

## ARGENTINE PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH: A REVIEW

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**ABSTRACT:** This article presents a summary report concerning Latin American investigators performing psychological research, with special reference to work conducted in Argentina. Articles published since 1990 in *Interdisciplinary Journal of Psychology and Related Sciences* and in the *Bulletin of the Argentine Association of Behavioral Sciences* serve as the basis for the review together with some ongoing investigations. It should be noted that a number of Argentinean studies are not included in this report due to the fact that they are unknown to the authors.

**KEY WORDS:** Argentina; psychological research; content analysis; psychological journals.

This article reviews a broad variety of psychological research projects conducted by Argentinean and other Latin American investigators in Argentina. Argentinean psychologists have pursued investigations in many research domains including psychometrics, environmental psychology, developmental psychology, psychosocial gerontology, personality, educational psychology, psychological methodology, cognitive psychology, social psychology, clinical psychology, and experimental psychology. Relevant research projects in these areas are summarized in the following pages.

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## PSYCHOMETRICS

In CIIPME (Centro Interdisciplinario de Investigaciones en Psicología Matemática y Experimental), psychometric advances have contributed to the development of many tests that have been constructed regarding different areas such as problem solving (Horacio J. A. Rimoldi, María C. Richaud, Roberto Raimondo, Elsa Bei), affective processes such as loneliness, depression, attachment, interpersonal relationships, and coping in children and adolescents (María C. Richaud, Carla Sacchi, Eduardo Moreno), and attitudes (Dorina Stefani, Nélida Rodríguez Feijóo).

Psychologists working under the direction of Professor Nuria Cortada (University of el Salvador and University of Buenos Aires) have developed new tests to evaluate performance in the sciences, humanities, language, and mathematics. These instruments were based on a technique devised by Velosky, Rabinowitz, and Robeson (1988) who worked at the Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia. The technique involves an "uncueing" procedure that prevents the induction of right answers and errors and suggestions generated in multiple choice tests. The same investigators together with Sergio Gentile have evaluated the performance of high school students from the city of Buenos Aires on the Ravens' Progressive Matrices Test. The results were compared with those obtained by J. C. Raven, J. H. Court, and J. Raven (1993). Psychometric factors related to Item Response Theory are being investigated by Cortada. At the National University of Cordoba, Ana M. Alderete is developing a diagnostic instrument to obtain information concerning the potential to learn in preschool children.

## ENVIRONMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

At the National University of Cordoba, as part of a project entitled "Objective-Subjective Statistical Survey on Urban Noise" supported by CONICET [Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas], Cristina Biassone's (CIAL [Centro de Investigaciones Acústicas y Luminotécnicas]) has been conducting excellent studies especially referring to the effects of noise in the teaching-learning process. This study is related to Biassone's previous study exploring the effects of noise pollution on oral language comprehension in children.

At the same Center (CIAL), Ana M. Verzini is investigating the

effects of very low frequency sounds on both physical and psychological behavior, and Claudia Arias, Oscar Ramos, and Aldo Ortiz Skarp have studied the echo-perception process (non-visual perception of obstacles) including its acoustic, psychoacoustic, and psychoneurological components.

## DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

At the University of San Luis, Claribel Morales has conducted significant studies in developmental psychology. Claribel Morales and Ruth Taborda have studied the performance of 4- to 6-year-old children from the cities of San Luis and Villa Mercedes, and compared the results obtained with those reported by Foscarini in Cordoba and Cortada in Buenos Aires. Furthermore, Taborda has utilized the same sample to investigate how children perform on the Goodenough-Harris Drawing Test. The results obtained confirmed the need to adapt instruments to the sociocultural environments in which they are applied. At the University of Cordoba, Silvia Tornimbeni has compared the performance of children in urban and rural environments and of children attending special and regular education classes, respectively.

