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FELICIDAD APLATANÁ: HOW DOMINICAN MIGRANTS LIVING IN NORDIC COUNTRIES MAKE SENSE OF THEIR HAPPINESS

Ivanna Lajara, Ph.D.

Western Michigan University, 2023

As globalization evolves and the number of migrants and cross-cultural interactions among world citizens increases, understanding various aspects of immigrants' experiences, including their happiness and subjective well-being will become fundamental to organizations, governments, and societies. However, there are substantial cross-cultural differences in how people understand their happiness, make sense of experiences that influence happiness, and how large-scale social trends, such as globalization, relate to the individual migration perspectives (Uchida and Ogihara, 2012). Research affirms culture as a key factor influencing happiness (Ye et al., 2015) and living in a foreign country may not only impact one's perspective on life, but also individual perceptions and definitions of happiness.

As the Nordic countries consistently rank in the top positions of the happiest countries in the world (as indicated in the OECD's World Happiness Report), this basic interpretive qualitative study examines how first-generation migrants from the Dominican Republic residing in Nordic countries make sense of their happiness in the host culture. This study utilized visual research methods (i.e., participant-produced drawings) to enrich participants' narrative by drawing on emotions and long-term memories surfaced from the drawing exercise. The findings from this study focus on how participants' conceptualization of their happiness is influenced by social factors from their home country and how cross-cultural interactions in their host country influence their ongoing transition experiences. The findings of this study have implications for organizations and policymakers seeking greater integration of their immigrant communities as well as influencers of subjective well-being and happiness in their own countries.

FELICIDAD APLATANÁ: HOW DOMINICAN MIGRANTS LIVING IN NORDIC COUNTRIES MAKE SENSE OF THEIR HAPPINESS

by

Ivanna Lajara

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate College
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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Doctoral Committee:

D. Eric Archer, Ph.D., Chair
Ramona Lewis, Ed.D.
Kirsi LaPointe, Ph.D.

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In April 2018, in one of the darkest moments in my life, a therapist asked me if I could do anything I dreamed of now that my plans changed unexpectedly, what would I do. I quickly answered “a PhD”. It’s been an extraordinary journey, and if you asked me today, I’d do it all over again!

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Ivanna Lajara

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"It is impossible, of course, to eliminate suffering. It is part of the human condition. But it is within the power of individuals and governments to make the world a happier place."

Geoff Mulgan, World Economic Forum, 2021

The decision to move to another country, especially to another continent, can be life-changing for both the immigrant and the citizens of the host country (Angelini et al., 2015). The United Nations' International Migration Report (2022) states there are 281 million international migrants living in a foreign country, currently accounting for approximately 3.6% of the world's population. As travel restrictions and mobility disruptions increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, migration decreased by 27% as compared to the year prior to the start of the pandemic (World Migration Report, 2022). However, due to technological advances and digital transformations resulting from social distancing during the pandemic, migration is now expected to increase as global opportunities for migrants become more widely available (McAuliffe et al., 2021).

Migration may be voluntary or involuntary; temporary or permanent, and results in two or more cultures coming into contact and ultimately generating a societal and individual transformation (Bornstein, 2017, 2018). After the intention of migrating is realized, the immigrant begins another process, identified as acculturation. During acculturation, immigrants learn to retain or surrender beliefs and behaviors from their culture of origin while abstaining from or adopting those from their host country's culture (Bornstein, 2018). "Thus, acculturation

is a complex phenomenon comprising multiple processes and is rightly thought of as an instance of the most thoroughgoing sort of individual disorganization and reorganization" (Bornstein, 2018).

As globalization evolves and the number of migrants and cross-cultural interactions among world citizens increases, understanding various aspects of their experience, including their subjective well-being and happiness will become fundamental to organizations, governments, and societies. However, there are substantial cross-cultural differences in how people understand their happiness, make sense of experiences that influence happiness, and how large-scale social trends, such as globalization, relate to individual subjective well-being (Uchida and Ogihara, 2012). Understanding the influence of migration on well-being and the ongoing way in which immigrants make sense of their happiness is a vehicle to further explore cross-cultural constructions of happiness.

Background

According to Bridges (2003), transition is the "emotional side of change", and it can be described as the internal psychological process that an individual experiences. To explore whether and how a transition, such as emigration, influences a migrant's definition or meaning of their own happiness is the objective of this research study. Studies show the complexity of migrants' experiences through the transition and adjustment to various and intersecting aspects of their lived experience such as preferences related to culture, communication, relationships, employment, and faith in both their native cultures and in the new host culture to which they immigrate. (Cline, 2017).

