me.” In this case, the scenario described is counterfactual, but it is evaluated negatively in contrast to an actual situation in which the person kept the information to herself. The speaker might also make a similar statement by focusing on the actual scenario: “it was better that she kept the information to herself.” In addition, when the counterfactual scenario is the focal state of affairs, counterfactuality is forced. In other words, the statement requires a counterfactual space mapped from the parent space of speaker’s reality. When the actual state of affairs is the focal scenario, the counterfactual alternative is suggested by the evaluative reading, but it is not necessarily forced and may not be set up as part of the discourse. However, the fact that it is made available is demonstrated by the fact that the counterfactual scenario can be elaborated easily in subsequent discourse: “It’s better that she kept the information to herself. If she had spoken up, she would have made the situation even worse.” In this case, making the situation worse is a counterfactual alternative prompted by the evaluative stance in the first sentence, which weakly prompts for a counterfactual space.⁴¹⁴

Emotions are deeply connected to our evaluations, and therefore emotions are a way for us to indicate our evaluative stance toward a scenario. As referenced by Keith Oatley and Jennifer Jenkins, “an emotion is usually caused by a person consciously or unconsciously evaluating an event as relevant to a concern (a goal) that is important; the emotion is felt as positive when a concern is advanced and negative when a concern is impeded. [Secondly,] the core of an emotion is readiness to act and the prompting of plans; an emotion gives priority for one or a few kinds of action to which it gives a sense of urgency – so it can interrupt, or compete with alternative mental processes or actions. Different types of readiness create different outline relationships with others. [Finally,] an emotion is usually experienced as a distinctive type of mental state, sometimes accompanied or followed by bodily changes, expressions, [or] actions.”⁴¹⁵ In this regard, we feel positively toward scenarios that we prefer. We feel negatively toward scenarios that we disdain. Descriptions of emotion thus become another way by which speakers indicate their evaluative stance toward a scenario. Our frames for certain emotions prompt us to expect consistent evaluative stances toward scenarios that invoke those emotions.

⁴¹³ Harding, 2004: 15.

⁴¹⁴ Harding, 2004: 15.

⁴¹⁵ Oatley and Jenkins, 1996: 96.



Counterfactual thinking is largely adaptive in its functionality when accommodate feelings and emotions. Counterfactuals can provide a means by which we relate our emotions to others. Counterfactual thinking and accompanying feelings have been widely studied by social psychologists despite that their relationship is complex.⁴¹⁶ Consistent with psychological findings counterfactual scenarios are closely related to emotions like regret and relief.⁴¹⁷ The linguistic nature of counterfactuals, thus, is important in describing not just how we think about emotions through counterfactuals, but how we talk about emotions using the language of counterfactuality. When counterfactuals are introduced into conversation with emotive descriptors, we may presume a certain evaluative stance toward that counterfactual, as when terms like “good” and “bad” are used to describe counterfactual scenarios. Similarly, when evaluative stance is indicated, an emotional stance toward the counterfactual scenario may be implied. If someone describes a counterfactual scenario as better or worse, there are strong implications that feelings such as regret, relief, or disappointment that are consistent with the evaluation are indicated as well.

An important distinction in the organization of counterfactuals is *Self versus Other*. “This distinction is simply between a focus on one’s own actions as opposed to the actions of others. When it comes to regret, self-focus is a basic, defining feature (i.e., many articles define regret in terms of an emotion stemming from one’s own decision or action). Counterfactual thoughts may focus on self or other, and it is straightforward that self-focused thoughts are more useful for self-improvement than are other-focused counterfactuals. Although one may learn from the mistakes of others, insights that are self-directed are by definition more specific in their focus on personal improvement.”⁴¹⁸ This distinction becomes pertinent in this thesis given that the social context and the integration in hosting societies are integral elements for subjective well-being of immigrants. In this regard, “counterfactuals that differ in terms of self -versus other-reference are systematically associated with self-esteem and outcome valence.”⁴¹⁹

In everyday conversation, emotions related to evaluative stance in counterfactuals may be more casual or may in fact be a response to situational circumstances. The relationship works both ways: emotive words can indicate a positive or negative evaluative stance consistent with the emotion conveyed, and evaluative stance implies a corresponding emotional attitude, such as regret or relief, that is consistent with the evaluation. Following this perspective, research assumes that counterfactuals can serve both affective and preparative functions.⁴²⁰ According to the functionality of counterfactual thinking, upward counterfactuals serve as a *preparative* (also referred to as self-improvement) function and allow individuals to prepare for the future by providing information about how to improve. Downward counterfactuals provide what

⁴¹⁶ See Landman, 1993.

⁴¹⁷ See, for instance, Gilovich and Medvec, 1994; and Landman, 1987.

⁴¹⁸ Roese and Epstude, 2008: 179.

⁴¹⁹ Roese and Olson, 1993: 205.

⁴²⁰ See Roese and Epstude, 2008; Roese, 1994; and Taylor and Schneider, 1989.



has been referred to as an *affective* function (also referred to as self-enhancement⁴²¹) by allowing individuals to feel better by comparison to worse-off simulations of what might have occurred.⁴²² Evidence for the affective function of counterfactuals has been demonstrated in laboratory studies in which those instructed to generate downward counterfactuals exhibit more positive affect than those instructed to generate upward counterfactuals.⁴²³

The preparative function of counterfactuals has also been demonstrated in past research.⁴²⁴ Upward counterfactuals serve as a preparative function, and upward counterfactuals are generated after failure and when the task is repeatable. In contrast, after success more downward than upward counterfactuals are generated. The finding that upward counterfactuals are more likely to be generated than downward counterfactuals in response to negatively valenced events is well represented in research literature. Common findings show that negative affect and negatively valenced events lead to the generation of more upward than downward counterfactuals. In contrast, literature suggests that downward counterfactuals are more commonly generated in response to positive than negative events.⁴²⁵ It has been suggested that because negative affect serves as a signal to the organism that there is some threat or problem that needs to be addressed,⁴²⁶ cognitive resources that may help to deal with the potential threat are mobilized.⁴²⁷

To summarize, as Neal Roese states, “counterfactual thinking centres on insights into what might have been different if some details of the past had been altered. These insights are a common feature of the mental landscape, and past research has long linked them to emotional experience [...and] counterfactual thinking serves a largely beneficial function of behaviour regulation.”⁴²⁸

⁴²¹ Sedikides, 1993:318; and Sedikides and Strube, 1997.

⁴²² Johnson and Sherman in Higgins and Sorrentino, 1990; Markman, Gavanski, Sherman and McMullen, 1993; Roese, 1994; Roese and Olson in Roese and Olson, 1995c; and Roese and Olson, 1995a.

⁴²³ Roese, 1994.

⁴²⁴ See, for instance, Markman, Gavanski, Sherman and McMullen, 1993; Roese, 1994; and Nasco and Marsh, 1999.

⁴²⁵ See, for instance, Markman, Gavanski, Sherman and McMullen, 1993; and Sanna, Turley-Ames and Meier, 1999.

⁴²⁶ Schwartz in Higgins and Sorrentino, 1990; and Schwartz and Bless in Forgas, 1991.

⁴²⁷ Taylor, 1991.

⁴²⁸ Roese and Epstude 2008: 186.





CHAPTER 6

– THE CASE STUDY: BRAZILIAN IMMIGRANTS TO CATALONIA/SPAIN –

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this research is based on a survey of Brazilian women living in Catalonia, Spain. The first aim of this study is to consider the levels of subjective well-being and life satisfaction of (these) immigrants which are acknowledged to be influenced by in origin (homeland) acquired attitudes, beliefs, preferences and values. These psychological factors are analysed in the manner whether they have been positive or not for the migrant in her adaptation to the hosting society.

The analysis of the relation of subjective well-being and life satisfaction with the parameters of in origin acquired attitudes, beliefs, values and emotions, namely those which are considered to be constructed during childhood and adolescence in the born country, is certainly a complex procedure and obtaining reliable indicators becomes frequently a slippery task. Therefore, the validation of consistent indicators for the study of subjective well-being and life satisfaction represents the other objective of this study. For this purpose, the analysis of counterfactual thinking becomes the general framework of our research approach. Through the analysis of counterfactual thinking constructions embedded in discourses, we have intended to evaluate implicit psychological states that cannot be recorded by standard inferential methods.

By making of comparisons and by generating different alternatives, counterfactual thinking is expected to be a reliable and helpful tool to better understand elements of the emotional side of individuals. Therefore, we expected that the first decision to construct a research project by using a multidisciplinary method -quantitative and qualitative- would be an advantageous procedure given the complexity of the concepts involved both in terms of their theoretical definition and the way they are contrasted with empirical sources. In accordance to this, a Likert-type questionnaire was built to guide participants towards counterfactual thinking as well as to collect analytical data. In conjunction with a semi-structured interview and an open-ended question, we expected to obtain reliability in terms of statistical testing and allow the emergences of counterfactual evidence that could endorse the objectives of study. In sum, the utilization of counterfactual thinking was expected to be a worthy and consistent instrument.

We anticipate that immigrants demonstrate a propensity to generate more downward than upward counterfactuals in response to immigration as a stressful process and,



accordingly, a tendency to repair moods or to self-enhance. Accordingly, this chapter develops the contents of the case study by means of a brief explanation of the methodological approach, the empirical task design and its procedures, and the description, analysis and discussion of results.

QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

By examining the current situation of methodologies applied in psychology, and language sciences, the research question, and the critical factors of each design, one which expects to enhance both the reliability and the validity of this study. Extensive reflection has been given to the type of data to collect and the most appropriate methods and approaches to gather the information. The methodology developed in this study will be of qualitative and quantitative character. Both methodological approaches have been chosen working together and complementing one another in the process of obtaining valuable information. So, both are thought to minimise the limitations and biases provided by a research using only one of them.

The construction of the research framework provides information through *description* and *analysis*. The description component mainly provides qualitative information which supports quantitative methodology and evaluation, as well as permits the synthesis of general trends. The description component is covered within the general field of discourse analysis. More specifically, semi-structured interviews are used to make information emerge from the group of participants. In addition, discourse analysis represents a tool to obtain complementary information from the analysis of counterfactual thinking statements, one which is also used in this research.

Analysis represents a fundamental part of the empirical contrast. In this study, analysis operates within the general framework of counterfactual thinking. Apart from an initial semi-structured interview, analysis is provided through a Likert questionnaire and an open-ended question. In doing so, counterfactual thinking emerges both explicitly and implicitly and, accordingly, the mixture of both qualitative and quantitative procedures is understood to be the most adequate research strategy. Both methodological approaches have been chosen working together and complementing one another in the process of obtaining valuable information. So, both are thought to minimise the limitations and biases provided by a research using only one of them.

In this regard, merging qualitative methods (semi-structured interviews, and open-ended questions) and quantitative methods (questionnaires) has been a central procedure in this research. Qualitative and quantitative methods can be used together to study life satisfaction. The traditional choice of distinguishing between qualitative and quantitative methods can represent a limitation, and they should not be viewed as polar



opposites or dichotomies; instead, they represent different ends on a continuum.⁴²⁹ Habitually, “the distinction between qualitative and quantitative research is framed in terms of using words (qualitative) rather than numbers (quantitative), or using closed-ended questions (quantitative hypothesis) rather than open-ended questions (qualitative interview questions).”⁴³⁰ In fact, in psychology it is frequently accepted that complex causality issues can be fruitfully addressed by drawing on multi-method research design approaches.

Table 6.1. Characteristics of Quantitative and Qualitative Research.⁴³¹

Quantitative	Qualitative
Objective	Subjective
Research questions: How many? Strength of association?	Research questions: What? Why?
"Hard" science	"Soft" science
Literature review must be done early in study	Literature review may be done as study progresses or afterwards
Test theory	Develops theory
One reality: focus is concise and narrow	Multiple realities: focus is complex and broad
Facts are value-free and unbiased	Facts are value-laden and biased
Reduction, control, precision	Discovery, description, understanding, shared interpretation
Measurable	Interpretive
Mechanistic: parts equal the whole	Organismic: whole is greater than the parts
Report statistical analysis. Basic element of analysis is numbers	Report rich narrative, individual; interpretation. Basic element of analysis is words/ideas.
Researcher is separate	Researcher is part of process
Subjects	Participants
Context free	Context dependent
Hypothesis	Research questions
Reasoning is logistic and deductive	Reasoning is dialectic and inductive
Establishes relationships, causation	Describes meaning, discovery
Uses instruments	Uses communications and observation
Strives for generalization Generalizations leading to prediction, explanation, and understanding	Strives for uniqueness Patterns and theories developed for understanding
Highly controlled setting: experimental setting (outcome oriented)	Flexible approach: natural setting (process oriented)
Sample size: n	Sample size is not a concern; seeks "informal rich" sample
"Counts the beans"	Provides information as to "which beans are worth counting"

As we have done in this thesis, research methods in psychology can be placed into the two general categories of quantitative and of qualitative ones.⁴³² The mixing of research methods can help to gather comprehensive evidence or to give a more complete picture

⁴²⁹ See, for instance, Newman and Benz, 1998.

⁴³⁰ Creswell, 2008: 3.

⁴³¹ Source: Trochim, 2000.

⁴³² See, for instance, Glynis Breakwell, Smith and Wright, 2012.



of the object of analysis. Research can start from statistical analysis as quantitative inference, then identify patterns with well-established concepts and definitions and, finally turn to qualitative analysis to explore outliers or mechanisms underlying the patterns. These two types of data analysis form different, but not necessary incompatible perspectives on corpus data. So, the mixing of both methods is expected to be fruitful. In view of this, a basic explanation of both methods can help to frame the specific method of this research. Common differences usually cited between these types of research are included in Table 6.1.

Advantages of combining both types of research include: research development (one approach is used to inform the other, such as using qualitative research to develop an instrument to be used in quantitative research); Increased validity (confirmation of results by means of different data sources); Complementarities (adding information, i.e. words to numbers and vice versa); Creating new lines of thinking by the emergence of fresh perspectives and contradictions. Barriers to integration include philosophical differences, cost, inadequate training and publication bias.

In this thesis, a kind of mixed method is used to develop the analysis of life satisfaction. From this brief discussion it can be appreciated that both qualitative and quantitative analyses have something to contribute to the study of subjective well-being and life satisfaction. So, “it is erroneous to equate a particular research design with either quantitative or qualitative methods.”⁴³³ This research projects accounts for the idea that a stage of qualitative research is often a precursor for quantitative analysis, since the categories for classification must first be identified before psychological phenomena can be classified and counted. In this project there is no intention to dichotomize and present in either a quantitative or a qualitative category. Moreover, with a sample of 18 participants, the use of qualitative analysis is expected to reinforce the outcome of the quantitative treatment. At the same time, the emergences of the qualitative analysis were translated into quantitative results. Thus, the two paradigms have been assumed to be complementary, not opposite.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTATION

Following the procedures of instrumentation techniques chosen in this study, three different research instruments were used to obtain data from participants: a semi-structured interview about participants’ life-stories in a context where field notes were taken; a survey based on rating scale items; and a final brief open-ended question, directed to the generation of counterfactuals. The instruments of investigation of this study were thought as a multi-task experiment that would enable participants to generate counterfactual thinking as the conclusion of the task. Thus, we have built a

⁴³³ de Vaus, 2001: 10.



multi-task assignment that is conceptualized to fulfil both a qualitative and a quantitative approach.

Participants were provided with tools that led them to a reflection about the costs/benefits of immigrating and their level of satisfaction with their decision. In this sense, proposing the final open ended question “How would your life be, if would be in Brazil (original land)?” allowed participants to generate comparative thinking and observe more clearly their situation. Besides, guiding participants in a continuous line past-present motivated reflection about their acquired systems of belief, preferences and values, both at the origin country and host society, this procedure provided us with information through different kind of data.

The survey items entailed questions about the participant’s status, their situation in Brazil and their present conditions. The semi-structured interview gave participants more freedom to explain the most relevant aspects they believed to be of their own experience and provided us with narratives discourse to be analyzed. Narratives provided both, facts about their mentality and the spontaneous oral production of counterfactual thinking. This material was collected as field notes and examined with discourse analysis procedures.

Field notes were not related directly to the research method of this study, but they helped to frame a general picture of the individuals under scrutiny. Field notes refer to notes created by the researcher during the act of qualitative fieldwork to remember and record any important information of an observation setting. Field notes are intended to be read by the researcher to produce meaning and an understanding of the culture, social situation, individual or any phenomenon being studied.⁴³⁴ Field notes proved to be a very important way of obtaining data as participants generated counterfactual thinking expressions without being guided to do it during the introductory semi-structured interview.