Regarding the mother-child relationship, Alicia Oiberman conducted a pioneering study at CIIPME. She has investigated the mother-child relationship during the first months after birth and has found that visual communication is significant during the first three months and that physical interaction develops during this period as a result of the mother initiating physical interactions with the child. Only at six months of age does the child initiate physical interaction with the mother, while verbal behavior appears already in the third month, together with gurgling. Together with other collaborators, Oiberman developed an interview model to be used with mothers during the early postpartum period. At Instituto Cabred in Córdoba, Ana M. Barreda and her collaborators have developed instruments that help pediatricians to trace children's development. Finally, Silvia Brussino and Ana María Alderete (National University of Cordoba) are studying parental upbringing guidelines at different sociocultural levels.

Mirta Ison is conducting studies on attention deficit problems, hyperactivity, and aggressive behavior in school children. Ison, Carlos Fachinelli, and Eduardo R. Soria, at the University of Aconcagua, Mendoza, developed the Behavioral Observation Guide for children



that can be used to explore physical and verbal aggression, negativism, transgression, impulsiveness, hyperactivity, attention deficit disorders, aggression directed against the self, inhibition, and children's acceptability by peers. In the same city, Ison at *CRICYT* [Centro Regional de Investigaciones Científicas y Tecnológicas] is studying the influence of social competition among school age children exhibiting behavioral problems. Finally, at the University of Cordoba, Brussino is developing an explanatory model of children's aggressive behavior as related to social competitiveness, locus of control, and intellectual capacity.

In order to study the relationships between adolescents and parents, Andrea Klimkievics has adapted Schaefer's "Children's Report of Parental Behavior Inventory" and Schaefer and Filkenstein's "Parent Report of Child Behavior Towards Parent Inventory" (CBTPI). Her study demonstrates the characteristics inherent to the parent-child relationship as perceived by normal and non-normal, drug-addicted adolescents.

Richaud and Sacchi have been working on the processes involved in coping with stress and coping styles in childhood and adolescence. During recent years, Eduardo Moreno has participated in this project. The study has principally investigated children's perceptions of parent and peer relationships and their connection to attachment, loneliness, depression, new interpersonal relationships, etc. The influence of dispositional factors and temperament is also analyzed.

### PSYCHOSOCIAL GERONTOLOGY

At CIIPME, studies related to psychosocial gerontology have been conducted by Dorina Stefani, Nélica Rodríguez Feijoo, and Adriana Riggio. Following Fishbein's approach, Stefani has been concerned with the study of the attitudes of the general population as well as of the family members of elderly persons, with reference to geriatric care in special centers. In her studies she has also investigated this problem with geriatric research participants. At the present time, she is studying how belief systems influence the social participation of the elderly. Of secondary interest is her concern with how to prevent AIDS among the elderly. Riggio, in turn, has explored how the elderly utilize their leisure time.

### PERSONALITY

A significant number of investigators at different universities and research centers, have been interested in the study of personality such as studies conducted at the National University of Cuyo, in Mendoza, and the National University of San Luis. For example, Abelardo Pithod has developed norms and standardized Eysenck's EPQ Questionnaire at the National University of Cuyo, while at the National University of San Luis, Claribel Morales and his coworkers are investigating from a systemic perspective the theoretical and methodological problems of personality evaluation. Marta S. Uhrlandt and collaborators have explored cross-cultural personality traits. In addition, Morales and Muñoz have examined the results obtained from administering Block's California Q-Sort, Form III.

At CIIPME, Rodríguez Feijoo has developed norms for subjects in the city of Buenos Aires in order to apply the California Personality Inventory.

Moreno (CIIPME) and Raquel Migone administered Fitts' Tennessee Self-Concept Scale to 16- to 19-year-old adolescents in the city of Buenos Aires. It is interesting to note that this scale has had only limited application outside the USA.

At CIIPME, Richaud and Sacchi have applied the Holtzman Inkblot Test to children and adolescents, exploring its validity and also examining its various scales such as anxiety and hostility, as well as pursuing a variety of social and cross-cultural comparisons with the help of the test.

