



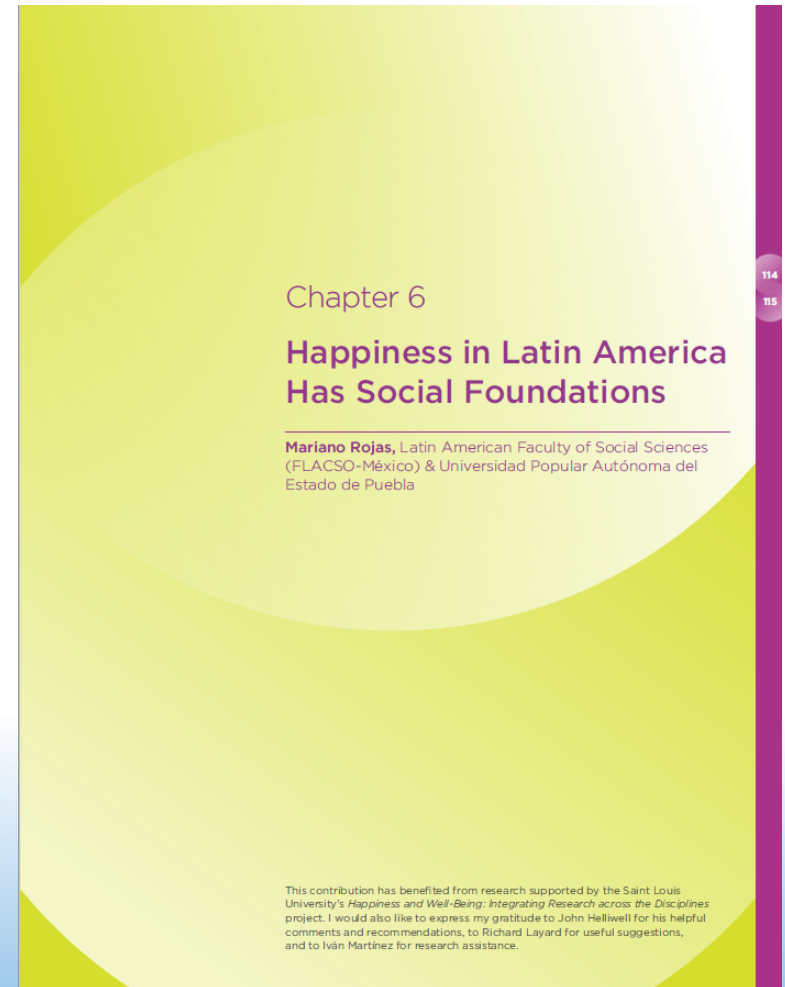
High Happiness in Latin America

The role of interpersonal relations

Mariano Rojas

High happiness in Latin America

- Why happiness is so high in Latin America?
 - Very high positive affect
 - Above expected life evaluation



A happy region

- Eight out of the top ten positive affect countries are from Latin America
- Gallup World Poll
 - Smile or laugh yesterday
 - Learn something
 - Treated with respect
 - Experienced enjoyment
 - Feel well-rested

Rank	Country	Positive affect
1	Paraguay	0.842
2	Panama	0.833
3	Costa Rica	0.829
4	Venezuela	0.824
5	El Salvador	0.818
6	Guatemala	0.812
7	Colombia	0.810
8	Ecuador	0.809
9	Canada	0.804
10	Philippines	0.800
	All countries in the world	0.697

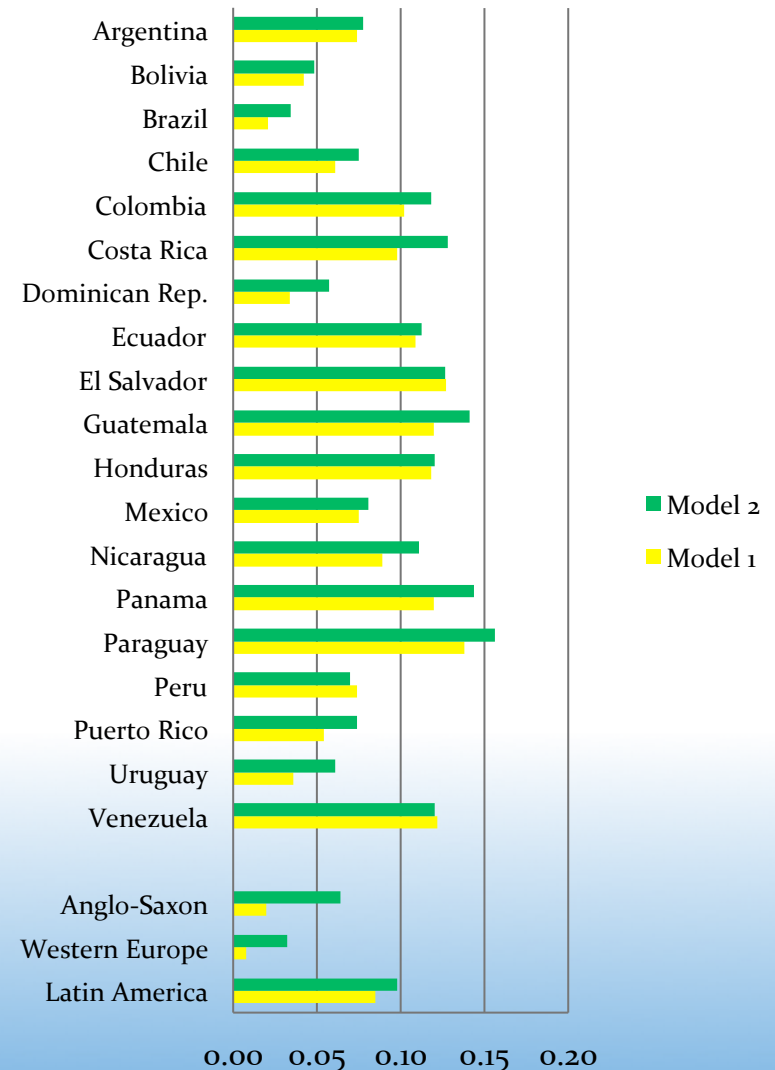
Note: Positive affect measured as simple average of the following five 'day-before' dichotomous variables: Smile or laugh yesterday, Learn something, Treated with respect, Experienced enjoyment, and Feel well-rested.. Positive affect is measured in a 0 to 1 scale.

Source: Gallup World Poll waves 2006 to 2016.

