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The Enduring Role of the Family in the Happiness of Puerto Ricans

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Abstract

The study of happiness has grown in popularity over the past decades emerging in psychology partly as a reaction against the emphasis on negative topics such as mental illness and other forms of dysfunction. However, the most common way to study happiness and well-being has been using scales that do not allow access to the comments or descriptions of the participants, reducing our comprehension of this phenomenon to numbers. In order to contribute to the study of happiness from a cultural perspective and to understand how Puerto Ricans describe their particular meaning of happiness, a two-phase qualitative descriptive design study was conducted before and after hurricane Maria hit our country. The category "The family context as a main reference for happiness" emerged in both phases of our research. Findings made clear the enduring role of the family in the meaning of happiness for Puerto Ricans.

Keywords

Happiness Studies, Families, Qualitative Descriptive Design, Familismo, Puerto Ricans, Hurricane Maria

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The Enduring Role of the Family in the Happiness of Puerto Ricans

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The study of happiness has grown in popularity over the past decades emerging in psychology partly as a reaction against the emphasis on negative topics such as mental illness and other forms of dysfunction. However, the most common way to study happiness and well-being has been using scales that do not allow access to the comments or descriptions of the participants, reducing our comprehension of this phenomenon to numbers. In order to contribute to the study of happiness from a cultural perspective and to understand how Puerto Ricans describe their particular meaning of happiness, a two-phase qualitative descriptive design study was conducted before and after hurricane Maria hit our country. The category "The family context as a main reference for happiness" emerged in both phases of our research. Findings made clear the enduring role of the family in the meaning of happiness for Puerto Ricans. Keywords: Happiness Studies, Families, Qualitative Descriptive Design, Familismo, Puerto Ricans, Hurricane Maria

Introduction

Happiness is an important aspect of human experience that influences other facets of human life (Aghababaei & Blanchnio, 2014); its study has grown in popularity over the past decades (Jongbloed & Andres, 2015). It has emerged in psychology partly as a reaction against the emphasis on negative topics such as mental illness and other forms of dysfunction (Bartram, 2011).

A diverse array of terms has been used in the cross disciplinary literature to address the study of happiness: subjective well-being, life satisfaction, experienced utility, and quality of life. Usually these terms are used as synonymous and apply to different concepts or quantities gathered from survey questions (Mackerron & Mourato, 2013). In social science and psychology, the study of happiness is approached from multiple concepts and the results are used to inform public policy (Rodríguez Araneda, 2015).

The most common way to study happiness and well-being has been using scales that do not allow for access to the comments or descriptions of the participants, reducing our comprehension of this phenomenon to numbers, which can be considered a limitation (Delle Fave, Brdar, Freire, Vella Brodrick, & Wissing, 2011). Culture and society are both important in determining how people perceive happiness (Delle Fave, Wissing, Brdar, Vella-Brodrick, & Freire, 2013; Joshanloo, 2013). As qualitative researchers, we agree with the argument of the above mentioned authors that it is necessary to consider the cultural domain in the analysis of happiness, so that that the collection of information may be free from preconceptions, allowing participants to describe their own understanding of it. For example, the happiness literature describes the Latin American paradox, making reference to the fact that individuals in Latin America report life satisfaction levels excessively high in relation to their income levels. However, theories focusing on economic

indicators alone neglect important aspects in the life of people, such as their interpersonal relations and their spiritual beliefs, which provide support to their sense of purpose in life (Rojas, 2016).

In order to contribute to the study of happiness from a cultural perspective and to understand how Puerto Ricans describe their particular meaning of happiness, we used a qualitative descriptive design study. This type of design allows for the opportunity of carrying out an in-depth exploration centered in the specific experiences of the participants, which facilitates the process of discovering and understanding their world. In this article we describe findings related to one of the categories found in our research, the family context and its enduring role in the meaning of happiness in Puerto Rico; thus, a discussion of the family context is included.

The Family Context

Family has been described as an interaction space of affective relationships that bring protection and security to its members (Nina Estrella, 2012). It is the first group that an individual belongs to and from which the individual acquires basic values (Pi Osoria & Cobián Mena, 2015); and by its nature, the family has assumed the implicit responsibility of socializing its members (Gallego Henao, 2012). According to this author, to emphasize the family as the core of a human being is important since it enables individuals to confirm their identity based on their references and develop self-esteem and confidence in themselves.

Much has been written on how the family as an institution has been changing in Puerto Rico during recent decades (Nina Estrella, 2014), and it has become more common to see unconventional family models: single parent families, step-parents, adoptive, same sex parents, and grand families. As maintained by Nina Estrella (2014), family diversity has always existed throughout humanity's social history, even though the only difference at present is the visibility and acceptance of what is politically and socially diverse. We agree with the author that it is necessary to discuss family from a heterogeneous perspective.

