

### 5.3 Testing Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 stated that the conceptualization of meaning of life and happiness will vary according to the years of formal education and the hardness of life circumstances. Both constructs will be understood in more abstract terms by students and in more concrete terms by the immigrants and Indians. I therefore expect to find a higher similarity between Peruvian students and both German sub-samples than between Peruvian students and the other three Peruvian sub-samples.

First, the question “What is the meaning in life” shall be evaluated for all sub-groups. Then, answers to the questions “What is happiness” and “Why is it important to be happy?” will be presented.

#### 5.3.1 Question 1: Meaning of life

A different methodological approach was taken to identify people’s perception of meaning. The categories used by Ebersole and colleagues (e.g. Ebersole & DePaola, 1987) were used to replicate their findings. In those cases where the description of their categories does not match my data exactly, modifications are described. According to Ebersole (1998), adults' answers can be listed in the following eight categories:

1. **Relationships** (interpersonal orientation including family, friends, and romantic relationships),
2. **Belief** (living according to one’s religious, spiritual, political, or social beliefs),
3. **Growth** (self-improvement, reaching goals, developing talents, and self-fulfillment),
4. **Service** (a helping and giving orientation towards other people),
5. **Health** (maintaining physical and/or mental health),
6. **Life work** (meaning derived from one’s occupation or job),
7. **Obtaining** (emphasis on materialism, does not include psychological rewards like obtaining respect or prestige), and
8. **Pleasure** (general expressions that meaning consists in pleasure, happiness, and contentment).

After examining data from all the sub-samples, it became obvious that these categories were not sufficient to list the answers satisfactorily. One completely new category, ‘**Existentialism**’, was therefore introduced, containing those statements which express an existentialistic point of view, claiming that life itself has no meaning except from just living it as well as possible.

Furthermore, the categories '*Mission*' and '*Transcendence*' were created as sub-categories of the existing category '*Belief*'. '*Mission*' contains those statements which refer to the respondent's conviction that we are in this life for a reason not chosen by ourselves, and there is a higher purpose which we have to find and fulfill. Example: "We all have our personal goals, but in addition we are here for a reason. Our existence has some meaning we might not be aware of yet". '*Transcendence*' contains those answers which reflect the respondent's wish to achieve something big, to leave traces, to be remembered after death by one's achievements. Example: "The meaning of life is that all this transcends you. Carry on constructing something. You can die but the things you have done for others will stay in this world".

Not only was the category system suggested by Ebersole (1998) insufficient for the present data, there was a conceptual overlap between the sub-category '*Political/Social belief*' and the category '*Service*'. Answers were listed following the criterion: 'Rate the statement as '*Service*' if the focus of the respondent is the other person or the group of other persons who are to be helped. The target person(s) must be explicitly mentioned – also by referring to them as 'others' (e.g. making the last years of life as pleasant as possible for residents in a day center, helping disabled children, supporting rape victims, but also general statements such as making other people happy). Rate the statement as '*Political/Social belief*' if the environment, the change of a political system or the creation of a better world in general is the focus of the respondent, and others will take benefit from the activity as a consequence (e.g. stopping global warming, achieving peace, protecting the environment, making this earth a better place). It must be said, however, that the inter-rater-agreement was the lowest for these two categories, which suggests that for future use they must either be re-defined more clearly, or the division should be removed by fusing the categories.

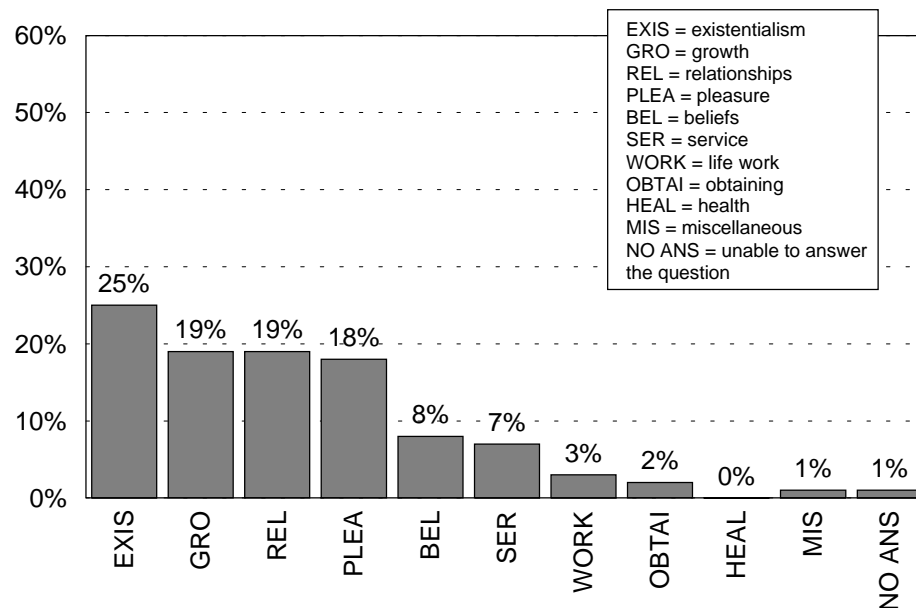
For students, if meaning was seen as achieving success at one's studies, such as passing an exam, the answer was listed under the category '*Life work*', since the university can be regarded as the student's equivalent of a work place. Since the night-students were all working in parallel to their evening studies, their answers referring to job and career were listed in '*Life work*', while those referring to studies and education were listed in '*Growth*', since their studies were regarded as personal projects and goals which the respondents wanted to achieve, and not as their main job and profession.

Again, a statement could be listed in two categories if it focused on two aspects. The answer 'I live to make my parents, my family, and myself happy' was listed in '*Relationships*, sub-category '*Family*' and in '*Pleasure*, characteristic '*happiness*'. Equally, the answer

‘enjoying life in harmony with the people you love the most’ was rated in ‘*Relationships*’ and ‘*Pleasure*’.

### 5.3.1.1 Meaning of life by German students

*Female German Students.* The 37 participants produced 119 answers (100 %). One subject was unable to answer the question (see Figure 5.31).



**Figure 5.31:** Meaning of life by German female students ( $N = 119$  answers by 37 participants)

Three participants believed in a cosmic meaning of life (listed under ‘*Belief*’), while 25 % had an existentialistic point of view, claiming that life itself had no meaning except from just living it as well as possible. The category ‘*Existentialism*’ offers an interesting insight into people’s understanding of meaning. The answers reveal that it is not a category full of resigned, frustrated and desperate people who feel a void in their life (so it should not be confounded with Frankl’s ‘*existential vacuum*’). The analysis of the interviews did not show any indication that ‘*existentialistic*’ respondents considered their lives as being lived in vain or were suffering from feelings of purposelessness and depression. They just did not believe that there must be anything else to this life than just living it. This result is in contrast to the wide-spread opinion that human beings cannot stand the feeling that their lives have no purpose. Do we really need the notion of sense to be fully functioning?

‘*Existentialism*’, in first position, is followed jointly by ‘*Growth*’, which has its clear focus on pursuing and reaching one’s personal goals (14 out of 22 answers), and ‘*Relationships*’, with all three sub-categories ‘*Family*’ ( $N = 9$ ), ‘*Friends*’ ( $N = 5$ ), and ‘*Partner/Romantic love*’ ( $N = 3$ ). The hedonistic category ‘*Pleasure*’ is third, followed by

‘Belief’, which contains twice as many answers in ‘Political/Social’ than in ‘Religious/Spiritual’. These five categories contain 89 % of all answers to German female students’ perception of their meaning in life.

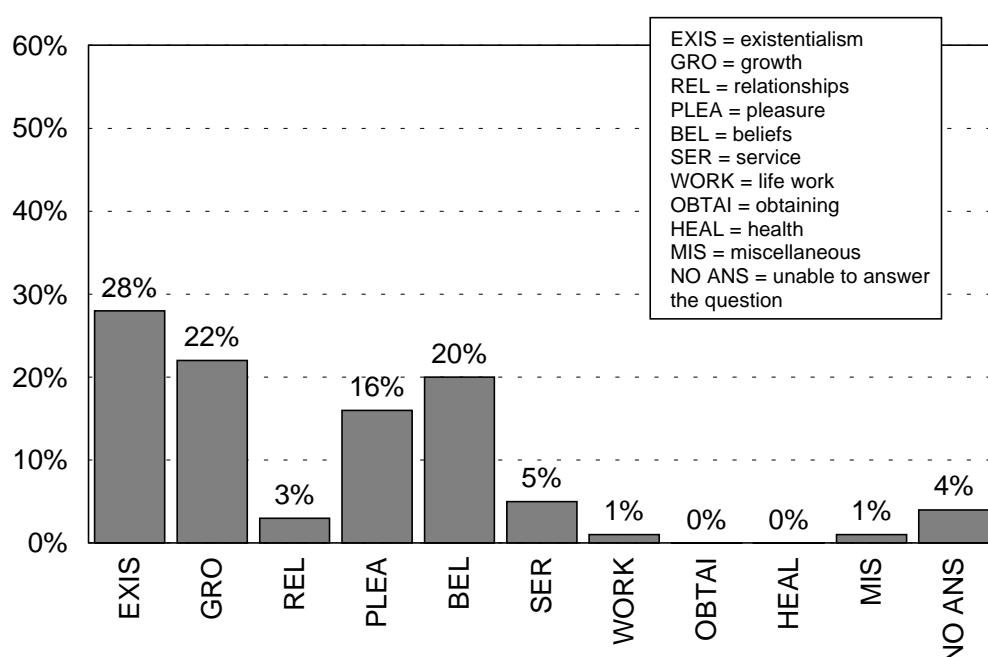
The following segment is an example of an answer to the question, ‘What is the meaning of life?’, which shows an existentialistic attitude:

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*“I am not religious, I don’t know how we came into being. I am neither a fan of the theory of evolution, nor of any religion which claims that we were created in a certain way. But I think that this is a very pragmatic matter, and that we are not watched by anyone and cannot distinguish ourselves in regard to anything in any way. I just think that we have a limited time here, which we really should not overestimate and not expect too much of, either. And the meaning, I think, is just to spend our time somehow without having the feeling that when we leave that we made more mess than was already there. This is like checking into a hotel. (...) I’m pretty certain that there is no higher meaning and that all this isn’t as important as we tend to look at it, and that it is just some banal development which put us here so we can spend some time here. I think there is nothing above us, and nothing after death. And all this is really not that important.”*

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*Male German Students.* The 25 participants produced 81 answers (100 %). Three subjects were unable to answer the question (see Figure 5.32).



**Figure 5.32:** Meaning of life by German male students ( $N = 81$  answers by 25 participants)

We find a remarkable parallel between female and male German students. With 28 % of all answers, ‘*Existentialism*’ also takes first position in the male sub-sample, followed by ‘*Growth*’ with 22 % and containing the same focus than the female sample: pursuing and reaching one’s personal goals. In third position we find ‘*Belief*’ (20 %), which is clearly dominated by ‘*Political/Social*’, followed by the category ‘*Pleasure*’, which holds 16 % of all answers. These four categories together account for 86 % of all answers in this sample. ‘*Relationships*’ with three percent is hardly mentioned, which is an obvious discrepancy to results in literature (Debats, 1999; DeVogler & Ebersole, 1983; Richter, 1993).

The following segment is an example of an answer to the question, ‘What is the meaning of life?’, which shows an existentialistic attitude:

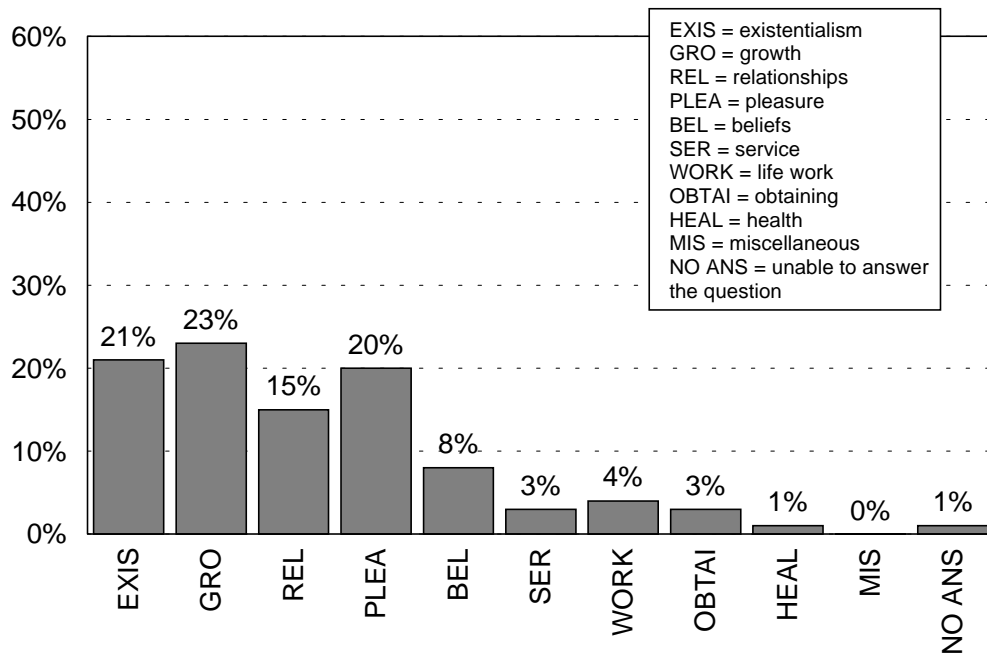
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*“This is very difficult, this really cannot be answered. Why are we on this earth? One could ask what would be if we were not on this earth. What would be if we did not have the intellectual capacities which distinguish us from animals, from other animals. I don’t know what a bear lives for. He will have bear children and a bear partner at some stage. I don’t know, he might be happy. I cannot tell, I am no biologist. But why does he live? And it is just the same with us. I mean I cannot say that the meaning in life is that I am working and that I am fine because this might just be an expression that I am alive and am doing something sensible with my life. And this is not the meaning in life but a consequence of being alive. But why we came on this earth and why the human race exists, no-one can tell in the end. And if you ask for a meaning in terms of what should one do with his life, well then, what I said earlier. Try to be happy and do good things for others and for yourself. Have a function in society. When you die you should be able to say: okay, I didn’t live completely in vain, I didn’t just sit around in a corner or something like that”.*

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### 5.3.1.2 Meaning of life by German non-students

*German female non-students.* The 25 participants produced 95 answers (100 %). One subject was unable to answer the question (see Figure 5.33).



**Figure 5.33:** Meaning of life by German female non-students ( $N = 95$  answers by 25 participants)

In this sub-sample, ‘Growth’ takes first position with the leading characteristic ‘pursuing/reaching personal goals’ (a third of all answers in this category). ‘Existentialism’ holds second position with 21 % of all answers, followed by ‘Pleasure’, whose focus is ‘being happy’ (8 out of 19 answers in this category). ‘Relationships’ is in fourth position, containing all three sub-categories. ‘Belief’, which is dominated by ‘Political/Social’ (6 out of 8 answers) follows in fifth place. These five categories together account for 87 % of all answers given by German female non-students.

