Data available since the early 1980s have been invaluable in assessing the cultural changes occurring in societies around the globe, and Argentina is one of the countries with uninterrupted time-series data for the last two decades. This chapter analyzes the evolution of the main cultural changes in Argentine society in the past two decades, deriving data from the four World Values Surveys conducted by Gallup, Argentina in 1984, 1991, 1995, and 1999.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the world experienced significant changes in terms of ideas, politics and technological development with profound effects on the behavior, attitudes and values of large masses. Changes, ranging from the disappearance of the hypotheses related to the world’s bipolar organization and the Cold War conflicts, to developments in communication technology and the Internet, paved the way for a whole new concept of distance in terms of how people access information and interact with each other.

In addition to these exogenous factors, Argentina, as well as other Latin American countries, underwent major political changes during this period. Argentina, for example, experienced two decades of continuous democracy, something not seen since the first quarter of the twentieth century. For countries with long republican and democratic traditions, this may seem like a brief period, unlikely to have any major consequences. For Argentina, however, this represents a major institutional/legal change, with ramifications for cultural change as well. Values surveys suggest that cultural changes in Argentina extended beyond the political to many other aspects of life. Nonetheless, we start our discussion with political values.
Throughout the period 1916 to 1999, Argentine politics was characterized by turbulence. Three points will help summarize the institutional setting:

1. Only five times did alternation between two democratically-elected presidents take place through popular vote.
2. During this period, Argentina had at least twelve de facto presidents (appointed through non-democratic means), almost as many as those who took office under the Constitution.
3. For 21 non-consecutive years, the Armed Forces ruled the country, seizing power by toppling constitutionally elected leaders.

From 1983 onwards, democratic rule has uninterruptedly prevailed in Argentina. Although two presidents resigned before schedule, the changes in office were conducted under the Constitution and with the participation of Parliament. Thus, the two decades which we will analyze happen to be the longest period of uninterrupted democracy in Argentina since 1930. This brief historical consideration serves to illuminate how Argentines view and perceive democracy. On the one hand, they seem to lack the experience of living under democratic institutions—people over 40 years old have lived half their lives under non-democratic regimes—and, at the same time, society is convinced that democracy is still the best system of government.

However, it is not the case that Argentines are fully satisfied with the way democracy works in their country. In fact, 1 out of every 10 persons in 1999 were not satisfied with how their democracy worked, and a slightly greater level of dissatisfaction was observed among those with the lowest-income and education levels. This disapproval is basically explained by the dissatisfaction with the performance of the institutions linked to the political system that developed later.

Argentines’ perception of democracy, then, is far from being that of the perfect regime. They are critical of some aspects of democratic systems and respond more favorably to others, thus giving a perspective with varied hues. A little less than two thirds (60% to be precise) of Argentines consider democracy to be slow in decision-making (with the proportion varying according to socio-demographic characteristics), but about the same proportion (59%) think it is successful in maintaining order. Furthermore, most Argentines do not believe that the economy