According to Morgado Camacho and Román Rodríguez (2014), what is important is not the family structure but the dynamics that occur in it. Given that, no structure guarantees happiness *a priori*, but does not prevent it either (Morgado Camacho & Román Rodríguez, 2014). This fact is abundantly clear in the works of Toro Alfonso (2014), whose research demonstrated that same sex couples contribute to a stable and nurturing family environment for their children.

Familismo is characterized by a sense of loyalty to the family and the belief that the family is a well-integrated unit in which family members can depend on one another. It has been defined as a multidimensional construct that includes values such as family obligation, financial support, emotional closeness, and respect (Knight et al., 2010; Lugo Steidel & Contreras, 2003; Reid, Halqunseth, Espinosa Hernandez, & Vasilenko, 2018; Villarreal et al., 2005). In Puerto Rico, *familismo* still prevails and is seen as the most important social unit (Rivero Méndez, Dawson Rose, & Solís Báez, 2010). It is congruent with the interpretation of Stein, González, Cupito, Kiang, and Supple (2013) as a cultural value that dictates norms, expectations, and beliefs about the family. Also, *familismo* gives emphasis to the centrality of the family and encourages emotional relationships with other family members in the extended family (Mogro Wilson, Rojas, & Haynes, 2016). Many family interventions seek to punctuate and strengthen the commitment and support that adult family members communicate toward each other and toward their children, as found in the study of Santisteban, Coatsworth, Briones, Kurtines, and Szapocznik (2012) with Hispanics.

However, as stated by Poggenpoel, Jacobs, Myburgh, and Temane (2017), most family research has taken place from a negative perspective, seeking "what is wrong with families", for example: poor relationships, illness, violence, or trauma. Puerto Rico is not the exception as

evidenced in our extensive literature review (Dávila Vázquez & Rivero Vergne, 2015; Jiménez Chafey, Duarté Vélez, & Bernal, 2011; López Bobonis & Rivero Vergne, 2015; Moralez Díaz & Rodríguez del Toro, 2012). A study titled: "The Puerto Rican family: A socio-historical approach" was conducted by Burgos Ocasio, Reyes Rivera, and Hernández Bello (2014). According to these authors, the family institution has been affected by the dramatic social and economic changes that have happened during the last few decades, which have created an increase in intrafamilial violence and has made Puerto Rico one of the countries with the highest divorce rates in the world. The massive migrations by Puerto Ricans who are looking for a better quality of life contributes to the fragmented family structure (Burgos Ocasio et al., 2014).

Even though we understand the importance of this type of research to identify problems and help find solutions in our cultural context, we also agree with Jiménez and Rodríguez Quiñones (2014) that psychology must encourage family models that are focused on transforming the meaning of the experience to provoke other types of interpretations. The above-mentioned authors discussed that the reconstructions of more positive alternate stories should address diversity and empowerment rather than psychopathology. We understand that this is one of the accomplishments of our research.

Our interest and involvement in this study developed as follows: The first author is a qualitative researcher who teaches qualitative research at Inter American University of Puerto Rico. During her qualitative analysis course, instead of students selecting different topics to study it was decided to focus on one: happiness. Participants were recruited using a convenience sample and considering diverse ages, academic professions and geographical areas. Students conducted in-depth interviews and photo analysis with 11 participants and also held six focus groups with different participants, eight in each. They also performed individual analysis of the information gathered.

When conducting research is one of your main professional interests, the best collaborators are those who consider research contributions an academic mission. This was the case of the second author and the reason for his involvement. The second author, who is also a qualitative researcher, teaches qualitative research at the University of Puerto Rico and has published two qualitative research textbooks. He was invited to collaborate in the triangulation of the data gathered by students and work in its analysis and interpretation. This work constituted the first phase of the study.

After hurricane Maria hit our country, both authors conducted six in-depth interviews and two focus groups with different participants, in order to make a comparison with previous findings. This work constituted the second phase of the study.