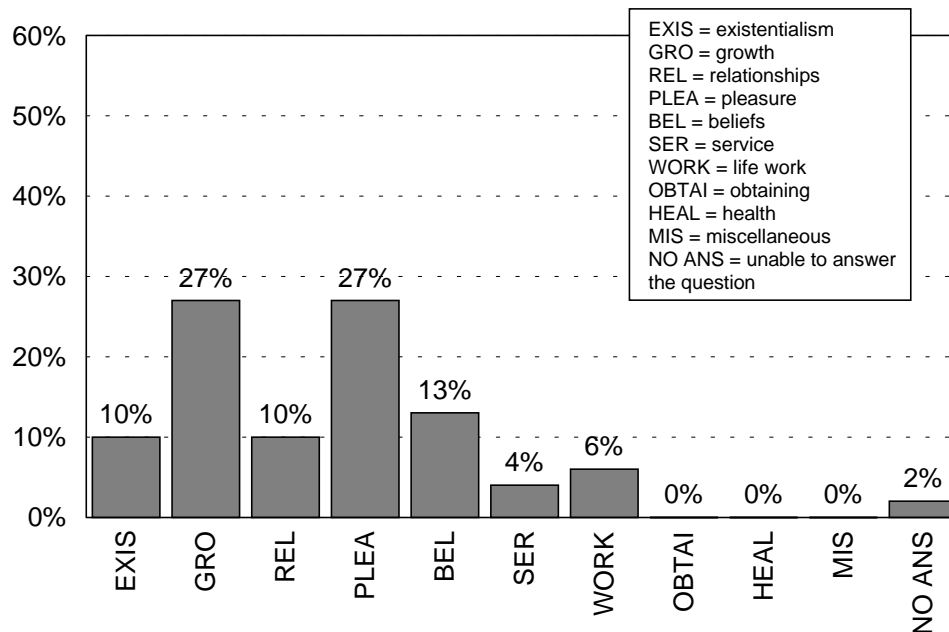
The following segment is an example of an answer to the question, ‘What is the meaning of life?’:

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*“What are we living for? Well, I don’t think humans are that different from animals. We live to secure the survival of the species. One does not live to work but works to live. Maybe also to move some things, make some things happen, for example watching over the disposal of atomic garbage. But being predestined for something big...well, I have this strange feeling, I do not believe in God, but I do feel sometimes that there is something else above me, yes I believe that. I have had some accidents which were too close for comfort, and I have been extremely lucky. Then I started thinking, well, there must be someone else who likes me, who knows what else I could be good for. But I am not constantly ruminating what I am here for, I just wait and see what happens. We*

*will see. There is something like a destiny from which no-one can escape. When it happens, it happens. But a meaning? I'm just enjoying it".*

*German male non-students.* The 17 participants produced a total of 48 answers (100 %). One subject was unable to answer the question (see Figure 5.34).



**Figure 5.34:** Meaning of life by German male non-students ( $N = 48$  answers by 17 participants)

More than half of the answers of German male non-students can be placed into the two categories ‘*Growth*’, this time with the focus of having all kinds of different experiences, and ‘*Pleasure*’, with the focus of ‘being happy’. ‘*Belief*’, in second place, with its focus on ‘*Political/Social*’, precedes ‘*Relationships*’ and ‘*Existentialism*’, which share third position with 10 % each. Together, these categories account for 87 % of all answers given by this subgroup.

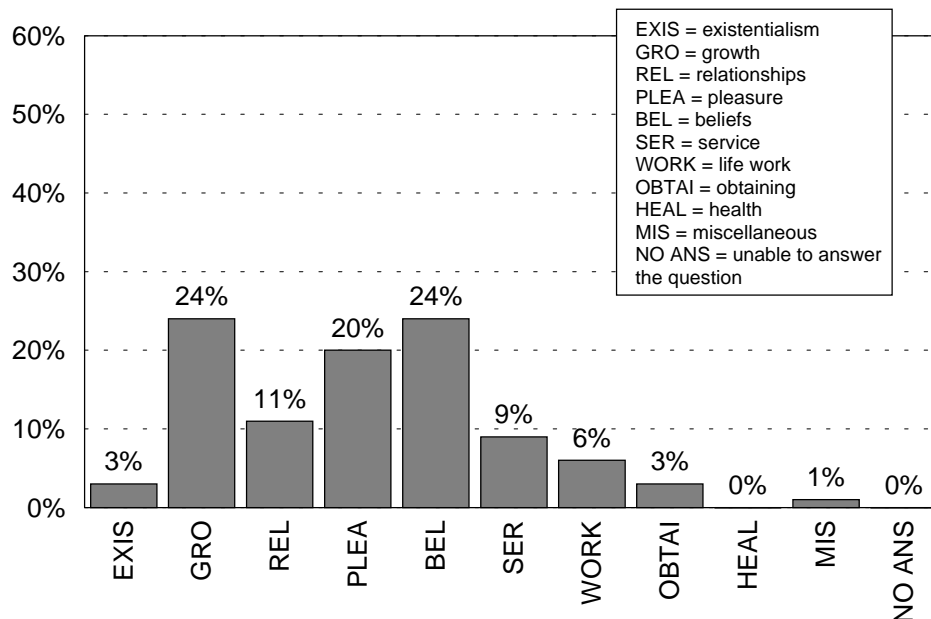
The following segment is an example of an answer to the question, ‘What is the meaning of life?’:

*“For me, the meaning of life consists in knowing a lot, having fun, and having a lot of experiences, conscious experiences. I don’t think one has to create anything big. Gathering wealth is not happiness – yes, happiness comes up again. Meaning of life is connected with happiness. Having fun with what you are doing, living life. (...) I think everybody should be able to recognize what gives them the strongest feeling of happiness and then try to achieve this. I don’t*

think there is one communal meaning for everyone. Everybody is reaching for different things”.

### 5.3.1.3 Meaning of life by Peruvian students

*Female Peruvian Students.* The 25 participants produced 80 answers (100 %). All subjects were able to answer the question (see Figure 5.35).



**Figure 5.35:** Meaning of life by Peruvian female students ( $N = 80$  answers by 25 participants)

Peruvian female students also see the pursuit of personal goals as crucial for meaning in life. With 24 % of all answers, the category ‘Growth’ shares first position with ‘Belief’, which contains the sub-categories ‘Mission’ ( $N = 7$ ), ‘Religious/Spiritual’ ( $N = 5$ ), ‘Political/Social’ ( $N = 4$ ), and ‘Transcendence’ ( $N = 3$ ). ‘Pleasure’ (20 %) in second position is led by the characteristic ‘happiness’, which accounts for more than half of the answers in this category. ‘Relationships’ (11 %) takes third position, containing the sub-categories ‘Family’ and ‘Partner/Romantic love’. ‘Friends’ are not mentioned by Peruvian female students. These four categories account for 79 % of all answers in this sample. The category ‘Existentialism’, which was so prevalent in the German samples, can be neglected for Peruvian female students, obtaining only three percent of all answers.

The following segment is an example of an answer to the question, ‘What is the meaning of life?’

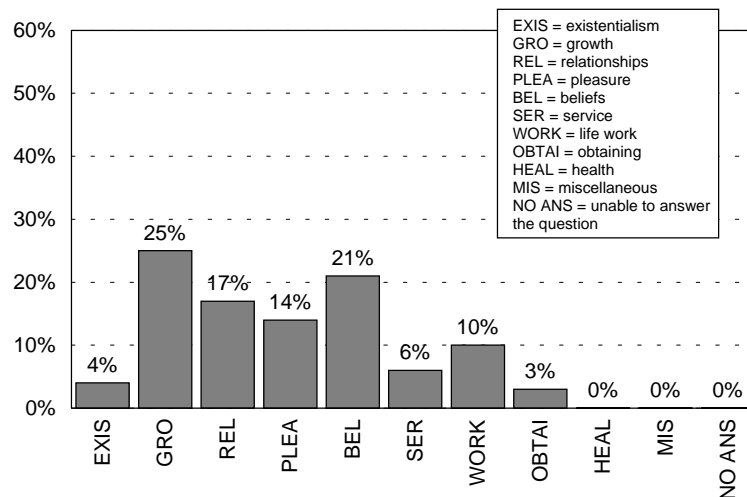


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*“I believe in reincarnation. People try to do things better and not to repeat the mistakes of the former life. Getting better every time. Helping others. Doing something for the environment, for the country. Finding happiness and winning the big battle against our own monsters, our negative sides and imperfections. I have this idea that I am part of a big project to do things better. We might not necessarily be aware of this collective project but we try to overcome our weaknesses over the course of the centuries. We will never be perfect, but I believe we are part of something”.*

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*Male Peruvian Students.* The 23 participants produced a total of 71 answers (100 %). All subjects were able to answer the question (see Figure 5.36).



**Figure 5.36:** Meaning of life by Peruvian male students ( $N = 71$  answers by 23 participants)  
Male Peruvian students obtain very similar results to female Peruvians students.

As Figure 5.36 shows, ‘Growth’, with its focus on pursuing personal goals, is in first position, followed by ‘Belief’, which contains the sub-categories ‘Political/Social’ ( $N = 10$ ), ‘Religious/Spiritual’ ( $N = 3$ ), ‘Mission’ ( $N = 1$ ), and ‘Transcendence’ ( $N = 1$ ). ‘Relationships’ in third position is mainly composed of the sub-category ‘Family’ (containing two thirds of the answers within this category), but ‘Partner/Romantic love’ and ‘Friends’ are also mentioned. ‘Pleasure’ in fourth position again has its focus on being/becoming happy. These four categories account for 77 % of all answers given by male Peruvian students.

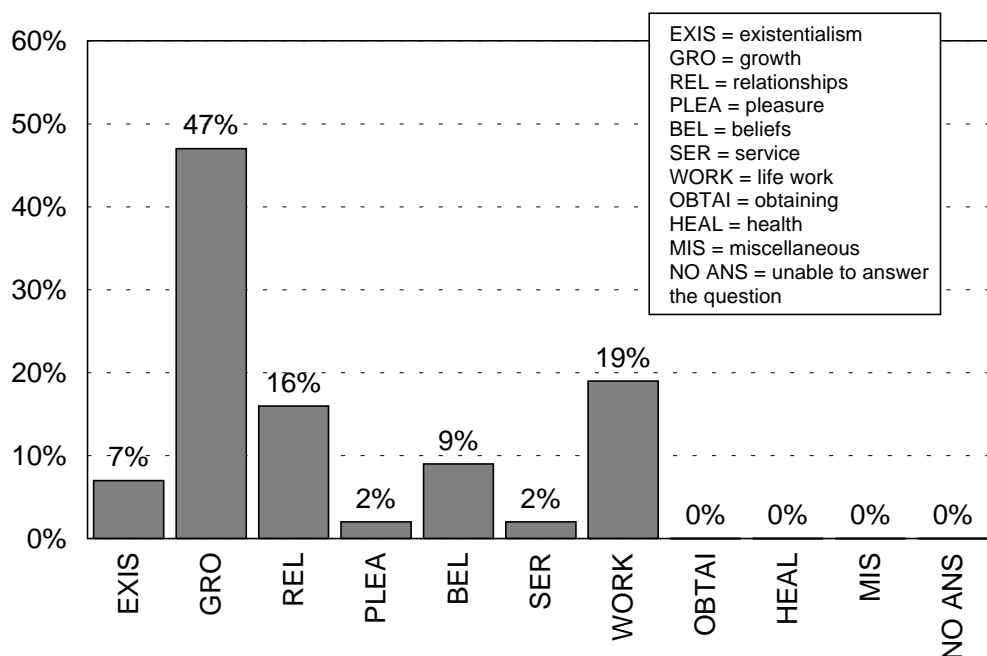
The following segment is an example of an answer to the question, ‘What is the meaning of life?’

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*“The meaning of life? That depends on people’s religion and beliefs. If you are a materialist, you live, are happy, die, and become dust. But if you have a religion, you are at least lucky enough to believe that there is something better in the afterlife (...) I don’t know what is the meaning of life itself. I think one was born to learn something, I mean people are born and want to reach a certain goal and when they reach it, they are happy because their whole life has been like a ladder and they climbed step by step to achieve what they wanted to achieve, and when they do they feel happy (...) I think we are all so different although we are living in the same country, everyone defines their own goals. [What are you living for?] I’m really not sure. I wish to finish my studies and work, try to be happy, all the rest will come on its own. When people have achieved some stability, they can afford the luxury of thinking of other things”.*

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Peruvian female night-students. The 20 participants produced a total of 58 answers (100 %). All subjects were able to answer the question.



**Figure 5.37:** Meaning of life by Peruvian female night-students ( $N = 58$  answers by 20 participants)

As Figure 5.37 depicts, 47 % of the interviewees mentioned ‘Growth’, indicating a greater consensus among this group compared to other sub-samples. The focus of ‘Growth’ in first position is education as a personal goal (40 % of all answers within this category). In

second place, we find ‘*Life work*’, which is one of the major categories for the first time. Third position is taken by ‘*Relationships*’, containing the sub-category ‘*Family*’, but neither ‘*Partner/Romantic love*’ nor ‘*Friends*’. These categories account for 82 % of all answers in this sub-sample. Interestingly, the category ‘*Pleasure*’ is mentioned last in this sub-sample, containing only one answer. ‘*Existentialism*’ contains four answers.

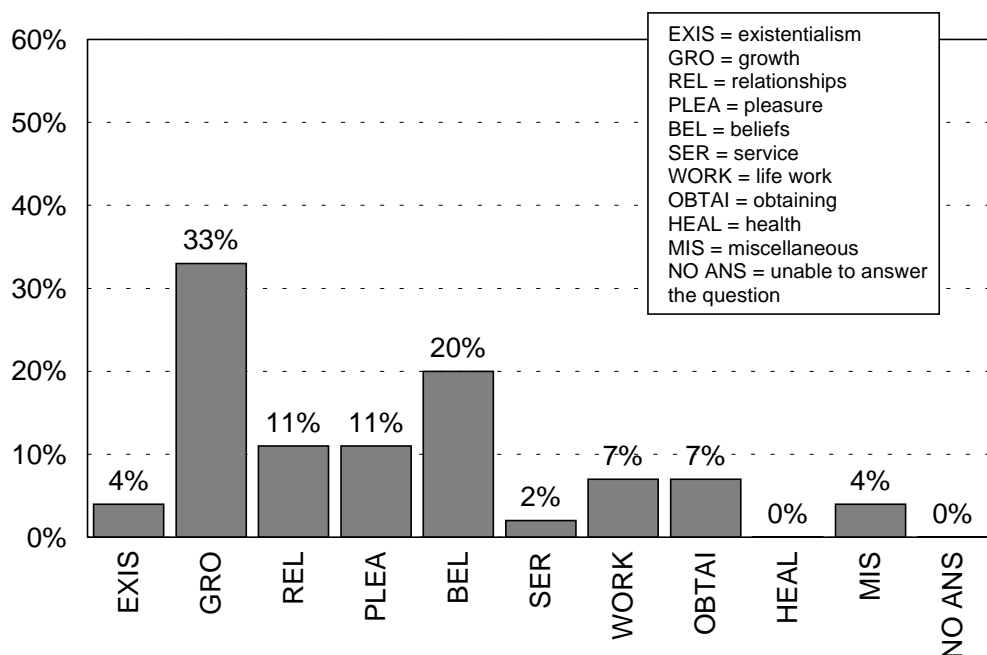
The following segment is an example of an answer to the question, ‘What is the meaning of life?’

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*“I think the meaning is to do something in life. Whatever, to study a lot, to achieve something, to get what one has set as a goal. I want to finish my studies and become a nurse one day”.*

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*Peruvian male night-students.* The 15 participants produced 54 answers (100 %). All subjects were able to answer the question (see Figure 5.38).



**Figure 5.38:** Meaning of life by Peruvian male night-students ( $N = 54$  answers by 15 participants)

Similarly to the female night-students, ‘*Growth*’ is the most frequently mentioned category. The focus of the category ‘*Growth*’ is getting to be someone in life, followed by education. In second position, we find ‘*Belief*’, led by ‘*Religious/Spiritual*’ and followed by ‘*Political/Social*’. ‘*Relationships*’ occupies third position, containing neither

‘Partner/Romantic love’ nor ‘Friends’, while ‘Pleasure’ takes fourth position. These four categories account for 75 % of all answers given by this sub-sample. ‘Life work’, which was very important for the female sample (19 %), is negligible for Peruvian male night-students (7 %).

The following segment is an example of an answer to the question, ‘What is the meaning of life?’