A happy region

- Positive affect:
Estimated errors
- Higher than predicted by income levels and other commonly-used explanatory variables
 - M1: Logarithm of household per capita income, count on the help, donated money, freedom in your life, corruption within businesses, and corruption in government.
 - M2: Logarithm of household per capita income

Estimated errors positive affect



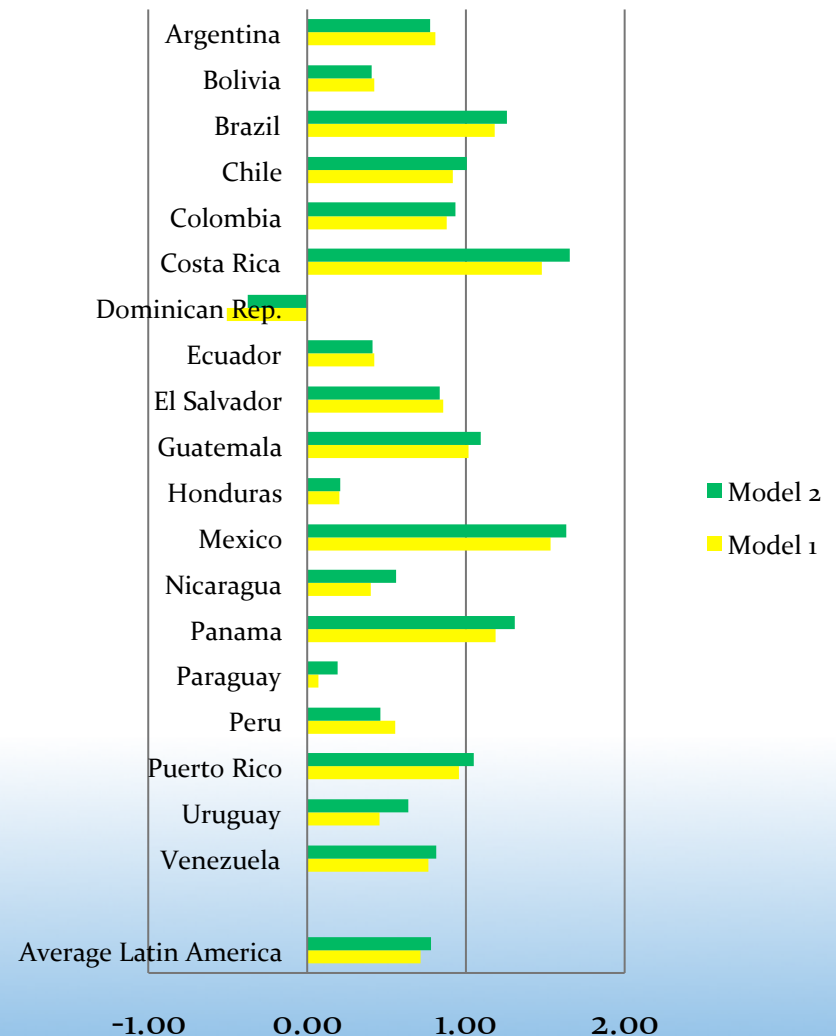
A happy region

- Life evaluation:
Estimated errors

- Higher than predicted by income levels and other commonly-used explanatory variables

- M1: Logarithm of household per capita income, count on the help, donated money, freedom in your life, corruption within businesses, and corruption in Government.
- M2: Logarithm of household per capita income

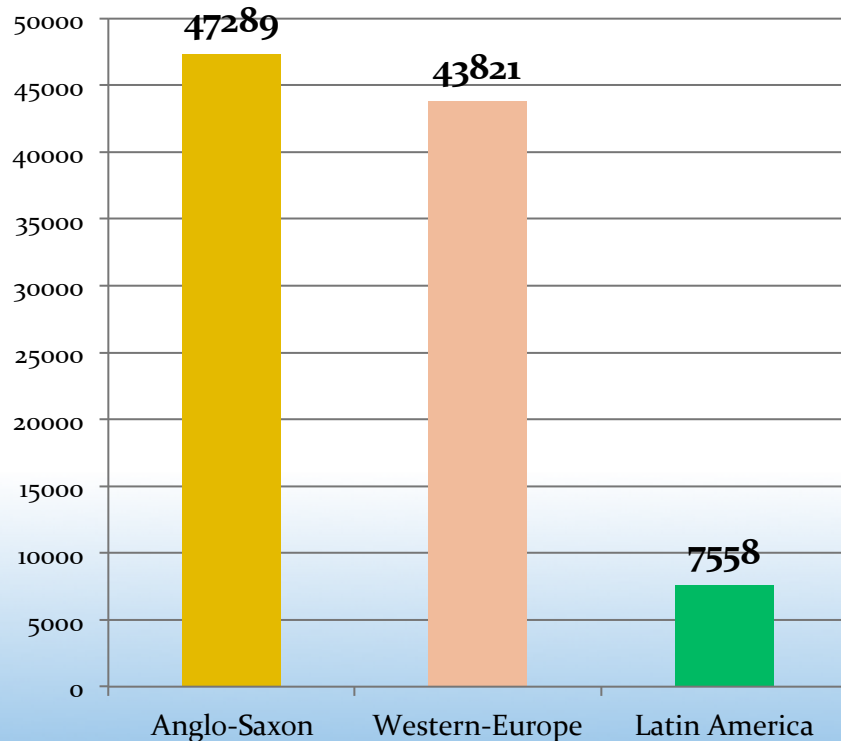
Estimated errors Best possible life



Apparent paradox

- Mid-level income, high crime and violence rates

Per capita income
simple country average, US\$



There is a brand-new ranking of the world's most violent cities from [Mexico's Citizens' Council for Public Security and Criminal Justice](#).

A full ~~one~~ **one-third** of global homicides occur in Latin America, even though the region has just 8% of the world's population, according to UN data.

Drug trafficking, gang wars, political instability, corruption, and poverty contribute to the region's elevated violence.



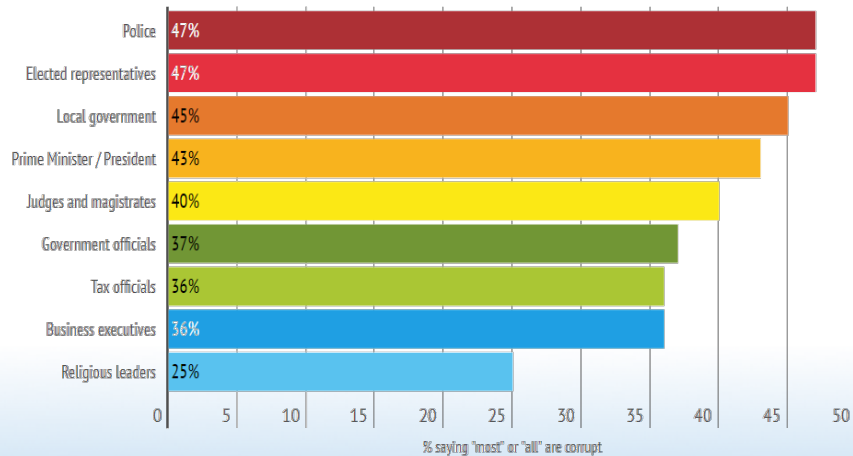
REUTERS/Howard Vernon

Apparent paradox

- Corruption, bribery rates

HOW CORRUPT ARE DIFFERENT INSTITUTIONS AND GROUPS IN SOCIETY?

- LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN REGIONAL RESULTS



Q: How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say? Base: all respondents, excluding missing responses. Chart shows percentage of respondents who answered that either "Most" or "All" of them are corrupt. "None," "Some" and "Don't know" responses are not shown for ease of comparison.



BRIBERY RATES ACROSS LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



Q: How often, if ever, did you have to pay a bribe, give a gift or provide a favour for: a teacher or school official; a health worker or clinic or hospital staff; a government official in order to get a document; a government official in order to receive [utilities] services; a police officer; or a judge or court official? Base: respondents who had contact with at least one service in the previous 12 months, excluding missing responses. The results from the Dominican Republic are based on the total population.

How can Latin Americans be so happy?

- Research shows that: Corruption, crime, and economic difficulties reduce happiness in Latin America
- **Main hypothesis**
 - LA is abundant in other factors that are highly relevant for happiness
 - *Where everybody knows your name*

Where everybody knows your name



- Sam, Diane, Norm, Cliff, Carla, Coach



*Sometimes you want to go
Where everybody knows your
name
And they're always glad you
came*

- Where is it 'where everybody knows you'?

Family, extended family, friends, . . .



- *“I changed your pampers”*
- *“I took care of you when you were a child”*
- *“We played together”*
- *“We were classmates during all school years”*
- *“Do you remember when . . . ?”*
- *“I was there when you . . .”*
- *“You can always count on me”*

The Relational Realm

- Latin America is abundant in a factor that is very important to happiness
 - Person-based interpersonal relations

Relations: interacting persons

- Person-based human relations

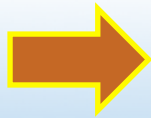
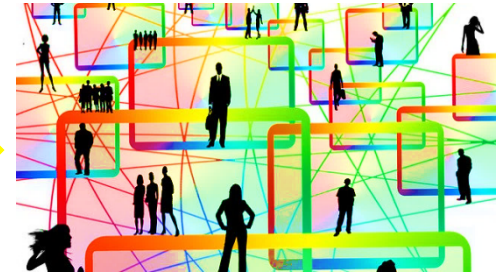
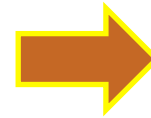
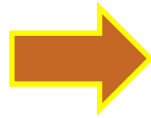
- Broader/integral perspective of person and her background
- Keep focus on the person
- Knowing and eager to know more about her
- Person in context and historical trajectory
- Knowing her beliefs, attitudes, needs and particular situation
- Recognizing the specificity of each relation; norms are malleable case by case (casuistic norms)

- Function-based human relations

- Partial/compartmentalized perspective of person
- Fragmentation
- No desire of knowing the person beyond what is needed to perform task
- Guided by norms of interaction: politeness
- Focus on the external task: the realm of objects
- Shadows in a relationship: out of focus persons
- Objectification, instrumentalization

Interpersonal relations

- Interacting with people: From person-based to function based
- Concrete persons vs shadows we are interacting with



The realm of objects and human relations

- **Riddle 1:** Affluence. Nice house, expensive cars, a lot of electronics, and even a US\$5000 sofa, . . . but very poor human relations



Objectification of life

- **Riddle 2:** Living creature, maybe 'human', has emotions. Instrumentalized and treated like object
- Object that is glamorized and almost venerated



The Relational Realm

- Culture, historical process
 - Focus
 - realm of relations vs. realm of objects
 - Aiming at
 - living within nature vs. mastering and transforming it
 - Affective and evaluative regimes
 - Expressing emotions
 - Quality of relations: Warm, close
 - Person-based human relations
 - Function based human relations



Social capital: Focus on the external realm

- **Social capital is missing** what is important to happiness
 - Within an economic-growth as progress paradigm
 - Focus on function-based interpersonal relations
 - Trust
 - Social networks
 - Weak and strong networks
- It is not social capital which is abundant in LA, it is person-based interpersonal relations



"Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to the properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense social capital is closely related to what some have called "civic virtue." The difference is that "social capital" calls attention to the fact that civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in a sense network of reciprocal social relations. A society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital' Putnam 2000: 19).

Fukuyama, *Trust* (1995)

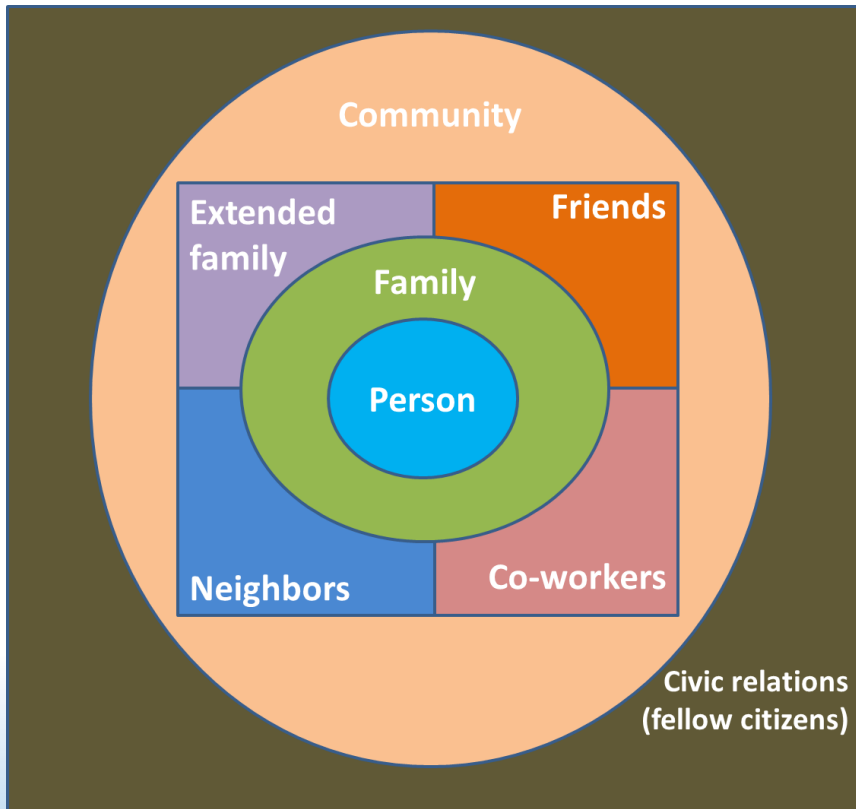
THE UNIVERSITY of YORK
Information

"if people who have to work together in an enterprise trust one another because they are all operating according to a common set of ethical norms, **doing business costs less**"