Method

Design

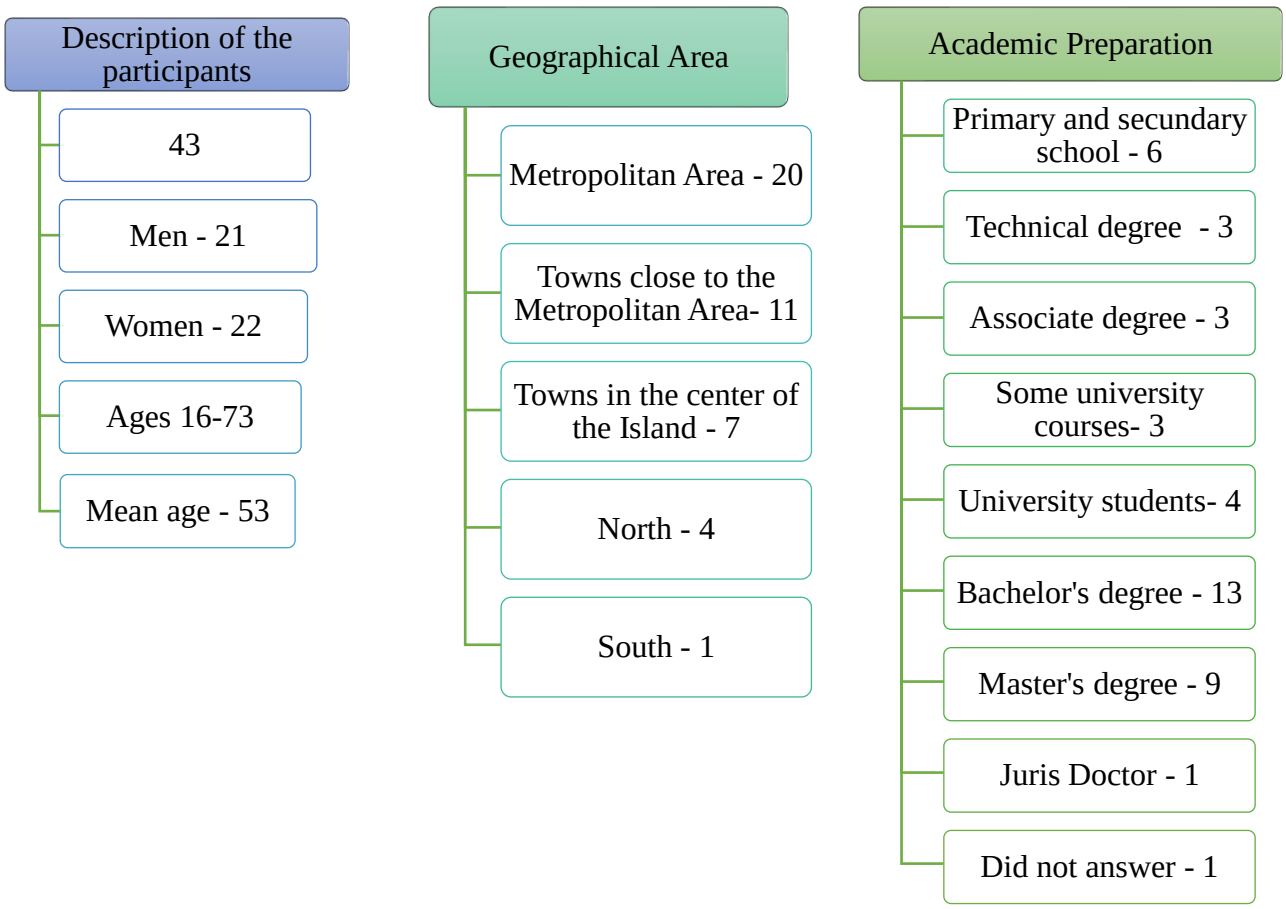
A qualitative descriptive design was used to conduct this study. This kind of design is sufficiently open and flexible to permit an open exploration of the phenomenon under study and facilitate the comprehension of issues in depth and detail (Patton, 2015). According to Patton, this design provides opportunities to achieve empathy and give the researcher an empirical basis for describing the perspective of others. This was exactly our purpose, to gather the perspective and understand the meaning of happiness for a group of Puerto Ricans. This design was congruent with our view of how the study should be conducted.

Participants

Our research was conducted in accordance with ethical and legal principles of the profession of psychology and was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the Inter American University of Puerto Rico. We collected the data through in-depth interviews, photo analysis and focus groups.

The study from which the results were derived was conducted in Puerto Rico and consisted of two phases. In the first phase, two university professors and seventeen doctoral students who were part of a graduate course in qualitative research analysis taught by the first author of this article worked as co-researchers as part of their course work. A total of 43 participants were recruited in the first phase: eleven (11) participants (six men and five women) participated in individual in-depth interviews of approximately an hour and a half and had an additional half an hour meeting to discuss a photo analysis exercise. Four focus groups with different participants of eight participants in each were conducted. A total of 15 men and 17 women participated in these focus groups (see Figure 1). All participants were identified and recruited using convenience sampling. We did try to have diversity regarding ages, academic professions and geographical areas.