Semi-structured interviewing “is an overarching term used to describe a range of different forms of interviewing most commonly associated with qualitative research. The defining characteristic of semi-structured interviews is that they have a flexible and fluid structure, unlike structured interviews, which contain a structured sequence of questions to be asked in the same way of all interviewees. The structure of a semi-structured interview is usually organized around an aide memoire or interview guide. This contains topics, themes, or areas to be covered during the course of the interview, rather than a sequenced script of standardized questions. The aim is usually to ensure flexibility in how and in what sequence questions are asked, and in whether and how particular areas might be followed up and developed with different interviewees. This is so that the interview can be shaped by the interviewee's own understandings as well as

⁴³⁴ Thorpe, 2008: 97.



the researcher's interests.”⁴³⁵ Apart from obtaining qualitative data, semi-structured interview serves also to introduce participants into the flair of the research. The semi-structured interview format also permits two-way communication and allows respondents to discuss and raise issues that you may not have considered. Semi-structured interviews are most often used in qualitative studies. The style is most useful when one is investigating a topic that is very personal to participants. This was the case in our study, where participants demonstrated to feel comfortable and open to participation.

In this study, semi-structured interviews have been conceptualized as a form of autobiography or life stories. Autobiographies of participants not only tell the specific experiences of the migrant him/her self, but also reveal important aspects of the mentality traits and cognitive formation. This work puts emphasis in both at the same time: the identification of some socio-cognitive cultural traits (personal or collective) and the way these ones are seen as positive (or not) for their successful process of integration. The implicit and explicit information about the individual mentality –ideas, beliefs, attitudes, values, mental sets and emotions- can be found in discourse, and mainly in this case, through the analysis of counterfactual thinking. Therefore, the use of narrative material seemed to be one of the best options to the purpose of this research. The study of (self-) narrative stories as being part of a qualitative approach can provide adequate information of the experiences of individuals who migrate.⁴³⁶

What may be of the greatest interest in life story “is how people see themselves and how they want others to see them.” The life story provides a clear and ordered record of personal truth that, of necessity, consists of both “fact” and “fiction”. This is the most we can ask of a life story. It sets the record straight, as a personal explanation or justification, and often in a very touching way, for what people have done with their lives.”⁴³⁷ This way of approaching to life story is especially important in the specific case of migration, so that for them “to find a place in the world is an imagination act. For those who are culturally transported, the challenge of building a new fiction or quasi-fiction can only be positively overcome by means of building up a proper identity which, in turn, is well-suited in the new cultural framework.”⁴³⁸

Basically, our intention was not to carry out a qualitative study on life-stories. We believed the analysis of life satisfaction and the weight of home acquired systems of beliefs, values and feelings on it, by also obtaining data from a more quantitative instrument to be a more productive approach. The aligned methods proved to be very profitable. Our interview served as collecting data for a complementary comprehension of the participants’ migratory process and the field notes taken also supplied

⁴³⁵ Mason, 2004: 284.

⁴³⁶ Henaó, 2008: 13.

⁴³⁷ Atkinson, 1998: 20.

⁴³⁸ Bruner, 1997: 60-62.



counterfactual statements and other observation that revealed data about participants' systems of preferences, feelings and values.

A Likert scale type questionnaire was applied to participants. Our survey was designed in 4 blocks (Appendix 1). The first block including parts A, B and C was designed in order to obtain general information about the participants' demographical information, such as age, education, time of living abroad, marital status, couple's nationality as well as other previous immigration experiences had been undertaken and their duration.

Blocks 2 and 3 were formed of a series of rating scale items. Respondents were asked to evaluate by choosing from a rating scale their level of agreement or disagreement to our statements. Four levels of agreement or disagreement were used in most of items in order to obtain the most defined measures, in a rating scale, following the basic format of a Likert scale were built-up.

Original Likert scales were built up as a five level response to a scales range from a group of categories. From a continuum, the level of agreement or disagreement is measured.

The design of a usual Likert scale with five levels could present the following form:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Nevertheless, our choice for most items was for a 4 level one, with an even number of categories in order to avoid the "neutral" option, i.e., *neither agree* nor *disagree*, so that more delineated answers to our questions could be obtained.

More specifically, the second block of questions was constructed in order to obtain data about participants' lives at their country of origin. Our objective was to collect information about their original values, feelings and preferences on their personal, professional and possible emigrational expectations and opinions about their lives in Brazil. Participants were inquired about their levels of agreement or disagreement, 4 scale possibilities were presented: *totally disagree*, *disagree*, *agree* and *totally agree*. Survey sections D, E and F settled rating scale items about their principal conceptions on family, friends, and couples, social and professional relations. Those sections tried to obtain data that could provide us with a general picture of the participant's individual and collective identity and mentality. Section G finished the second block of the survey with an inward looking question. Participants were invited to make a global analysis of their level of Life Satisfaction before emigrating. This assessment consisted of 2 items;



first, asked them to make a consideration on their happiness level and second, inquired about their happiness when compared to other people. Those items of Section G entailed a five scale rating question, ranging from *not very happy* to *very happy*, as 1 being *not very happy* and 5 *very happy*.

The third block of questions repeated the same structure of block 2: rating scale items were presented with 4 level choices. A global assessment on individual's happiness, a 5 scale item finished the block. This block was put, this time, on participant's experience after emigrating. Section H stated rate scale items about their situation at the hosting society at the moment of the task application. The items were generated in order to obtain information about their impressions, feelings and sentiments about the hosting society. Our aim was to promote possibilities of comparison between origin and hosting countries and obtain information of individual's perceptions of differences, new values acquisition and acculturation and/or enculturation attitudes. In this manner, the structure of the survey by promoting comparative judgments also conducted participants to generate counterfactual thinking. The third block was finished with a global appraisal, containing inward looking questions about individual's levels of life satisfaction and also about their happiness level, when compared to others. Those items entailed a five scale rating question, ranging from *not very happy* to *very happy*, as 1 being *not very happy* and 5 *very happy*.

Other two questions of a more personal character were stated. Those last two questions of *Section I* also presented a five level scale item that inquired what participants believed to be their general moods attitude towards life. We believed those last two questions to be important for the study in order to evaluate the weight of personal mood tendencies towards life in comparison to cultural and collective learned attitudes, values and mentality.

Counterfactual generation task

Fundamental to this study was the **analysis of counterfactual thinking** generated both orally during the interview, and in writing as a result obtained within the questionnaire and through an open-ended question.

Certainly, in order to complement the information obtained from the questionnaire, an open-ended question was asked. **Open-ended questions** are those which solicit additional information without narrowing from the inquirer the answer of the respondent. An open-ended question is one that compels a person to volunteer more information. An open-ended question is designed to encourage a full, meaningful answer using the subject's own knowledge and/or feelings. For the purpose of this study, the open-ended question was a counterfactual generation task, as it permits to explore attitudes, emotions, beliefs and values. The applicants can answer the questions in the manner they choose to respond. In-depth responses are expected, along with a description or explanation and there are no yes or no or right or wrong answers. Those



tasks, in addition to answering to the survey, required from the participants the capacity to report and analyze their own trajectory and feelings about their life satisfaction all along their migration project. That is also one of the reasons for choosing this kind of participants. The whole set of combined tasks, formed by participating in an interview, answering a survey and carry out a counterfactual task needed a group of participants capable of dealing with the cognitive oral and written abilities of them.

In this research project, the core of the analysis of counterfactual thinking was presented as an open ended question as a final part of the survey. The survey statements introduced prior to this guided the generation of counterfactual thinking and by leading participants to reflect about their system of beliefs, feelings and values during their lives, both at the origin and at the hosting countries. All survey items statements and questions were built in a way that memory and reflection on their immigration process could be potentiated. Thus, the culmination of the task was the generation of counterfactual thinking through answering the following question:

“Please, answer as sincerely as possible the following question: If you have not made the decision of living here, how do you think your life had been. What do you think you would be doing now? Where would you be? Whom with? What would you be working with? Think about the alternatives of what you would have done, how would you be and feel? Please, explain this in one or two paragraphs.”

When answering to this question, the obtaining of counterfactuals in terms of comparing conditionals of past time reference in relation to the actual present is expected. In doing so, the emotional element that refers to life satisfaction is expected to emerge within discourse. The analysis of these emotions as they compare the past to the present is expected to provide whether the immigrant experience a high degree of life satisfaction and subjective well-being in the present situation.

The use of open-ended questions in this research project has provided valuable information regarding the discussion of results about the correlations between counterfactuals and the data found through the questionnaire. With them, we have intended to develop additional findings and to strengthen those obtained with the quantitative study. In fact, these findings have given support to the idea that some characteristics that can be seen as originally acquired attitudes, beliefs and values are relevant elements for the subjective well-being and the life satisfaction of the group of women under scrutiny.



PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR SPECIFIC TRAITS: PRIVILEGED THOUGH REACHED

The targeted population of this research has been Brazilian women immigrants living in Catalonia-Spain. More specifically, they all live in the Barcelona metropolitan area and nearby towns. These women left behind parents, brothers and friends, but they did not leave sons or husbands they were attached to before their migration. Accordingly, we could state that they are a type of “independent, modern” woman who set out on the migrant process in search of new experiences and personal growth. Several reasons accounted for choosing this particular group of Brazilian women:

- Women who undertake a migratory project - Feminization of migration

In the last years, mainly the Latin-American migration process changed when compared to previous classical migration movements consisting mainly of men, who looked for a better life, leaving wife and sons back at the home country very often. Nevertheless, Latin-American migration of the last years showed frequently the opposite situation: women were those who immigrated in view of having possibilities of finding a job quicker at the hosting country. In this regard, “the globalization of care work constitutes a necessary point of departure when facing the current processes of the feminization of international migrations. Moreover, the dynamics of globalization influences the inequalities on gender in the context of social reproduction crises.”⁴³⁹

This gender role’s modification implies, many times, conflictive situations given the emotional and psychological impact of the absence of a woman, who is responsible for the maintenance of the family, and whether she is a mother, a daughter, a grandmother, and an aunt, one who cares for the children, who is the custodian of the household, promoting and protecting family ties. Frequently, the absence of the one in charge of housework –and even for other members of the family who live abroad– generates disturbances in the family’s stability. In this sense, frequently, the woman who acts as a wife, as a mother, or as a daughter experiences a sense of regret or guilty feelings about their leaving.

“Migration researchers and policymakers repeatedly claim that a feminization of migration has taken place” [...] Nevertheless, “frequently it remains unclear what authors mean when they use the term ‘feminization’. The term may indicate that women outnumber men in migration. Or it might suggest that the number of women now equals the number of men, while that was not the case in the past. It is also used to refer to (assumed) changes in migration: an increase in long-distance migration of women (as opposed to the mostly short distance migration that was common in the past), or an increase in the number of women who are pioneers or single migrants (as opposed to the dependent migrants of the past). Authors generally offer no proof of feminization, but

⁴³⁹ See Zimmerman, Litt, and Bose, 2006: 13. See also Solé, Cavalcanti and Parella, 2011.



simply observe that women today form about half of migrants”.⁴⁴⁰ “The literature on the feminization of migration presents the migration of women as new. Such novelty both calls for and justifies specific measures or policies aimed at migrant women. Yet, it is not so much the migration of women that has increased. Rather, there has been an increased focus on migrant women. In migration policies this heightened focus is used to justify restrictions and controls. In this volume, we show how juggling numbers and percentages is a favoured strategy in the problematization of migration”.⁴⁴¹

In this sense and following Schrover’s ideas, our research tries to “move away from the over-studied sectors of domestic work and prostitution, and the stress on victimization, feminization and problematization.”⁴⁴²

- Privileged, though reached

Further than the significance of lately increase of women immigration studies due to the consequences on family lives and living conditions, both at country of origin and hosting society, our proposal took a group of women, as far as we know, not yet taken into account in previous studies: a group of Brazilian women from middle-class with a degree (or higher) level of studies, “65,2% of the Brazilians have, at least, high school studies and 15% university studies. Those numbers are superior to the foreigners group’s (58,2% with high school studies or more and 12,4% with university studies) likewise the total included in the census, which includes the Spanish, (51,0% and 11,4%, respectively). When compared to the Latin-Americans, the Brazilians present the lowest rate of illiteracy (only 5,5%) and are only lead by the Argentineans in what university studies concerns. These data reveal, with no doubt, the high average level of the Brazilians living in Spain.”⁴⁴³

The general path introduced previously is consistent with the group of study in this research. Certainly, according to official data, it is evident the “the notable female presence within the migratory flows from Brazil and the much more varied patterns of labour inclusion, both for men and women, than the ones identified in the other Latin-American collectives, as Colombia, Ecuador or Bolivia, for instance. The data concerning Brazilian women show a smaller concentration in the domestic work and a higher presence in the qualified work positions [...]. They present similar patterns of inclusion as Argentinean’s ones, one of the Latin-American collectives with inclusion labour patterns also marked by the heterogeneity [...]. This specificity occurs besides the fact, as we have seen, that the Brazilian group experiences a recent growth; thus, with less average time of residence in the Spain than other collectives, which present more difficulties to develop ascendant labour trajectories.”⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴⁰ Schrover, M. and Moloney, D. M., 2013: 14-15.

⁴⁴¹ Schrover M., 2013 in Schrover, M. and Moloney, D. M., 2013: 17.

⁴⁴² Schrover, M. and Moloney, D. M., 2013: 41.

⁴⁴³ Solé, Cavalcanti and Parella, 2011.

⁴⁴⁴ Solé and Cavalcanti, 2011: 163.



The group of analysis belongs to a general immigration process to Spain initiated in the half of the nineties, which also included a young, urban, very specialized immigration with a good academic education whose migratory processes were built with the aim of gaining cultural, social, labour and economical capital, among others.⁴⁴⁵ According to this, we understand that this research project can contribute to a better understanding of immigration of Brazilians to Spain, and we believe that carrying out an analysis of a group of well-educated women in Catalonia could open several interesting possibilities of study given that, so far, this ‘prototype’ group has not been considered in Brazilian studies.⁴⁴⁶ Such patterns are not exclusive of the Spanish context, projects and trajectories heterogeneity define the Brazilian immigration of women who live in Europe, USA and Japan. Several investigations in the last years have as object the Brazilian women and indicate such profiles heterogeneity.

Moreover, we shall note the importance the reproductive role of values and customs that middle-class undertakes. “The middle-class is the mirror, both of the élite as well as of the very poor. It is the core.”⁴⁴⁷ So, the selection of middle-class members (a class in expansion in Brazil nowadays) is totally congruent with the aims of our study.

- Homogeneous group, starker tests

The relevance of analysing a “homogenous” group like the one of this research lays on the fact that it served as a stronger way to test the role of cultural traits on adaptability, integration and life satisfaction during the immigration process. The members of this specific group were supposed to have more adaptive and cognitive resources due to their education and life opportunities in what the migration process concerns. The immigrant process entails a series of constant learning, comprehensive and reorganization of ideas, concepts (sometimes, changing or overcoming pre-concepts and prejudices) and judgements about the new environment in order to understand, adapt and integrate in the new society that can be both exciting and stressing for the individual. So, it is symptomatic and illustrative the opinion of participant A1, who after five years of residence in the hosting country stated: “living out of your country is a continuous learning.”

The choice to focus on the emotional aspects of immigration is not by chance. The accountability of these variables is now present in the research programmes of international organizations. So, in its 2013 report, the International Organization for Migration declared the will to focus “on the migrant, exploring the positive and negative effects of migration on individual well-being. Many reports linking migration and development concentrate on the broad socioeconomic consequences of migratory processes, and the impact of migration on the lives of individuals can easily be

⁴⁴⁵ Solé, Cavalcanti and Parella, 2011: 103.

⁴⁴⁶ See Solé, Cavalcanti and Parella, 2011: 163.

⁴⁴⁷ DaMatta, 2010.



overlooked. In contrast, the WMR 2013 focuses on migrants as persons, exploring how migration affects quality of life and human development across a broad range of dimensions [...] The *World Migration Report 2013* contributes to the global debate on migration and development [...] by examining the impact of migration on individual well-being, the report goes beyond traditional analyses focusing on economic development and, in particular, on the impact of remittances (money that migrants send home). In contrast, by exploring how migration affects human development, the report presents a more holistic picture of development.”⁴⁴⁸ Furthermore, the relationship between mental health and immigration has been a major trend in the new research programmes developed by most important hosting countries, and authorities are aware of the necessity to improve this research given that “the lack of health data about immigrants has become a critical issue as community agencies move to become responsive to the pressing needs of immigrants who come from different cultures.”⁴⁴⁹

- Elaborated task

As previously commented, our study developed an elaborated task to obtain data, formed by a semi-structured interview, a questionnaire and a written counterfactual generation. Those tasks altogether demanded not only time, but also specific capabilities from participants. We believe the application of this multiple task to other groups with less academic skills would affect the possible results as per the impossibility of its reproduction under the same application conditions. This kind of group was elected because we found them to be able to express their sentiments and feelings with higher complexity and as well generate more information through counterfactual thinking.