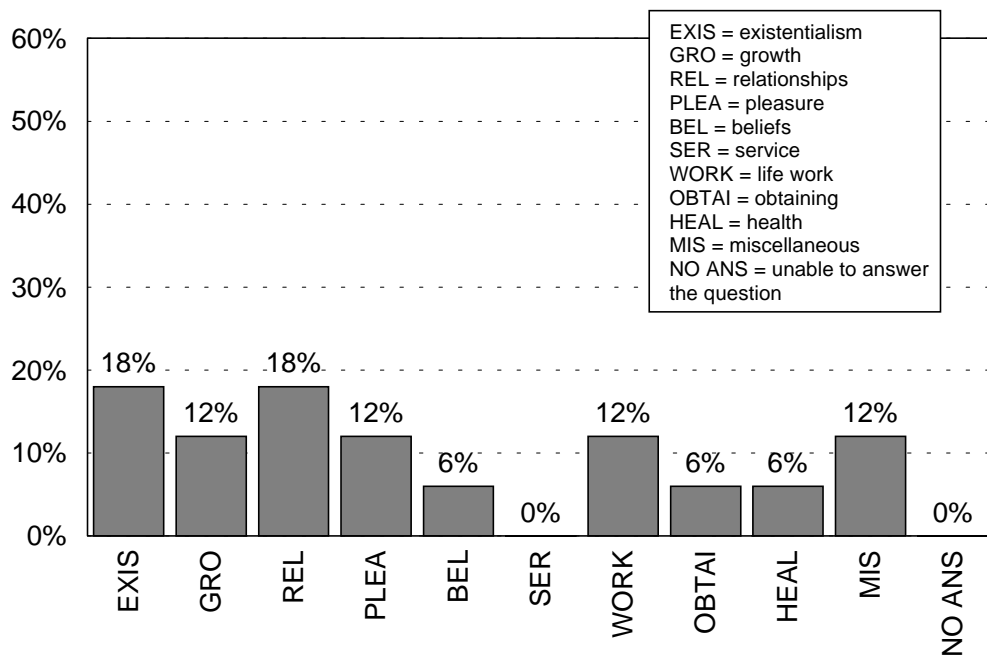
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*“We are in this world to contribute to society’s benefit, this must be our goal. I, just like everybody, live to achieve something. Basically, my principle motive of living is to be someone in life. I don’t want to be one more mediocre person”.*

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### 5.3.1.4 Meaning of life by Peruvian immigrants

*Peruvian female immigrants.* The six women produced 17 answers (100 %). All subjects were able to answer the question (see Figure 5.39).



**Figure 5.39:** Meaning of life by Peruvian female immigrants (N = 17 answers by 6 participants)

‘Existentialism’ regains first position in the sub-sample of female immigrants (18 %). It shares this place with ‘Relationships’ (18 %), which contains the sub-categories ‘Partner/Romantic love’ and ‘Family’. As Figure 5.39 shows, second position is shared by the

four categories ‘Growth’, ‘Pleasure’, ‘Life work’, and ‘Miscellaneous’. These six categories contain 84 % of all answers.

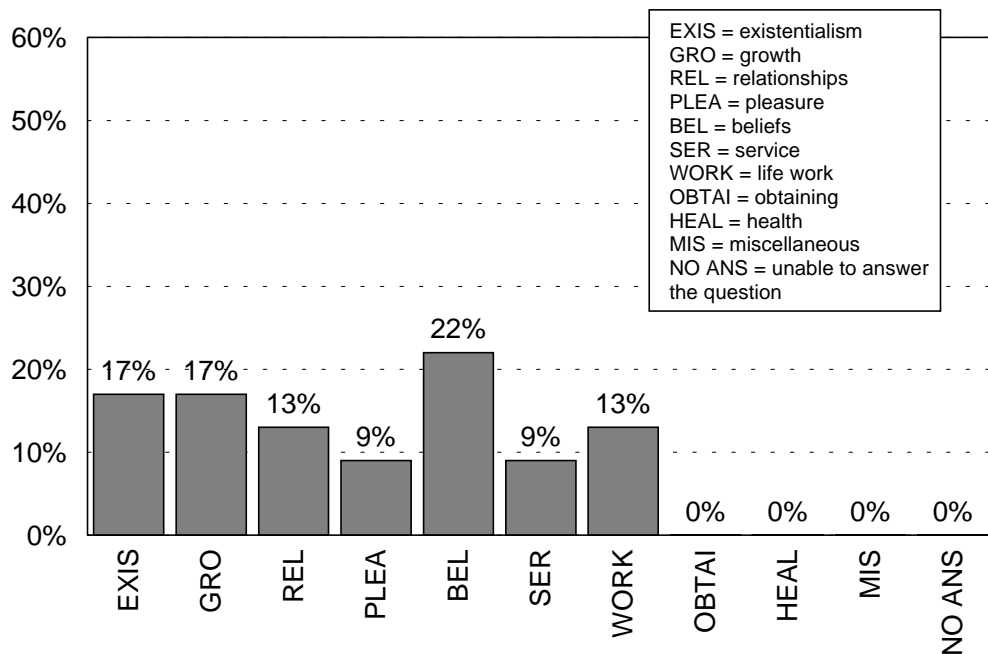
The following segment is an example of an answer to the question, ‘What is the meaning of life?’

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*“For me, meaning in life is living in an appropriate manner, leading an orderly life. [What is the most important thing in life?] The most important thing in life is our happiness”.*

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*Peruvian male immigrants.* The 5 participants produced 23 answers (100 %). All subjects were able to answer the question (see Figure 5.40).



**Figure 5.40:** Meaning of life by Peruvian male immigrants (N = 23 answers by 5 participants)

This time, ‘Belief’ takes pole position, containing three answers of ‘Political/Social’ and two of ‘Religious/Spiritual’. ‘Growth’ shares second position with ‘Existentialism’, followed by ‘Life work’ and ‘Relationships’, which consists of the sub-categories ‘Family’ and ‘Partner/Romantic love’.

The following segment is an example of an answer to the question, ‘What is the meaning of life?’

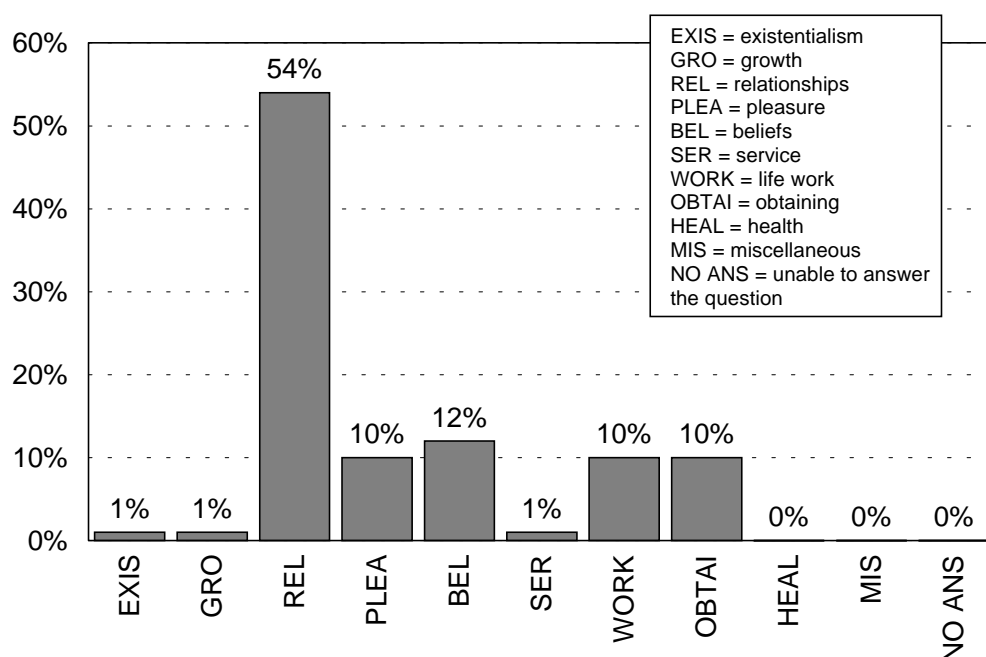
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*“Life is so hard, isn’t it? A bit as if it hasn’t got a meaning. [What do we live for?] This life is a struggle. A struggle for survival. [What is the most important thing in life?] Well, work, duties”.*

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### 5.3.1.5 Meaning of life by Peruvian Indians

*Peruvian female Indians.* The 30 participants produced 90 answers (100 %). All subjects were able to answer the question (see Figure 5.41).



**Figure 5.41:** Meaning of life by Peruvian female Indians ( $N = 90$  answers by 30 participants)

As the first sub-sample in this study, the female Indians replicate the findings in literature, that ‘*Relationships*’ is the category with most answers. 49 out of 90 answers could be listed here, 45 of which in ‘*Family*’ and four in ‘*Partner/Romantic love*’. All 30 participants mentioned their families as being the most important meaning in their lives. In second position, we find ‘*Belief*’, with six answers in ‘*Religious/Spiritual*’ and five answers in ‘*Political/Social*’. Third position is shared by the three categories ‘*Life work*’, ‘*Pleasure*’, and ‘*Obtaining*’, containing 10 % of all answers each. These five categories together contain 96 % of all answers given by this sub-group.

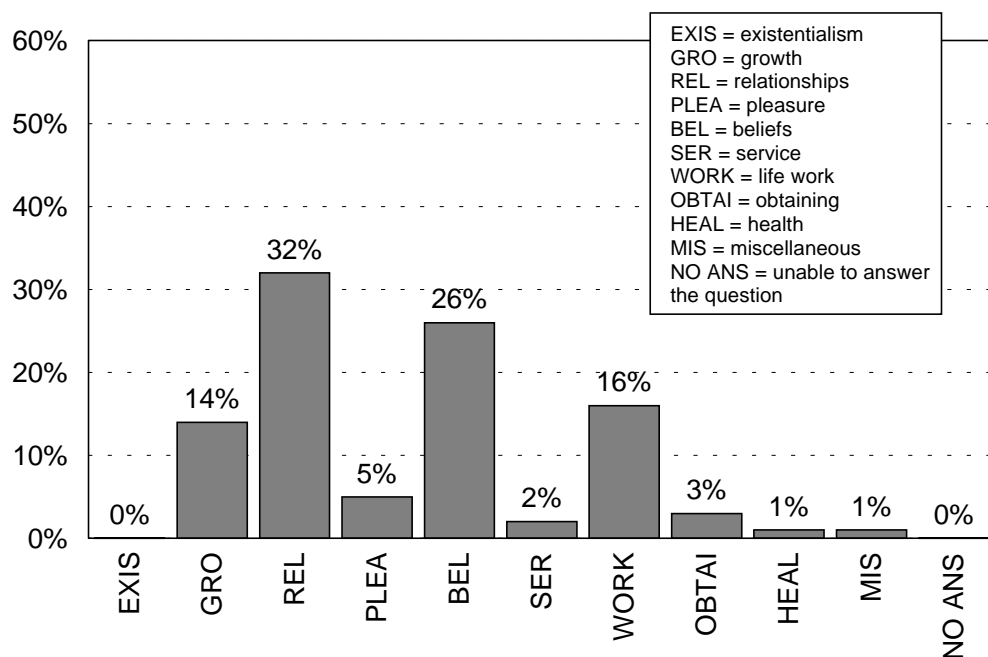
The following segment is an example of an answer to the question, ‘What is the meaning in life?’

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*“I live for my children and my husband, also to educate my children at school, to prepare food for my children and my husband. Otherwise they would not have anyone cooking for them because men don’t know how to cook and my children would be hungry”.*

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*Peruvian male Indians.* The 30 participants produced 105 answers (100 %). All subjects were able to answer the question (see Figure 5.42).



**Figure 5.42:** Meaning of life by Peruvian male Indians ( $N = 105$  answers by 30 participants)

As in the sample of female Indians, male Indians also perceive the family as their most important meaning in life, which raises the category ‘*Relationships*’ to first position. However, it should be noted that this perception was less prevalent amongst male Indians (32%) than amongst female Indians (54%). The sub-category ‘*Friends*’ is also mentioned, while ‘*Partner/Romantic love*’ is missing. ‘*Belief*’ holds second position, dominated by ‘*Political/Social*’ (22 out of 27 answers in this category), with its clear focus on the development and improvement of the community. ‘*Religious/Spiritual*’ contains five cases. ‘*Life work*’ follows in third position, and ‘*Growth*’ in fourth. These four categories account for 88 % of all answers.

The following segment is an example of an answer to the question, ‘What is the meaning in life?’

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*“I am here in my community, in this world, to fight, successfully or unsuccessfully, for a better life for my family and my community. I want to get out of my situation of poverty. I am very worried about my three children. I have little arable land, I want to engage in commercial activities, but this is not profitable here, I would like to leave my community and move to the capital of the province so my children can have another life. I am waiting for them to be at least seven years old so they can go to school. Right now my eldest daughter is six years old and attends her first year of primary school, the other daughter is three years old, my youngest son only 4 months. That’s why I’m worried. I am 25 years old and I want to educate my children, because when I get older it will be difficult to meet the costs and necessities of my children. I would like them to read and speak Spanish so they can at least write a document. I notice that the pupils who finish our community school are unable to write a document, not even a letter – they could never address an engineer or a lawyer, they cannot present new proposals at the meetings of the community, that’s why I want children and adolescents to develop their knowledge. (...)”*

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It is not representative for the whole sample since this subject is atypically eloquent, and presents his thoughts in a very elaborate manner. A more representative example is therefore included as well.

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*“I have come into this world as a farmer. I must think of my children. I live to achieve that my children won’t be farmers like me. I do everything possible so that they will become something else. Being a farmer must stop with me”.*

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For this sub-sample, Ebersole’s categories were not optimal. It would have been more data-sensitive to create a category ‘*Progress of the community*’ instead of subsuming the answers under ‘*Political/Social belief*’. The extreme future orientation of the male Indians gets lost in the present categorization. Thirty answers were directed towards a better future, and working to obtain this aim clearly reflected participant’s conceptualization of meaning in life.



### 5.3.1.6 Summary of the results concerning meaning of life

For all sub-samples, the meaning of life could be reflected in eleven general categories, as summarized in Table 5.7. (The total  $N$  refers to the number of participants who answered the question.)

**Table 5.7:** Meaning of life (relative frequencies).

sample	$N^1$	relationships	growth	pleasure	service	beliefs	life work	obtaining	health	existentialism	miscellaneous	unable to answer the question
Gstu ♀, $N = 37$	119	19 %	19 %	18 %	7 %	8 %	3 %	2 %	--	25 %	1 %	1 %
Gstu ♂, $N = 25$	81	3 %	22 %	16 %	5 %	20 %	1 %	--	--	28 %	1 %	4 %
GnonStu ♀, $N = 25$	95	15 %	23 %	20 %	3 %	8 %	4 %	3 %	1 %	21 %	--	1 %
GnonStu ♂, $N = 17$	48	10 %	27 %	27 %	4 %	13 %	6 %	--	--	10 %	--	2 %
Pstu ♀, $N = 25$	80	11 %	24 %	20 %	9 %	24 %	6 %	3 %	--	3 %	1 %	--
Pstu ♂, $N = 23$	71	17 %	25 %	14 %	6 %	21 %	10 %	3 %	--	4 %	--	--
Pnight ♀, $N = 20$	58	16 %	47 %	2 %	2 %	9 %	19 %	--	--	7 %	--	--
Pnight ♂, $N = 15$	54	11 %	33 %	11 %	2 %	20 %	7 %	7 %	--	4 %	4 %	--
Pimmi ♀, $N = 6$	17	18 %	12 %	12 %	--	6 %	12 %	6 %	6 %	18 %	12 %	--
Pimmi ♂, $N = 8$	23	13 %	17 %	9 %	9 %	22 %	13 %	--	--	17 %	--	--
Pind ♀, $N = 30$	90	54 %	1 %	10 %	1 %	12 %	10 %	10 %	--	1 %	-	--
Pind ♂, $N = 30$	105	32 %	14 %	5 %	2 %	26 %	16 %	3 %	1 %	--	1 %	--

Note: ♀ = female; ♂ = male; Gstu = German students; GnonStu = German non-student; Pstu = Peruvian students; Pnight = Peruvian night-students; Pimmi = Peruvian immigrants; Pind = Peruvian Indians  
column 1 = total of given answers

To get a better comparison, the following Table 5.8 shows the relative frequencies of the sample as a whole, the German samples vs. the Peruvian samples, German students vs. Peruvian students, and Peruvian Indians vs. the other Peruvian sub-groups.