Figure 1. Participants in the first phase

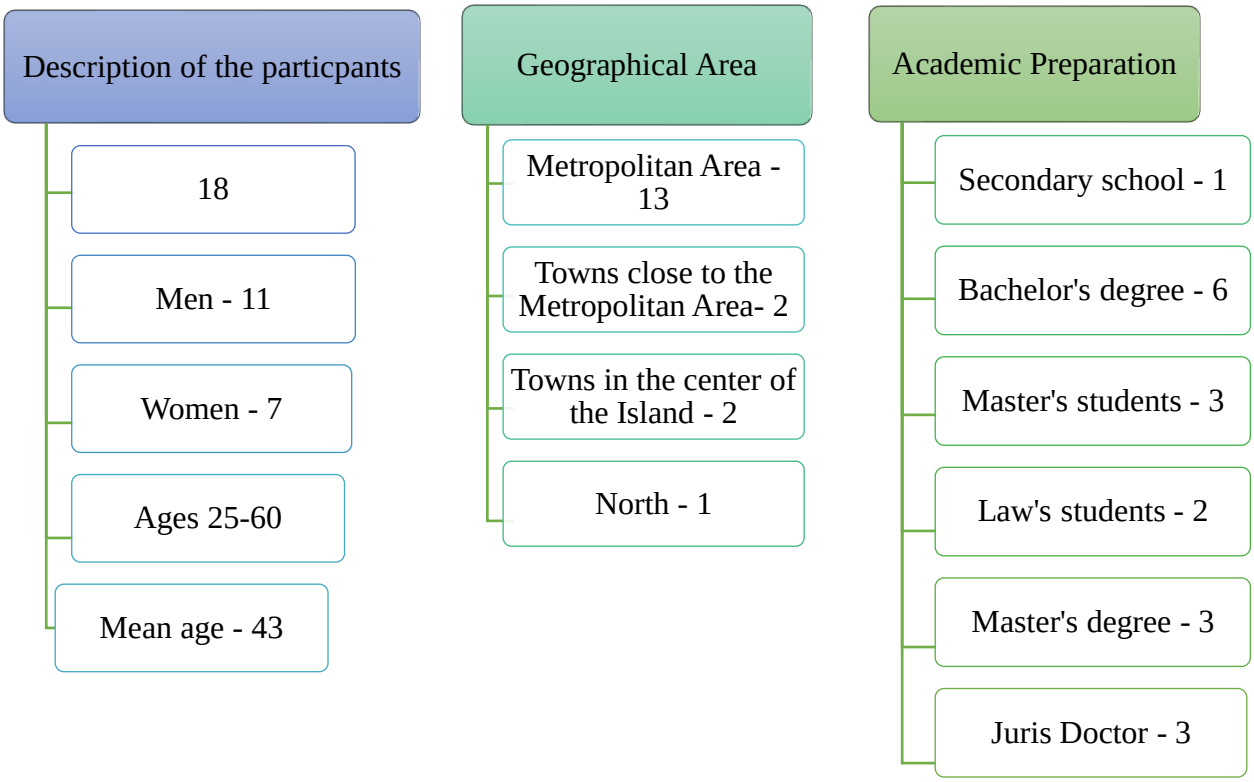


The second phase was conducted four months after hurricane Maria hit our country by the two authors of this article. Previously, it was not our intention to conduct another phase for this study. However, a destructive, deadly category 5 hurricane impacted our country, causing enormous

damage and devastation. We wanted to inquire how this event had modified our previous findings related to the meaning of happiness.

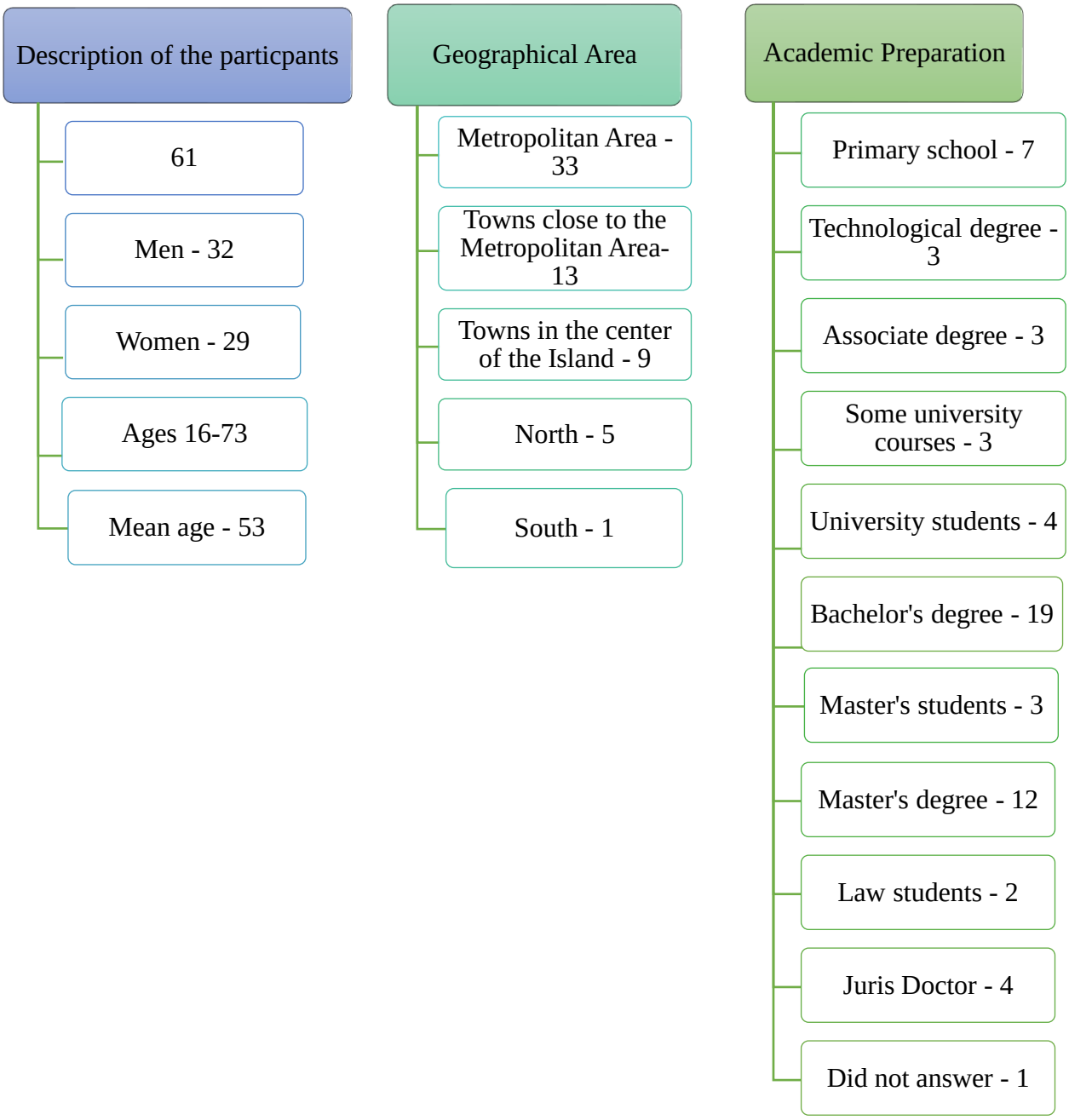
This second phase took place almost a year after the first phase and four months after hurricane Maria with different participants. The sample was comprised of 18 participants. Six (three men and three women) participated on in- depth interviews of approximately one hour and a half. Two focus groups with different participants (eight men and four women) of six participants in each were conducted. All subjects were identified and recruited using convenience sampling. We did try to have diversity regarding ages, academic professions and geographical areas. (see Figure 2)