- Homogeneous, though varied

Although we can observe the homogeneity of the group in what education, social and economical conditions refer, this group also shows differences in age, time of residence in the hosting society, professional careers, working and free-time activities and their origin in Brazil. This means that, in principle, they are supposed to have a variety of patterns of originally acquired attitudes, values and emotions. Nonetheless, they all came from urban centres, but from different regions from Brazil, which “is an intense pattern in the Spanish case.”⁴⁵⁰ So, we could resume the common base of the participants of our study as being an educated, middle-class woman, coming from urban Brazilian cities.

⁴⁴⁸ IOM, 2013.

⁴⁴⁹ Regarding U.S., see, for instance, Takeuchi, Alegría, Jackson and Williams, 2007: 11. See also, Fabrega, 1969.

⁴⁵⁰ Solé, Cavalcanti and Parella, 2011: 103.



- The exclusion of men in this study

Men have been excluded from this study. We believe that the presence of male participants in the group would have implied the analysis of other variants intrinsically related to gender causes, which is not the object of this study, and would have needed other considerations further from our initial goals.

The following table summarizes the main demographic information of the participants collected in our survey:

Table 6.2. General Data of Participants.

Number of participants	Nationality		Gender	
18	18 all Brazilians		18 women	

Phenotype	Afro-Brazilian 3	White 12	Hispanic 2	Other 1
Age (years)	23 to 30 5	31 to 40 7	41 to 50 3	50 to 64 3
Education	Finishing Degree 2	Degree 11	Post-degree 3	Doctorate 2
Time of residence (years at hosting country)	2 to 7 12	8 to 12 3	> 13 3	Average 7
Previous experience living abroad before present one	9 had previous experience			
Civil status	Married 12	Living as married 3	Single 3	
Couple nationality	Non-Brazilian 13	Brazilian 2		

To summarize, the group of this research is constituted by adult Brazilian, well-educated, married (or living in couple as married) women with experience of living abroad and that chose to immigrate for neither economical nor persecutions reasons. They are individuals who are looking for amplifying their knowledge of the world, life and of themselves and who are able to analyse and think about their own trajectory. Due to their age and time of living abroad, the participants showed to have enough experience to evaluate both their immigrating process and themselves. Accordingly, this could be defined as a “privileged” group when considering the level of Brazilian welfare society. We consider, thus, that it is a remarkable group to be tested when considering the influences –the attachment or the disengagement– of original acquired



patterns of attitudes, preferences, feelings and values developed before their migration process.

PROCEDURE

The task was administered to 18 Brazilian women during the summer of 2012. Each participant was invited individually and personally and agreed to participate with willingly. No money was paid to any of them for this collaboration. They accept voluntarily and supportively. The task was proposed to the participants as for the application of a survey and with the duration of 30 minutes. Participants were also informed about the anonymous character of the answers and that information would only be used for research purposes.

The applicator met each one of the participants individually at the most convenient place and time for them. A quiet place was suggested and agreed, sometimes a library, a coffee shop or even the participant's home. The task was introduced with a conversation and a very brief explanation about the object of the survey, without details that could direct the participant's answers. They were informed that the task belonged to the data collection for a Doctorate Thesis on Immigration.

Participants were asked how they decided to immigrate and in most cases, no further questions were necessary to make participants talk about their life stories. They seemed willingly to talk and report their situation and story of their migratory process. The applicator had some prepared questions (see Appendix 2) for a semi-structured interview, but in the majority of the cases those were not necessary as participants narrated their experience fluently and voluntarily. Immediately afterwards, participants were asked to fulfil the survey and answer to the final question, the counterfactual generation task. Participants were told they could ask if they had any doubts about any of the questions during the application.

Meanwhile, the applicator took field notes about the interview and also about own observations of participants and their narratives. After the tasks were finished, participants were asked if they wanted to mention anything else or expose anything else they had not previously. The task application had an average duration of 30-45 minutes and participants seemed to feel comfort with doing it.

We asked for participant's views about the task itself and their opinions about participating in the survey. So, during and after the interview participants also showed their satisfaction about being involved in this research, and the positive and relevant experience for them to tell their stories as a way to think or re-think about their decisions and the process they were living. The benefits of narrating life stories is well



known as they fulfil three crucial functions: “*The Directive Function* to use the past in order to solve problems and to direct one’s present and future behaviour; *The Self Function*, that might deal with affect regulation and moreover in their study, involved self–continuity; and *The Social Function*, what they had conceived of as a unitary Social function of Autobiographical Memory seems actually to be best reflected as two social functions: Developing Relationships and Nurturing Relationships.”⁴⁵¹

The recompilation of notes about the applicator’s impressions during the task application proved to be of major importance. During the first contacts, explanation of the task and task answering a series of crucial information on the participant’s opinions and feelings about their immigration process and themselves were provided orally. Participants revealed their impressions and even generated spontaneous counterfactual thinking statements before they were asked to do so. As mentioned previously, counterfactual thinking, autobiographical memory and cultural memory are interrelated. This information was condensed in a form for each individual participant immediately after each task application. According to this, field notes were immediately transcript and condensed into the Form (See Appendix 3), so that no observation could be left apart or forgotten.

RESULTS

This research project has an empirical character. However, given the difficulty of obtaining precise and determinant data, the methodology that has been applied is of double character, qualitative and quantitative. The use of both procedures has produced a better picture of the way the group of Brazilian women evaluated their own feelings, subjective well-being and life satisfaction. The following section presents a general picture of the obtained results by explaining the procedure, and an analytical analysis of the obtained data.

Data Analysis

The object of this study is to assess the level of life satisfaction and subjective well-being of immigrants, and observe the role of original cultural acquired values, beliefs and attitudes through their self-evaluation. This research has intended to deepen into individual’s perception of the cost/benefits of immigration and the weight of their original acquired mental settings –attitudes, values and beliefs– that are supposed to have conditioned, by maintaining them, their new patterns of living and their emotional development. Moreover, as explained previously, the assessment of the use of counterfactual thinking as a reliable indicator to evaluate life satisfaction has also been considered as a key point of the process of research.

⁴⁵¹ Bluck, Alea, Habermas and Rubin, 2005: 92-93.



Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from participants through the designed task. We describe the main results of the questionnaire, the counterfactuals found and the correlations between them as follows.

Results of questionnaires

Besides guiding participants towards the generation of counterfactual thinking, the questionnaire was built in order to obtain data about individual's beliefs, values, and attitudes, and as well to identify the levels of their life satisfaction, both before and after immigration. So, the general data obtained from participants is summarized in several tables, which vary from table 6.3 to table 6.8.

- Regarding participants' general characteristics, we summarize the results in table 6.3:

Table 6.3. Demographic Data (A, B, C Questionnaire Blocks).

Age (average)	38 years-old
Education	28% PhD - 61% Degree – 11% about to finish Degree
Time in Europe (average)	7 years
Time before settling definitively	50% Yes – 2 years
Civil Status	83% Married or living as married
Nationality of husband / friend	93% Non-Brazilians
Lived abroad alone before	39% Yes

The first part of the questionnaire was dedicated to obtain data regarding respondents' lives at homeland. Individuals were asked about the importance of tradition, family, friends, as well as their personal, professional and possible emigration expectations.

Values 1-4 were established, so that participants could evaluate their degree of accordance to each question item proposed. The average of all items of a block was calculated per participant and from them the average of the group. We observed that all items of each block should respect the same answer direction, when not, the values of the specific item with an opposite directions was inverted. The analysis of those questions supposed the inversion of scores in order to obtain a coherent evaluation. We also observed if high discrepancies occurred among the obtained averages per item of each block as the ones found in Table 6.4.

Values given to participant's answers ranged from 1-4. For the valuation "totally disagree", the value 1 was given; the participant's assessment "disagree" corresponded



to the value 2; the appraisal “agree” received the value 3 and the “totally agree” consideration corresponds to the maximum value 4. Answers that chose higher scores pointed to stronger attachment to family, friends and original cultural traits, as well as higher difficulty to adapt to the conditions of the hosting society. Data revealed the averages that are presented in table 6.4.

Table 6.4. Personal Expectations before Immigrating (Questionnaire Block D).
1-4 scale: 1 totally disagree-4 totally agree

Average of the group	2.78
Most valued aspect, respectively: Support of family, family tradition, support of friends	3.33 – 3.05 – 3.05
Less valued aspects, respectively: Having sons, closeness to friends and family	2.27 – 2.33 – 2.55

Concerning their professional life and predisposition to live abroad, the average levels of satisfaction of the group are presented in table 6.5.

Table 6.5. Professional Expectations before Immigrating / Predisposition to Migrate (Questionnaire Blocks E and F).

1-4 scale: 1 totally disagree-4 totally agree

Professional Expectations before Immigrating	3.02
Predisposition to live abroad	2.7

To finish the questioning about the participant’s previous experiences before settling in the hosting society, a global evaluation was included about both their self subjective well-being and their SWB when compared to others. Results are presented in table 6.6. The range of responses for this item was from 1 to 5, being 1 “not very happy” and 5 “very happy”.

Table 6.6. Global Evaluation. (Questionnaire Block G)

1-5 scale: 1 not very happy- 5 very happy

Self perception of happiness/ life satisfaction	3.72
Perception of LS compared to others	3.66
Global average	3.69



The second part of the questionnaire included questions about participants' personal experience after immigrating (Block H). These are presented in table 6.7.

Table 6.7. Personal Experience after Immigrating - (Ques. Block H)

Average numbers of the group

Higher scores represent more difficulty in a 1-4 scale: 1 totally disagree- 4 totally agree

Family life	3.18
Friends	2.95
Country	3.16
Work	2.5

In Block H, questions concerning how participants coped when living far away from their families were asked. These showed that the averages of experiencing difficulties of missing family life were substantial. Similar questions about relations with friends were also asked. Scores represent easiness to make new friends in the hosting society and difficulties of being apart from homeland friends.

In addition, questions concerning participants' view about the hosting country were formulated, Table 6.7 illustrates average degree of satisfaction. Highest scores, those of **3.4** and **3.5** respectively, were found regarding the concepts of "possibility to know interesting/nice people" and of "possibility to learn new things" at the hosting society. Both items were included in the category of "Country".

Questions concerning participants' view about working expectations and professional satisfaction were also introduced. The levels of two specific items, "feeling professionally fulfilled" and "having professional expectations accomplished" showed higher levels of success and satisfaction at homeland. On the contrary, the respective scores at the hosting society were lower, with values of **2.0** and **1.83** respectively.

To finish the questionnaire about participant's experiences after immigration, we repeated the same inward global questions as it was done at the end of first part of the general survey concerning their experiences and expectations before migrating. Questions about the own subjective well-being and their SWB when compared to others after immigration (Questionnaire Block I) are presented in table 6.8.



Table 6.8. Personal Experience after Immigrating - Global Evaluation (Ques. Block I)
1-5 scale: 1 not very happy- 5 very happy

Self perception of happiness/ life satisfaction	3.7
Perception of LS compared to others	3.94
Global average	3.86

The difference of levels found when compared to participant's global evaluation before immigrating was not significant. Nonetheless, we included two other questions in this part of the questionnaire in order to better evaluate the moods of participants. To items 3 and 4 of the global self-assessment of Block I, a 5 score was also presented to participants. Score 5 corresponded to the highest value and 1 to the lowest one in relation to participant's opinion on their general mood, happy or depressive. In this sense, we tried to assess emotional and mood aspects of participants. The analysis of those questions supposed the inversion of scores in order to obtain a coherent evaluation. The results obtained from these rose up in favour of a happy-type character, with an average of **3.75**.

Results of counterfactuals analysis

Counterfactual data obtained from the open-ended question and notes on the interviews were analyzed through categorization and interpretation. Answers were assessed using comparison/contrast techniques and by establishing common themes and patterns. For the counting of counterfactual statements, a score of 0-1-2 was given, equivalent to neutral, downward and upward counterfactuals.

We have registered a total number of 94 counterfactual (CF) statements in the texts of the answer to the last final question of the general survey, the one which was defined as "If you had not made the choice of moving here (hosting land), how would your life have been. And also, oral answers during the interview previous to the survey also produced a number of counterfactuals. No direct counterfactual question-like was done during the interview, but the generation of CF appeared naturally during participant's speech.

Counterfactuals were considered upward when the imagined scenario was better than reality. The following statement generated by participant A1 is a clear example of an upward counterfactual: "if I were in Brazil, I would be financially better, I imagine." And down when the imagined scenario was worst: "If I haven't come to live abroad, I



would be tied to the way of living expected by the Brazilian society; a downward counterfactual generated by the participant B1”.

In terms of their characteristics, we considered “internal” counterfactuals when causality was given to participants’ decision or were attributed to their attitude. On the contrary, “external” counterfactuals refer to those which are attributed to external circumstances and are non-dependent of individuals or inner attributes. The following table 6.9 shows the numerical distribution of those found counterfactuals.

Table 6.9. Percentage of Counterfactuals of Each Category in Survey Open-ended Question and Notes on Interviews (frequency inside parentheses).

Total (N)					
Downward CF		Upward CF		Neutral Statements	
Internal	External	Internal	External	Internal	External
36% (34)	17% (16)	8.5% (8)	28% (26)		10.5% (10)
Total = 53% (50)		Total = 36.5% (34)		Total = 10.5% (10)	

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As shown in Table 6.10, upward counterfactuals referred more frequently to external causes than to internal ones (difference between means: $t(17) = -3.9, p < .01$). The reverse was true for downward counterfactuals ($t(17) = 1.91, p < .01$)

The average number of downward internal counterfactual generated by participant was ≈ 2 , when downward external counterfactual average was ≈ 1 .

In the case of upward counterfactual, the average of the internal causally attributed represented $\approx 0,5$ and the average of generation per participant of external upward counterfactual was approximately $\approx 1,5$.



Table 6.10. Statistics of Related Samples.
Average Frequency of Counterfactual per Participant.

	Mean	N	Typical Deviation	Typical Mean Error
Par 1				
DOWN INT	1,89	18	1,605	0,378
DOWN EXT	0,89	18	1,132	0,267
Par 2				
UP INT	0,44	18	0,616	0,145
UP EXT	1,44	18	1,199	0,283

In sum, tables 6.9 and 6.10 show the numerical statistics related to the study of counterfactual. The results indicate the consistence of the association between internal cause attribution and downward counterfactuals, and external cause attributions and upward counterfactuals.

Results of the correlations between questionnaire and counterfactuals

By means of crossing survey items categories and counterfactual categories, some negative Pearson correlations emerged. They are the following:

- One of the significant correlations came out between upward counterfactual and participant's age ($r(18) = -.62, p < .01$) and also between upward counterfactual and their time of residence abroad ($r(18) = -.62, p < .01$). So, older participants, the ones who have been for a longer time out of homeland, generated less upward external type of counterfactuals.

External upward counterfactuals were the ones related to the feelings and ideas of, firstly, the possibility of having better working and professional conditions at homeland and, secondly, the possibility of having more proximity to family and friends.

- Similarly, the generation of neutral external statements, where participants expressed their professional, housing and family conditions did not present any change or difference before and after immigrating, correlated positively with the happy-type ($r(18) = .72, p < .001$). That is to say, happier type individuals appeared to be less conditioned by the external circumstances



- In addition, although weaker, a negative correlation was also observed between upward internal counterfactual –when participants expressed they would feel emotionally better at the homeland– and happy-type ($r(18)=-.52, p<.05$). In other words, slightly happier individuals reported to be less dependent on emotional support of in-origin family and friends.

Finally, a correlation appeared between 2 survey items blocks, namely “work” and “country”.

- The survey categories “work” and “country” correlate positively ($r(18) = .61, p<.01$). That is to say, high levels of satisfaction with the hosting country were expressed when levels of satisfaction with working conditions increased. The concept “country” included items/questions about the hosting society, such as “feeling welcome”; knowing interesting and nice people”, “having the opportunity of learning new things”, “having opportunities of personal growth”, “being happy with the current life”. Though participants expressed dissatisfaction with “work” not only by not being able to work accordingly to their preparation and skills, but also with the working mentality in comparison to the in-origin one, the valuation improves with time and learning hosting country mentality.