**Table 5.8:** Meaning of life, comparison of selective sub-groups (relative frequencies).

sample	relationships	growth	pleasure	service	beliefs	life work	obtaining	health	existentialism	miscellaneous	unable to answer the question
<b>total</b>	18 %	22 %	14 %	4 %	16 %	9 %	3 %	1 %	12 %	2 %	1 %
<b>German</b>	12 %	23 %	20 %	5 %	12 %	4 %	1 %	--	21 %	1 %	2 %
<b>Peru</b>	22 %	22 %	10 %	4 %	18 %	12 %	4 %	1 %	8 %	2 %	--
<b>German students</b>	11 %	21 %	17 %	7 %	14 %	2 %	1 %	--	27 %	1 %	3 %
<b>Peruvian students</b>	14 %	25 %	17 %	8 %	23 %	8 %	3 %	--	4 %	1 %	--
<b>Indians</b>	43 %	8 %	8 %	2 %	19 %	13 %	7 %	1 %	1 %	1 %	--
<b>Peruvians without Indians</b>	14 %	26 %	11 %	5 %	17 %	11 %	3 %	1 %	11 %	3 %	--
<b>Peruvians without students</b>	24 %	21 %	8 %	3 %	16 %	13 %	4 %	1 %	8 %	3 %	--

Looking at the sample as a whole, ‘*Growth*’ takes first position and is followed by ‘*Relationships*’. In third position we find ‘*Belief*’, followed by ‘*Pleasure*’. ‘*Existentialism*’ takes fifth position, followed by ‘*Life work*’. The remaining categories ‘*Service*’, ‘*Obtaining*’, ‘*Health*’ and ‘*Miscellaneous*’ do not contain enough cases to warrant major attention. This result could not replicate the findings in literature that ‘*Relationships*’ is the most frequently mentioned category when asked for the meaning of life (e.g. DeVogler & Ebersole, 1980; 1981; 1983; McCarthy, 1983; Ebersole & DePaola, 1987; Jenerson-Madden, Ebersole & Romero, 1992; Taylor & Ebersole, 1993; Richter, 1993; Debats, 1999). ‘*Relationships*’ was mentioned in first place only by the Indians, and in shared position with ‘*Existentialism*’ by the female immigrants. ‘*Growth*’, the category which combines characteristics such as self-improvement, reaching goals, developing talents, and self-fulfillment, which had obtained less than 10 % in Ebersole’s studies, was mentioned in first position by 6, and in second position by 4 (albeit shared in some cases), out of 12 sub-samples.

‘*Existentialism*’ was crucial for the four German samples (taking first position for both student sub-groups, second for female non-students, and third for male non-students), but not so much for the Peruvian ones. Only the immigrants give a relatively high number of existentialistic answers, but since these samples are so small, this result must be interpreted with care.

Interesting cultural and sub-cultural difference were found for the category ‘*Belief*’. Germans mention ‘*Political/Social*’ three times more frequently than ‘*Religious/Spiritual*’. ‘*Transcendence*’ is only mentioned by two sub-groups, ‘*Mission*’ by one. The Peruvian

female students, on the other hand, give a much higher weight to ‘*Mission*’ and ‘*Transcendence*’. The Peruvian male students only have one answer in each of these categories, and the remaining six Peruvian groups do not supply answers for the categories ‘*Mission*’ or ‘*Transcendence*’, but make more use of ‘*Religious/Spiritual*’ than the Germans. The four German samples provide 27 answers for ‘*Political/Social*’ and eight for ‘*Religious/Spiritual*’, while the eight Peruvian samples provide 51 answers for ‘*Political/Social*’ and 31 for ‘*Religious/Spiritual*’. Table 5.9 shows the exact distribution (absolute frequencies) of the four sub-categories of ‘*Belief*’ for all sub-samples.

**Table 5.9:** Sub-categories of Belief (absolute frequencies).

sample	Political/Social	Religious/Spiritual	Transcendence	Mission	N	% of all answers
Gstu ♀, N = 37	6	3	--	--	9	8 %
Gstu ♂, N = 25	12	2	2	--	16	20 %
GnonStu ♀, N = 25	6	1	--	1	8	8 %
GnonStu ♂, N = 17	3	2	1	--	6	13 %
Pstu ♀, N = 25	4	5	3	7	19	24 %
Pstu ♂, N = 23	10	3	1	1	15	21 %
Pnight ♀, N = 20	3	2	--	--	5	9 %
Pnight ♂, N = 15	3	8	--	--	11	20 %
Pimmi ♀, N = 6	1	--	--	--	1	6 %
Pimmi ♂, N = 8	3	2	--	--	5	22 %
Pind ♀, N = 30	5	6	--	--	11	12 %
Pind ♂, N = 30	22	5	--	--	27	26 %
together	78	39	7	9	133	16 %

Note: ♀ = female; ♂ = male; Gstu = German students; GnonStu = German non-student; Pstu = Peruvian students; Pnight = Peruvian night-students; Pimmi = Peruvian immigrants; Pind = Peruvian Indians

Another cultural difference is that all German sub-samples had some participants amongst them who could not answer the question (mean 2 %), while all Peruvian interviewees gave an answer. This finding, however, is too weak to draw the conclusion that Germans find their lives less meaningful than Peruvians, or had a more diffuse idea about meaning. First, there are too few cases to support this assumption, and second, it could be the result of higher compliance in the Peruvian samples and a greater willingness to provide an answer for every question.

With the inclusion of the new category ‘*Existentialism*’, and the new sub-categories ‘*Transcendence*’ and ‘*Mission*’, Ebersole’s categories seem very suitable to measure meaning

in life, since the category '*Miscellaneous*' was only needed for six sub-samples, with a mean of 3 % of the answers.

### 5.3.1.7 Conclusion

It was hypothesized that Peruvian students would be more similar to the four German sub-samples in their answers than to the six Peruvian sub-samples. As Table 5.7 shows, this assumption could be confirmed for the four key categories '*Relationships*', '*Growth*', '*Pleasure*', and '*Service*', but not for the remaining categories. There are differences between the German samples and the Peruvian students for '*Belief*', and '*Existentialism*', and no clear statement can be made for '*Work*' or '*Health*'. These results can not provide a uniform picture to determine whether education or nationality has a stronger influence on the perception of meaning.

Amongst all sub-samples, the Peruvian night-students (especially the women) have the strongest focus on '*Growth*'. This could be explained by their specific circumstance of going through a stressful period in their lives in order to fulfill an ambition. While working during the day and studying at night, the night students expect their efforts of further education to be rewarded by obtaining better jobs in the future, which is a classical component of '*Growth*'. The gender difference between this sub-sample could be explained by the fact that it is even more difficult for women to strive for such a high goal as further education, since it opposes their classical gender role.

The Indians differ notably from the other Peruvian sub-samples only in the categories '*Relationships*' and '*Growth*', which leaves more categories in which they respond in a similar manner to the other Peruvian sub-groups when asked for the meaning of life. Of course, as the quotations have shown, the environment and daily experiences leave their mark on the answers. The exact connotation within the categories can be seen in Appendix B.

Contrary to common findings in literature, most answers given by the sample belonged to the category '*Growth*' and not '*Relationships*'. Growth is a highly individualistic category in which answers expressing the importance of autonomy, independence, and personal goals are subsumed. Only the Peruvian Indians do not give '*Growth*' a remarkable importance in their ranking. This finding will be discussed again when hypothesis 3 is tested (see below).

As hypothesized, participants' conceptualization of meaning of life varied according to their years of formal education and the hardness of their life circumstances. It was understood in more abstract terms by students, and in more concrete terms by immigrants and Indians. A higher similarity was found between Peruvian students and both German sub-samples than

between Peruvian students and the other three Peruvian sub-samples in terms of abstract understanding. These results cannot be seen in Ebersole's categories, but can be deduced from Appendix B, which depicts the answers of all sub-samples. The following shows a verbatim example for each sub-sample.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 'making life easier and worth living for humanity' (<i>German female student</i>)</li> <li>▪ 'living according to Kant's categorical imperative' (<i>German male student</i>)</li> <li>▪ 'experiencing something new and living it fully' (<i>German female non-student</i>)</li> <li>▪ 'being creative' (<i>German male non-student</i>)</li> <li>▪ 'getting better, winning the battle against our own monsters, personal improvement' (<i>Peruvian female student</i>)</li> <li>▪ 'being part of history, having done something extraordinary in this world' (<i>Peruvian male student</i>)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 'getting better, making progress, getting to be someone' (<i>Peruvian female night student</i>)</li> <li>▪ 'triumphing in life' (<i>Peruvian male night student</i>)</li> <li>▪ 'struggling against everything we have to endure' (<i>Peruvian female immigrant</i>)</li> <li>▪ 'helping old people' (<i>Peruvian male immigrant</i>)</li> <li>▪ 'I live to take care of my children so they will not curse me, but celebrate a mass for me when I die' (<i>Peruvian female Indian</i>)</li> <li>▪ 'moving to a bigger city so the children have better chances, education' (<i>Peruvian male Indian</i>)</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

### 5.3.2 Question 2: Happiness

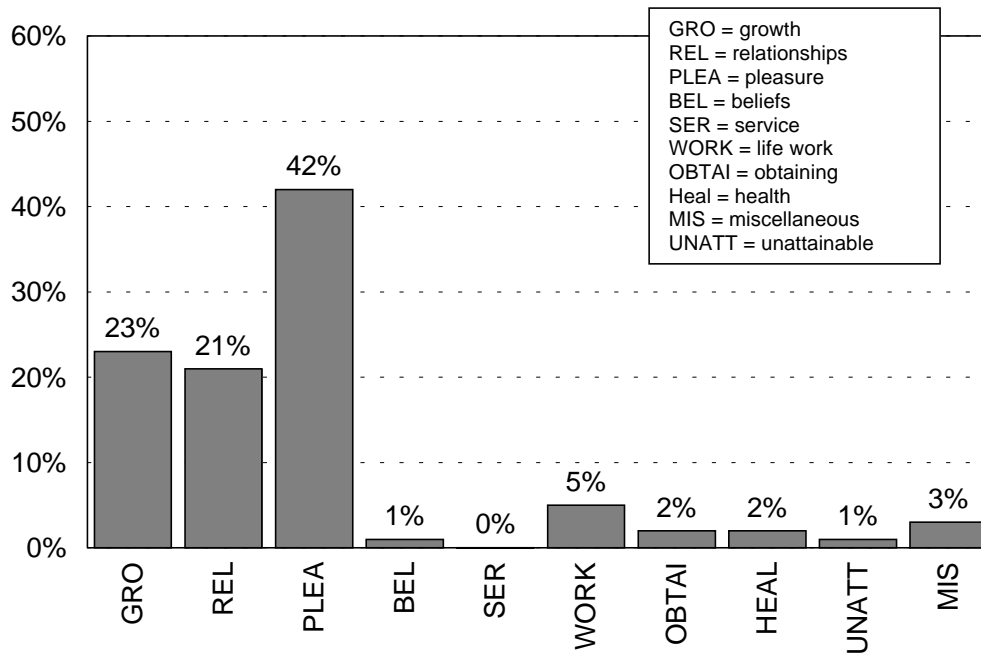
To find out how meaning and happiness are interconnected, it seems sensible to apply the same system of categories for both constructs. Two additional categories had to be introduced to reflect the data. The category '*Unattainable*' expresses the participants' opinion that happiness is something we cannot really reach, no matter how hard we try. It could be regarded as the corresponding category to '*Existentialism*' in meaning. If the answer referred to the impossibility of being happy because there is too much misery in this world, however, it was listed under the sub-category '*Political/Social belief*'.

Happiness as the result of the success at one's studies, such as passing an exam, was listed under the category '*Life work*' since the university can be regarded as the student's equivalent of a work place.

Some double-listings also occurred for the answers for happiness. If the answer to the question what made a participant happy was 'my family being healthy', it was listed both in the sub-category '*Family*' and in the category '*Health*'.

#### 5.3.2.1 Happiness by German students

*Female German Students.* The 37 participants produced 132 answers (100 %). All subjects were able to answer the question (see Figure 5.43).

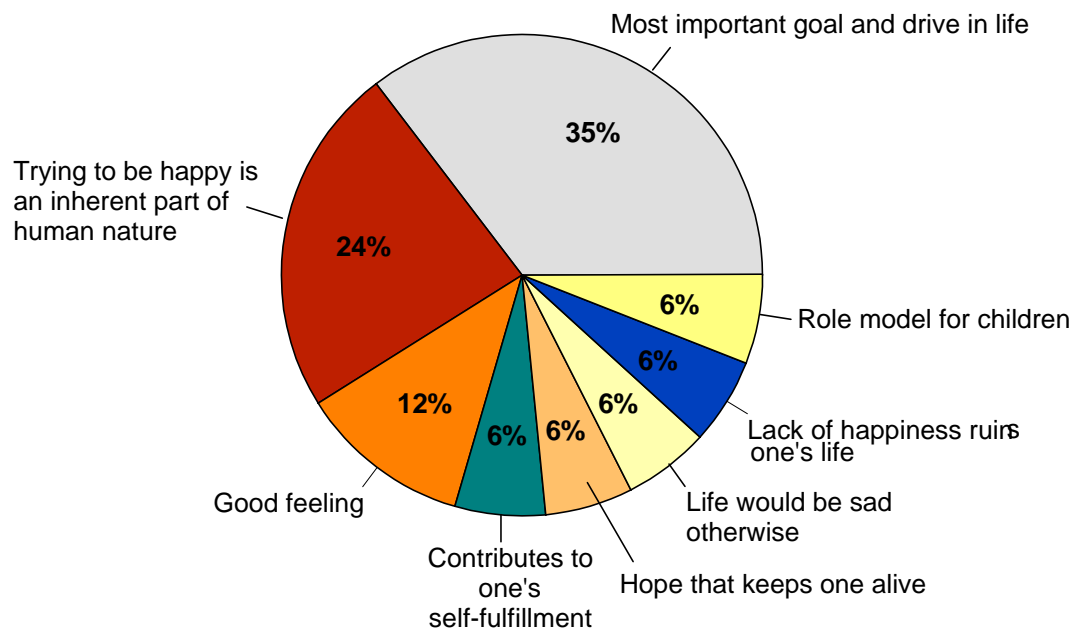


**Figure 5.43:** Happiness by German female students ( $N = 132$  answers by 37 participants)

By far the most frequent choice to describe happiness are answers which are subsumed in the category ‘*Pleasure*’. Of the 56 answers in this category, 24 of them refer to ‘the perfect moment’, which was defined as an overwhelming feeling, a moment of euphoria, the notion that everything is just the way it should be, a flooding of endorphins, a climax and ecstasy. Common to all these descriptions is the fact that happiness is a feeling, which does not last long. The category also comprises 18 answers defining happiness as a feeling of contentment and satisfaction. Second position is taken by the category ‘*Growth*’, whose three focuses are ‘being in accordance with oneself’ ( $N = 10$ ), ‘self-fulfillment’ ( $N = 8$ ), which was defined as following one’s interests, living according to one’s potentials and recognizing one’s identity and wishes, and ‘reaching goals, achieving something, being successful’ ( $N = 8$ ). Interestingly, the category ‘*Relationships*’ in third position gives more importance to the subcategories ‘*Friends*’ ( $N = 10$ ) and ‘*Partner/Romantic love*’ ( $N = 9$ ) than ‘*Family*’ ( $N = 5$ ). For meaning of life, German female students’ answers had been listed in a different order, namely ‘*Family*’ ( $N = 9$ ), ‘*Friends*’ ( $N = 5$ ) and ‘*Partner/Romantic love*’ ( $N = 3$ ). These three categories account for 86 % of all answers by this sub-sample, leaving only 14 % for six other categories.

In addition to the definitions of happiness listed in Appendix B, five participants defined happiness as ‘luck, chance’, which is understandable since the German term ‘Glück’ covers both connotations: luck and happiness. As this semantic coincidence confuses two constructs, these five answers will not be taken into further account.

Seventeen participants were asked if happiness was important for human beings, all of whom expressed their conviction that it was, while one subject said it was important but not as a permanent state. Figure 5.44 illustrates the explanations given for the importance of happiness.