"by contrast ... legal apparatus serving as a substitute for trust, entails what economists call **'transaction costs'**"



The Relational Realm



- Spheres in the relational realm
 - Family
 - Extended family
 - Friends

 - Neighbors
 - Co-workers
 - Community

 - Civic relations: Fellow citizens, unknown people
- Quantity
 - Frequency of gatherings, Time spend in reunions
- Quality
 - Person-based interpersonal relations

Two main hypotheses

- Abundance of person-based interpersonal relations in Latin America
- Positive and significant impact on SWB
 - Cultural perspective
 - Historical processes
 - Abundance is a relative concept
 - Cross-cultural comparison

The Survey

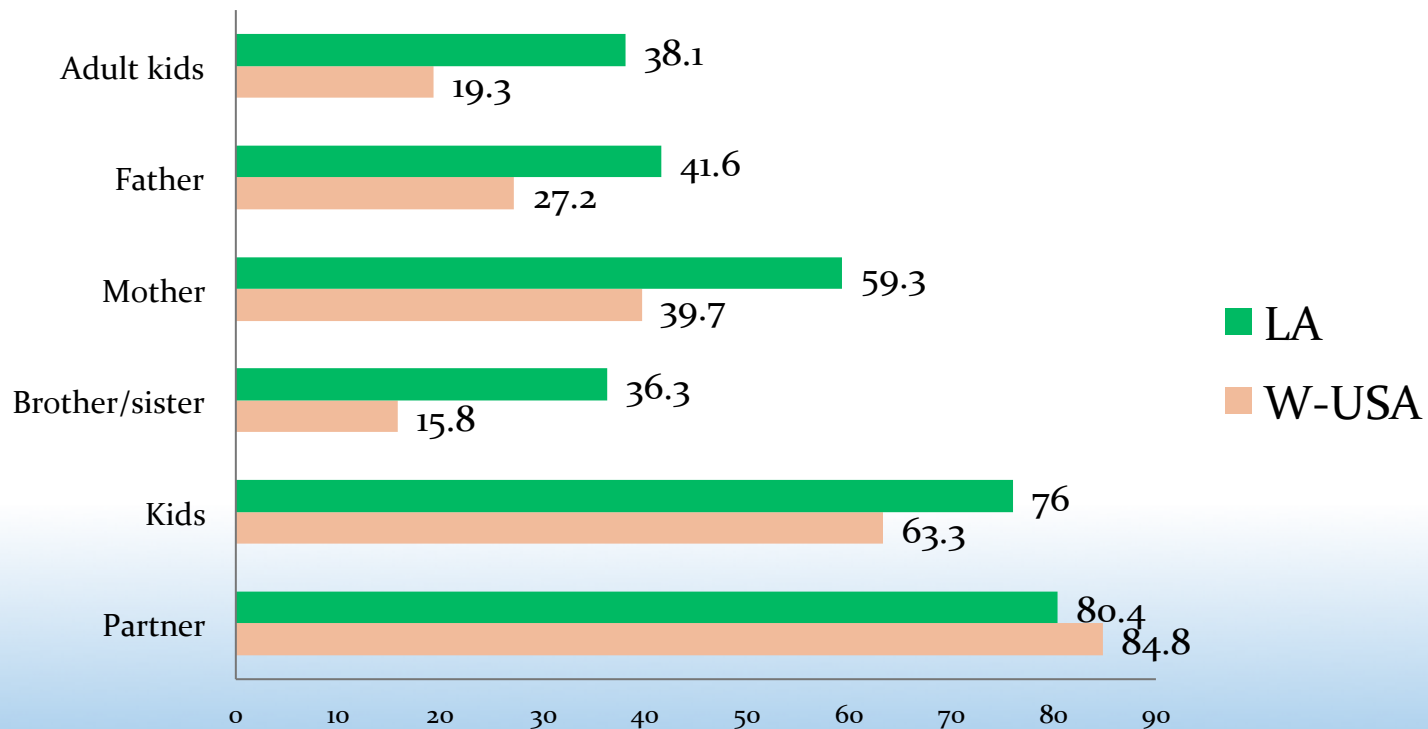
- Representative surveys
 - Mexico 992 obs
 - Costa Rica 945 obs
 - Colombia 920 obs
 - White/Caucasian USA 1091 obs
 - Hispanic USA 279 obs
- November, December, 2017 and January, February 2018

Analyses

- **Situation** regarding the relational realm
- **Impact on SWB**
 - Single regression with all observations
 - Significance of regression coefficient controlling by:
 - Age, age_sq, gender, education level, log household income, marital status, reported health
 - Significance must not be understood as direct and simplified causality but as indicating a larger social phenomenon. Culture and co-evolution.
 - From variable-based to person-based analyses