Counterfactuals Content/Qualitative analysis: Inferring Causal Attribution

As shown in Table 6.9, participants generated a total of 94 counterfactual expressions. Categorizing the counterfactuals according to the causal attribution suggested by them, a total number of 50 downwards counterfactuals were found. With these, our participants answered that it would have been worse if they had chosen not to immigrate. Therefore, those counterfactuals were related to benefits or gains of the immigration project. In addition, 34 upward counterfactuals were generated where participants mentioned that they believe it would have been better for them not to immigrate. In this case, counterfactuals were related to actual costs or losses of immigration. In addition, 10 neutral statements were created where participants declared that no change would have occurred in their lives if they would have not emigrated. However, more important than the quantities of generated counterfactuals were the causes that our participants attributed to their choices and outcomes and that could be inferred from them. These have given us the clues of our findings.

Causal attribution of own choices and vital events becomes a necessity that human beings develop in order to provide meaning to their existence. As introduced in chapter 2, counterfactual thinking has two main functions: learning from the experienced situation, on the one hand, and finding a certain relief from the fact of thinking that results could have gone worse, on the other. Individuals attribute specific causes to personal outcomes and their associated emotions and thoughts in order to achieve meaning and coherence with themselves. The contrast between reality and counterfactual scenarios appears to provide meaning to individual experiences and emotional states. The construction of counterfactuals appears to be a natural



predisposition of individuals to give sense to reality. The character of life satisfaction and subjective well-being also depends on these intellectual constructions.

We found downward counterfactuals to be mostly associated to self-related factors as values, feelings, attitudes, behaviours, emotions, as well as to the possibility of new ways of relating to others, and different manners of thinking and acting. Moreover, the opportunity of achieving more personal freedom and self-expression was very much valued by participants. On the other hand, the generation of upward counterfactuals were mainly related to external factors to the individual such as their professional career, working conditions, the on-going education, closeness to family and friends.

Table 6.9 showed interesting results. 67% of the found downward counterfactuals referred to an internal cause (34% among the total). Evidence shows a clear predominance of immigration benefits and gains related to internal personal growth. External cause attributions were also associated to downward counterfactuals, but with lower rates. 33% of downward counterfactuals (17% among the total) referred to external circumstances such as the hosting society citizen security, city quality of life, the possibility to have access to leisure and culture activities, and less stress levels in the day-by-day life. On the other hand, upward counterfactuals appeared and were attributed to external causes, such as the loss of professional or academic opportunities as well as personal affect losses (family and friends). Among upward counterfactual, 78% of them referred to external causes. Very low rates of upward internal counterfactual were generated, 22% of upward counterfactual (8.5% among the total) were related to possible scenarios of emotional balance and professional realization at homeland.

Concerning the generation of neutral statements, all of them were related to external causes and participants expressed that they could imagine scenarios of no change in their professional or career circumstances when comparing both homeland and hosting society situations. We have also mention that this “neutrality” seemed to express some kind of negative relaxed attitude. No change means no possibilities and no growth. Data shows (Table 6.11) that the possibility to learn provided by the experience of living at the hosting society is positively connected to life satisfaction. The correlation between neutral statements and happy-type could also be associated to this causal attribution.

Table 6.11 recaps counterfactual recurrent cause attribution categories as well as their relation to downward counterfactuals (DC) and upward counterfactuals (UC). The two main cause attribution categories shown below include some sub-categories (indicators) extracted from the data generated by participants in form of counterfactual terminology. The first cause attribution category relates to internal (self-related) factors of participants, and the second category refers to external attribution causes, ones which are dependent on outside life circumstances.



Table 6.11. Counterfactual Direction and Internal/External Cause Attribution.

INTERNAL - SELF-RELATED FACTORS		EXTERNAL - OUTSIDE CIRCUMSTANCES	
Personal and social development / growth	DC	City quality of life, access to culture and leisure	DC
Learning	DC	Citizen (public) security	DC
Openness of mind	DC	Having more time for oneself	DC
Being not conditioned (attached) by original mentality: consumerism, social uses, ostentation; social pressure	DC	Less stress	DC
Self-knowledge	DC	Opportunities of professional growth, career	UP
Change – move out of the comfort zone	DC	Continuous academic training	UP
Coping with solitude, individuality	DC	Higher economical incomes	UP
Possibility of making plans, trust in the future	DC	Proximity of family and friends	UP
Acquisition of new and better values: friendship concept, meaning of age,	DC		
Personal freedom, being able to choose	DC		
Regret for not having emigrated	DC		
Gain experience, maturity	DC		
Identification	DC		
Professional recognition	UP		
Emotional support	UP		

The above list on Table 6.11 illustrates participants' counterfactual statements and the attached causes mentioned to them. Change and move out of the comfort zone of the known lives conditions at the homeland were seen as an opportunity of seeing things from another point of view and gain experience. To be able to live a migratory process was experienced as a possibility of gaining maturity and self-confidence through overcoming the stressful challenges of immigration, such as coping with solitude. Personal growth was related to self-knowledge and recognition of different talents and capacities, so far unknown. The possibility of reinforcement of the individuality and acquiring more freedom from homeland demands and patterns of behaviour were



expressed as with positive affect and revealed indicators of LS. Learning new patterns, identification and incorporation of new systems of thinking also related to high levels of subjective well-being till the point that regret for not have taken the decision would be felt.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The results found in our study through the designed task can be summarised in three main blocks. Firstly, regarding the main results of the questionnaires, we observe that no significant difference was found between participant's global levels of life satisfaction before and after immigrating. In detail, the relevance of elements related to levels of subjective well-being and life satisfaction such as family tradition, family and friend's support were clearly detected. This data is congruent with the view of DaMatta about the Brazilian society conception of *home*, one which praises the value of the holdup received and given to the closest members of the group, such as relatives, friends, work-mates, neighbours. Nonetheless, the lowest rates of LS's indicators at the hosting society were those related to working expectations and working fulfilment as the correlation "country-work" revealed. In this correlation, participants valued more positively the hosting society when fulfilment of working expectations could be achieved. This is also compatible with the Brazilian migratory trajectory (and also other Latin-American trajectories) of the ones with higher academic preparation, who frequently find difficulties in their professional insertion in accordance with their knowledge. Moreover, the differences in working mentality also present indication of culture shock, as the Brazilian society, on the one hand, allows more professional initiative and on the other praise closer relationships in the labour environment. Though revealing a quite homogenous data among participants as being of a more happy-type and showing high rates of life-satisfaction, the questionnaire fulfilled the purpose of obtaining data about participant's system of beliefs, preferences and values as well as guiding participants into the generation of counterfactuals in the closing writing task.

The survey items provoked assessment about their migratory process in terms of positive and negative affect by directing participants through a past-present time-line. Our assessment is that this reflective guidance supported participant's natural tendency to generate counterfactual thinking they showed in the introductory interview. Spontaneously, participants used comparisons as well as alternative scenarios concerning past-present, homeland-hosting country. We consider that the chosen Likert-type questionnaire was, therefore, profitable to the research purpose /for the reinforcement of self- reflexion and further generation of counterfactual statements.

Secondly, in the results concerning the counterfactuals themselves, as we anticipated, a propensity to generate more downward than upward counterfactuals in response to immigration appeared. The main result regarding the generation of counterfactuals showed higher averages of internal downward counterfactual per participant (1.2) external downward counterfactual per participant found meant half of internal average



(≈ 1); internal upward counterfactual per participant were the least generated (≈ 0.5); and external upward counterfactual per participant showed also inferior average than internal downwards (≈ 1.5). Moreover, the numerical statistics related to the study of counterfactuals has shown results that indicate the consistence of the association between internal cause attribution and downward counterfactuals (67% among the downward counterfactual, 36% among the total) In this case, participants expressed their life satisfaction at the hosting country to be associated to personal gains and the benefits of the migration trajectory. On the other hand, external cause attributions related to upward counterfactuals (78% of the upward counterfactuals, 28% among the total), revealed the costs of immigration to be associated to external circumstances, such as the possibility of achieving higher earnings, successful career and professional growth at the homeland. In sum, participants generated more internal downward counterfactuals, where the possibility of learning new ways of living and personal freedom at the hosting society appeared as the most valued life satisfaction's indicators. The generation of external upward counterfactual occurred in a lower average and related costs of immigration to possible better scenarios of material and career opportunities and recognition at the homeland. As we anticipated, immigration as a stressful process and, accordingly, a tendency to repair moods or to self-enhance through the spontaneous and guided generation of counterfactual thinking could be observed.

And in a third level of analysis, the results of the correlations found between the data of questionnaires and counterfactuals were also taken in account. The most significant correlation was the negative correlation between both, older participants and the ones that resided longer in the hosting society and less generation of external upward counterfactuals. As we have mentioned, upward external counterfactuals were the ones where participants considered the homeland career, professional and earnings to be better. This correlation is coherent with the fact that time of residence and age are factors of emotional stability and adaptation. These results are also compatible with migrant's trajectory. Longer time at the hosting society frequently corresponds to the improvement of working conditions and also higher levels of satisfaction in social relations. Age and time of residence are important factors that contribute to the development of emotional regulation strategies. Furthermore, the learning factor, as an outcome of counterfactual thinking, plays an important role in the immigrant's SWB. Understanding, identification and acquisition of the feelings, beliefs and values of the hosting society improve life satisfaction.

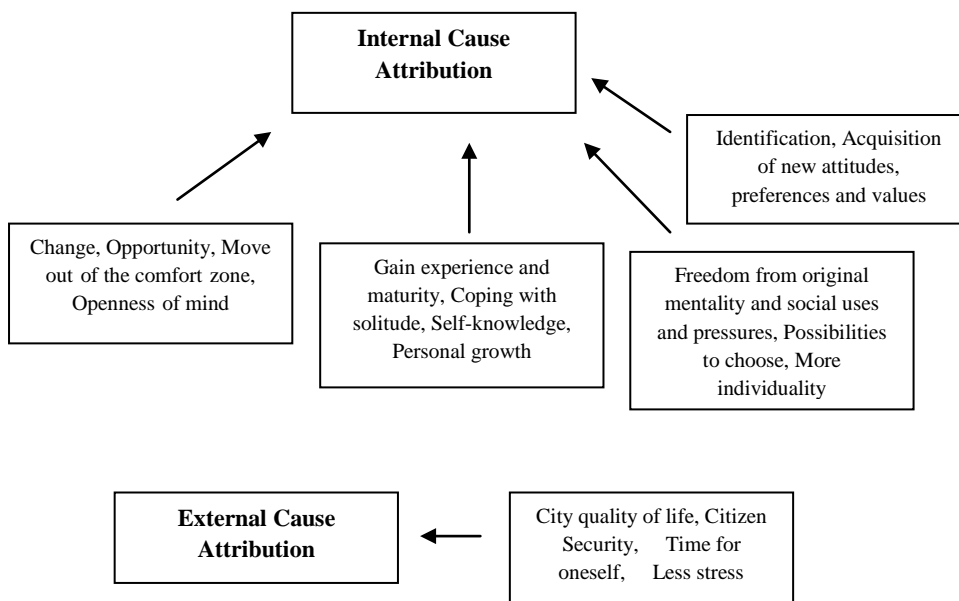
Furthermore, the positive correlation between external neutral statements and happy-type, shows that those individuals who presented happier moods were the ones less conditioned by external circumstances. As previously mentioned, the global self-evaluation of life satisfaction before and after immigration showed no variation and, accordingly, it seems plausible to affirm that in-origin acquired mentality associated to a happy-type remains constant and steady, independently from external circumstances. The strength of a happy-type self-image connected to cultural traits seemed to be maintained. Nevertheless, the happy-type is not only a Brazilian collective social-cultural outcome, given that there are influential individual components that have not



been accounted in this study. Although the studied sample was quite homogeneous regarding gender, individual differences were also found in both reported happiness and type of counterfactuals generated. That is, individual differences are also found in Brazilian collectives.

Finally, a slight tendency appeared regarding happy-type participants and the generation of less internal upward counterfactuals, which reinforced the perception that higher life satisfaction levels are connected to more autonomy of individuals. The participants who are less conditioned by life circumstances showed high levels of emotional adjustment and adaptive possibilities.

Downward Counterfactuals



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Upward Counterfactuals

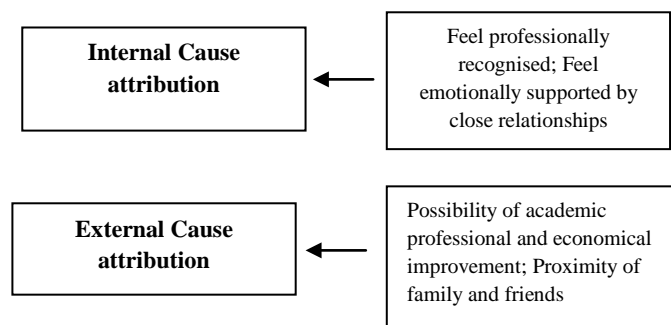


Figure 6.1. Summary of Counterfactual Direction Causes.



Figure 6.1 summarizes the distribution of the main causes assigned by participants to both downward and upward counterfactuals. In a smaller level in comparison to internal causes, the external causes attributed to downward counterfactual appeared in relation to city quality of life and its benefits of immigrating, in comparison to the insecurity and stress showed by the city life back home. The causes attributed to the costs of the migration trajectory related to indicators, such as the wish of professional recognition and emotional support from close relations at the homeland. These internal causes directly related to the external ones, such having the possibility of professional and academic improvement and the correspondent incomes at the country of origin, as well as by the proximity to relatives and close friends.

In sum, a more detailed analysis of the nature of cause attribution related to generated counterfactuals revealed the importance given by participants to achievements and personal growth obtained by learning new systems of values and preferences. Their positive evaluation on their life satisfaction at the hosting society is directly associated to internal and personal gains achieved by the (re)-elaboration of the whole system of beliefs, preferences and values in comparison to the in-origin acquired ones.

The Self Vision: Adaptability and Life Satisfaction

The idea of using different techniques that poses a self judgement about own life experiences is thought to be pertinent as a method to obtain information of subjective and emotional states of the individual. Certainly, as Michael Eid and Randy J. Larsen state, “subjective well-being has another component in addition to the hedonic component; it includes a cognitive judgment about one’s life, as a whole, as satisfying. Some researchers refer to this as life satisfaction, and most see it as an essential feature in the overall structure of subjective well-being.”⁴⁵² Self opinion and self reference descriptions provide suggestive information about individual life satisfaction. This procedure is also seen suitable given that these emotional states are introduced within the context of immigration and in combination with concepts such as acculturation, enculturation, adaptation and maintenance or not of in-origin culturally acquired traits. A more accurate analysis of counterfactual thinking revealed the emergence of elements deeply associated to the re-elaboration of the systems of behaviour, values and preferences of individuals. Those cognitive elements direct related to positive or negative affect formed the individual’s concepts of their life satisfaction.

As we have commented above, cause attribution inferred from/expressed through both, downward and upward counterfactuals can be related to the systems of attitude, preferences and values. The sub-categories internal and external causes showed inter-related elements with acculturation, enculturation and the adaptation process. Moreover,

⁴⁵² Eid and Larsen in Eid, and Larsen, 2008: 10.



the cause attribution sub-categories, such as personal growth, self-knowledge, identification or gain maturity relate directly to the learning, mood repairing and emotional adjustment functions of counterfactual thinking.

In accordance to these relations, we have considered a group of questions as a research explanation to strengthen the perspective obtained by the previous analysis of results. These questions are developed in order to provide an analytical framework derived from the answers to the open-ended question in combination with the quantitative data obtained. They are the following:

1. What are the costs and benefits of immigrating?
2. What are the elements of acculturation / enculturation / adaptation and their combined patterns?
3. How do those elements (acculturation / enculturation / adaptation) influence life satisfaction and subjective well-being?
4. How do those elements (acculturation / enculturation / adaptation) affect identity in emotional terms? What role does emotion play in the migratory process and in identity development?
5. Are original cultural traits and behaviours maintained after the migrant process?

According to the general information provided previously we can state that our findings concentrated into the following directions:

1. What are the costs and benefits of immigrating?

The results of the study seem to indicate that, regarding the migrant process, participant's levels of life satisfaction are associated to the possibility of personal growth –found in the generation of downward counterfactuals–, at the expenses of the costs of losing affects and opportunities in the country of origin –showed by the generation of upward counterfactuals. These results are found both at quantitative and qualitative level analyses, in the Likert type questionnaire and the open-ended question.

Evidence shows the predominance of individual's perception of the benefits of immigration in comparison to its costs. So, 67% of the downward counterfactuals generated acknowledge the benefits of the migratory process associated to personal gains. As shown in Table 6.11, a series of sub-categories or indicators of personal growth and internal improvement through the acquisition of new systems of references were mainly found under the concepts of *learning*, *self-knowledge*, *new values acquisition*, or similar terms of self-development.