Richaud has performed several studies where the main variable has been locus of control. She has developed a multidimensional hypothesis exploring how locus of control evolves among children over the years. As a result of this, she has created a Locus of Control scale for children and adolescents. Richaud, Sacchi, and Moreno are investigating how 13- to 18-year-old adolescents perceive threat and how they cope with stress. In this area, Sacchi, following current developments in cognitive psychology, has explored interpersonal trust in terms of social learning theory. As a result, two scales, one for adolescents and one for adults were developed.

Franchi (CIIPME) has examined how cognitive therapy can be applied in the Argentine sociocultural contexts and studied the concept of self in relationship to competence, perception, and assertiveness.



### EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Educational Psychology has been a subject of continued interest in Argentina. A few examples illustrate this situation. At CIIPME, many studies by Rodriguez Feijoo, Stefani, and M. Mitrece have investigated the attitudes of high school students and their relationship to computer software knowledge. A scale of attitudes toward *Informatic*<sup>1</sup> was created and factor-analyzed by Rodriguez Feijoo and Stefani. Five dimensions explained the results showing how *informatic* relates to learning. In this area, we should mention the study by Bertone (Instituto Cabred), who examined how computation may be applied to learning.

Carmen Dagfal (National University of San Luis) and collaborators investigated how violence and aggression in the educational milieu are related to educational level and sociocultural background.

At the National University of Cordoba, Edgardo Perez is interested in creating instruments to evaluate adolescent vocations.

At the University of Buenos Aires, Nora Leibovich, Roberto Muiños, and collaborators have developed a graphic test called *Pareja educativa*. This instrument is used to determine how the teacher-student relationship is influenced by students' gender and success in school. The same authors and Marta Schufer are examining the influence of different contexts such as family and school on the perception of the teacher-student relationship.

An interdisciplinary group including Carmen Peme, Adriana Freyre, Sandra Gerbaudo, and Elena Echevarrieta (National University of Cordoba) have studied how the didactic and epistemological beliefs of science teachers contribute to improving teaching ability.

At the Instituto Rosario de Investigacion en Ciencias de la Educacion (IRICE), Mirta S. Giacobe, Maria de los Angeles Sagastizabal, and Alberto Miranda are exploring the characteristics of teaching in the social sciences as well as the effects of different cultural contexts. At the National University of Cordoba, Tornimbeni is examining the type of research being conducted in different departments of psychology at the present time.

At CIIPME, Horacio J. A. Rimoldi and Roberto Raimondo have investigated cognitive processes with special reference to medical diagnosis, mathematical talent, and comparisons of problem solving tactics in terms of different cultures, ages, gender, and so on. To evaluate the results obtained, information theory is applied. Rimoldi and

Raimondo have also been exploring the relationship between symptoms and syndromes.

In the area of medical education, many transnational studies, including studies conducted at The National University of La Plata and at University of el Salvador, and investigators from Uruguay and several universities in the USA (Erdmann from Jefferson Medical College and faculty from the University of Missouri), are being performed with the collaboration of Rimoldi and Raimondo. Rimoldi and Raimondo are in the process of analyzing new instruments to evaluate the relationship between symptoms and syndromes. In a related area, Blanca Humberto, of CONICET and the National University of the Northeast has been investigating the attitudes of physicians in relation to the practice of medicine and its effects in the context of different health programs.

### PSYCHOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

Rimoldi and Gary Burger (University of Missouri, Saint Louis) have examined the problem of "reversing the roles" as originally outlined by Cyril Burt. Rimoldi, Burger, and Elsa Bei have compared logical with psychological reasoning. Richaud has participated in some of these studies.

With reference to meta-analysis, Richaud, Rimoldi, and Silvia Gamiz have explored this problem using different ANOVA models. There is also research conducted by Richaud on the most recent developments in the area concerning cumulative knowledge and the results obtained in repeated studies. Meta-analyses of studies related to psychotherapy have been pursued by Carlos Disogra at the National University of Cordoba. A similar study was conducted by Emilio Moyano Diaz and Andrea Moyano Cornejo who performed an "epistemometric" analysis of research published in Chilean journals of psychology.