Figure 2. Participants in the second phase



Including the two phases 32 men and 29 women between the ages of 16 -73 were recruited for this study (N=61). Most were from the metropolitan area (33), others from municipalities close to the metropolitan area (13), nine from the center of the island, five from the northern, and one from the southern part. Seven had primary or secondary education, three a technical degree, three an associate degree, three university courses, four were university students, 19 had a bachelor's degree, three were master's students and 12 had a master's degree. Two of the participants were studying law, four were lawyers and one did not give this information (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Participants in the two phases



Data Collection

In-depth qualitative interviews. The qualitative interview is a strategy that allows the establishment of a spontaneous relationship between the interviewer and interviewee where information flows as a conversation (Yin, 2011.) According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), this kind of interview facilitates the recreation of events and experiences where one establishes a relationship based on trust.

Qualitative research utilizes in-depth interviews to collect detailed information from subjects about a topic or event that has impacted their lives and helps researchers acquire knowledge about some phenomenon (Lucca Irizarry & Berríos Rivera, 2009). In this case, that phenomenon was happiness. During the first phase of this research after being trained to gather and analyze qualitative data as part of their course work, the two professors (who were also taking the course) and the graduate students, conducted in depth-interviews of approximately an hour and a half with 11 participants. They were recorded for transcription and analysis. All the participants signed the informed consent form before starting the interview. An interview guide was used with all participants without rigidly following it. All participants were asked the following questions: How do you describe been happy? What moments in your life would you describe as happiest? In which life role have you been happier? At the present time in Puerto Rico happiness can be reached? They also were invited to freely and spontaneously describe what happiness meant to them. All interviews were conducted in Spanish, our predominant language.

In the second phase conducted 11 months before the first phase and four months after hurricane Maria hit our country, six in- depth interviews were held with different participants of one hour each with the same interview guide, following exactly the same procedure.

Photo analysis. Photo analysis has emerged as a technique that facilitates the involvement of the participants in the research process. This analysis strategy allows researchers to understand and interpret the phenomenon based on the participants' personal perspective, so they can discuss and analyze what was captured in the photo with the purpose of establishing meaning (Given, Opryshko, Julien, & Smith, 2011). Hatten, Forin, and Adms (2013) explained that photo analysis helps participants expose their experiences through metaphors and can use the image to reveal their thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

During the first phase after the in-depth interviews were conducted, participants were invited to a subsequent half hour interview and were asked to bring one or two images that represented their meaning of happiness and discuss it with the co-researchers. All participants brought at least one image. These interviews were also transcribed and analyzed.

Focus groups. Focus groups constitute a qualitative research strategy that collects information through the interaction of a group about a topic determined by the researcher. It is the interest of the researcher which provides the focus, while the information comes from the group interaction (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

Employing focus groups is useful to understand the social norms of a community, to inquire how different phenomena or situations affects people and acquire a more profound understanding of the perceptions, feelings, and thoughts of the participants (Zavaleta, 2013).
In the first phase, four focus groups were conducted. Because they were led by graduate students, these focus groups were videotaped. The course professor wanted to be certain that the information was collected through group interaction. In the second phase conducted four months after hurricane Maria hit our country, we held and audio-recorded two focus groups and transcribed *ad verbatim* the information obtained. An interview guide was developed for the focus group and was used exactly in the same way in both phases of our research (see Appendix 1 for focus group interview guide).