In addition, the losses of the migratory process found in the generation of upward counterfactuals appeared to be related, on the one hand, to the costs or losses of the migration process such as the closeness to family and friends and on the other, the will of professional recognition. Nowadays, the economic situation in Brazil seems to offer better possibilities for finding jobs with advantageous wages, when compared to the economic recession and jobs losses in Spain during the last five years. Considerations on practical and external circumstances at the country of origin as career development, higher wages, professional recognition, continuous education were seen as negative elements of their current situation in the hosting country. Participant K1 expressed negative affect towards her labour conditions: “I have responsibility at work; I do here the same I did in Brazil, but I have neither recognition nor the correspondent money.” Participants B1, C1, H1 and J1 expressed their dissatisfaction for not having found a job in accordance to their academic knowledge and professional experience. In addition, they criticised the hosting society working systems for the thoughtlessness towards creativity, free thinking and lack of growing opportunities and, even, criticism was also focused on the type of relationships created with direct chiefs as they were considered cold, without open participation and distant.

Moreover, the trajectories found in our studies are congruent with the demographic data about the Brazilian young (and not so young) middle-class women, whose migratory processes are motivated by an individual search for personal growth. Without gender assignments such as the care of family members, the non-economical dependence of direct family members at homeland, and the truly willingness for a change their strategies to gain social and cultural capital abroad are facilitated.⁴⁵³ In this sense, our data seems to confirm the results of the World Values Survey about subjective well-being which states that when basic economical necessities are covered, the main life satisfaction factors are personal growth and freedom.

On the other hand, table 6.12 shows the increase of subjective well-being in Brazil experienced during the last twenty-five years, one which appears to be associated to the economical growth and the institutional redistribution policies. Taking this into account, it is important to note that the economic difficulties occurred in the eighties and the nineties in Brazil seem to have motivated also the emigration that took place during that time. The economic factor, thus, must be recognized in studies about Brazil in order to explain, at least, the initial flow of emigration. On the contrary, the permanence of Brazilian immigrants in hosting societies during a long period of time could be explained by the will of immigrants to develop processes which were motivated by an individual search for personal growth, one which is referred to life satisfaction and subjective well-being.

⁴⁵³ Solé, Cavalcanti and Parella, 2011: 187.



Table 6.12. Subjective Well-Being in 52 Countries: 1981–2007.⁴⁵⁴

Country and Year	SWB Index	Happiness	Life Satisfaction
Brazil (1991)	2.24	2.06	7.39
Brazil (1997)	2.23	1.97	7.15
Brazil (2006)	3.25	1.76	7.65

Thus, not only economical reasons are the motivations for the immigration project. The latest waves of immigration also show the hope for finding more freedom and social openness and tolerance. This dynamics puts in question the idea that migration was based on the security that could be provided by the hosting European countries in comparison to Brazil. Certainly, “differently from what is in occasions perceived by the public in general, the ones who engage in a trip are neither the poorest nor the most vulnerable. This is an applicable fact when considering the immigration from developing countries (like Brazil), as well as from developed countries.”⁴⁵⁵ Additionally, “in most migratory projects in which individual the motivation prevails, the social benefit is more important than the economic one. And this is true even for the women who dedicate themselves to sexual work, as they want to enjoy individual benefits, [...] escape for a time, or to live an adventure.”⁴⁵⁶

Accordingly, as the studies of Ed Diener confirm, “life satisfaction and happiness are more important than money. Attaining happiness in life appears to be an almost universal goal.”⁴⁵⁷ As our research validates, this conception seems to be also applicable to our group of study. Gaining personal growth by learning and adopting new systems of beliefs and attitudes allow them to achieve their objective of personal growth and, therefore, to enjoy higher rates of life satisfaction and subjective well-being.

2. What are the elements of acculturation / enculturation / adaptation and their combined patterns?

The counterfactual categories found in this research seem to fit in some characteristics of the four acculturation/ enculturation dimensions mentioned by the researchers Kim and Abreu.⁴⁵⁸ They reaffirm that behaviour; values, knowledge and identity have long been considered important dimensions of acculturation and enculturation processes. In particular, the value dimension refers to attitudes and beliefs about social relations,

⁴⁵⁴ Inglehart, Foa, Peterson and Welzel, 2008: 282.

⁴⁵⁵ Solé, Cavalcanti and Parella, 2011: 25.

⁴⁵⁶ Solé, Cavalcanti and Parella, 2011: 21, 27 and 28.

⁴⁵⁷ Diener, in Eid and Larsen, 2008: 10.

⁴⁵⁸ See Kim and Abreu, 2001.



cultural customs, and cultural traditions, as well as gender roles and attitudes and ideas about health and illness. In the findings of this research, these items appear profusely associated to life satisfaction and subjective well-being by acknowledging the importance of their existence or the lack of them.

The downward counterfactuals generated by the participants of our study are directly related to the value dimension with emphasis in social relations, cultural customs and gender roles. The acquisition of new attitudes, values and beliefs towards friendship and family, which strengthen the idea of having fewer ties and more freedom to choose and being identified with a more individualistic society, were expressed by participants through the creation of downwards counterfactual expressions as shown in table 6.11.

Many examples were found where downward counterfactuals met the acculturation value dimension as immigrants showed appraisal and/or adopted new value systems in detriment of homeland ones. So, participants G1 and M1 mentioned with positive affect the existence of more relaxed ties towards friends and acquaintances at the hosting society in comparison to the “too-close and demanding” attitudes from partisans. The distance in time and space locals are able to give and accept were valued positively as a different understanding of friendship.

Regarding their homeland, participants J1, I1 and L1 expressed their negative affect about the conditionings and demands of relatives and friends regarding compromises, parties, events and their expectation of attending to them. They also expressed the social pressure they felt in relation to consumerism and ostentation that exist in Brazil. These attitudes exist among all Brazilian social classes, but they were understood as duties and, therefore, in the surveys they were consequently rejected and were labelled with a negative appraisal. In the words of participant L1: “In Brazil, people live for the obligations”.

Participant F1 showed positive affect towards the hosting society in all acculturation dimensions, praising mainly the different attitudes and values towards aging and gender discrimination. She said: “Brazil? Only for holydays.” She meant she was considered too old, too alone, too free for Brazilian standards, but she stated that in Barcelona those ‘personal’ circumstances neither are noticed nor represent a cause of discrimination.

Concerning the specific value dimension of “gender role”, participant N1 showed positive affect towards the hosting society due to the way of life of many families without children. She questioned herself about having a baby and expressed her appraisal in relation to the possibility of not being a mother. “In Brazil, this does not happen. I wouldn’t even ask myself about having a baby; I would simply have it, as every other wife at her age.”

On the other hand, enculturation associated to the value dimension was also found in the question of being professionally recognised. It is important to point out that Brazilians



also praise ‘personalism’ in working relations, as DaMatta points out previously. This could explain the criticisms and the perception of not being recognised at work by the members of the hosting society, even when the individual has a job commensurate with her capacity and skills. This would also be in accordance with the maintenance of a personalistic mentality stated by Da Matta that favours homeland patterns of beliefs and, therefore, enculturation attitudes. In this regard, it is important to comment that despite deep social and cultural differences, Brazil is very similar to the United States when dealing with business organization, talent recognition, or meritocracy in labour market. Moreover, Brazilians praise the closeness and blending of the various spheres of the relationships: co-workers, acquaintances, neighbours, family and friends are frequently joined without restrictions.

3. How do those elements (acculturation / enculturation / adaptation) influence life satisfaction and subjective well-being?

We have found in the answers of the research questions a clear relationship between the costs and benefits of immigration and the levels of acculturation/enculturation developments. The levels of life satisfaction, the benefits of the migratory project and the value dimension of acculturation/enculturation showed to be congruently associated. The benefits and gains of immigrating showed to be related to learning and acquiring new patterns of attitudes, values and beliefs, and new ways of social relations compatible with the hosting society manners. In this sense, participants uttered several times expressions such as: “learn, open up my mind, grow personally, change for better, develop, self-knowledge, choose freely, gain experience and maturity, identification.” The dynamic of change and learn, and acquiring the hosting society’s cultural and social customs come along with personal satisfaction and positive subjective well-being. This pattern becomes clear as it is expressed by means of the construction of downward counterfactuals.

The correlation participant’s age, time of settlement in the hosting country and less generation of external upward counterfactuals found in our analysed data is also in accordance to the importance participants gave to the aspect “learning”. The possibility of gain knowledge of news ways of thinking and living was very positively considered and attached to high levels of life satisfaction. Certainly, longer time spent at the hosting society facilitates the comprehension of the environment, the elaboration of new systems values and beliefs their and integration. In other words, successful socio-cultural is affected by culture-specific factors, such as length of residence in the host culture, interaction with host nationals, cultural distance and language fluency.⁴⁵⁹

Moreover, higher levels of LS and SWB are frequently associated to the capacity of elaborating and selecting attitudes, values and behaviours, either acquired from the in origin country or the hosting society. According to the concepts previously presented in chapter 3, both processes acculturation and enculturation occur to be complementary for

⁴⁵⁹ See Ward and Searle, 1991; and Bhugra and Arya, 2005.



the achievement of the individual's psychological and socio-cultural well being. The combination of acculturation -the process of both cultural and psychological changes that results from the interaction between cultures- with enculturation -the process of (re)learning and maintaining the norms of the dominant culture- appears to be necessary for the fulfilment of subjective well-being. In other words, cultural adaptation and cultural maintenance are acknowledged to reduce acculturative stress, and integration is seen as the most successful strategy to achieve well-being.⁴⁶⁰

4. How do those elements (acculturation / enculturation / adaptation) affect identity in emotional terms? What role does emotion play in the migratory process and in identity development?

In this study, a relevant amount of downward counterfactuals were found regarding both the value and the cultural identity dimensions which relate to the processes of acculturation and enculturation immigrants develop to achieve psychological adjustment. The incorporation of new values and attitudes in the system of beliefs of individuals are mainly referred to the self. This process facilitates the construction of a different identity characterized by a sense of more freedom to choose one's life that overcomes social and family pressures. This development works for a better life satisfaction of individuals as the new identity is more centred on individual personal growth. The predominance of this kind of counterfactual thinking in contrast to upward counterfactuals which prioritize external conditions in detriment of inner individuals needs, reveal participant's election of new concepts acquired from the hosting society systems of values, preferences and beliefs.

Learning new attitudes implies the development and growth of identity. As a constant in the life of the immigrant, the struggle and the necessity of being always alert to the new environment are taken by our group of study as a positive challenge that permits personal development and growth. Though not explicitly mentioned, the data found in this research lead us to interpret that both the costs of being apart from family and close friends, and the fact of being professionally limited and, in many cases, even earning less money are not enough to counteract the perceived benefits of achieving personal development, of gaining freedom and of identity growth. Moreover, the dimensions of behaviour, knowledge and cultural identity revealed to be also connected to their adaptation and integration capabilities. Individuals showed that their enculturation development was highly compatible with acculturation mechanisms within the hosting society.

We should point out that we did not observe in our participants "gueto type" attitudes and behaviour that certain communities adopt as migrants. They participate and interchange lots of activities and contact with locals both individually and in small groups. Besides, we also note that the Barcelona metropolitan area has a very international flair that allows contact with very different groups of different origins as well as with individuals from different areas of Spain. This coexistence with different

⁴⁶⁰ See Berry and Sam in Berry, Segall and Kagitcibasi, 1997.



groups in the hosting society can be seen as a reproduction of the social developments of the Brazilian reality in which the mixing of people coming from different places is a common feature. However, individuals also explained that they maintain contact with other Brazilians in Catalonia and, moreover, they maintain fluid contacts with relatives and friends from Brazil as well as they frequently travel back to their place of origin.

Concerning the relationships with locals, the group of analysis also valued as a new acquisition the respect for individuality and the independence that friendship privileges in Catalonia, both in opposition to the sensation of being controlled and the must of doing all together that Brazilian society tends to promote. In this sense, the new context of more space and freedom seems to follow the same tendency reported by a recent study that showed that “people with weaker tie’s relationships reported being happier.”⁴⁶¹

In terms of emotional content, Brazilians focus their interest not only to personal relations, but also on the way inter-relations take place. As we have commented, cordiality and conciliation are musts of the Brazilian society, and Brazilians pay much attention to the manner things are said and how affable encounters are. Brazilians have a very positive representation of themselves as warm, happy, nice and receptive people. Brazilians feel sure and are proud of their ability with relationships. This ability is deeply entrenched within the use of the *jeitinho* in order to seek and maintain the good atmosphere during socialization. This pattern of origin is compatible with the way social relations take place in first instance in the hosting society. Despite cultural differences, Brazilian and Catalan societies share some social customs that favour not only well-educated procedures but also warm and soft manners. Regarding this aspect, the positive emotions experienced by the immigrant can be maintained or, even, increase because beliefs and attitudes about socialization are similar and work in favour of the individual self-esteem. Immigrants’ life satisfaction, thus, has no social barrier to rise in the hosting society.

Taking into account that, as Erikson states, “identity is made up of generalized ideological and cultural identifications belonging to the wider social environment,”⁴⁶² the fact of feeling familiar with the social practices of the hosting society facilitates that the process of enculturation/acculturation is not traumatic. A kind of continuity seems to be present in the process of adaptation and, thus, a more spontaneous -not repressed- development of identity takes place. Emotional well-being is facilitated as identification is more natural, and values, social knowledge, and customs are easily understood and accepted. The vast content of downward counterfactuals found in the obtained data proves that this integrative dynamic of identity self-construal has been powerfully developed. In this sense, identification, the gaining of experience and maturity, the acquisition of new and better values, self-knowledge, adaptability to

⁴⁶¹ Sandstrom, 2013.

⁴⁶² Erikson, 1980: 157.



change, personal and social development, and learning are related indicators that were reported by participants.

On the contrary, a cultural shock was identified between immigrants and the members of the hosting society at the beginning of the migrant process. According to individuals' statements, the expressions of close affect were not perceived, or they were misunderstood from both directions, from immigrants toward locals and from locals to immigrants. As *distance maintenance* or *free spaces* are key elements of the hosting society, they were interpreted as coldness and lack of attention from locals towards immigrants. Additionally, some individual found to be difficult to have close friends from locals. Participants A1, J1, H1 and P1 expressed their negative feelings as they had much difficulty in having close friends or confidants. This would be the initial costs/affect loss of the migratory process: the lack of known expressions of affect. Participants declared the importance of having close relationships, understood as having a trustful couple able to understand their feelings, sentiments and values without the necessity of explaining them explicitly. This necessity showed to be crucial for our participants. Subjects expressed the desire of closeness and comprehension. So, original systems of beliefs, preferences and values proved to influence immigrants' first perception of affect loss.

Despite the results showed by our research in favour of low difficulties in living apart from homeland friends and the facility of acquiring new ones at the hosting society (Table 6.7), participants expressed recurrently orally to miss the closeness and easiness of the relationship with in-origin friends, the ones who can understand what they feel without the necessity of further explanation. According to the Van Dick's concept previously introduced, the term "collective pozo", the shared meanings that are understood without the necessity of deeper explanations is what our participants expressed participants expressed about missing friends. The possibility of self-expression with no need of explanations facilitates the relationships. Acquisition of new friends and family implies also internal modifications and acceptance of new roles and different faces of the individual's identity. Immigrants' adaptation is preceded by processes of continuous emotional negotiations to give meaning to their new situation, to understand their place, to fit into this place and to feel the new hosting society like home.

5. Are cultural traits and behaviours maintained after the migrant process?

The generation of specific downward counterfactuals related to the flexibility of a new system of beliefs that promote more freedom (from strong family ties and social pressure belonging to the origin country members) is congruent with the primary individual motivation of the migratory project of young Brazilian women. These individuals see immigration as an opportunity for achieving personal gains and as a provider of a higher benefit that compensates the feelings of affect loss and distance from family's original values and emotions.



The clearest element of this movement of getting rid of cultural elements of the country of origin is clear in the conception Home/Street established by DaMatta. According to him, the duality Home/Street experienced by the Brazilian society seems to be congruent with our findings and also bring light to them. The conflict between personal obligations (*home*) and personal freedom and individual autonomy (*street*) are evident on the choices taken by our participants and the level of subjective well-being they expressed to experience in the hosting society. They show a sense of experiencing more life satisfaction in the hosting country by means of terms that express (1) distance towards their original mentality: consumerism and ostentation, and social and family pressure; and (2) attachment to the new cultural patterns: personal freedom, being able to choose more freely; coping with solitude, individuality; openness of mind; the option for a more autonomous life. In sum, acculturation refers to acquiring more individualistic patterns, and enculturation to take advantage of the originally acquired ones in terms of their usefulness, and their capacity to be relearned properly.