Mariano Castagnino, Alicia Omar, and Cristina Bender have developed methodological approaches to explore errors performed in education evaluation. Finally, Rimoldi is now investigating the concepts of random, order, chaos, and the progression from randomness to stability in different collections of numbers.



### COGNITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Argentina has a long tradition of research on problem solving, for instance studies by Rimoldi, Richaud, and Alfredo Lopez Alonso. Lopez Alonso and Nora Ricardi have developed the Test de Coherencia de Razonamiento that has been used to compare cognitive processes in normal children and in children with hearing problems. The research project has led to interesting epistemological considerations by the authors.

At IRICE, Néstor Roselli and Olga Peralta are investigating cognitive and social cognitive processes in children's development, while Ana M. Perez is conducting research on the theory and methods of social representation analysis.

Along similar lines, Zaiga Grinberg Lewin from the Universidad Federal de Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, Brazil, is examining the effects of television advertising on children's cognitive development. Finally, Jorge Horas and Alejandra Taborda at the National University of San Luis are investigating neuronal nets with reference to cognitive sequences.

### SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Miriam Aparicio (CONICET and National University of Cuyo) conducts research in two major areas. She is concerned with the psychosocial aspects of employment, comparing developed and underdeveloped countries. In addition, she has been attempting to find out how beliefs attitudes, ability, and so forth influence the development of "mental maps." Ingrid J. Melis (University of the Northeast) has investigated how professional profiles are related to the market's demand in various countries of Mercosur. At the same university, Gabriela Costa is interested in the evaluation and necessary changes in the health system in Argentina including private medicine. Within the same program, Américo J. Porcel is investigating the attitudes and behavior patterns of university students in relation to alcohol and psychoactive drugs. Finally, Melis has been studying professional profiles and their relationship to market demands.

Angel Rodriguez Kauth (National University of San Luis) directed a study on electoral behavior and its relationship to different kinds of social community groups. In the same area, Baggione and Brussino have explored how respondents consider the possibility of influencing political decisions.

### CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

In the field of Clinical Psychology, María C. Cortes and Alderete, both on the faculty of the National University of Cordoba, are conducting small-scale epidemiological studies on mental symptoms in the province of Cordoba.

At the National University of San Luis, Mabel Labiano is investigating how the application of cognitive-behavioral techniques influences academic achievement in university students. This research includes the development of appropriate procedures to restructure the resources for coping with stress. At the same university, María T. Florentino has been investigating how to reduce stress among students and teachers by modifying their cognitive and affective skills.

Alicia Mauro and associates are analyzing learning problems, basically dyslexia and low attention in children and adolescents from a neurological and psychoneurological perspective. Liliana Fracchia, Teresa Figueroa, Zulema Chaila, and Jorge Bianchi at the School of Medicine at the National University of Tucuman are studying the detection of psychosocial factors and biological indexes in puerperal depression.

### EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

At the Institute for Medical Research M. and M. Ferreyra, located in the city of Cordoba, Juan C. Molina and Juan C. Godoy are conducting research in experimental psychology. They are studying the effect of ethanol intoxication at different ontogenetic levels. These studies include those that explore how alcoholic intoxication affects learning and how, according to an animal model, ethanol influences behavior. Along the same lines, Alberto Fernandez has been investigating how cognitive processes are influenced by alcohol and how this could be used to predict recovery.

In addition, Daniel Cordoba Montoya, and Ana E. Faas have studied the neurological and behavioral components that influence learning.

At the University of Buenos Aires, Alba Mustacca and Santiago Pellegrini are performing research on themes related to experimental psychology concerning learning, and Pellegrini has been exploring problems related to immunology and stress.



## NOTE

1. A Spanish term that refers to what computer science has done to information processing (*Editor's note*).

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