Family

Family: Close interaction with . . . Percentage at least several days a week



● Significant for SWB

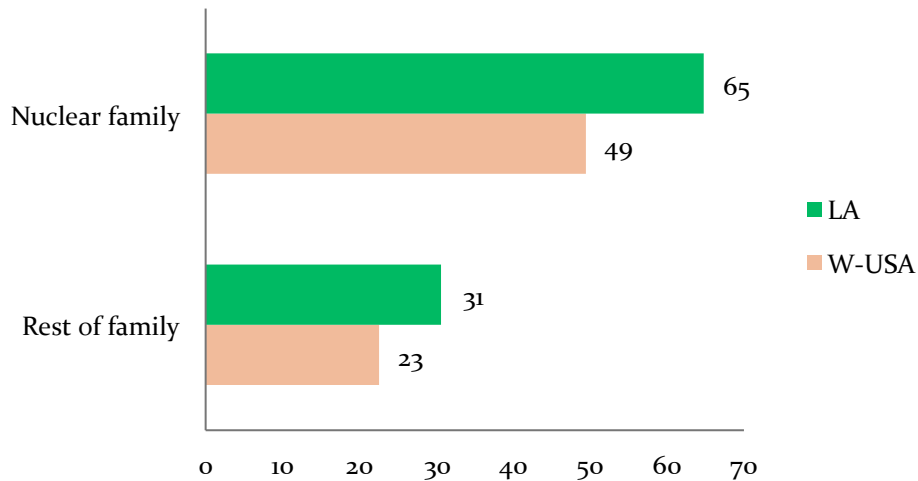
- LS
- BPL
- SWLS
- Happ
- +Aff
- -Aff

■ LA

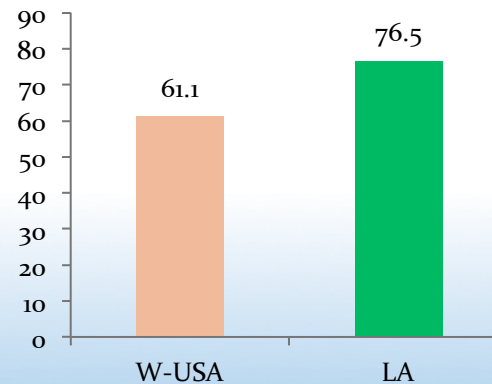
■ W-USA

Family

Showing and sharing positive emotions % very frequent or always



We spend a lot of time together % agree or strongly agree



- Significant for SWB

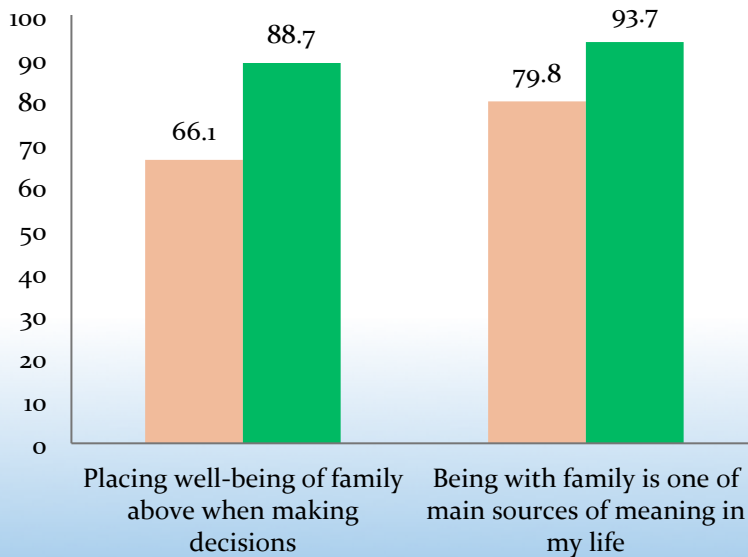
- LS
- BPL
- SWLS
- Happ
- +Aff
- -Aff

Family

- Significant for SWB: LS, BPL, SWLS, Happ, +Aff

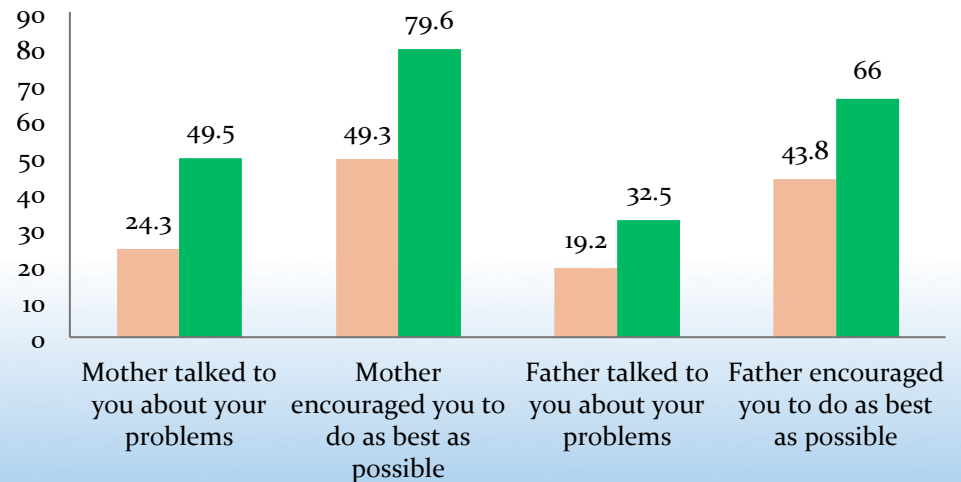
Family - centrality in life

Percentage who agree or strongly agree



Presence of parents when teenager