**Figure 5.44:** Explanations for importance of happiness by German female students (17 participants)

The statements ‘happiness is the most important goal and drive in life’ and ‘it is the hope which keeps one alive’ suggest a link to meaning of life.

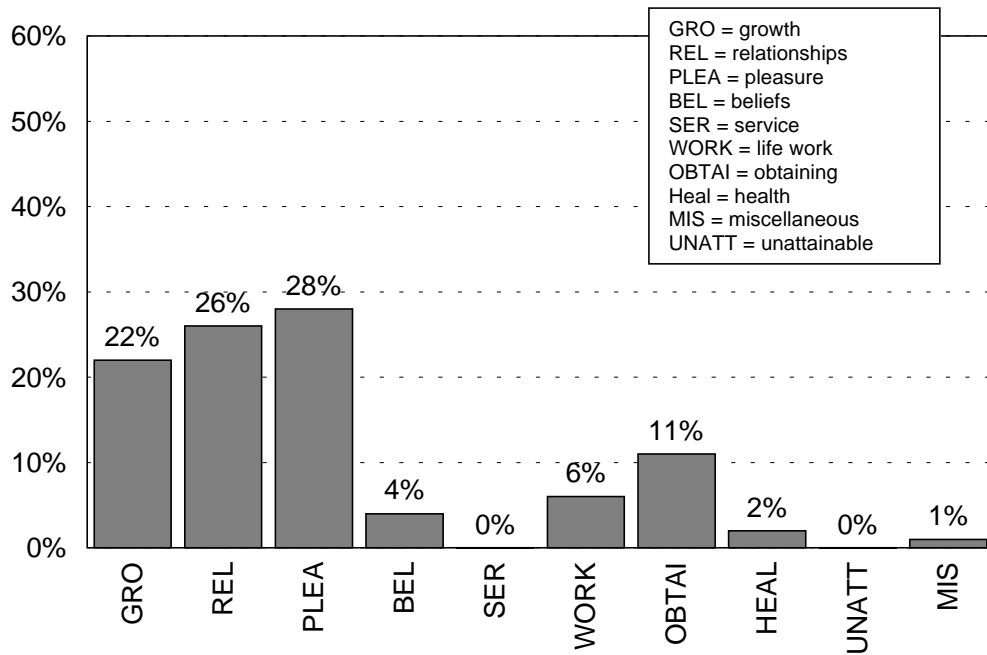
The following segment is an example of an answer to the question, ‘What is happiness?’

---

*“In the last two, three years I have arrived at the conviction that happiness is nothing stable. It is a moment. If somebody tells me ‘I have a happy marriage’, I don’t know if this is possible. For me happiness is not associated with continuity. It is only dealing with certain points in specific situations. Happiness is a feeling which disappears instantly”.*

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*Male German Students.* The 25 participants produced 109 answers (100 %). All subjects were able to answer the question (see Figure 5.45).



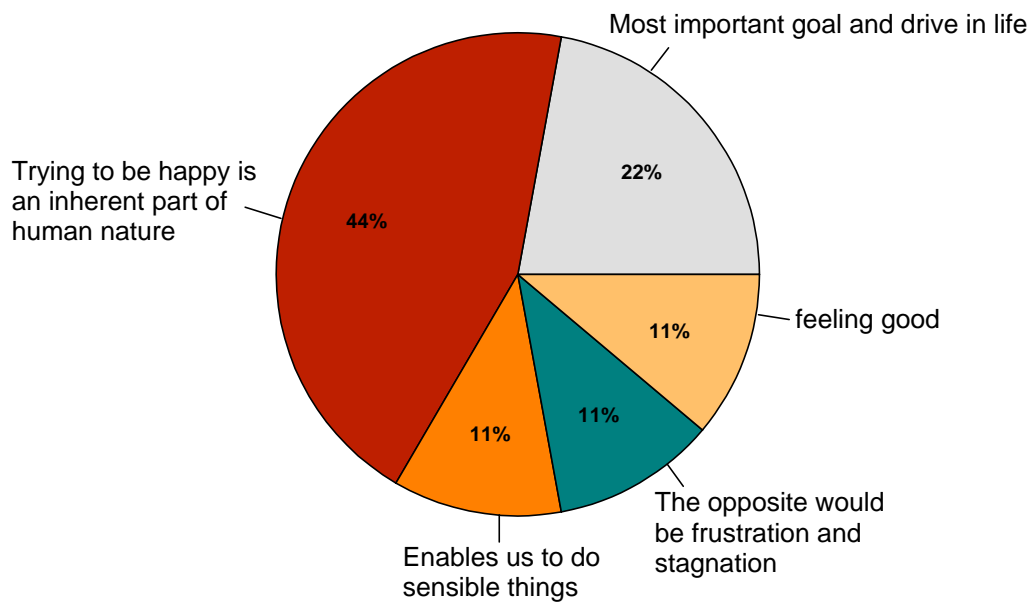
**Figure 5.45:** Happiness by German male students ( $N = 109$  answers by 25 participants)

As with the German female students, the men also provide most answers which were listed in the category ‘*Pleasure*’. Fourteen out of 31 answers refer to the feeling of contentment and satisfaction, nine refer to ‘the perfect moment’. In second position, we find ‘*Relationships*’, containing the sub-categories ‘*Partner/Romantic love*’ ( $N = 11$ ), ‘*Family*’ ( $N = 8$ ), and ‘*Friends*’ ( $N = 3$ ). For the meaning of life, ‘*Relationships*’ was in sixth position and only contained the sub-category ‘*Partner/Romantic love*’ with one answer. ‘*Growth*’, with its focus on reaching goals, achieving something, and being successful is the third category for this sub-sample. In fourth place, we find ‘*Obtaining*’, where seven out of twelve answers aim at financial security which provides happiness. These four categories account for 87 % of all answers, leaving 13 % in the remaining four categories.

In addition to the definitions listed in Appendix B, five participants defined happiness as ‘luck, chance’. Again, these five answers will not be taken into further account.

Twenty participants were asked if happiness was important for human beings, nineteen of whom expressed their conviction that it was, one subject said it was not essential that human beings are happy. Two participants claimed that others must not be disadvantaged through pursuing personal happiness. The following explanations for the importance of happiness were given:





**Figure 5.46:** Explanations for importance of happiness by German male students (9 answers)

The following segment is an example of an answer to the question, ‘What is happiness?’.

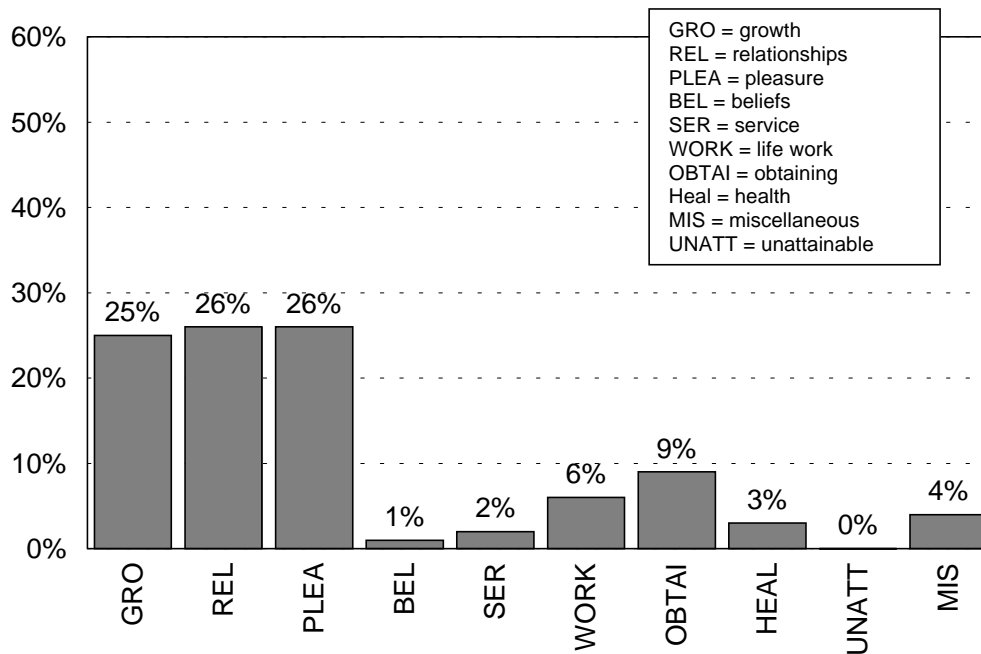
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*“Happiness means for me, being able to say, at every stage of my life, yes, I am satisfied with myself (...) Being satisfied with yourself does not mean that you could not be crying just now. Satisfied or happy, I don’t know if this is exactly the same, but I define this by saying that I want to be a happy person – not in terms of winning 10.000 DM in the lottery and feeling good for one evening, but by being really satisfied. And being really satisfied doesn’t mean that I’m constantly laughing but being satisfied in terms of also being able to cry but without entering complete despair. You would not have these burn-out days where everything goes wrong and you get to the point where you say to yourself everything is shit and I myself am shit and everything is horrible. And when you are really happy and satisfied these days become fewer and fewer and in the end they cease to be at all, and even if things go wrong you don’t turn desperate but you just think ‘well, that’s pretty awful’, but deep inside you know that you are satisfied. And this feeling intensifies and things turn out to be better [So is there a difference between happiness and satisfaction?] No, the way I have just pointed out, there isn’t”.*

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### 5.3.2.3 Happiness by German non-students

*German female non-students.* The 25 participants produced 110 answers (100 %). All subjects were able to answer the question (see Figure 5.47).



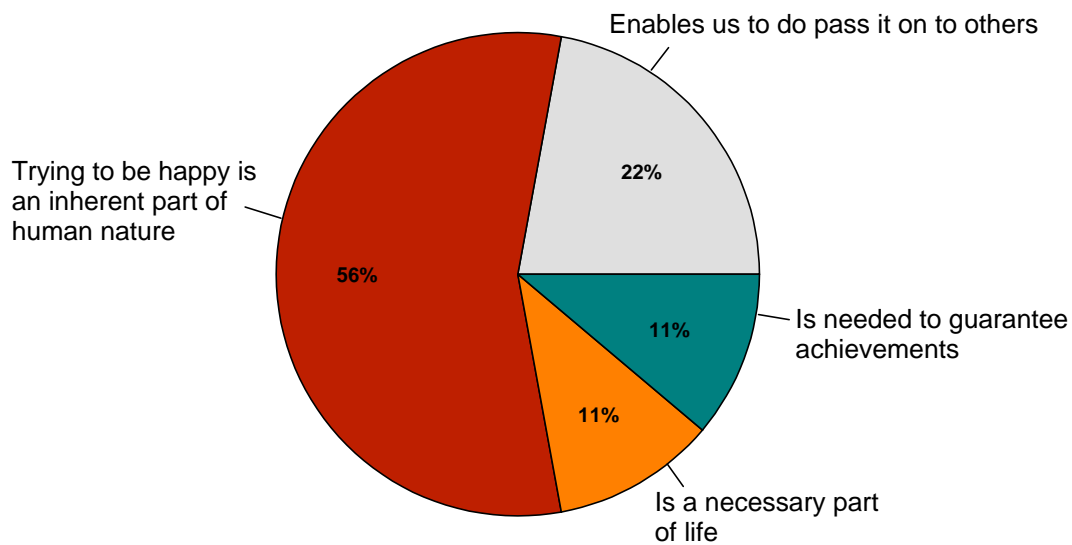
**Figure 5.47:** Happiness by German female non-students ( $N = 110$  answers by 25 participants)

The sub-group of German female night students replicates the order of German male students. ‘*Pleasure*’ in the leading position is followed by ‘*Relationships*’, ‘*Growth*’, and ‘*Obtaining*’, and these four categories account for 86 % of all answers, leaving the remaining five categories with only 14 % of answers amongst them. ‘*Pleasure*’ has the two focuses ‘the perfect moment’ and ‘contentment/satisfaction’; ‘*Relationships*’ contains the sub-categories ‘*Partner/Romantic love*’ ( $N = 10$ ), ‘*Family*’ ( $N = 6$ ), and ‘*Friends*’ ( $N = 5$ ). For the meaning of life, their distribution across the sub-categories had been similar with ‘*Partner/Romantic love*’ ( $N = 4$ ), ‘*Family*’ ( $N = 4$ ), and ‘*Friends*’ ( $N = 2$ ). The main aspects of ‘*Growth*’ for this sub-sample were ‘being in accordance with oneself’, ‘reaching goals’, and engaging in things which are interesting, hobbies’. ‘*Obtaining*’ refers mainly to having a lot of money.

In addition to the definitions listed in Appendix B, one participant defined happiness as ‘luck, chance’. As before, this answer will not be taken into further account.

Seventeen participants were asked if happiness was important for human beings, fifteen of whom expressed their conviction that it was, while one subject claimed that happiness was neither a moment nor an aim. It cannot be bought or reached. It comes and goes like the wind. Therefore, the question of its importance does not make sense. Another subject said that

happiness was not important since one is automatically happy when being alive. The following explanations for the importance of happiness were given:



**Figure 5.48:** Explanations for importance of happiness by German female non-students (9 answers)

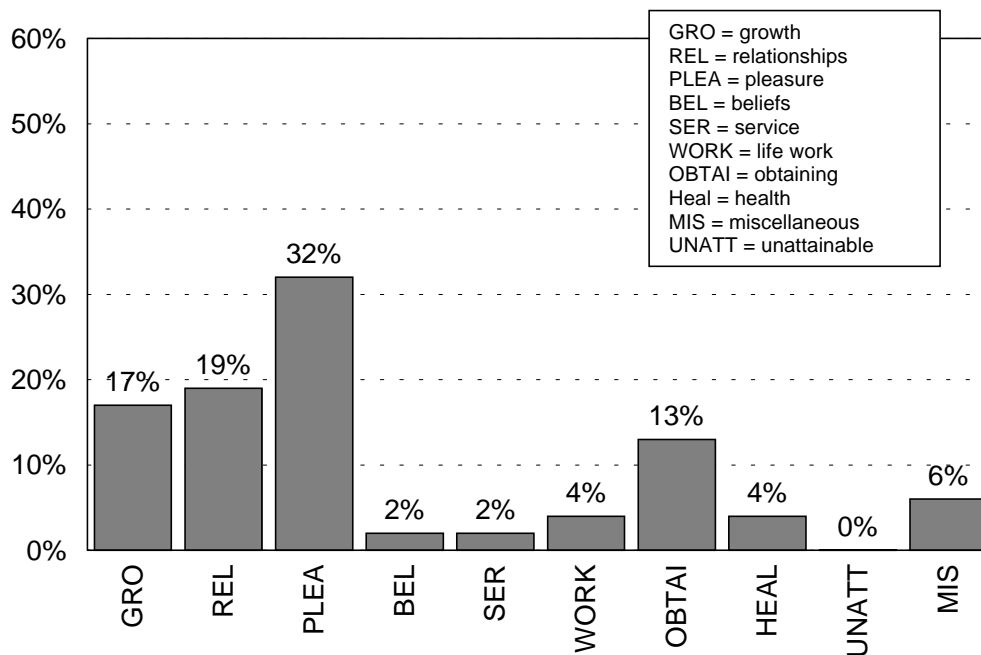
The following segment is an example of an answer to the question, ‘What is happiness?’

---

*“Coming home knowing that there is someone to hug me when I feel sad. This is ultimate happiness (...) Happiness is not having to be alone, having someone to confide all my worries and fears in. This, I believe, is happiness. These people are not just standing in the street, you must really find someone you can really trust. And finding someone you want to spend your life with is happiness [Is there a difference between happiness and satisfaction?] Yes. I always say ‘money alone does not make you happy but satisfied’. Satisfaction is a feeling like ‘this will do, I can handle that’. You don’t get excited but what you’ve got is okay, sufficient, and acceptable. And this tranquilizing feeling is satisfaction. You can manage the next day. But happiness is some form of heart-beating, an internal thing, whereas satisfaction is just a feeling which comforts people’.*

---

German male non-students. The 17 participants produced a total of 47 answers (100 %).