Data analysis. During the first phase of the study co-researchers (graduate students and the two professors taking the course) transcribed *ad verbatim* and analyzed the interviews and photo analysis discussion, analyzed focus group videos and presented main themes found. After the course concluded to confirm and triangulate the information previously collected and analyzed by co-researchers, we used the following strategies used by Colaizzi (1978) and Rubin and Rubin (2012):

a) Each transcribed interview was read several times by the two researchers to get a general sense of content. The same was done with the analysis of the focus groups and the descriptions made by participants on the photo analysis exercise (triangulation).
b) While triangulating the information for each transcript (related to in-depth interviews, focus groups, or the photo analysis exercise) each of the researchers identified statements and phrases utilized by the participants that explained the meaning that was attributed to the phenomenon being studied: happiness. Over the course of several meetings, they were discussed until consensus was reached (member checking).
c) From these statements, central concepts were identified which created categories with their corresponding subcategories.
d) Each category was developed selecting statements that best illustrated the perspective of the participants and ensuring that it had the due resonance that made obvious the meaning ascribed to it. This took several weeks of discussion between the researchers and on various occasions we went back to the transcriptions to assure the veracity of what was found. Steps a to d are related to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) concept of credibility regarding whether the findings illustrate reasonable information gathered from the participants' original data and is a correct interpretation of their views.
e) A meeting was held with three research colleagues to discuss with them our evidence, show them our audit trail, obtain their perspective about our findings and receive feedback about our analysis and conclusions. This process is closely related to Lincoln and Guba's concept of confirmability regarding the degree to which the findings could be confirmed by other researchers.
f) Memos were kept during all the analysis process capturing our ideas, introspections and assumptions a process related with Lincoln and Guba's concept of reflexivity which relates to the process of critical self-reflection about oneself as researcher and the research relationship.

Finally, we compared results of both phases of our research (before and after hurricane Maria) to assess if the general meaning of happiness had changed due to this catastrophic event.

Findings

Family Context: The Main Reference

The category, *The family context as a main reference for happiness,* emerged with resonance in both phases of our research. Thus, only this category is discussed in this article. Findings made clear the enduring role of the family in the meaning of happiness for Puerto Ricans. We begin our discussion presenting findings of the first phase of this research, product of our analysis 11 months before even considering a second phase followed by a discussion of the second phase which took place four months after hurricane Maria hit our country.

First phase. During the first phase, throughout the individual interviews, photo analysis exercises, and focus groups, we found that regardless of gender, age, education, profession, or geographical area, the family context was directly associated with the meaning of happiness of the participants. In the photo analysis exercise, 10 of the 22 photos showed a direct relation with the family bond. In the interviews, participants between the ages of 22 and 37 emphasized the family as their cultural core. They expressed that their family represented a source of support and confidence that offered a legacy they reciprocated and appreciated. They also pointed out the happiness felt when spending time with members of their immediate family.

> All cultures have a foundation and, in Puerto Rico, that foundation is the family. (Woman 22-years-old – cultural core). I have been blessed, I have always felt so happy, so safe and supported by my family circle. Happy moments? The first time that I held each of my nephews. It's like a connection where we are part of the same circle and you can see the continuation of the family. (Woman 37-years-old – source of support). My grandparents left me a legacy of values that I encourage in other people and in that way achieve happiness. (Man 27-years-old - legacy)

Young-old participants mentioned first their bond with their partner as their source of happiness, with an emphasis on fidelity, complementarity, motivation, and permanence in the relationship. They also discussed the happiness of being a mother or a father, the love they received from their children, the joy of spending time with their extended family, and the continuation of family traditions. One of the participants described in a unique way his extended family as "a book of references." Participants over the age of 60 mentioned frequently their children's' goals and their love for their grandchildren. They emphasized the solidarity and well- being obtained from their family.

> We have been married for 30 years, and we are very happy. What makes him happy is for me to be here, and the same happens to me. (Woman 54-years-old – bond with partner). We are reaching 25 years of marriage with a lot of happy moments for me including the birth of my three children. (Man 50-years-old – happiness that comes with marriage and family). Grandchildren are a source of happiness that you can't describe. It is a source of happiness when you look at their little faces and you see your reflection in them. (Woman 61-years-old – love for grandchildren).

In all focus groups, the family theme came up spontaneously and continuously. Happiness was described as spending time with their family or having a role in it.

> I associate happiness with family. (Focus group 1, Man, 23-years-old). In this phase of my life what gives me most happiness is my role as a father. (Focus group 3, Man, 29-years-old). Being with my parents gives me happiness. (Focus group 4, Man, 37-years-old). What first comes to my mind is my family, knowing that they are okay, that to me, is happiness. (Focus group 2, Man, 70-years-old).

The photo analysis demonstrated in a clear and at moments poetical way, the family as the essential component of happiness. Ten images illustrated the strength of this bond. These were of their immediate or extended family, marriage and birthday celebrations associated with joy, love, affection and dedication and with the importance of the family role in happiness.