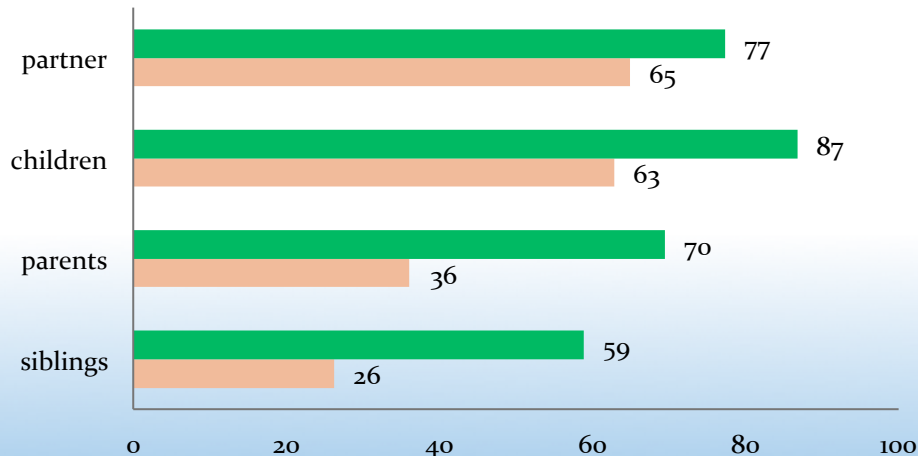
% always or very often



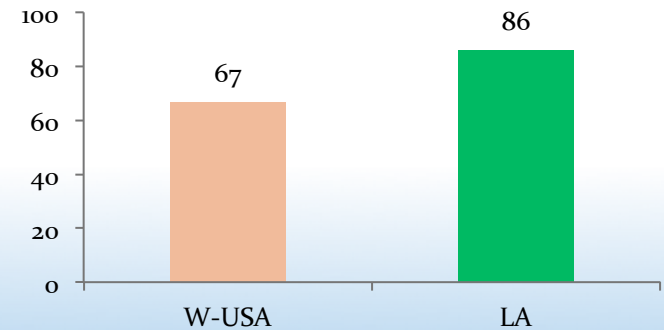
Family

- Significant for SWB: LS, BPL, SWLS, Happ, +Aff

Family - Manifestations of affection with ... % frequent and very frequent



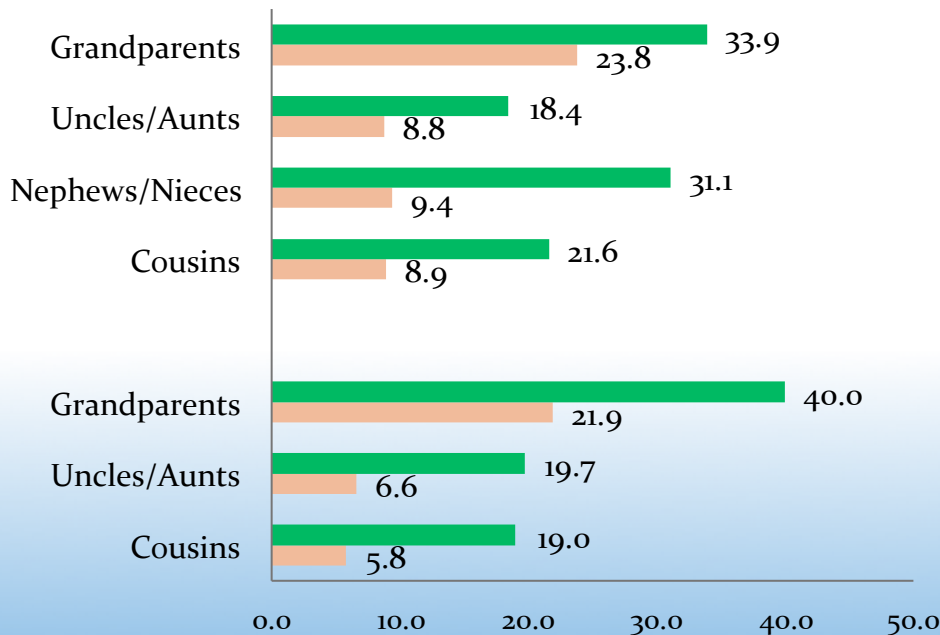
In my family we **help and support** each other a lot % who agree or strongly agree



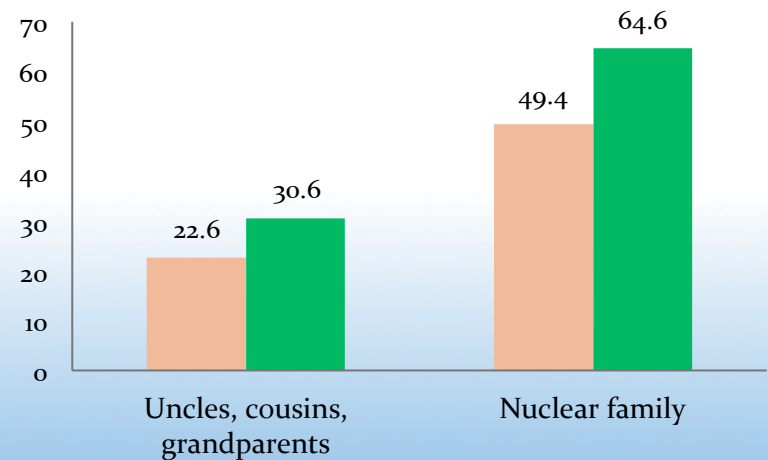
Extended family

- Significant for SWB: LS, BPL, SWLS, Happ, +Aff

**Gathering/talking about feelings,
goals, aspirations**
% at least once a week



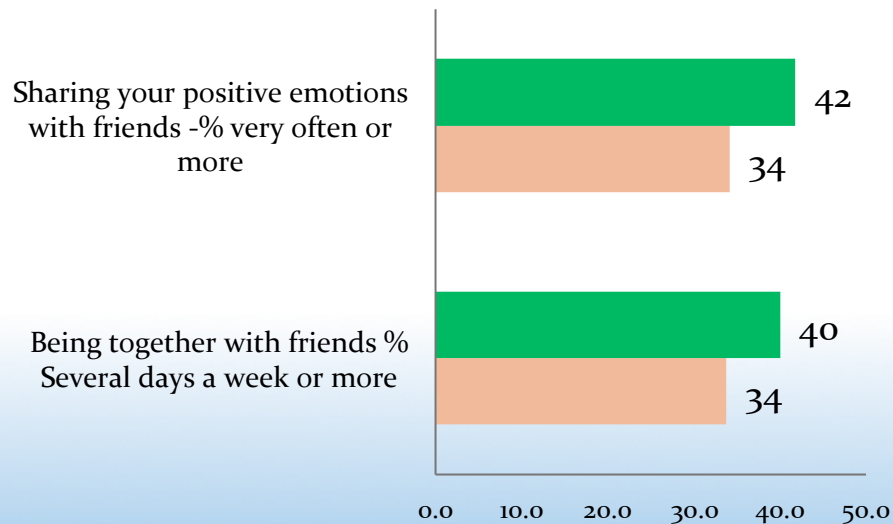
**Sharing positive emotions
with . . .**
% always or very often