Regarding family ties, and despite the importance given to closeness to family and friends, our participants expressed the big idea that “moving from strong to weak ties increases happiness.” According to them, the possibility to be free from imposed social roles is a way for increasing happiness. However, this seems to be somewhat in contradiction with surveys on Brazilian’s well-being that show the family and relationship net indicators to be the ones with the highest rates of performance when considering relevance and satisfaction. As introduced previously, the family indicator for Brazilians is included in the bigger category of *Home* as defined by DaMatta. This pervasive concept disseminated through the whole society entails the feelings and perceptions of order, protection and welcome for their members. Furthermore, the concept of Home includes outside members of the family as friends, work fellows, neighbours, and anyone who shares respect and appraisal to the other members of the group. Nonetheless, this perception is congruent with the generation of upward counterfactuals related to the sub-categories *proximity of family* and *friends* found among some individuals of the research group. So, missing relatives and friends –and recognition at work– seem to belong to the consistent group of enculturation patterns found through the production of upward counterfactuals.

Concerning the importance of family and friends found in our study (Tables 6.4 and 6.8), the data is congruent with the research developed in the city of São Paulo in 2013.

⁴⁶³ –The *Well Being Brazil - Cidade de São Paulo FGV Survey* reveals the relevance of social support on people’s SWB. According to the WBB@ Group, the variable *Family* presents the best performance, given that the relevance and the satisfaction ratings are closer to one another (see Table 6.13). That is to say, if Brazilians have this level of satisfaction at homeland regarding the *Family* indicator, it is normal that in our survey the levels of dissatisfaction at the hosting society are high as the found ones. However, we want to note that the concept *Home* entails many other components, rather than the family, such as friends, and work relations, all of them shaping and driving personal relations. These parameters are acknowledged to be crucial for the mental stability of

⁴⁶³ Mendes Da Silva, Gallo Garcia and Motoryn, 2014.



Brazilians, given that the sharp dichotomy between *Home* and *Street* as presented by DaMatta. Congruent with DaMatta’s ideas, which show the significance of those aspects (hold in the idea of Home) for the Brazilians at the expense of less civic attitudes in the Street (outside the protection of Home). According to DaMatta, the significance of the Home goes beyond personal and sentimental relations; it represents the guide and support for the individual.

Table 6.13. Average Ratings Obtained for the Component Variables of the Well Being Brazil Index.

Well-being variables	Average Ratings		
	Relevance	Satisfaction	Performance
Family	4,688	3,842	0,846
Relationship nets	4,515	3,612	0,903
Consumerism	4,521	3,299	1,223
Health	4,721	3,323	1,398
Professional and financial life	4,775	3,298	1,476
Education	4,552	3,068	1,483
Environment	4,563	2,821	1,742
Citizen security	4,624	2,694	1,930
Transport and mobility	4,609	2,574	2,034
Public Institutions	4,561	1,831	2,729

Note: Developed by the WBB© Group, based on the data collected in the city of São Paulo, between November 10th and 30th, 2013. N = 786. Note: This table presents the answers given (average *rating* in a scale 1 to 5) for satisfaction and relevance in relation to the 68 indicators of well-being, organized in the ten components variables of the WBB©. It is possible to observe that the variable *Family* presents the best performance, once the ratings of relevance and satisfaction appear closer than the ones found for the other variables. On the contrary, the variable Public Institutions, following the same criteria, present the worst performance.⁴⁶⁴

In sum, some patterns prove to be maintained from the country of origin as immigrants tend to behave in some aspects in their new residence as they do at home. The existence of these patterns seems clear regarding the structure of the family, inner personal values and social education, and it follows the general evidence that “cultural values like the structure of the family are very stable over time as shown in many different ways.”⁴⁶⁵ The transmission of values regarding family relies on parents-children relationship and it is reproduced intensively as parents teach children values about the family, the society and the meaning of life.⁴⁶⁶ In this regard, we have to be aware that the processes of

⁴⁶⁴ Mendes Da Silva, Gallo Garcia and Motoryn, 2014.

⁴⁶⁵ See, for instance, Alesina and Giuliano, 2007; Bertrand and Schoar, 2006; Reher, 1998; and Todd, 1985.

⁴⁶⁶ See for instance, Tabellini, 2008; and Bisin and Verdier, 2001.



enculturation and acculturation are constructed as a continuum and, accordingly, it is difficult to indicate to what a degree a given cultural trait still influences the mechanisms of the immigrant to the hosting society, and regarding family, it could be stated that “strong or weak family ties are neither “bad” nor “good” but they lead to different organizations of the family and have different social implications.”⁴⁶⁷

The results of the analysis of our study point towards a positive view of the immigration process. On the one hand, qualitative data associates life satisfaction to age of participants, time of residence at the hosting society and the reduction of the importance of the possible benefits of living at homeland. Counterfactual thinking is a natural strategy used by participants in search of emotional balance and coping with the costs of living apart from their in-origin atmosphere. Guided counterfactual thinking statements generated during the research task showed the importance of the learning effect, one of the outcomes of counterfactual thinking. On the other hand, the data obtained in our study allowed the elaboration of a series of considerations about the maintenance or not of cultural in-origin acquired system of feeling, beliefs and values and the adoption of new ones. The data collected gave us some clues about the interdependence of acculturation, enculturation and adaptation, and how they play a crucial role in immigrant’s life satisfaction and subjective well-being.

⁴⁶⁷ See Esping-Andersen, 1999. See also Alesina and Giuliano, 2009: 4.



CHAPTER 7

– CONCLUDING DISCUSSION AND REFLECTIONS –

Over the last thirty years, the world society has been marked by a peculiar combination of integrating and disintegrating trends. On the one hand, technological change brings virtually every human being on the planet to reach every other through communication satellites and mass transport. On the other, cultural traits and collective identities are reshaped in societies as a necessity of individuals to create a sense of protection and of identity when facing the unstoppable dynamics of globalization. In accordance to this, the migrant process and the question of the immigrant adaptation have become one of the most important issues in both the academic and the political forums.

Social integration represents for both the individual who migrates and the hosting society a main objective to be achieved, and from this evaluation we can refer to the well-being of immigrants. Successful integration (or generally, adaptation) is considered to be as “a process that includes, but is not limited to, the spread of educational and economic mobility, social inclusion, and equal opportunity for newcomers and minorities into the mainstream of a society.”⁴⁶⁸ Nonetheless, the relevant discourse has moved from the material well-being to emotional or subjective well-being. When a minimum of material necessities (food and housing) has been achieved, the psychological aspects of well-being are introduced into the agenda. As the *World Happiness Report* informs, there is rich evidence that the systematic measurement and analysis of happiness can teach us a lot about ways to improve the world’s well-being and sustainable development. Moreover, “economic growth makes a positive contribution to SWB, but it is the weakest of the main factors.”⁴⁶⁹

The phenomenon of immigration clearly affects the subjective well-being of individuals who migrate. In the last decades, subjective well-being and life satisfaction have been introduced in the debate on immigration. The understanding of the psychological factor of migrant’s experience has become an important element for evaluation. Evidence shows that subjective well-being has both individual and social components. In this regard, immigrant’s identity and the in origin acquired beliefs, attitudes and values are seen as elements that influence his/her life satisfaction, and they are acknowledged to become a positive or a negative factor for integration. Thus, this thesis represents the outcome of a research project which has intended to deepen into the relationship between immigration and subjective well-being and life satisfaction when applied to a particular, but clearly identified group of immigrants. We have done this by means of the analysis of counterfactual thinking. We have observed the appearance of emotional components embedded in counterfactual statements. By using qualitative and quantitative methods, psychological elements of subjective well-being and life satisfaction of participants have emerged through their discourses. Thus, the complete

⁴⁶⁸ Boyer, 2009: 3.

⁴⁶⁹ Inglehart, Foa, Peterson and Welzel, 2008: 280.



research procedure has been demonstrated to be a valid alternative of research in the fields of immigration and subjective well-being.

MAIN RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH TASK

The outcome of this thesis can be divided in two general research perspectives. The first one refers to the specific results as applied to the group of analysis, namely the Brazilian women who migrated to Catalonia. The second perspective intends to show a general view of the use of counterfactual thinking in the analysis of subjective well-being and life satisfaction when applied to immigrants. The first perspective is presented in this section, and the second is presented in the next one. Figure 7.1 shows an outline of this concluding chapter. The main results and contributions of this research are shown there.

When trying to explain the specific results when applied to the group of Brazilian women, it can be stated that some identified patterns of data correlations emerged. Firstly, older participants and the ones who have been residing longer in the hosting society generated less external upward counterfactuals. This result is coherent with two important factors for the development of emotional regulation strategies: age and time of adaptation. This correlation is important as far as it validates the utility of the methodology used in this project. In addition, these results are also in accordance to stronger positive affect towards the hosting society when more satisfaction with working/employment situation occurred. This outcome is also coherent with a longer time of residence, one that brings more possibilities of finding a fulfilling job suitable to individuals' skills and knowledge, or adaptation to new professional and working mentality conditions both providing an increase of the levels of life satisfaction. Secondly, participants that generated more external neutral statements showed to be of a more happy-type mood, what is related to being less conditioned to the external environment circumstances. Finally, a slight tendency appeared regarding happy-type participants. The individuals of this group generated less internal upward counterfactuals, and happy mood types tended to present more emotional regulation with slight lower levels of emotional dependence of their in-origin basis.

When trying to describe analytically the results of counterfactual thinking production, we can state that 67% of the found downward counterfactuals referred to an internal cause (36% among the total). This shows evidence of the predominance of immigration benefits and gains related to internal personal growth. External cause attributions were also associated to downward counterfactuals, but with lower rates. 33% of downward counterfactuals (17% among the total) referred to external circumstances such as the hosting society citizen security, city quality of life, the possibility to have access to leisure and culture activities, and less stress levels in the day-by-day life. On the other hand, 78% (28% among all) of the upward counterfactuals were attributed to external causes, such as the loss of professional or academic opportunities as well as personal affect losses (family and friends). Very low rates of upward internal counterfactual were



generated, 22% of upward counterfactuals (8.5% among the total) were related to possible scenarios of emotional balance and professional realization at homeland.

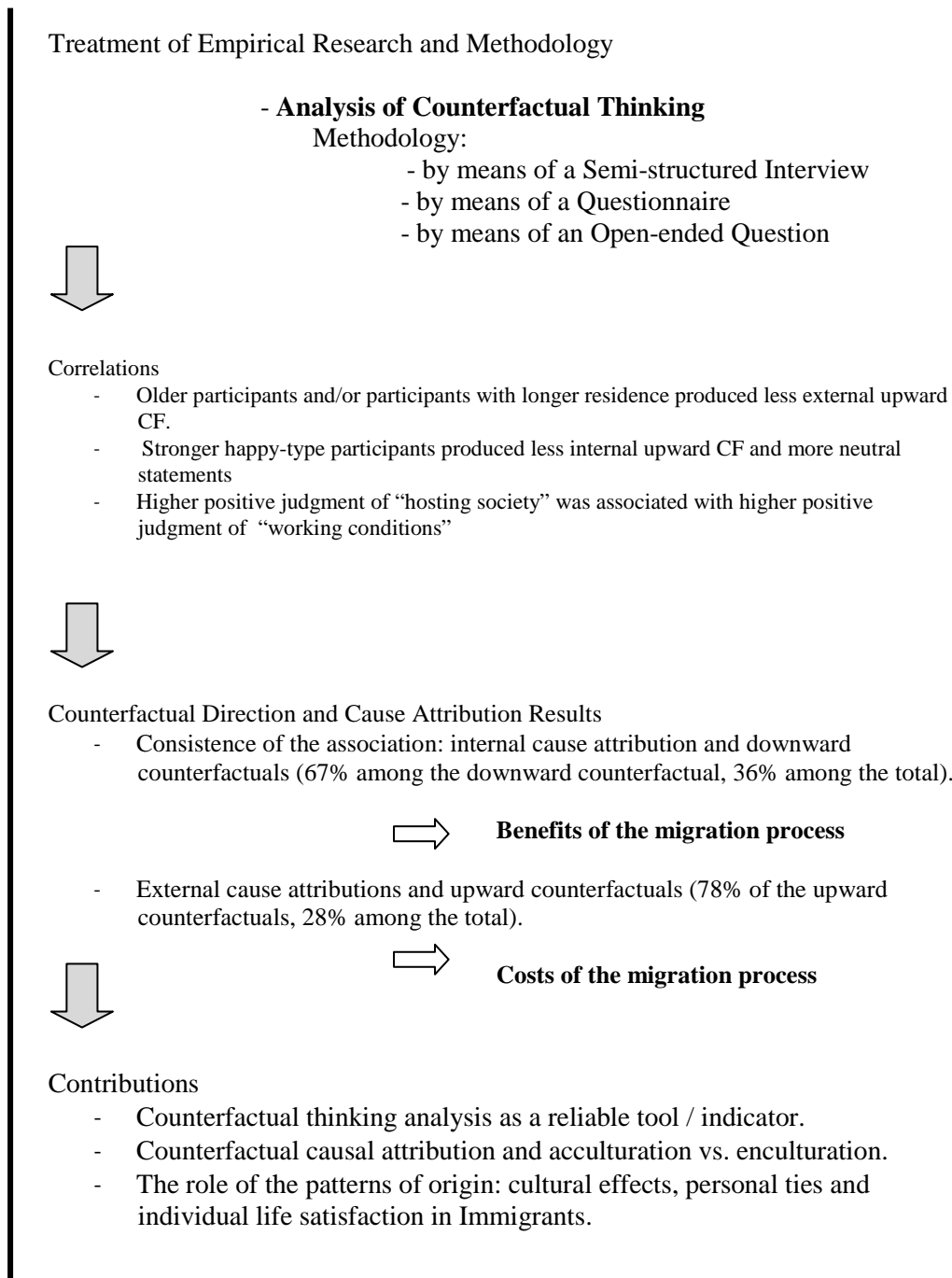


Figure 7.1. Main Results and Contributions of the Research Task



The data presented above are the outcome of the production of counterfactuals in terms of cause attribution. Counterfactuals were produced in order to show a value's load about individual decisions (migration) and the resulting emotional equilibrium (high levels of SWB and LS). These counterfactuals revealed that the benefits of the immigration process were mainly associated with the gains of personal growth and higher levels of freedom. The revealed importance given by participants to individual achievements and personal growth obtained by learning new systems of beliefs, values, and preferences. Their positive evaluation on their life satisfaction at the hosting society is directly associated to internal and personal gains achieved by the (re)-elaboration of the whole system of beliefs, preferences and values in comparison to the in-origin acquired ones. On the other hand, both being apart from family and close friends and the losses of material welfare and economic status (financial, professional and academic) were connected to the costs of the migration process, but these presented lower rates in comparison to benefits. As developed in previous studies, we have focused on the functions of counterfactuals when trying to establish causal relationships. The procedure has been that which develops the well-known division between upward and downward counterfactuals.

Evidence has shown that within quantitative and qualitative analysis, although a significant correlation between downward counterfactual and positive emotions was not observed, participants who scored higher in happiness produced less upward counterfactuals. Furthermore, qualitative analysis supports the association between causal attribution and happiness. In these ones, participants compared their reality as immigrants to the worse alternative -constructed as a counterfactual- of maintaining their residence in their country of origin. Similarly, consistent within analysis was that the relationship of negative emotions -such as regret- with upward counterfactuals thoughts emerged as people compared their actual situation to a better alternative.

In this research, quantitative analysis has proved an expected correlation between reported happiness, less internal upward and more neutral counterfactuals. Although results have to be considered cautiously due to the small size and homogeneity of the sample, they support the usefulness of this new approach. Furthermore, we have found consistency between the observed results and the relations previously observed between counterfactual content and subjective well-being.

In sum, the correlations of data found between subjective well-being and life satisfaction and the production of counterfactuals, although not being determinant, served to validate somewhat the methodology used in this thesis, as well as it is important to note that they were congruent with the evidence of previous studies about immigrants' life satisfaction, and particularly in relation to the general labour situation of Brazilians in Spain. The main results and contributions of this research are shown in Figure 7.1. There, it is summarized that the analysis through counterfactual thinking has proved to be a fruitful method to evaluate immigrants' explanations about how their life satisfaction and subjective well-being is influenced by psychological elements acquired in-origin, as well as the new acquired at the hosting society. Elements that they believe



to be part of their in-construction identity as immigrants (elements of their own self-perception) are evaluated to have favoured their integration in the hosting society.