Second phase. The analysis of all the in-depth interviews held during the second phase of our research four months after hurricane Maria hit our country, highlighted again that unrelated to gender, age, education, or geographical area the family context was linked directly with the meaning of happiness of our participants. Young adults made reference to their children, family cohesiveness and the contact between the nuclear or extended family as a source of happiness. Young-old participants pointed out that happiness meant the time they could spend with their family and assuring their wellbeing.

> Happiness is my son. When I am with him, I am happier. He is my life. (Man 31-years- old – children as a source of happiness). Being with my family makes me happy. I have a strong emotional bond with them. (Man 33-years-old – family cohesiveness). To me happiness is having time to spend with my family, that my family is happy, and do not lack from anything. (Woman 42-years-old – spending time with family).

Also related to the family context, various participants alluded to the hurricane and how somehow it brought them happiness feeling closer to family members and having an opportunity to reevaluate what is important and overcome difficulties as a family.

> I am happy with the fighting spirit that has developed in Puerto Rico after the hurricane. I feel happy that family members that I thought were not thinking of me have communicated and have brought the necessary support to keep us going forward. (Woman 26-years-old – closer to family members). The new Puerto Rico after Maria compelled me to reevaluate things. It forced us to reevaluate what's important. We were living difficulties and challenges and trying to understand what was going on, to overcome this as a family. The hurricane gave us a space to look at ourselves and reflect. (Man 49-years-old- reevaluate and overcome).

In the two focus groups held on the second phase after hurricane Maria it was observed that similarly to the first phase participants mentioned the family explicitly as a reference for happiness relating their meaning of happiness to their roles as sons or daughters, grandparents, uncles, brothers and sisters, husbands or wives, and parents. There were even references to a stronger family unity developed while dealing with the hurricane aftermath.

> Happiness are the moments I have with my nuclear family. (Focus group 2, Man, 46- years-old). Because my mother is the most important person in the world and to know that I'm there for her gives me much happiness. (Focus group 2, Man, 46-years-old). The roles where I have felt the happiest has been as an aunt and as a godmother. (Focus group 1, Woman, 39-years-old). My role as a sister is the one that makes me the happiest, it's a very special connection. (Focus group 2, Woman, 52-years-old). The best conversations our family had, happened after Maria. Being without Wi-Fi or Internet… the kids once again went out into the streets, rode on their bikes, and interacted with their neighbors. (Focus group 2, Man, 46 years old).

Discussion

In both phases of our study regardless of gender, age, profession, or geographical area, the family context proved to be the main reference of happiness for participants. They

emphasized the family as a cultural base and as a source of support, and the importance of the relationship between partners and the extended family, while discussing what constituted the meaning of happiness. In fact, we were amazed that while referring to hurricane Maria instead of alluding to how Puerto Rico was impacted by the catastrophe, participants emphasized how this phenomenon made the family stronger and more aware of the importance of its members in their lives.

Our participants discourse reflected clearly the cultural value of *familismo* frequently observed in Hispanic cultures were more emphasis is placed on family bond in terms of respect, support, obligation and reference point (Valdivieso Mora, Peet, Garnier Villarreal, Salazar Villanea, & Johnson, 2016). This cultural value highlights warm and close relations of support and promotes feelings of unity and cohesion in the family. Research has found that *familismo* contributes to mental health because it encourages in a person the perception of support.

However, according to Hernández et al. (2016), many of the tenets related to well-being (happiness) derivate from a Eurocentric perspective neglecting cultural frameworks. These authors carried out a study with Latinos in an urban city in the United States and the prevalent theme was the importance of peaceful social relationships with the family unit as the fundamental source for a strong emotional well-being. Other authors also have published findings related to the values that Latinos ascribe to the family (Dirección de Estudios Sociales del Instituto de Sociología de la Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, 2015; Fuller & García Coll, 2010) that has been identified in collective cultures (Lambert D'raven & Pasha Zaidi, 2014). In Puerto Rico there is empirical evidence that even non-traditional families identify with universal values and feelings of love. These values like respect and love are primarily associated with interpersonal relationships and contribute to maintain in a permanent and functional way the family connection (Nina Estrella, 2012).