**Figure 5.49:** Happiness by German male non-students ( $N = 47$  answers by 17 participants)

And again, we find the four major categories in the order ‘*Pleasure*’, ‘*Relationships*’, ‘*Growth*’, and ‘*Obtaining*’, which together account for 81 % of all answers, leaving the remaining 19 % spread over five categories. Focuses for ‘*Pleasure*’ are, as before, ‘the perfect moment’ and ‘contentment/satisfaction’. In ‘*Relationships*’, the sub-category ‘*Partner/Romantic love*’ ( $N = 3$ ) precedes ‘*Family*’ ( $N = 2$ ) and ‘*Friends*’ ( $N = 1$ ). For the meaning of life, ‘*Partner/Romantic love*’ and ‘*Family*’ had both contained one case. ‘*Growth*’ focuses on the fulfillment of one’s dreams and wishes and success, while ‘*Obtaining*’ focuses on having enough money to afford nice things. One participant explicitly mentioned ‘finding meaning in one’s life’ as a definition for happiness.

In addition to the definitions listed in Appendix B, two participants defined happiness as ‘luck, chance’. As before, these answers will not be taken into further account.

Eleven participants were asked if happiness was important for human beings, all of whom expressed their conviction that it was, but only four provided an explanation for its importance. The following explanations for the importance of happiness were given:

- It’s a human aim: 75 %
- It’s necessary for one’s personal development: 25 %

The following segment is an example of an answer to the question, ‘What is happiness?’

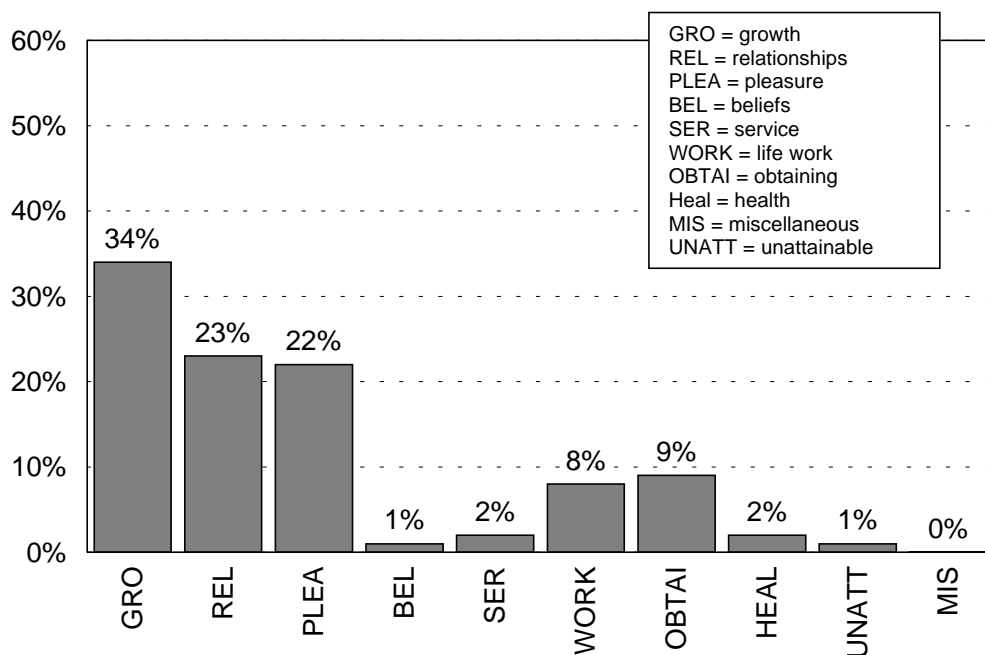
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*“I experience happiness when I have people around me with whom I feel good, when I have a partner, possibly, with whom everything works well. I feel happy that I am able to leave this country twice a year to travel to foreign countries. And I feel happy that I am in a position to get my self into comfortable situations, that I have the financial basis for doing so, that I can afford a nice flat which is up to my taste, that I can buy the music I like, all these are moments of happiness”.*

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### 5.3.2.4 Happiness by Peruvian students

*Female Peruvian Students.* The 25 participants produced 116 answers (100 %). All subjects were able to answer the question (see Figure 5.50).



**Figure 5.50:** Happiness by Peruvian female students ( $N = 116$  answers by 25 participants)

While the four major categories for the German samples remain the same for Peruvian female students, their order and focus change slightly. With 39 out of 116 answers, the category ‘*Growth*’ takes first position with one focus on reaching goals, achieving something, and being successful; a second focus on self-fulfillment, which was defined as following one’s interests, living according to one’s potentials, and satisfying one’s needs and wishes, and a third focus on feeling good with oneself. ‘*Relationships*’ contains the sub-categories ‘*Family*’ ( $N = 10$ ), ‘*Partner/Romantic love*’ ( $N = 5$ ), and ‘*Friends*’ ( $N = 4$ ). For the meaning

of life, the distribution had been ‘Family’ ( $N = 6$ ) and ‘Partner/Romantic love’ ( $N = 1$ ), while ‘Friends’ was not mentioned. ‘Pleasure’ in third position focuses on ‘the perfect moment’ and ‘contentment/satisfaction’, as well as ‘feeling good’. ‘Obtaining’ in fourth place focuses on having money. Together, these four categories account for 88 % of all answers, leaving the remaining 12 % for five other categories.

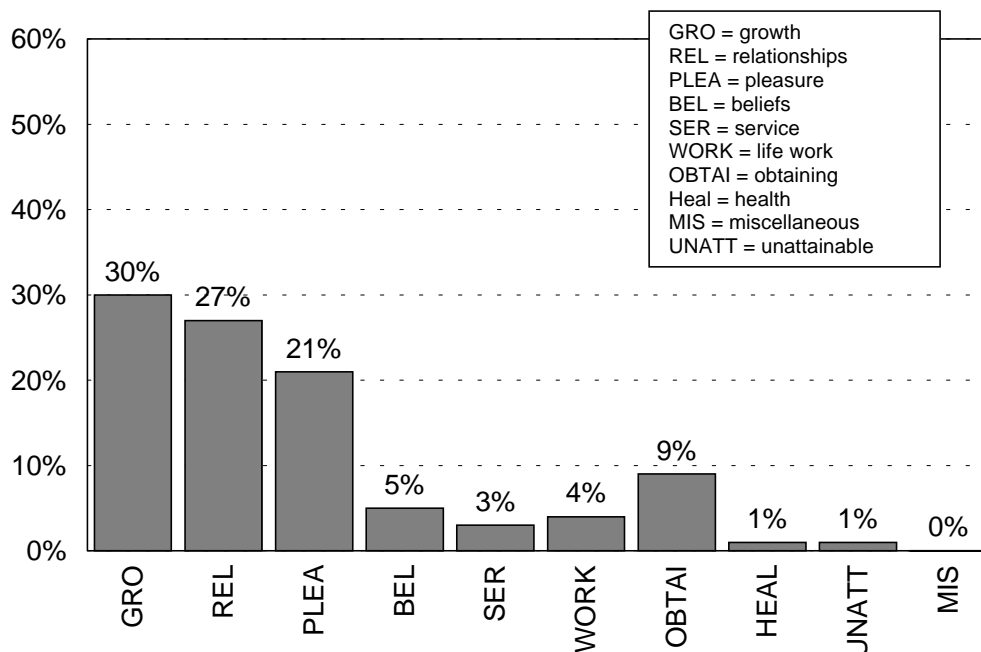
The following segment is an example of an answer to the question, ‘What is happiness?’.

---

*“Happiness? Something that fills you up, something, a moment in which you don’t feel lonely, you feel good, maybe you don’t have a family and are living alone, but you feel good, with a zest for life, with the wish of going further. People who are unhappy, although they might be living with their family and have friends, do not want to go on living, feel down, feel bad in spite of everything they’ve got. Happy people, although they might be poor and don’t have money, want to go on struggling, want to go further, go beyond”.*

---

Peruvian male students. The 23 participants produced a total of 78 answers (100 %).



**Figure 5.51:** Happiness by Peruvian male students ( $N = 78$  answers by 23 participants)

We find exactly the same order of categories for male and female Peruvian students. For men, these categories account for 87 % of all answers, leaving 13 % for five other categories.

‘Growth’ focuses on ‘pursuing and reaching goals’, as well as ‘feeling one’s heart fulfilled’. ‘Relationships’ contains the two sub-categories ‘Partner/Romantic love’ ( $N = 6$ ) and ‘Family’ ( $N = 5$ ). For meaning in life, the distribution had been ‘Family’ ( $N = 8$ ), ‘Friends’ ( $N = 1$ ), and ‘Partner/Romantic love’ ( $N = 1$ ). ‘Pleasure’ focuses on three main aspects: ‘feeling good’, ‘being content, satisfied’, and ‘the perfect moment’. ‘Obtaining’ focuses on possessing money. Two answers provided a connection between happiness and meaning. One participant claimed that happiness meant finding a justification for our existence, and another one stated that life would have no meaning without happiness (see quotation below).

All 23 participants answered that happiness was important for human beings. The following explanations for the importance of happiness were given:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It is an inherent part of human nature: 22%</li> <li>▪ No explanation was given: 11%</li> <li>▪ For coping with life: 7%</li> <li>▪ If you feel unhappy you are not productive: 7%</li> <li>▪ It makes life bearable: 4%</li> <li>▪ To keep going: 4%</li> <li>▪ For one’s personal development: 4%</li> <li>▪ For self-fulfillment: 4%</li> <li>▪ It gives you internal balance: 4%</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ For self-esteem: 4%</li> <li>▪ Life would have no meaning otherwise: 4%</li> <li>▪ You need a balance of good and bad in life: 4%</li> <li>▪ It makes you a better person: 4%</li> <li>▪ You cannot live in peace otherwise: 4%</li> <li>▪ The contrary means frustration: 4%</li> <li>▪ For remaining sociable: 4%</li> <li>▪ To pass it on to others: 4%</li> <li>▪ For collective harmony: 4%</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

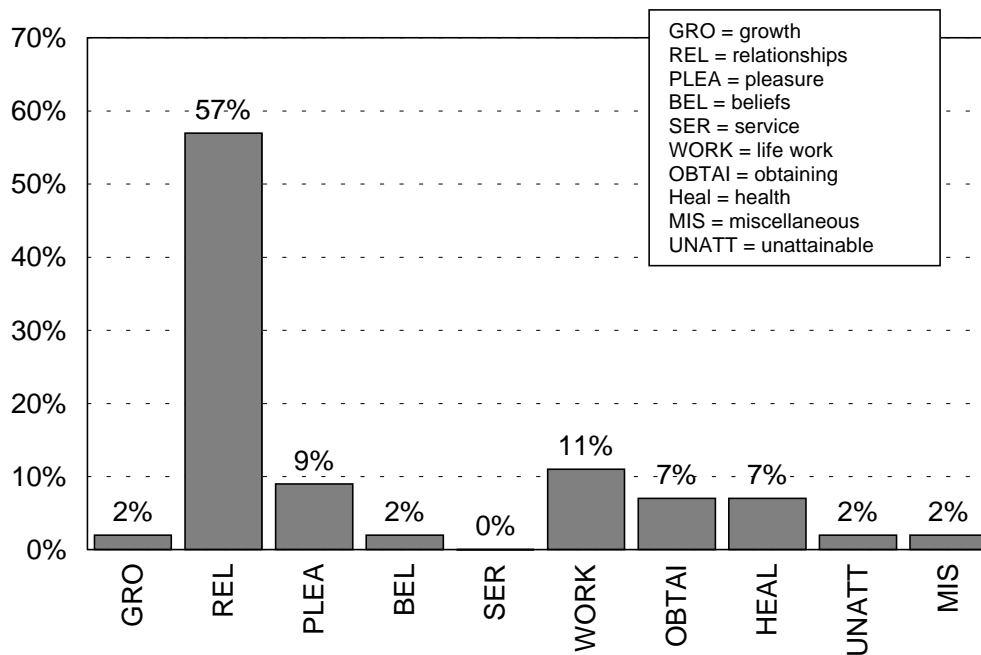
The following segment is an example of an answer to the question, ‘What is happiness?’

---

*“Happiness is when you feel good for some reason, whatever, you might have satisfied your economic needs, your needs of affection, when you feel fulfilled, when you can say the life you are leading is good. [Is this something constant?] It depends on every person. What makes me happy would not necessarily make someone else happy. I might be happy buying a brand-new car, somebody else might be happy going for a walk with someone, this is very relative, it depends on how the person is formed and what he/she has inside. [Inside?] Like feelings, some people are happy when they are in love, others when they get a job or a promotion, this is what I meant by being relative (...). [Why is happiness important?] It is a state of mind, I mean when someone is not happy, nothing makes sense, what is it all good for? Why so much fuss, why studying, why working, when you cannot really be happy?”*

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*Peruvian female night-students.* The 20 participants produced a total of 54 answers (100 %).



**Figure 5.52:** Happiness by Peruvian female night-students ( $N = 54$  answers by 20 participants)

Peruvian female night-students present a different ranking for happiness. ‘*Relationships*’, with its sub-categories ‘*Family*’ ( $N = 12$ ), ‘*Partner/Romantic love*’ ( $N = 3$ ), and ‘*Friends*’ ( $N = 1$ ) takes first position with 57 % of all answers. For meaning of life, ‘*Relationships*’ had only contained the sub-category ‘*Family*’. In second position, we find ‘*Life work*’, focusing on having/getting a (good) job. ‘*Pleasure*’ in third position focuses on feelings of joy. Fourth position is shared by the categories ‘*Health*’ and ‘*Obtaining*’. Together, these five categories account for 91 % of all answers, leaving 9 % for four other categories. One participant points out that happiness is important for not committing suicide, which establishes an indirect link to meaning of life.

All 20 participants answered that happiness was important for human beings. The following explanations for the importance of happiness were given (see Figure 5.53).

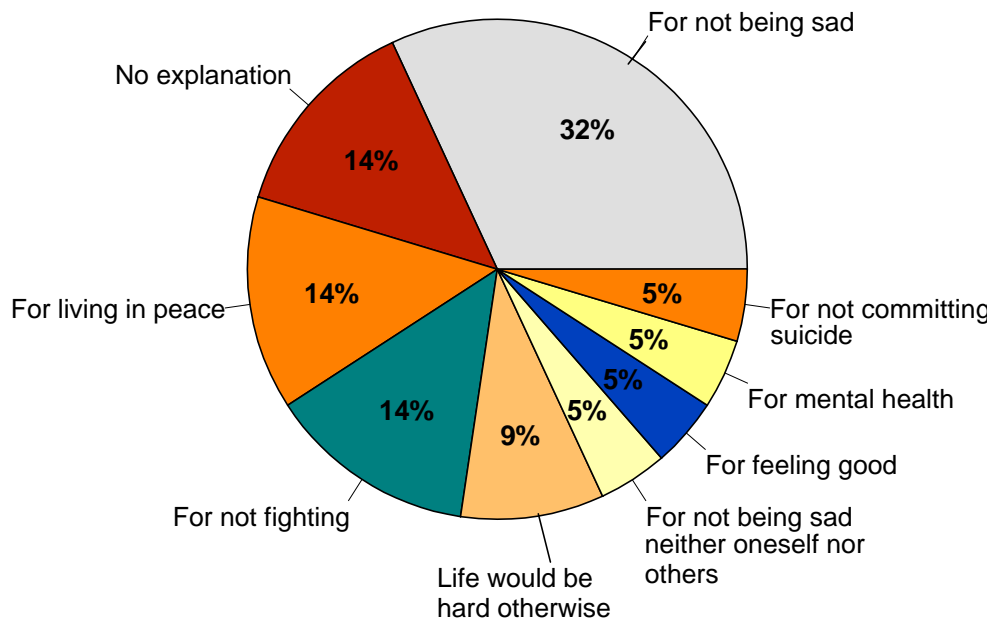
The following segment is an example of an answer to the question, ‘What is happiness?’