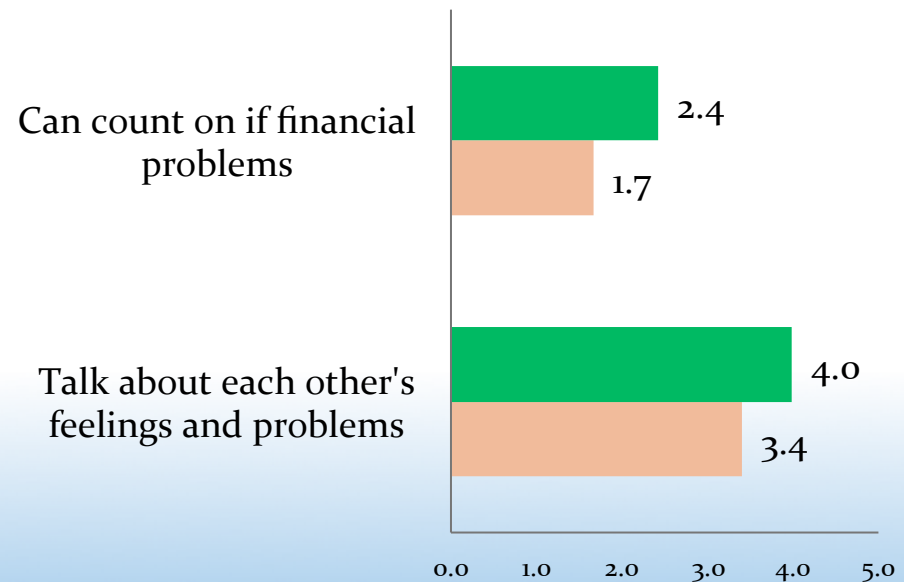
Friends

- Significant for SWB: LS, BPL, SWLS, Happ, +Aff, -Aff

Friends



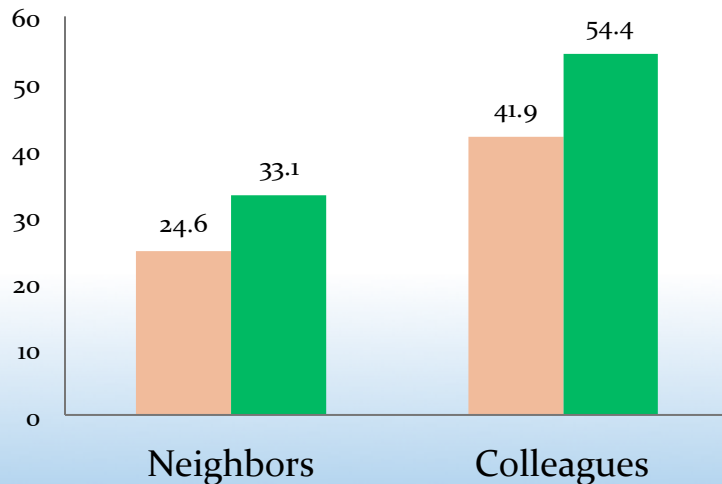
Number of friends



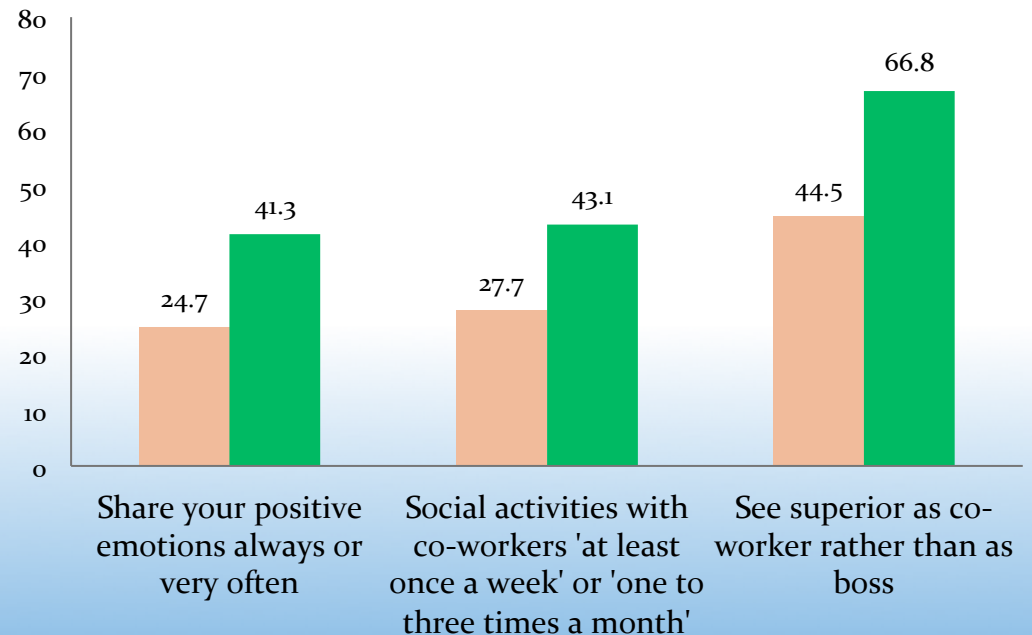
Co-workers and Neighbors

- Significant for SWB: LS, BPL, SWLS, Happ, +Aff, -Aff

Talking about feelings, goals, aspirations
% at least once a week



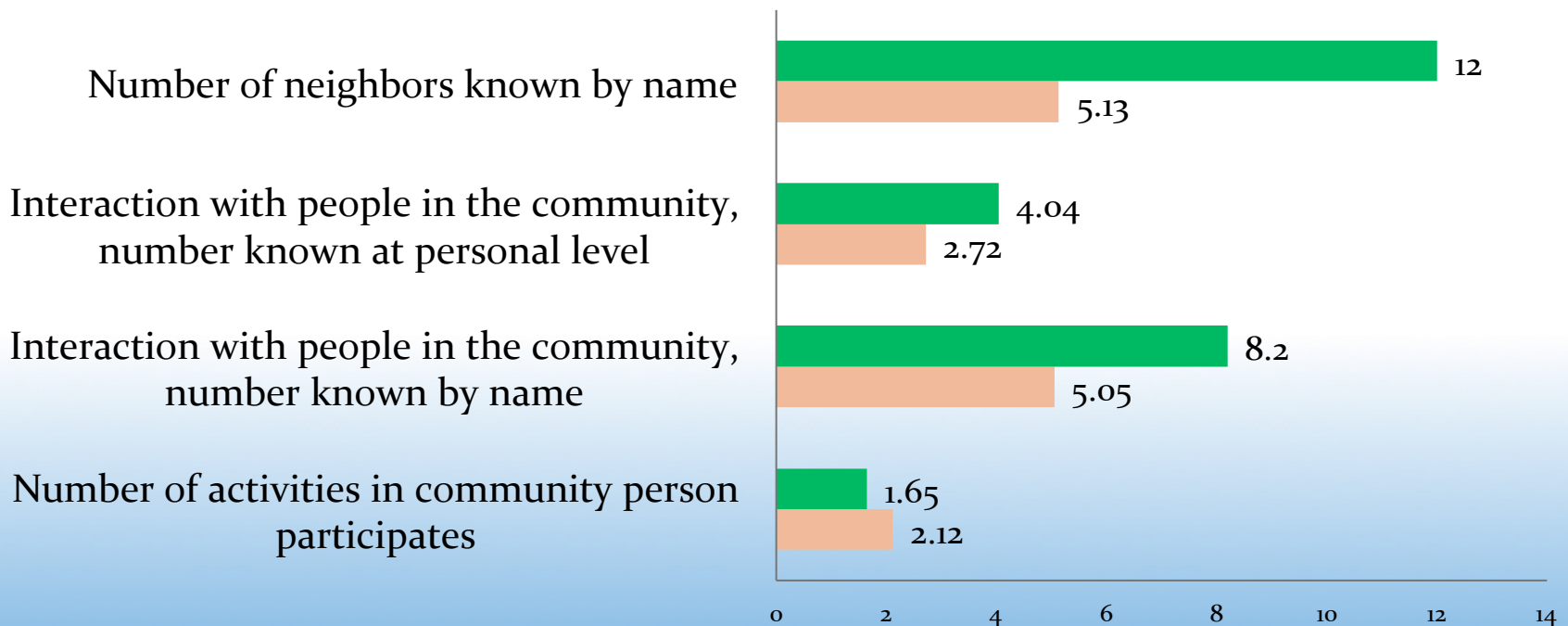
Co-workers percentages



Community

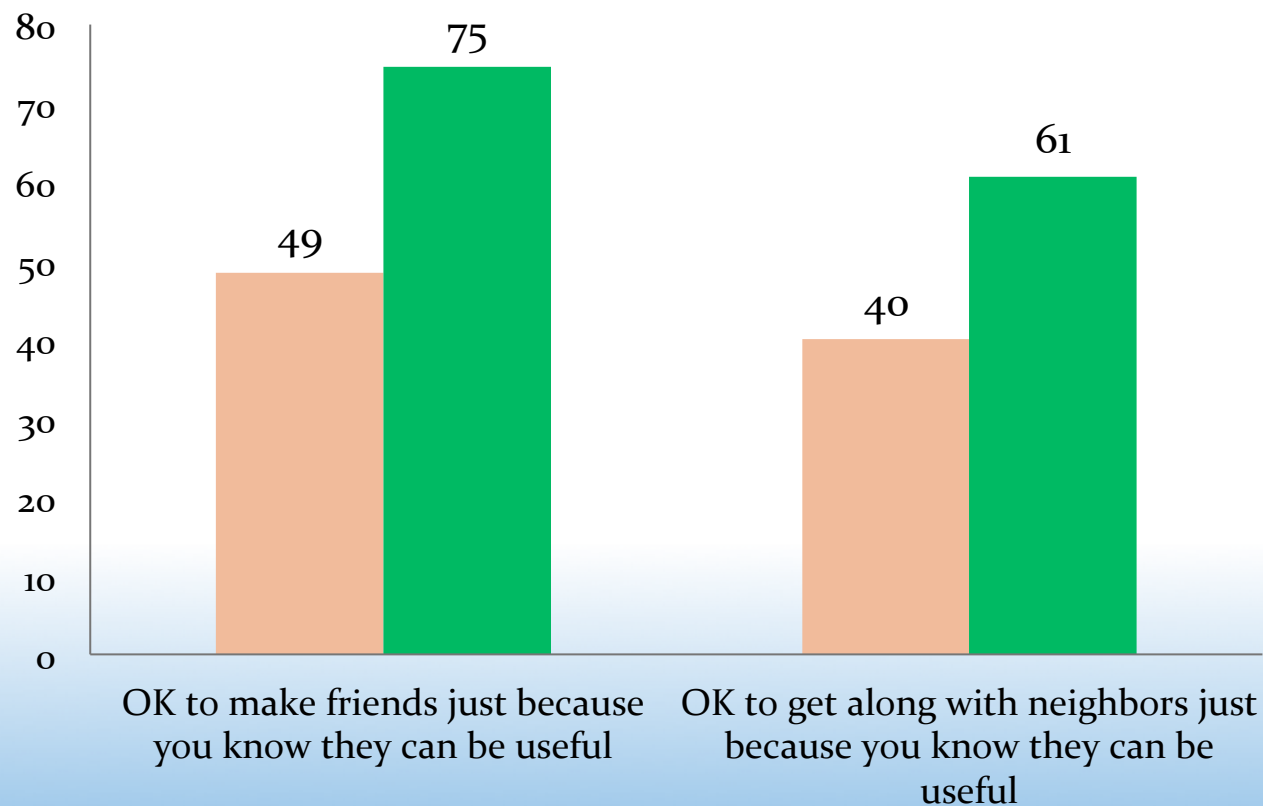
- Significant for SWB: LS, BPL, SWLS, Happ, +Aff, -Aff

Neighbors and community mean values



Instrumentalization of others

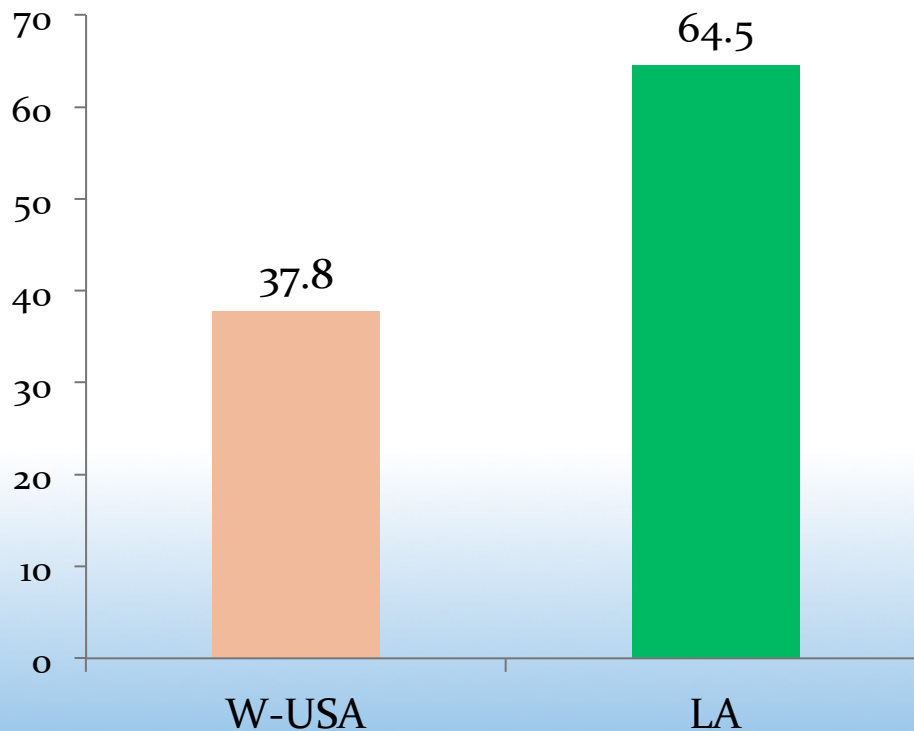
Instrumentalization of others
percentage who disagree or strongly disagree



- Significant
- Dominance, objectification

Warm and close interpersonal relations

"Interpersonal relations in this society are **warm and close**"
% agree or strongly agree



- Significant for SWB: LS, BPL, SWLS, Happ, +Aff, -Aff

High happiness in Latin America

- Latin America is mostly a **relational-oriented society**
 - **Abundance of person-based interpersonal relations**
 - Very important for happiness
 - Usually neglected by literature
 - Research has implications for
 - Policy discussions
 - Development discourse
 - Modernization discourse
 - Individualistic vs collectivistic view
 - Relevance of social-capital concept