An Overview of Happiness

According to Robert Diener, renowned scientist in the field of happiness, psychologist, and Senior Researcher at Gallup, there has been a revolution in the study of happiness in recent decades (Rojas, 2016). Rojas (2016) explains this revolution implies a redefinition of the concept of happiness; with happiness being conceived as a life experience that people perceive and make sense of, rather than an abstract concept proposed by experts. For several decades, and until very recently, it was understood that being happy was largely the result of your genetic disposition or measured against a genetic base line (Lyubomirsky, 2005). In the past, aspiring to be a "happier" person was the same as "aspiring to have another skin color or height." However, more recent research in various disciplines has determined that it is possible to raise our levels of happiness in a sustainable way through capacity building, as one example (Rastelli et al., 2021; Wiking, 2018; Hyman, 2014). Furthermore, research finds that migrating to a country with different definitions and levels of happiness, due to pre-existing socioeconomic, environmental and cultural factors, may impact one's perceived level of happiness (WHR, 2018). "What does it mean to be happy? [It] indeed depends to an important degree on where you live." (Gardiner et al., 2020).

To better understand concepts such as happiness and well-being, I reviewed the academic literature that discusses these terms. *Happiness* and *subjective well-being* (SWB), often used synonymously in the literature, have been widely debated in philosophy since Antiquity and prominently researched through the lens of several social and behavioral sciences such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics, and biology (Haller & Hadler, 2006), as well as more recently in fields such as neuroscience (World Happiness Report, 2015). Diener (1984) proposed the use of the scientific term subjective well-being (SWB) instead of happiness

precisely because of the ambiguities associated with the original construct of happiness. However, for this study, I use the term happiness, unless noted otherwise. This decision aligns with the United Nations' OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) preference in the naming of their research work for the World Happiness Index in the World Happiness Report. For this study, I will also rely on the definition of happiness established by Veenhoven (1984) after analyzing and comparing 254 studies in his book *Conditions of Happiness*, which is "the degree to which an individual judges the overall quality of his life-as-a-whole favorably. In other words: how well he likes the life he leads" (p. 22).

Even though some authors state that happiness cannot be defined (Haybron, 2013), literature provides three broad ways in which a person can assess, experience, and self-report their sense of happiness: (1) through emotion or affect, (2) through life satisfaction or cognitive evaluation and (3) as a moral value or virtue (Greve, 2012; Hyman, 2014; Haller & Hadler, 2006). Historically, happiness research has been influenced by a Western worldview, which is far from universal (Gardiner et al., 2020) and it is important to note that ongoing debates concerning the nature of these concepts were conceived in a distinct cultural, economic, and sociological environment from the one we experience today; and one that continues to evolve across the globe. Sang (2006) argues that the pursuit of Happiness, listed alongside Life and Liberty, is one of three naturally endowed unalienable rights. Since the establishment of the United States of America, its Declaration of Independence (1776) states, "Happiness as a common pursuit, as well as the government an instrument to further this common pursuit" (Sang). Various authors (Hyman, 2014; Greve, 2012) also note that this societal construal of happiness, as presented by Thomas Jefferson, has changed over time.

In 2011, the General Assembly of the United Nations (GA) adopted resolution 65/309 as an invitation to Member States to continue to pursue additional actions and measures that better reflect the relevance of happiness and well-being in development to guide their public policies. A year later, to recover their initial invitation, the GA established March 20 to be the International Day of Happiness in resolution 66/281 of 2012, which aimed:

> to recognize the relevance of happiness and well-being as universal aspirations of human beings and the importance of their inclusion in government policies. The resolution also recognizes the need for a more inclusive, equitable and balanced approach to economic growth that promotes sustainable development, the eradication of poverty, the happiness and well-being of all peoples.

This declaration led to the creation of a yearly publication on World Happiness developed by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Solutions Network, a nonprofit created by the UN in 2012. This document, the *World Happiness Report*, assesses happiness levels around the world, publishing a yearly ranking of the World Happiness Index. The publication is compiled by researchers and scientists who act as independent experts. Within the report, experts declare migration as an important source of global change and found that the living environment of each country, including its social background and political systems, are important sources of happiness. Furthermore, the international ranking presented in the World Happiness Report (2019), which deeply examines happiness in a cultural context, concluded that immigrants' happiness become nearly identical to that of native-born people of their host country. I discuss more information on the World Happiness Report later in this Chapter.

Happiness as a Cultural Construct

Historically, happiness research has traditionally been influenced by a Western worldview (Gardiner et al., 2020). Krys et al. (2020) conclude that an earlier review of the literature by authors Uchida and Ogihara (2012) on cultural constructions of happiness suggested that the common measures of happiness, such as life satisfaction, are based on European-American ideals of happiness, which does not include the cultures where most migrants originate from, which is Latin America. There is evidence that the relationship between life satisfaction and migration is more robust than the one between income and migration (Méndez, 2020). Furthermore, according to Méndez (2020), a branch of literature suggests that educated individuals in Latin America, with high aspirations and lower satisfaction with their current economic situation, show high intentions to migrate.

Research affirms culture as a key factor influencing happiness (Ye et al., 2015). According to Krys et al. (2020) a large body of literature states that within and across cultures, people conceptualize happiness differently. Deciding to move to a different country, especially on a different continent, can be a very emotional and life-changing experience that can impact one's well-being, both objectively and subjectively. Studies show the complexity of migrants' experiences through the transition and adjustment in various intersections of culture, communication, relationships, employment, and faith (Cline, 2017). Living in a foreign country may not only impact one's perspective on life, but also our perception and understanding of our own definition of happiness and subjective well-being.