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*“Happiness, I don’t know. When I go and see my family, when I am with my sisters and my mother, when I play with my little daughter and we are fine, when I get another job, this is happiness”.*

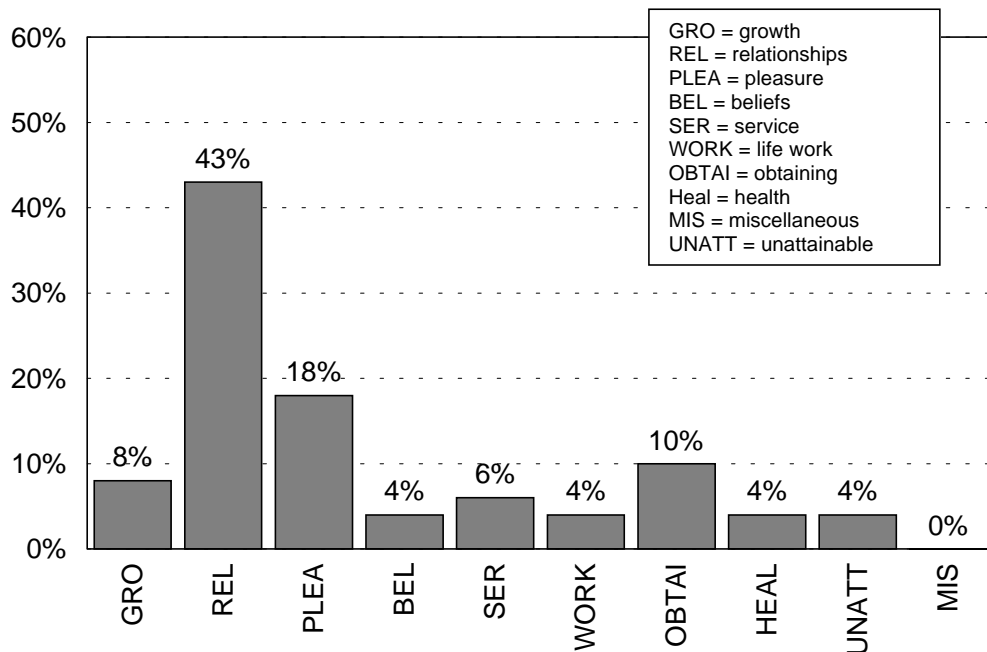
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**Figure 5.53:** Explanations for importance of happiness by Peruvian female night-students (22 answers)

*Peruvian male night-students.* The 15 participants produced a total of 51 answers (100 %).



**Figure 5.54:** Happiness by Peruvian male night-students (N = 51 answers by 15 participants)

Peruvian male night-students do not attribute the same importance to ‘Life work’ as the female night-students (11 % vs. 4 %). ‘Relationships’ in first position contains the sub-

categories ‘Family’ (N = 10), ‘Partner/Romantic love’ (N = 5), and ‘Friends’ (N = 4). For meaning of life, ‘Relationships’ had only contained ‘Family’. ‘Pleasure’ in second position focuses on joy and contentment/satisfaction. Getting everything that one has always wanted is the focus of ‘Obtaining’ in third position. ‘Growth’ in fourth place with 8% of the answers does not have a specific focus. These four categories account for 79 % of all answers.

Fourteen of the fifteen participants were asked if happiness was important for human beings, thirteen of whom answered ‘yes’. One subject said ‘yes, but it cannot be longed for, it just comes’. The following explanations for the importance of happiness were given by the 14 subjects:

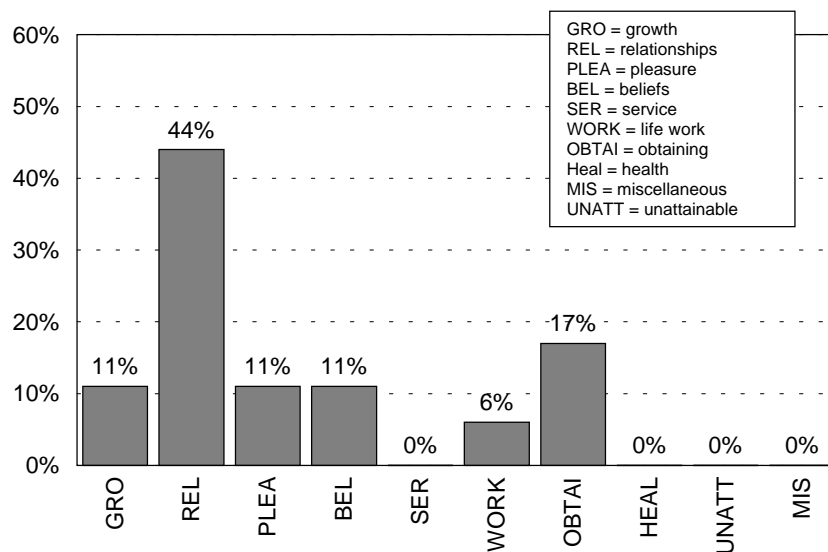
- For feeling good: 20%
- For not feeling lonely: 13%
- No explanation was given: 13%
- We were born to be happy: 7%
- For not closing yourself off: 7%
- For giving one’s soul peace: 7%
- For not worrying about one’s family: 7%
- For showing it to one’s children: 7%
- For leading a better life: 7%
- For obtaining something in life: 7%
- Because it is a beautiful feeling: 7%

The following segment is an example of an answer to the question, ‘What is happiness?’

*“Happiness is getting everything you want. It could be money, health, so many things really, a job”.*

### 5.3.2.5 Happiness by Peruvian immigrants

*Peruvian female immigrants.* The six women produced 18 answers (100 %). All subjects were able to answer the question (see Figure 5.55).



**Figure 5.55:** Happiness by Peruvian female immigrants (N = 18 answers by 6 participants)

The Peruvian female immigrants supply eight out of 18 answers for the category ‘*Relationships*’ with the sub-categories ‘*Family*’ ( $N = 2$ ) and ‘*Partner/Romantic love*’ ( $N = 1$ ). For meaning of life, these categories had been reversed. ‘*Friends*’ was not mentioned for either question. ‘*Obtaining*’ in second position is followed by three categories sharing third position, namely ‘*Pleasure*’, ‘*Belief*’ and ‘*Growth*’. These categories do not contain enough cases to identify a focus. Together, they account for 94 % of all answers, leaving one single statement for the category ‘*Life work*’.

All participants expressed their opinion that happiness was important for human beings. The following explanations for the importance of happiness were given:

- To live a quiet life: 33%
- Good feeling: 17%
- To transmit it to the children: 17%
- The family is not going to be satisfied with what they have got otherwise: 17%
- No further explanation: 17%

The following segment is an example of an answer to the question, ‘What is happiness?’

---

*“Well, it seems to me that happiness in the most important place is love. After that, the family. The family is part of happiness, too. And money. I mean, money is just something in addition, it is not happiness itself, but you can satisfy your wishes, you can buy the things you want. It is also important to have a steady job so you can live comfortably and give your family what they wish for, and this is the way to get happy”.*

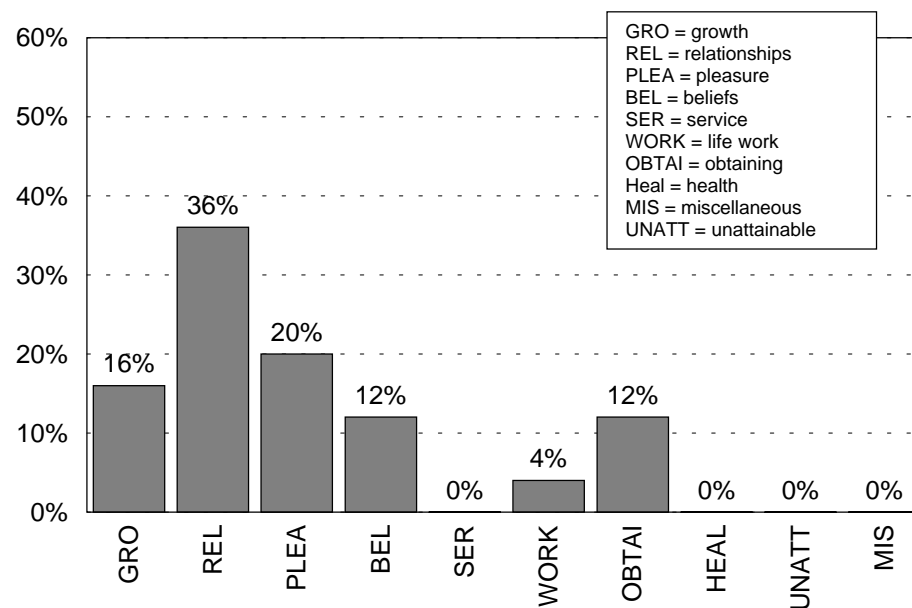
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*Peruvian male immigrants.* The eight participants produced 25 answers (100 %). All subjects were able to answer the question (see Figure 5.56).

‘*Relationships*’, with one sub-category ‘*Family*’, takes first position in the sub-sample of the male immigrants. ‘*Pleasure*’ in second position is followed by ‘*Growth*’. No special focus for these categories could be identified. Fourth place is shared by ‘*Belief*’, entirely composed of ‘*Political/Social*’, and ‘*Obtaining*’. Together, these five categories account for 96 % of all answers, leaving one single answers for the category ‘*Life work*’.

All participants expressed the opinion that happiness was important for human beings. The following explanations for the importance of happiness were given:

- To live a peaceful life: 38%
- To be quiet, united, without arguments and problems: 13%
- You have to look for it and get it, it won't come to you: 13%
- Only mad people would not want to be happy. You can't live well without it: 13%
- Jesus would have to come to make people happy: 13%
- No explanation: 13%



**Figure 5.56:** Happiness by Peruvian male immigrants ( $N = 25$  answers by 8 participants)

The following segment is an example of an answer to the question, ‘What is happiness?’, which expresses an attitude subsumed under ‘*Political/Social belief*’

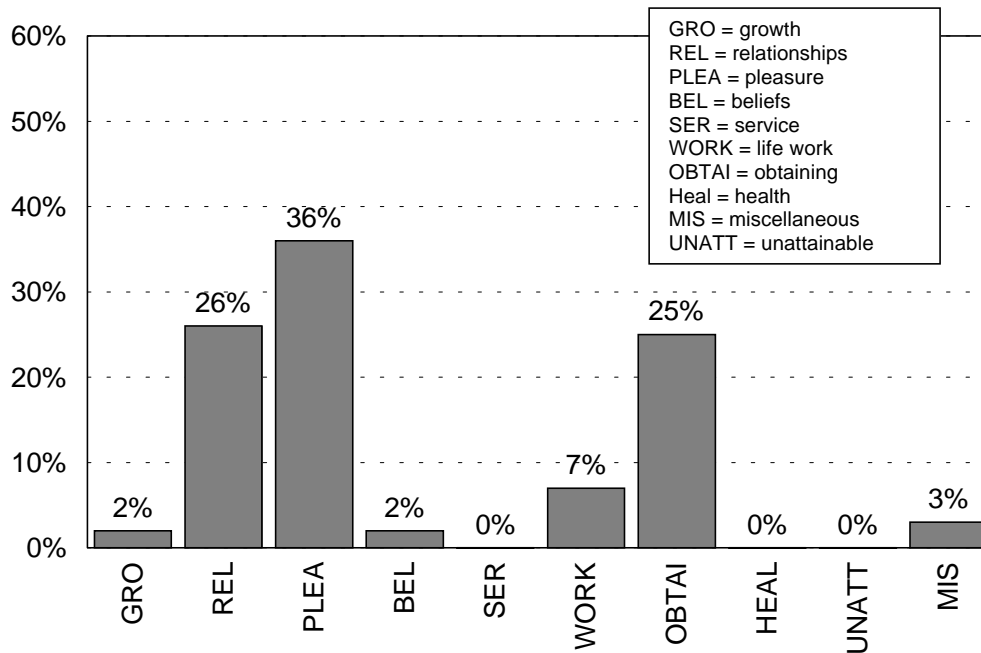
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*“I cannot be happy with so much misery around me. Only hypocrites can be happy. So many children are begging in the streets – how can I be happy if human rights do not exist? I know that they are written down but they do not exist in practice. But those who say that money is happiness, for me money has no value, money comes and goes like the tides”.*

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### 5.3.2.6 Happiness by Peruvian Indians

*Peruvian female Indians.* The 30 participants produced 102 answers (100 %).



**Figure 5.57:** Happiness by Peruvian female Indians ( $N = 102$  answers by 30 participants)

Contrary to the other sub-samples, the female Indians provide most answers for the category ‘Pleasure’ with the focuses ‘parties’ and ‘occasions to drink alcohol’. ‘Relationships’ is mostly composed of answers belonging to the sub-category ‘Family’ ( $N = 24$ ), and one answer in ‘Friends’. For meaning of life, ‘Family’ had contained 45 answers, and ‘Partner/Romantic love’ four, while ‘Friends’ was not included. In third position we find ‘Obtaining’, whose answers refer both to the fulfillment of basic needs such as ‘having enough for cooking dinner’ and to luxury beyond those needs such as ‘winning something in a lottery’. Together, these three categories account for 87 % of all answers, leaving the remaining 13 % for four other categories.

Twenty-nine participants were asked if happiness was important, twenty-eight of whom expressed their opinion that it was. One participant replied: ‘Yes, but since happiness is always accompanied by too much alcohol, I think they should not be happy too often’.

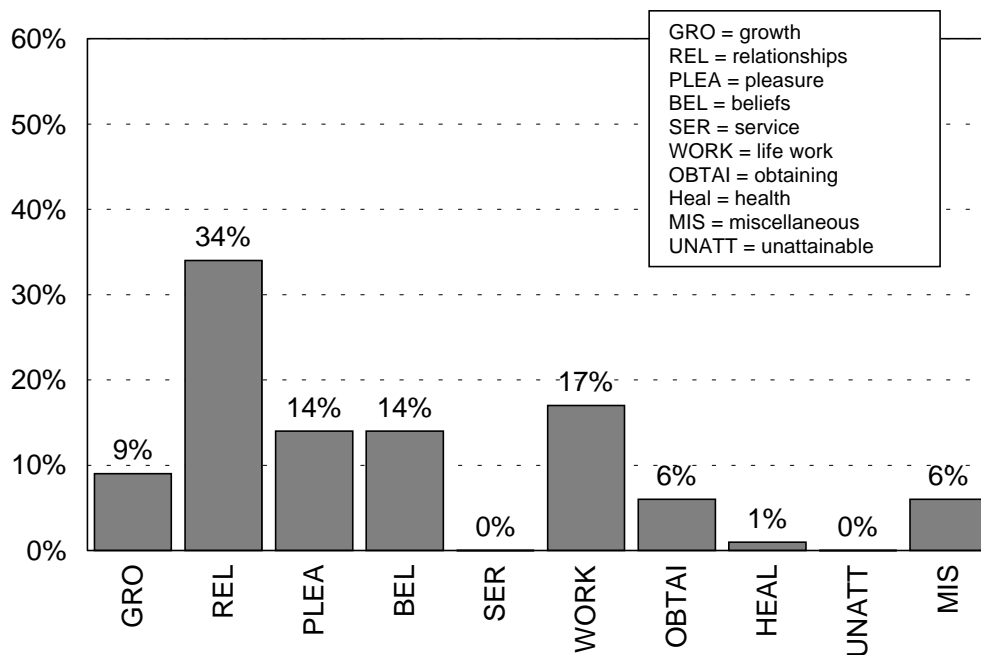
The following explanations for the importance of happiness were given:

- no explanation was given: 33%
- otherwise, there would only be sorrow, and this not good: 21%
- one cannot be complaining all the time: 6%
- for not getting ill: 6%
- for living a peaceful life: 6%
- happiness is the meaning of life: 6%
- for making one’s children happy, too: 6%
- otherwise we would be crying: 3%
- if you are only sad you get depressed and die: 3%
- if you are sad all the time you get old very soon: 3%
- for living a good life: 3%
- for remembering nice moments when you die: 3%

The following segment is an example of an answer to the question, ‘What is happiness?’

*“Happiness is expressed when there are motives for drinking alcohol, when something good has happened, when people buy something for themselves after selling a cow. With these things people are happy”.*

Peruvian male Indians. The 30 participants produced 120 answers (100 %).