Vera Rodríguez, Rosario Nieves, Ruiz Santana, and Cabán Huertas (2016) held a multidimensional study with 600 youngsters between the ages of 14 and 30 in 66 municipalities in Puerto Rico with similar results. It was found that 80% believed in marriage and wished to have at least two children, since for the majority family was a source of happiness and support, and the main figure was their mother. It also revealed that when young people got older, they started having more stable relationships and 90% confirmed the importance of having friends to trust. In our research, participants alluded to the happiness felt while interacting with different members of their extended family and young adults expressed their love for their family. Likewise, in a study that took place in Chile, happiness appeared as the first term associated with sharing important moments with family and friends (Dirección de Estudios Sociales del Instituto de Sociología de la Pontificia Univesidad Católica de Chile, 2015). It is important to mention results of a study about the individual values of young people in Puerto Rico (González Gijón & Soriano Díaz, 2017). These authors observed that participants attributed the greatest importance to family, health and religion, aspects closely related to traditional Puerto Rican values. In our study, young-old participants pointed out the importance of the relationship with their partners as a symbol of happiness giving prominence to fidelity, complementarity, and permanence in the relationship. It has been empirically established that the relationship with their partner influences the well-being level of people (Alzugaray & García, 2015). Ríos García and Pando (2014) stated that people do not have the capacity to make each other happy, but what they can do in a romantic relationship is to look for both sides to benefit. From our participants' narratives emerged that they were aware of this mutual benefit and acknowledged it as happiness. Nina Estrella (2016) findings in Puerto Rico demonstrated that spouses identified communication as a positive strategy to respond to stressful events. A study that took place in Mexico (Pozos Gutiérrez, Rivera Aragón, Reidl Martínez, Vargas Núñez, & López Parra, 2013) described among the attributes of happiness, the romantic relationship, the positive emotional evaluation of the relationship comprised of

love and affection, the need of constant interaction, and the commitment of their members. Similar to our findings, these authors emphasized that in the Mexican culture, happiness is associated with support networks of family, relationships, children, and friends. According to Angeles (2009), despite the hard job of raising children, if one were to ask parents what the most important thing in their lives is, the majority would put their children on top of the list. Angeles found that the presence of children increased the satisfaction of married people. Findings of a study conducted in Puerto Rico by Domenech Rodríguez, Franceschi Rivera, Sella Nieves and Félix Femín (2013) found parents with high grade of positive involvement skills building, monitoring, and problem-solving skills showed low levels of parental stress and depression suggesting enjoyment of their parenting roles and other dimensions of their lives.

The study by Pino, Escobar, Muñoz, Torrent, and Bonilla (2011) evidenced that even in teenagers, the existence of a child gives them a new meaning and new life expectations for themselves. In fact, it is important to mention that independent of the difficulties that arise through discrimination and prejudice according to Toro-Alfonso (2014) data points out that people from the LGBT community in Puerto Rico have the same interest as the heterosexual community in establishing stable commitments that last a long time. The option of partners and marriage in the LGBT community emerge as a desire to establish and raise a family (Toro Alfonso, 2014). In the case of grandparents as stated by Weisbrot and Giraudo (2012), despite the challenges that it conveys, the care of their grandchildren provides them with satisfaction and a sense of vitality and dynamism.

In both phases of our research it was observed that family was conceptualized as a source of personal support and at the same time enabled participants to help family members which contributed to their feeling of happiness. However, our findings in phase two demonstrate the structural strength of f*amilismo* and are consistent with Walsh (2004) resilience model. According to Walsh, related with the concept of resilience, a family can emerge stronger and with more resources after a crisis. The author sustained that the resilience paradox precisely centers on how the worse situations (in this case, the devastation caused by hurricane Maria), can bring the best. As stated by Walsh, a crisis can be an awakening for family members to find out the importance of those that they love and to develop even more significant relationships. There is a wide body of work that suggests that the perception of social support and close relationships are associated with subjective well-being (happiness) (Monpetit, Nelson, & Tiberio, 2017; Nguyen, Chatters, Taylon, & Mouzon, 2016). We agree with Reyes (2016) that despite its shortcomings, the family in Puerto Rico promotes social mobility and constitutes a solidarity force in our country. As stated by this author and similarly to the expressions of our participants the family has been the foundation of need satisfaction and support that enables an individual to grow qualitatively.

Finally, we refer to the description that Albite Vélez (2014) made regarding families. According to this author, the family is a product of what happens, where its members make their own the positive things that account for their psychosocial well-being, and quality of life, alongside the negative in its different manifestations. It emerged from our participants' narratives that despite what could have been expected from the previous socio economic difficulties in Puerto Rico and the experience lived as a consequence of hurricane Maria, they took ownership of the positive things and focused on their psychosocial well-being which asserts the enduring role of the family in the happiness of Puerto Ricans.

As stated previously there is an orientation to study everything negative that happens in the family. The findings of this category make an argument about the benefits of *familismo* and how in Puerto Rico the family has an enduring role in the happiness of its members. It also makes clear the ongoing role of the Puerto Rican families as a facilitator of resilience. Practitioners should take these findings into consideration when working with Hispanic populations and consider how family members can be integrated into treatment. We believe

the positive impact of the family at a systemic level should continue to be researched in order to better understand the possibilities and opportunities that can be derived from the family unit.

Limitations

A convenience sample was used. Most participants were from the metropolitan area of Puerto Rico or municipalities close to this area. Therefore, findings of the study only illustrate the experience of these participants. Efforts should be made to broaden the scope of this study in order to include participants from another geographical region from our island.

We did not inquire specifically about the type of family structure of our participants; however, their narratives suggested that some came from single-parents, same sex parents, and families constituted by grand families.

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