MAIN CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS STUDY

The subject of the life satisfaction and subjective well-being of immigrants and the role of culture on their levels is a reasonably well explored field of research to the extent that the study of subjective well-being and life satisfaction has become a world of its own. However, searching for innovative approaches that intend to associate emotional elements of individuals and migration processes is not a simple task. Our intention in this research work was to explore counterfactual thinking as a reliable tool to find connections between subjective well-being and life satisfaction and immigration experiences. Furthermore, in this study we have intended to validate specific indicators as well as to consider the relevance of in-origin acquired system of beliefs, preferences and values in SWB and LS. Below we introduce our findings in terms of a global perspective that joins in a three dimension framework the process of immigration, how this affects the levels of subjective well-being and life satisfaction, and how it is possible to find a link between them by means of the analysis of counterfactuals emerged from the own self reflections of individuals who migrated.

Counterfactual Thinking as a Useful Tool for SWB Analysis

The analysis through counterfactual thinking has proved to be a fruitful method to evaluate immigrants' explanations about their life satisfaction and subjective well-being. The analysis of counterfactual thinking used to develop the empirical contrast has proved to be productive in both semi-structured interviews and open-ended question. The identification of correlations between attitudes, values and beliefs, and life satisfaction by using counterfactual thinking constructions embedded in discourses has become clear and consistent. Thus, it can be stated that the analysis of counterfactual thinking could represent a fertile framework with which it is possible to recognize psychological states –namely life satisfaction and subjective well-being– of specific groups –namely immigrants– whose beliefs, attitudes and emotions are identified as elements of a given identity.

One of the most important outcomes produced by this research project refers to methodology. Counterfactual thinking has been used as the strategy to obtain empirical evidence from participants. Counterfactual thinking has appeared as a credible tool in the extraction of information regarding emotional well-being and life satisfaction in association with well-defined beliefs, attitudes, values and emotional embeddings. From participants' discourses, counterfactuals have emerged as providers of emotional



descriptions of both as members of an in-born community and immigrants in a hosting society.

Originally, counterfactuals have been accounted, as Roese and Olson affirmed, as a measurable and empirically definable pattern of the mental states of individuals. Working as comparators between the present and the past or the future, counterfactuals have showed to be crucial as an important source of information for analyses. Nonetheless, in this study they have been a clear instrument to make visible the two different scenarios under scrutiny, that of a national resident and that of an immigrant. Using counterfactuals has been a motivating strategy for participants to achieve the most complete panorama of their immigration process. Moreover, a majority of the participants expressed that the participation in our study gave them a pleasant possibility of organizing their ideas and feelings about their living experience. Counterfactual scenarios are more than just creative products of the imagination: they are useful in communicating our attitudes, and in guiding others to share those attitudes. By indicating whether a counterfactual scenario is “too bad” or a “good thing” in relation to some other state of affairs the emotional evaluation is introduced. When a speaker describes a counterfactual and pairs it with an evaluation, a unique individual perspective is conveyed to the listener.

In general research, as well as in this study, evidence has shown that counterfactuals as mental simulations (a broader term that includes not only mental simulations of hypothetical alternatives to reality, but also simulations of past and future events) may serve both problem solving and emotion regulation functions.⁴⁷⁰ In addition, counterfactuals have proved to serve as a proactive coping strategy, whereby the individual learns strategies to prevent negative outcomes in the future, and as a reactive coping strategy, whereby the individual regulates negatives emotions.⁴⁷¹ Similarly, researchers in the field of stress and coping often distinguish between two general types of coping efforts: Problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping.⁴⁷² Problem-focused coping involves efforts to do something constructive about the situation, whereas emotion-focused coping involves regulating the emotional consequences of a stressful event. Upward counterfactual thinking may represent a problem-focused coping strategy, in which the individual attempts to plan for the future and attain a sense of control and mastery over negative events.⁴⁷³ Downward counterfactual thinking, on the other hand, may represent emotion-focused coping, whereby negative mood states are alleviated by comparison to a simulated alternative that makes one’s true state of affairs seem not so bad by comparison.⁴⁷⁴ According to the functionality of counterfactual thinking, upward counterfactuals serve a *preparative* (also referred to as self-improvement) function and allow individuals to prepare for the future by providing

⁴⁷⁰ Taylor and Schneider, 1989.

⁴⁷¹ Gleicher, Boninger, Strathman, Armor, Hetts and Ahn in Roese and Olson, 1995.

⁴⁷² Folkman and Lazarus, 1985; and Pearlin and Schooler, 1978.

⁴⁷³ Kasimatis and Wells in Roese and Olson, 1995; and Taylor and Schneider, 1989.

⁴⁷⁴ Kasimatis and Wells in Roese and Olson, 1995; Roese, 1994. See also Taylor, Wood and Lichtman, 1983.



information about how to improve. Downward counterfactuals provide what has been referred to as an *affective* function (also referred to as self-enhancement, the desire for people “to enhance the positivity of their self-conceptions and to protect the self from negative information.”⁴⁷⁵) by allowing individuals to feel better by comparison to worse-off simulations of what might have occurred.⁴⁷⁶ Counterfactual thinking is largely adaptive in its functionality when accommodate feelings and emotions.

Counterfactual Causal Attribution and Acculturation vs. Enculturation

In this study, individuals’ counterfactuals have shown to have both ranges of affective paths, the positive and the negative, or the happy and the depressive. Whether simple or elaborate, counterfactuals emerged as creative elements of discourse that show emotional states. Generally, the most common association between antecedent event valence and counterfactual direction is one of mood congruency whereby positive moods (and positive events) are associated with downward counterfactuals thoughts, and negative moods (and negative events) are associated with upward counterfactual thoughts.⁴⁷⁷

Downward counterfactuals have been constructed to report positive affect regarding the decision to emigrate and the fact of experiencing highly subjective well-being in the hosting country. This study has shown that individuals do actively generate more downward than upward counterfactuals in response to their real-life as immigrants. They generate a majority of downward counterfactuals both spontaneously as well as when prompted in response to their current situation as migrants. The generation of downward counterfactuals has been related to a desire to feel in accordance to their situation, one that they value as positive and, accordingly, seem to support their current subjective well-being and life satisfaction. Moreover, participants associated the re-elaboration of the systems of values, beliefs and preferences to satisfactory adaptation and integration at the hosting society. Acculturation, that is, acquiring new patterns, and enculturation, that is, reorganizing in-origin acquired ones, work together in the permanent identity construction of migrants as well as enhance life satisfaction and subjective well-being.

⁴⁷⁵ The term *self-enhancement* is used to describe how “individuals involved in self-evaluation desire to enhance the positivity of their self-conceptions or protect the self from negative information. To this end, people will selectively process self-relevant information. For example, people will focus on information that has favourable implications for the self and avoid information that has unfavourable implications for the self.” Sedikides, 1993: 318.

⁴⁷⁶ Johnson and Sherman in Higgins and Sorrentino, 1990; Markman, Gavanski, Sherman and McMullen; Roese, 1994; Roese and Olson in Roese and Olson, 1995c; and Roese and Olson, 1995c.

⁴⁷⁷ For reviews of mood congruency in memory and social judgement see Bower 1991; Forgas, 1995; and Forgas, 2000.



Upward counterfactuals have emerged to balance some emotional costs related to the fact that they missed some elements of their country of origin. Upward counterfactuals are mobilized cognitively in response to negative moods that appear when elements of the migrant process have been evaluated negatively when compared to similar ones that are located in the country of origin. In this regard, the findings of this study revealed that a significant number of downward counterfactuals were directly related to the acquisition or reformulation of inner beliefs, values and attitudes, also understood as strong benefits of the migratory project. On the contrary, upward counterfactuals were associated to the cost of immigrating, especially to the external possibilities that the country of origin could offer to them such as better working conditions and social relations.

So, it is not surprising that they declared to be in a constant and deep contact with the country of origin and, at the same time, feeling integrated in the hosting societies. In accordance to this, these contacts to “recharge the emotional batteries” in the country of origin are beneficial for subjective well-being and life satisfaction. In this regard, the less up-rooted the individual feels, the most life satisfaction is experienced by the individual as immigrant in the hosting country. Upward counterfactuals appear with less intensity when individuals can enjoy this dual emotional life. As the individual is fulfilled with emotional necessities from the country of origin (mainly regarding family and earlier friends), he/she experiences broadened life satisfaction as they dedicate to learn and enjoy the new elements the hosting society presents. The pressure for deciding to be an exclusive member of one society or another, which was an implicit requirement in the formerly way of immigration, seems to be diminished with the possibility of maintaining contact with the country of origin. We acknowledge that the participants of this study have showed this better subjective well-being given the way of experiencing the adaptation process in the hosting societies.

Generally they are related to the emotional links with family and old friends. In both cases, through their responses to the qualitative questions “If you have not made the decision of living here, how do you think your life had been? What do you think you would be doing now? Where would you be? Whom with? What would you be working with? Think about the alternatives of what you would have done, how would you be and feel?”, participants implicitly indicated that the role of in origin acquired beliefs, attitudes, and values influenced their decision about their immigrating process. This affirmation has been done by a group of immigrant individuals who were not recent newcomers. On the contrary, they did enjoy a long period to experience a consistent process as immigrants and to be able to think deeply about it. With this account, the embedded emotions constructed from both the cultural and the personal spheres have been acknowledged to have influenced their will to immigrate in order to improve SWB and life satisfaction. In this regard, these cognitive elements appeared to embed an emotional component that could only better improve their subjective well-being and life satisfaction by forcing the process of immigration to the hosting society.



The Role of the Patterns of Origin: Cultural Effects, Personal Ties and Individual Life Satisfaction in Immigrants

The case study of this research project assessed a particular relationship between, on the one hand, identity loaded with beliefs, attitudes, values and emotions and, on the other, subjective well-being and life satisfaction. This relationship has been introduced by making the analysis on an important general category of social analysis, that of the immigrant. The focus on subjective well-being rather than on more economic variables is the natural result of an attempt to consider the complexity of immigration phenomena and to take a more holistic approach. This research, thus, is driven by the acknowledgment of a relatively recent literature that highlights the fact that “money is not enough to make people happy” and that, in addition to economic factors, there are non-economic dimensions that play a crucial role in affecting life satisfaction and happiness. Moreover, given the relevance of the immigration phenomenon in the last decades around the globe, the issue of cultural influences of immigrants represents a fundamental issue for social cohesion in hosting societies.

The group of analysis has been that of Brazilian women who migrated to Catalonia. In theory, Brazil is presented as a very interesting field of study on ethnicity, socio-cultural psychology, immigration and subjective well-being. The processes of coexistence and of integration Brazilians face with their own process of immigration present a vast and attractive field for research. The most important feature of Brazilians is ‘*mestizaje*’. Brazil is one of the richest countries in the world regarding the mixing of biological races. However, more important than the origin of ethnic-race groups, it is the mixture of cultures which has produced, in turn, an opened and plural identity. On the other hand, during the last twenty years, Brazil has also become a country of emigrants. And these individuals who emigrate take intrinsically with them the tradition of a multicultural environment. Taking those notions into account, samples of Brazilian individuals have meant to be a very interesting option for empirical research. In addition, another well-known ‘*cliché*’ about Brazilians is the happy-type stereotype which is present consistently in the results of our research. The happy-type pattern is well acknowledged as one of the most important features of Brazilian personality.

The results have shown that the in origin acquired beliefs, attitudes, values and embedded emotions have had a significant influence on well-being and life satisfaction. Evidence has suggested that the relationship between them has been developed through identity. The identity of the individual is filled with knowledge schemes that he/she constructs in association to experience. These schemes are constituted by those cognitive concepts such as ideas, beliefs, values, emotions and so on. Thus, identity refers to the grouping of ideas, beliefs, attitudes, values that an individual is embedded with, and places him or her as a discrete, separate entity, but also in a position related to the social world. Identity is seen as a dynamic and continuous cognitive construction process that is developed from two different frameworks: from socio-cultural identity and from individual identity. Thus, subjective well-being and life satisfaction are products of a process of psychological construction of the individual in the social



contexts. Moreover, this perspective comes from the idea that emotions are social antecedents and products of social interaction and, as Jerome Bruner has pointed, people embody cultural systems in the form of emotions. Accordingly, life satisfaction and emotional well-being are also socially constructed and, as such, the necessity to take into account cultural systems as producers of human emotions becomes a compulsory path in the research program.

The members of the group of study have shown that they are influenced by the Brazilian cultural traits and by family ties. Brazilian cultural traits have emerged as ambivalent factors for life satisfaction, which explains largely how their migrant process is understood in terms of costs and benefits. Cultures force individuals to focus their attention to specific traits and ways of being and seeing the world and, accordingly, influence their emotional appeals and refusals. Cultural identity is clearly associated with subjective well-being when this is affected by social reputation or status and social sanctions as far as these terms include moral values and social beliefs. A good reputation is very valuable since it can mean better social status, but it can also subjugate the inner feelings than can bring to more life satisfaction of individuals. The individuals under scrutiny have stated that their emotional well-being and life satisfaction have increased in the hosting country in relation to experiencing more freedom and respect for their individual choices, ones that many times have been in opposition to the cultural values of the Brazilian society. The new cultural identity with which immigrants feel to be embedded appears in terms of a sense of *togetherness* within the society that precisely respects and accepts their inner individual feelings, their freedom and their choices. Moreover, the new social identity fits adequately to the emotional necessities of this group of immigrants, and then it becomes of great importance for the success of the process of integration. These statements that relate the decision to emigrate to the perception of moral coercion in the country of origin has become an outstanding connection in this specific group of research.

General research suggests that family exerts a bigger impact on identity formation than any other context. In this research, family ties have been acknowledged to be a fundamental element in the construction of individual identity or, in a wider perspective, personality. Individual identity construction refers to the internalization of a system of ideas, beliefs, attitudes and values that an individual develops to give coherence to his/her experience personal existence, especially regarding the first circle of personal contacts, namely family, close relatives, school first friends and classmates. However, this individual identity is filled with schemes that the person constructs in association with emotional experience. Emotional experience and personal ties come together in the construction of an individual identity, and they shape the personality and the future understanding of both personal and social relations. Findings seem to follow Erikson's perspective on psychosocial development as far as this affirms that several contexts affect development of identity including family, school, neighbourhood, community, and society, and it occurs in stages beginning in childhood and continuing into young adulthood. Furthermore, the models of family background and the demographics of community, neighbourhood, and school all influence individuals and this perspective emerge from the empirical evidence of this research. The research



suggests that family ties exerts a bigger impact on subjective well-being since Brazilian individuals with their process of immigration seem to account, on the one hand, that they still need to feel close to their relatives and, on the other, some of the emotional patterns produced within family ties produce in the individuals the necessity to create a new framework of fruitful relationships and of personal growth in order to fulfil their life satisfaction. In sum, those in origin acquired systems of beliefs seem to lead to a circular movement between beliefs and emotions which are fulfilled positively in terms of life satisfaction in the hosting country.

The experience of migration has been fruitful for subjective well-being as far as it creates open spaces for growth. Following the ideas of Erikson, exploration is crucial to the development of an achieved ego identity for every individual. Creating environments in which individuals are allowed to both explore and express their various identities is critical in helping them as fulfilled human beings, to construct an internal sense of identity and their own belief systems. It is through these new perspectives that individuals can develop a worldview that is more complex, integrated, and inclusive. This reinforces the circular dynamics that state that individuals who feel good about themselves are likely to be more open and receptive to interaction with others and to respect their cultures and identities.

The most valued aspects in favour of the hosting society concern the internal appreciation of the individual in order to acquire new values. The acquirement of new ways of interpreting reality and oneself constantly implies the continuous building of the individual identity and also the cultural identity in order to be integrated. The discovery of potentials and feelings before unknown to oneself and the openness to change and give coherence to one's life guide the individual towards the enforcement and on-going construction of her identity. To the initial surprise, follows comparison, admiration, ending up with acceptance and integration of new values and attitudes and re-learning of the original acquired ones. Identity is a continuum story-telling of oneself that brings coherence and sense to life. According to Erikson, identity is an evolving configuration resulting from pragmatic reality -found in the construction of upward counterfactuals in this study- and who we want to be- established in the downward counterfactuals generated by participants.

The results of this research follows the path that states that economic factors have a strong impact on SWB in low-income countries, but that, at higher levels of development, evolutionary cultural changes occur in which people place increasing emphasis on self-expression and free choice, leading them to increasingly emphasize strategies that maximize free choice and happiness.⁴⁷⁸ Accordingly, life satisfaction and subjective well-being appear to be related to individual growth rather than economic factor when a certain degree of economic self-sustainability is achieved.

⁴⁷⁸ See, for instance, Inglehart, 1997; and Inglehart and Welzel, 2005.