**Figure 5.58:** Happiness by Peruvian male Indians ( $N = 120$  answers by 30 participants)

Male Indians differ in their answer pattern from females. In first position we find ‘Relationships’ with the sub-categories ‘Family’ ( $N = 22$ ), ‘Partner/Romantic love’ ( $N = 6$ ) and ‘Friends’ ( $N = 1$ ). For meaning in life, ‘Family’ had contained 31 answers, ‘Friends’ one, while ‘Partner/Romantic love’ was not included. ‘Life work’ takes second position with the clear focus on good results obtained by agricultural work. ‘Pleasure’ in third place focuses on parties ( $N = 8$ ) and alcohol ( $N = 5$ ). ‘Belief’ takes fourth position with the sub-categories ‘Political/Social’ ( $N = 13$ ), focusing on progress for the community, and ‘Religious/Spiritual’ ( $N = 4$ ), focusing on happiness derived from God’s mercy. These four categories account for 79 % of all answers, leaving 21 % for four other categories.

Twenty-nine participants answered the question if happiness was important with ‘yes’, one participant did not answer the question.

The following explanations for the importance of happiness were given:

- Otherwise you get old very quickly: 22%
  - No explanation was given: 15%
  - Otherwise you get ill [referring to physical and mental illness]: 12%
  - For not being sad: 10%
  - For achieving progress: 10%
  - For the well and progress of the community: 5%
  - It would not be right otherwise: 5%
  - It would not be a good life otherwise: 5%
- For not having problems between people: 5%
  - It would be like living in the darkness otherwise: 2%
  - For not perceiving others as your enemies: 2%
  - There would not be peace otherwise: 2%
  - The house would be quiet otherwise: 2%
  - The whole family would not be alright otherwise: 2%

The following segment is an example of an answer to the question, ‘What is happiness?’

*“What makes me happy are the activities that the committees and the government are initiating now, for example the school or the medical post for the community, and the development of the adolescents, who in earlier times could go nowhere with their worries and proposals. (...) Women are thinking of the future now, and these things make me proud and happy about my community”.*

### 5.3.2.7 Summary of the results concerning happiness

For all sub-samples, the concept of happiness is summarized in Table 5.10. (The total *N* refers to the number of given answers).

**Table 5.10:** Happiness (relative frequencies).

sample	<i>N</i> <sup>1</sup>	relationships	growth	pleasure	service	beliefs	life work	obtaining	health	existentialism	miscellaneous
Gstu ♀, <i>N</i> = 37	132	21 %	23 %	42 %	--	1 %	5 %	2 %	2 %	1 %	3 %
Gstu ♂, <i>N</i> = 25	109	26 %	22 %	28 %	--	4 %	6 %	11 %	2 %	--	1 %
GnonStu ♀, <i>N</i> = 25	110	26 %	25 %	26 %	2 %	1 %	6 %	9 %	3 %	--	4 %
GnonStu ♂, <i>N</i> = 17	47	19 %	17 %	32 %	2 %	2 %	4 %	13 %	4 %	--	6 %
Pstu ♀, <i>N</i> = 25	116	23 %	34 %	22 %	2 %	1 %	8 %	9 %	2 %	1 %	--
Pstu ♂, <i>N</i> = 23	78	27 %	30 %	21 %	3 %	5 %	4 %	9 %	1 %	1 %	--
Pnight ♀, <i>N</i> = 20	54	57 %	2 %	9 %	--	2 %	11 %	7 %	7 %	2 %	2 %
Pnight ♂, <i>N</i> = 15	51	43 %	8 %	18 %	6 %	4 %	4 %	10 %	4 %	4 %	--
Pimmi ♀, <i>N</i> = 6	18	44 %	11 %	11 %	--	11 %	6 %	17 %	--	--	--
Pimmi ♂, <i>N</i> = 8	25	36 %	16 %	20 %	--	12 %	4 %	12 %	--	--	--
Pind ♀, <i>N</i> = 30	102	26 %	2 %	36 %	--	2 %	7 %	25 %	--	--	3 %
Pind ♂, <i>N</i> = 30	120	34 %	9 %	14 %	--	14 %	17 %	6 %	1 %	--	5 %

Note: ♀ = female; ♂ = male; Gstu = German students; GnonStu = German non-student; Pstu = Peruvian students; Pnight = Peruvian night-students; Pimmi = Peruvian immigrants; Pind = Peruvian Indians column 1 = total of given answers

The four German sub-samples present a relatively uniform picture: *'Pleasure'*, in first place, followed by *'Relationships'* and *'Growth'* are the main categories for describing happiness. *'Obtaining'* is the one other category with some importance, while all other categories only hold one to six percent of all answers, and can therefore be neglected. German female students, however, consider *'Obtaining'* least important of all sub-samples (2 % German female students vs. 12 % mean all other samples). The male students with 11 % come much closer to the total mean.

The eight Peruvian sub-samples show a more complex picture. Peruvian students describe happiness above all in terms of *'Growth'*, while the six remaining Peruvian sub-groups provide significantly less answers for *'Growth'* (mean students 32 % vs. mean other Peruvians 8 %). The other main categories for Peruvian students are *'Relationships'*, in second position, followed by *'Pleasure'*, and in fourth position *'Obtaining'*, which makes them more similar to the German samples than to their compatriots. For all other Peruvian sub-samples, with exception of the female Indians, *'Relationships'* holds first position for describing happiness, mostly followed by *'Pleasure'* and *'Obtaining'*. Peruvian students are closer in their perception of happiness to the four German samples in all categories except *'Pleasure'*. The Germans are more pleasure-oriented than the Peruvians. The order and mean percentages of *'Pleasure'* and *'Growth'* are inverted for Peruvian students and German sub-groups: *'Pleasure'*: mean Peruvian students 22 % vs. mean Germans 32 %; *'Growth'*: mean Peruvian students 32 % vs. mean Germans 22 %. Contrary to the German students, Peruvian students show no visible gender difference in *'Obtaining'*; both have a group mean of nine percent, while German male students are much more focused on *'Obtaining'* than females.

The Indians also show clear gender differences. For women, *'Pleasure'*, in first position, is followed by *'Relationships'* and *'Obtaining'*, while men's answers are mostly subsumed in *'Relationships'*, followed by *'Life work'*. In joint third position we find *'Pleasure'* and *'Belief'*. *'Obtaining'* only gets six percent in the male sub-sample, as opposed to 25 % in the female. *'Pleasure'* contains 36 % of all female answers, and only 14 % of the male. *'Belief'* with two percent is almost completely neglected by women, while men supply 14 % of their answers for this category. This shows again that the development and progress of the Indian community is regarded as a male domain, while women take care of the domestic domain. In this context, it is interesting that women provide less answers for *'Relationships'* than men (26 % women vs. 34 % men). This result does not meet the expected outcome that women's primary source of happiness will be the family. The difference in *'Life*



work', however, is in line with daily Indian practice, with men obtaining a mean of 17 %, women of only seven percent.

Unlike for the meaning of life, all subjects were able to answer the question of happiness.

To get a better comparison, the following Table 5.11 shows the relative frequencies of the sample as a whole, the German samples vs. the Peruvian samples, German students vs. Peruvian students, and Peruvian Indians vs. the other Peruvian sub-groups.

**Table 5.11:** Happiness, comparison of selective sub-groups (relative frequencies).

sample	relation- ships	growth	pleasure	service	beliefs	life work	obtain- ing	health	unatt	miscel- laneous
<b>total</b>	32 %	17 %	23 %	1 %	5 %	7 %	11 %	2 %	1 %	2 %
<b>German</b>	23 %	22 %	32 %	2 %	2 %	5 %	9 %	3 %	--	4 %
<b>Peru</b>	36 %	14 %	19 %	1 %	6 %	8 %	12 %	2 %	1 %	1 %
<b>German students</b>	24 %	23 %	35 %	--	3 %	6 %	7 %	2 %	1 %	2 %
<b>Peruvian students</b>	25 %	32 %	22 %	3 %	3 %	6 %	9 %	2 %	1 %	--
<b>Indians</b>	30 %	6 %	25 %	--	8 %	12 %	16 %	1 %	--	4 %
<b>Peruvians without Indians</b>	38 %	17 %	17 %	2 %	6 %	6 %	11 %	2 %	1 %	--
<b>Peruvians without students</b>	40 %	8 %	18 %	1 %	8 %	8 %	13 %	2 %	1 %	2 %

As for the explanation for the importance of happiness, Germans provided fewer reasons than Peruvians, but no clear focus within the samples could be identified for discussing cultural, educational, or gender differences. There is one exception, however, which is that both female and male Indians argue that happiness is mainly important for not getting sick and old too quickly. This finding was not replicated by the other ten sub-samples.

The category '*Belief*' is this time almost entirely composed of the sub-category '*Political/Social*'. Of 39 cases, 31 are listed in '*Political/Social*', eight in '*Religious/Spiritual*', and none in '*Transcendence*' or '*Mission*'.

Once slight modifications were included, Ebersole's categories, which were developed to classify meaning in life, have proven suitable to classify happiness as well. Only two percent of the answers of the total sample had to be listed in the rest-category '*Miscellaneous*'.

### 5.3.2.8 Conclusion

The assumption that Peruvian students would present an answering pattern more similar to the German sub-samples than to the Peruvian ones could be confirmed. There are interesting differences in the perception of meaning and happiness across the sub-samples. Table 5.12 summarizes some of these aspects.

**Table 5.12:** Main differences between meaning and happiness (relative frequencies).

sample		relationships	growth	pleasure	service	beliefs	life work	obtaining	existentialism /unatt
total	Meaning	18 %	22 %	14 %	4 %	16 %	9 %	3 %	12 %
	Happiness	32 %	17 %	23 %	1 %	5 %	7 %	11 %	1 %
Germans	Meaning	12 %	23 %	20 %	5 %	12 %	4 %	1 %	21 %
	Happiness	23 %	22 %	32 %	2 %	2 %	5 %	9 %	--
Peruvians	Meaning	22 %	22 %	10 %	4 %	18 %	12 %	4 %	8 %
	Happiness	36 %	14 %	19 %	1 %	6 %	8 %	12 %	1 %
Peruvian students	Meaning	14 %	25 %	17 %	8 %	23 %	8 %	3 %	4 %
	Happiness	25 %	32 %	22 %	3 %	3 %	6 %	9 %	1 %
Peruvians without students	Meaning	24 %	21 %	8 %	3 %	16 %	13 %	4 %	8 %
	Happiness	40 %	8 %	18 %	1 %	8 %	8 %	13 %	1 %
Indians	Meaning	43 %	8 %	8 %	2 %	19 %	13 %	7 %	1 %
	Happiness	30 %	6 %	25 %	--	8 %	12 %	16 %	--
Peruvians without Indians	Meaning	14 %	26 %	11 %	5 %	17 %	11 %	3 %	11 %
	Happiness	38 %	17 %	17 %	2 %	6 %	6 %	11 %	1 %
All women	Meaning	22 %	21 %	14 %	4 %	11 %	9 %	4 %	13 %
	Happiness	33 %	16 %	24 %	1 %	3 %	7 %	12 %	1 %
All men	Meaning	14 %	23 %	14 %	5 %	20 %	9 %	2 %	11 %
	Happiness	31 %	17 %	22 %	2 %	7 %	7 %	10 %	1 %

Looking at the sample as a whole, ‘*Relationships*’ is more adequate to describe happiness than meaning in life, while ‘*Growth*’ is the most suitable category to describe meaning. The other key-category for both meaning and happiness is ‘*Pleasure*’. These three categories account for 72 % of the whole sample for happiness, and 54 % for meaning. In the ranking for meaning, ‘*Belief*’ with 16 % takes a still higher position than ‘*Pleasure*’ with 14 %, while for happiness, this category is of no major significance. For all sub-samples, ‘*Obtaining*’ is significantly more important for happiness than for meaning. Women obtain a significantly higher score for ‘*Relationships*’ when it comes to meaning, but there is no significant gender difference for happiness. There are no gender differences for the key-categories ‘*Growth*’ or ‘*Pleasure*’ for either happiness or meaning. The category ‘*Belief*’ still shows significant gender differences for both meaning and happiness, with men scoring higher than women.

In their perception of meaning, Peruvian students are closer to the German mean in all categories, except ‘*Belief*’, ‘*Obtaining*’, and ‘*Existentialism*’. In their perception of happiness,

German and Peruvian students differ in the key-category '*Pleasure*', where Peruvian students respond in a more similar manner to the other Peruvian sub-groups than the Germans, who are much more hedonistic than the Peruvians. In all other categories, however, they come closer to the Germans than to their compatriots, which supports the hypothesis that education has a stronger influence than culture, and replicates Oerter's findings that students in all countries in his cross-cultural study respond in a similar manner. The interesting contribution of this investigation is that this is not only true for the stage levels, as Oerter could show, but equally for Ebersole's content categories.

Summarizing the results, the major findings are that all sub-samples except the Indians perceive meaning of life in situations subsumed under the category '*Growth*', which stands for autonomy, independence, personal goals, projects, and development. The Indians draw their meaning mainly from personal relationships, mostly the well-being and progress of their children. Happiness on the other hand is mainly defined in terms of '*Pleasure*' by the German sub-groups, and in '*Relationships*' by the Peruvian non-academic samples. Unlike all other samples, Peruvian students choose '*Growth*' as the most important category for both happiness and meaning.

The link between meaning of life and happiness could not be clearly identified. A recurrent point of view was that meaning in life consists of being happy (see Table 5.11), but there were also statements that happiness is the result of experiencing meaning. These single cases are not sufficient to be generalized.

The following Table 5.12 depicts the number of answers which stated that the meaning of life consists of being happy for each sub-sample. Since Diener (2000) defines one of the two sub-dimensions of happiness as being satisfied/content, I included this statement in Table 5.13.

With the exception of the Peruvian female night-students, each sub-sample contains a number of cases which stand for the conviction that happiness is the meaning of life. These cases range from four percent (male Peruvian night-students) up to 10 % (Peruvian female students). On average, Germans and Peruvian students score higher than Peruvians with lower education (eight percent both Germans and Peruvian students vs. five percent Peruvians with lower education). No systematic gender difference could be observed.

**Table 5.13:** Meaning of life (absolute and relative frequencies).

sample	The meaning in life consists primarily of ...		
	being/becoming happy	being content/satisfied	N answers for this question
<b>Gstu</b> ♀, <i>N</i> = 37	9 (8 %)	7 (6 %)	119
<b>Gstu</b> ♂, <i>N</i> = 25	7 (9 %)	3 (4 %)	81
<b>GnonStu</b> ♀, <i>N</i> = 25	8 (8 %)	7 (7 %)	95
<b>GnonStu</b> ♂, <i>N</i> = 17	4 (8 %)	1 (2 %)	48
<b>Pstu</b> ♀, <i>N</i> = 25	8 (10 %)	5 (6 %)	80
<b>Pstu</b> ♂, <i>N</i> = 23	6 (9 %)	--	71
<b>Pnight</b> ♀, <i>N</i> = 20	--	--	58
<b>Pnight</b> ♂, <i>N</i> = 15	2 (4 %)	--	54
<b>Pimmi</b> ♀, <i>N</i> = 6	1 (6 %)	--	17
<b>Pimmi</b> ♂, <i>N</i> = 8	2 (9 %)	--	23
<b>Pind</b> ♀, <i>N</i> = 30	6 (7 %)	--	90
<b>Pind</b> ♂, <i>N</i> = 30	4 (4 %)	--	105
<b>together</b>	57 (7 %)	23 (3 %)	841

Note: ♀ = female; ♂ = male; Gstu = German students; GnonStu = German non-student; Pstu = Peruvian students; Pnight = Peruvian night-students; Pimmi = Peruvian immigrants; Pind = Peruvian Indians

The statement that the meaning of life consists in being content/satisfied was only made by the German groups and the Peruvian female students. Viewing the sample as a whole, only three percent of all answers given referred to satisfaction. This result could be an indicator that, contrary to Diener's belief (Diener, 2000), life satisfaction might not necessarily be a sub-dimension of happiness, but the evidence of my results is too weak to prove this.