A general conclusion of this research project seems to follow the works of Ed Diener and his colleagues: “there are substantial individual differences in SWB, as well as mean level differences between cultures. We have begun to understand why such differences occur. For example, there are dispositional differences that predispose people to more or less positive affect, and genetics and early rearing seem to contribute to such differences. At the cultural level norms in nations for feeling positive emotions relate to the amount of pleasant emotions reported in those countries.”⁴⁷⁹

The information provided by this research brings us to formulate the question whether are the causes of high SWB universal or are they particular to the culture one lives in? The answer could follow, once again, the findings of Ed Diener who stated: “perhaps both. Some ubiquitous needs such as for temperature control, food, health, environmental control, and social relationships might be necessary for SWB. These needs may be so likely to drive people’s desires and goals that they almost inevitably have some impact on SWB. However, there also appear to be differences in goals and values between individuals, and between cultures, that lead to distinct predictors of SWB.”⁴⁸⁰

Another question needs to be placed which refers to the issue that if there is a good culture and, consequently, if there are some cultures bad, as questioned by Robert Edgerton.⁴⁸¹ Evidence shows that some cultures produce higher levels of SWB than do others. It seems unlikely that the low levels of SWB found in very poor nations and in the former Soviet bloc countries are merely measurement elements. At the same time, some differences in SWB between nations appear to be due to the fact that people differentially value SWB. Thus, people may trade some amount of positive emotions in order to obtain other things they value. In sum, as Edgerton argues, it is possible objectively to evaluate all existing societies, based on how well they serve human needs and therefore contribute to the longevity, health (both physical and mental) and happiness of their members.

Finally, the use of counterfactual thinking has proved to be a very useful tool, even for therapist practice: This permits the individual to conserve the balance of her identity, either by learning new attitudes or by accepting reality as they evaluate that results could have been worse. This continuous exercise has proved to keep the internal coherence of their identity and, thus, to maintain positive emotions and strengthen their subjective well-being and life satisfaction.

⁴⁷⁹ Diener, Oishi and Lucas, 2003: 419.

⁴⁸⁰ Diener, Oishi and Lucas, 2003: 419.

⁴⁸¹ See, Edgerton, 1992.



LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This research has an intrinsic difficulty when developed in the fields of cognition, psychology and language, on the one hand, and social sciences, on the other. The most important reason for this is the theoretical construction upon which this work develops and, especially, the conceptualization of the social and psychological terms such as happiness, well-being, personal satisfaction, attitude, value, identity, or mentality. Certainly, in order to develop the content of this work, it has been necessary to introduce theoretical concepts which are acknowledged to be difficult to theorize. Happiness, subjective well-being, culture, attitudes, values, life satisfaction have being some of the most important ones in this respect. The general approach to them has been developed from psychology, and discourse-cognitive theories.

The intention was to expose an interpretative, but also coherent approach to the problem of cultural effects and its relation to happiness and life satisfaction and, thus, to the issue of how an immigrant develop a successful integration process. It has not intended to make fulfilling categorizations and establish strict and unmoveable theoretical conclusions. In this regard, a tentative outcome of tendencies and patterns has been the main proposal. The treatment of data has been developed by means of questionnaire analysis with the support of counterfactual thinking analysis and self explanatory story telling. In this regard, proposing reasonable but not absolute tendencies and patterns by means of contrasting available data becomes the purpose of this study.

A final consideration is that, nonetheless, the fine analysis of counterfactuals categories presented relevant information, we are aware of the weak consistency between the parameters defined from theoretical concepts in terms of quantitative analysis. It is important to note that the non-fulfilment of all of our expectations to find clear correlation between the generation of counterfactuals, specifically the ones related to downward counterfactuals and emotional states, and life satisfaction may have come from several causes.

Firstly, the number of participants might have been too small and did not allow investigating deeper patterns of individual differences; secondly, the group was rather homogeneous, participants had more similarities than differences; thirdly, the type of survey questions could not evaluate parameters well. Fourthly, the type and content of counterfactuals could have been affected by specific questions included in the interview and questionnaires. And finally, the order of presentation of the task could have affected the type and content of counterfactuals.

We can speculate about these apparent failures by saying that this research could be improved in this regard. So, for instance, we could have increased the number of participants in order to find well-defined patterns, or we could have improved the reliability of the questionnaire by modifying the inner structure of the questions, or by increasing their quantity and their scope, as well as by contrasting results with a wider



scope of participants. Moreover, an extra task to test individual's natural tendencies to generate typologies of counterfactual thinking –upward and/or downward– would be necessary to obtain better reliable information.

PERSPECTIVES FOR POSSIBLE FURTHER RESEARCH

The study of subjective well-being and life satisfaction for both the individual who migrates and the hosting society which accepts him/her is increasingly becoming one of the major fields of study in social sciences and cognitive studies. This research project must be considered to be as an exploratory attempt to associate emotions embedded in identity construction, the phenomenon of immigration, and subjective well-being and life satisfaction. The construction of this triangular association has become a difficult task but counterfactual thinking has proved to be a promising methodology for this issue. At quantitative level, the results of this study supported at least the relation of emotional moods with the generation of upward counterfactuals. Furthermore, at qualitative level, downward counterfactuals emerge mostly concerning the reformulation or acquisition of some new beliefs, values and attitudes directly related to levels of life satisfaction and benefits of immigration. The findings derived from the appraisals detected in the qualitative analysis would need confirmation in terms of quantitative significance. It would be necessary to investigate samples of migrant Brazilians with different characteristics in order to produce a representative picture of the patterns of how life satisfaction and subjective well-being is constructed and developed, and permit to establish whether or not their success is based also on in origin acquired beliefs, attitudes, values and embedded emotions present in their current identity. Accordingly, generalisations should be taken cautiously.

The aim of this study has seemed to be reasonably valid as a way of confirming the systems of beliefs, attitudes, values, and embedded emotions as vital elements to immigrants' life satisfaction and SWB. With the results exposed above, there would be a fruitful possibility of widening and deepening the initial research in order to strengthen the conclusions of this project. The understanding of the cognitive side of migrant experience becomes an important issue. It would be necessary to investigate samples of migrant Brazilians with different characteristics in order to produce a representative picture of the patterns of life satisfaction and subjective well-being, and permit to establish whether or not the positive evaluation of these elements is also based on in origin acquired emotional backgrounds present in their identity traits. Future researchers would be encouraged to develop new findings based on a broader sample and on the study of several situations. These should include more variability in terms of participants' profile as well as countries of origin and hosting societies. So, future studies could be able to further identify in origin acquired traits that might favour the subjective well-being and life satisfaction of immigrants. Being able to identify clearly these patterns could be a useful tool for improving the immigration policies developed by governments and all members of a given society, ones that now focus on the



psychological aspects of the phenomenon of immigration with better theoretical and methodological instruments.

Certainly, the use of counterfactual thinking as a methodology has proved to be a new adequate path in research when analysing how beliefs, attitudes, values and embedded emotions within the general process of immigration. Nonetheless, the use of counterfactuals would need the combination of different theoretical disciplines in order to make this methodology become a fruitful method of research. In order to create meaningful interdisciplinary research frameworks and models, this consideration becomes essential. Otherwise, there is a risk that research approaches remain too unidirectional and shallow, and their benefits apparent and based on artificial hypothesis. A good starting point for the development of a common, shared multidisciplinary research framework could be the framework presented in this research.

Another possible study with a less elaborated task that would contain direct counterfactual question items -with yes/no answers- could be employed in individuals with lower education in order to take advantage of the counterfactual thinking analysis as reliable indicators of subjective well-being.

Another implication of the study concerns the meanings of identification. Different participants stated to be identified to different beliefs, values and attitudes of the hosting society and at different degrees of them. This means that these categories operate differently within individuals. Some of the beliefs, values and attitudes are acknowledged to be incorporated and some others do not, creating the perception that 'being identified increases life satisfaction in the hosting society.' This, in another sphere of social research, could be useful for further analysis since it could be an important aspect for the study of subjective well-being and life satisfaction in immigrants. Given the diversity of the immigrant experience, future research should work with a broader sample, one that would include other cultural ethnically diverse participants as well as a wider age and education ranges to further examine the effect of in origin acquired beliefs, attitudes, values and embedded emotions on literature on immigration and integration.

Assuming that the aim of this study is valid as a way of confirming the systems of beliefs, attitudes, values, and embedded emotions as vital to immigrants subjective well-being, future studies could be able to identify positive in origin acquired traits that might favour the rise of such psychological concepts. To be able to identify these patterns clearly could be a useful tool for improving the immigration policies developed by governments and all members of a given society. Moreover, if we take into account that the features considered to shape a group as such do not necessarily belong exclusively to this group, then they can be introduced and reinforced by social environment and culture in order to favour the development of more healthy individuals. Certain cultures focus their attention to specific traits and ways of being and seeing the world. By focusing their attention to them and practicing them along the



time, and by valuing them more than others, they end it up by developing a higher ability on them. Improving the knowledge of this capacity of acquisition and maintenance of positive traits and integration abilities, without any doubt, shall help to consolidate better human interrelations.



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INTERNET SOURCES

International Organization for Migration, <http://www.iom.int/>

Migration Information Organization, <http://www.migrationinformation.org/>

Observatorio Permanente de la Inmigración,

<http://extranjeros.empleo.gob.es/es/ObservatorioPermanenteInmigracion/>

World Values Survey, <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>





– APPENDIXES –

APPENDIX 1. QUESTIONNAIRE

Applied to participants in Portuguese Language, their mother tongue.

Este questionário é anônimo e servirá unicamente como material de análise para a minha tese de doutorado.

Comprometo-me a não revelar os dados e/ou utilizá-los para qualquer outra finalidade.

Agradeço muito a sua colaboração.

Questionário

Por favor, reflita sobre as seguintes questões em relação a sua vida antes e depois de ter imigrado / passado a viver fora do Brasil.

A. Status Geral

Por favor, escreva suas respostas

1. Por favor, indique o seu gênero	Mulher	Homem			
2. Por favor, indique se é	Afro Americano / Negro	Asiático	Branco	Hispano - Latino	Outro: _____
3. Qual é a sua idade?					
4. Qual é a sua formação/instrução?					
5. Em que mês e ano veio viver na Europa?	____ / ____				
6. Esteve vivendo por períodos curtos antes de se instalar definitivamente? Em caso positivo, mencione aproximadamente quantas vezes e quando.					

B. Status civil

Marque a sua resposta com um círculo

1. Qual é o seu estado civil atual?	Casado/a	Convivo como casado/a	Casado/a anteriormente (separado/a ou divorciado/a)	
2. O seu (sua) esposo(a) / companheiro(a) é brasileiro(a)? Em caso de resposta negativa, indique a nacionalidade do(a) seu (sua) esposo(a) / companheiro(a)			Sim	Não



C. Questões relativas a emigrações anteriores

Por favor, marque e escreva suas respostas

1. Você morou no exterior com/sem companheiro(a) antes de viver aqui?	Não	Sim
2. Se você respondeu SIM à pergunta #1, comente, o motivo específico da mudança (por trabalho, estudo,...) Como foi essa experiência no geral?	Responda abaixo	

Resposta:

D. Expectativas para a vida adulta (antes de emigrar)

Pessoal

Marque a sua resposta com um círculo

Totalmente em desacordo Em desacordo De acordo Totalmente de acordo

1. A tradição familiar era importante para mim.	1	2	3	4
2. Sempre quis viver perto dos meus pais.	1	2	3	4
3. O arraigamento ao entorno em que me criei e cresci era uma parte fundamental da minha vida.	1	2	3	4
4. Meus pais e irmãos eram um pilar de apoio importante para mim.	1	2	3	4
5. Ter um companheiro(a) sentimental/casar formava parte dos meus planos.	1	2	3	4
6. Ter filhos tinha um sentido vital para mim.	1	2	3	4
7. Minha vida social e os meus amigos eram um pilar importante na minha vida.	1	2	3	4
8. Nunca imaginei uma vida vivendo longe dos meus amigos.	1	2	3	4

E. Expectativas para a vida adulta (antes de emigrar) Profissional

Marque a sua resposta com um círculo

Totalmente em desacordo Em desacordo De acordo Totalmente de acordo

1. Eu tinha um projeto profissional claro antes de emigrar.	1	2	3	4
2. Pude me realizar profissionalmente no Brasil.	1	2	3	4
3. Eu era economicamente independente no Brasil.	1	2	3	4
4. Estava satisfeito(a) com as minhas conquistas. As minhas expectativas profissionais se cumpriram/iam por bom caminho.	1	2	3	4
5. A independência econômica é vital para mim e é um fator decisivo na hora de tomar decisões	1	2	3	4



F. Expectativas/ Predisposição para emigrar

Marque a sua resposta com um círculo

	Totalmente em desacordo	Em desacordo	De acordo	Totalmente de acordo
1. Eu tinha me imaginado vivendo um tempo fora do Brasil por trabalho ou estudo.	1	2	3	4
2. O conhecimento de outras culturas sempre me interessou.	1	2	3	4
3. Nunca tinha me imaginado vivendo definitivamente fora do Brasil.	1	2	3	4
4. Eu gostaria de mudar de lugar de residência com frequência.	1	2	3	4
5. Não tenho problemas para viver separado dos meus seres queridos.	1	2	3	4
6. Pensava que a vida do emigrante era difícil.	1	2	3	4
7. Havia pensado viver no exterior só se fosse pelo(a) meu(minha) companheiro(a).	1	2	3	4

G. Valoração global antes de emigrar

Numa escala de 1 a 5, como classificaria o seu bem estar global quando vivia no Brasil?

	Não muito feliz				Muito feliz
1. Eu me considerava uma pessoa	1	2	3	4	5
2. Comparada com meus amigos/conhecidos, eu me considerava uma pessoa	1	2	3	4	5



H. Perguntas sobre a Experiência Post-Emigração

Marque a sua resposta com um círculo

Totalmente em
desacordo

Em
desacordo

De acordo

Totalmente
de acordo

Família

1. É muito difícil para mim ter deixado a minha família no Brasil.	1	2	3	4
2. Sinto muita falta da convivência familiar.	1	2	3	4
3. Eu me sinto muito bem com a minha nova família política (se a tem aqui).	1	2	4	5
4. Às vezes sinto pena por ter deixado meus pais e a minha família.	1	2	3	4

Amigos

1. Sinto falta dos meus amigos do Brasil.	1	2	3	4
2. Tenho novos e bons amigos aqui.	1	2	3	4
3. Eu me sinto querido(a), apoiado(a) pelos meus amigos daqui.	1	2	3	4
4. Penso que é difícil fazer amigos aqui.	1	2	3	4

País – geral

1. Eu me sinto bem-vindo aqui.	1	2	3	4
2. Conheço gente interessante e agradável aqui.	1	2	3	4
3. Aprendo muitas coisas novas aqui.	1	2	3	4
4. Tenho oportunidades de crescer neste lugar.	1	2	3	4
5. Algumas vezes me arrependo de ter vindo viver aqui.	1	2	3	4
6. Estou muito contente com a minha vida atual.	1	2	3	4

Trabalho

1. Eu me sinto realizado(a) profissionalmente aqui.	1	2	3	4
2. As minhas expectativas profissionais se cumpriram aqui.	1	2	3	4
3. É bom fazer algo diferente do meu trabalho anterior.	1	2	3	4
4. Sinto falta do meu trabalho anterior.	1	2	3	4
5. Às vezes penso que não estou fazendo nada aqui.	1	2	3	4
6. Eu gostaria de trabalhar na minha área original/a que desenvolvia no Brasil.	1	2	3	4



I. Valoração global Post-Emigração

Numa escala de **1 a 5**, como classificaria o seu bem estar global aqui?

	Não muito feliz			Muito feliz	
1. Eu me considero uma pessoa	1	2	3	4	5
2. Comparada com meus amigos/conhecidos, eu me considero uma pessoa	1	2	3	4	5

	Em nada			Em grande parte	
3. Há pessoas que são geralmente muito felizes. Desfrutam a vida, independentemente da situação. Aproveitam todas as oportunidades. Em que medida estas características o/a descrevem?	1	2	3	4	5
4. Há pessoas que geralmente NÃO são muito felizes. Ainda que não sejam depressivas, não parecem ser felizes tanto quanto poderiam. Em que medida estas características o/a descrevem?	1	2	3	4	5

Por favor, responda com toda sinceridade possível:

Se você não tivesse tomado a decisão de viver aqui, como pensa que teria sido a sua vida? O que pensa que estaria fazendo agora? Onde estaria? Com quem? No que estaria trabalhando? Pense nas alternativas de que teria feito, de como estaria e se sentiria. Por favor, explique em um ou dois parágrafos.



APPENDIX 2. NOTES AND OBSERVATION DOCUMENT

Used by the observer during and immediately after each interview.

OBSERVATION DOCUMENT – INTERVIEW / QUESTIONNAIRE

Name:

Participant's code:

Date:

Initial motivation to immigrate:
Difficulties:
Cultural differences:
Idea / principal expression (participant):
First impression (observer):