Highlighting the diverse and unique perspectives of happiness and quality of life, the widest compilation of cultural perspectives on happiness is *Happiness Across Cultures* (2012), which discusses happiness as being rooted in rich cultural heritage and histories. Some of the

factors that influence or provoke cultural and cross-cultural studies in happiness and subjective well-being are linguistic differences (Wierzbicka, 2004), levels of education (Veenhoven, 2012), levels of collectivism or individualism in nations, geography, the economy, and overall political climate (Ye et al., 2015).

While much has been written on these topics, recent cross-cultural studies (Gardiner et al., 2020) have found there is a need for further research that can provide a more robust definition of happiness that may apply to a larger set of diverse cultures. These authors call for additional exploration regarding factors such as how cultural variables may affect happiness (Ye et al. 2015) as well as studies that help in the construction of more culturally balanced measurement scales of happiness (Pflug, 2018).

Further, cultural relativism, as explained by Veenhoven (1984), has been one of the greatest limitations of happiness literature. This means that many researchers are focused on determining a few exact conditions of happiness and may have lost sight of the context of the findings, failing to highlight that these conditions of happiness vary across cultures and times. Another source of uncertainty is the possibility of cultural bias in happiness research studies (Veenhoven 2012), which has been confirmed by Méndez (2020). Beyond the influence of cultures, Tamir et al. (2017) shows that happiness depends, in part, on the match or gap between "what people feel" compared to "what they desire to feel", given their current and specific situation. Recent studies of cross-cultural happiness (Gardiner et al., 2020) have found there is a need for studies that can provide a more universal and comprehensive definition of happiness. Factors such as how culture variables affect happiness (Ye et al., 2015) as well as studies that help in the construction of more culturally balanced measurement tools of happiness (Pflug, 2018), are needed.

The Influence of COVID-19 on Conceptions of Happiness

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted human mobility and travel worldwide (International Migration Report, 2020). In its last two publications, the World Happiness Report has utilized individual-level data from 2017 through 2021 to examine how life under COVID-19 has changed for people in different countries and varying circumstances.

According to Rafieifar et al. (2021), the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on immigrant, refugee, and migrant communities. A roundtable, which took place in June 2020 and made up of interdisciplinary experts on migration, revealed many social inequities, including the lack of financial and social resources, minimal or completely lacking health supports, inadequate access to social support, social or racial discrimination, among others. Although countries across the globe responded differently to the outbreak, the pandemic has had a massive influence on all parts of life in every part of the world, including mental health outcomes regardless of age, race, gender, religious affiliation, or cultural background (WHO, 2020). The impact of various government decisions on how to address the pandemic and how it influences citizens' and immigrants' happiness is discussed further in this study.

As a result of the global temporal context where all nations faced COVID-19, Rossouw and Adhikari (2021) conducted a cross-country study that looked at the causal influence of lockdown on happiness. They discovered that imposed lockdowns had a detrimental impact on happiness, regardless of country characteristics, length of lockdown, or type of lockdown rules. They also discovered that the tighter the lockdown controls, the higher the cost of happiness. Declaring a state of emergency and alerting the public that the country will be put under lockdown had a major negative impact on happiness levels (Rossouw & Adhikari, 2021). Further, the researchers' findings showed that, in a country with an extreme confinement situation, the

factors directly related to the restrictions in place played a substantial role in happiness under lockdown. These reasons can be divided into two categories: (1) social capital issues: such as a lack of access to alcohol, concerns about education, and increased social media usage; and (2) economic issues: such as job insecurity, the prospect of layoffs, and decreased consumption levels (Rossouw and Adhikari, 2021). The number of daily COVID-19 cases was, as expected, inversely related to overall happiness. Surprisingly, the stay-at-home variable was shown to be positively connected to happiness, meaning that spending more time at home, even when other negative impacts of a lockdown were considered, enhanced happiness. I provide further discussion of the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on conceptions of happiness in Chapter Two.

The World Happiness Report

Since 2012, the World Happiness Report (WHR) has served as a guide for governments, international organizations, policy makers, and educators to consider a more holistic understanding of human development and subjective well-being. In this report, six social factors, described as social foundations contributing to overall subjective well-being, are utilized to measure happiness: 1) GDP per capita, 2) social support, 3) healthy life expectancy, 4) freedom to make life choices, 5) generosity, and 6) perceptions of corruption versus trust (WHR, 2022). Each year, the report publishes rankings of the overall happiness of citizens from over 150 countries along with complementary research on topics that impact the various social foundations of happiness discussed above. Over the last several years, the Nordic countries (Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark) have held top positions in the report and this phenomenon is what scientists and researchers call “Nordic Exceptionalism” (WHR, 2020). These top countries show general consistency in their scores and are more tightly grouped as

compared to countries ranked at the bottom of the report (WHR, 2022). Even though the foundational evidence and underlying research is consistent throughout the years, since its conception, the Report focuses each edition on a global, comprehensive research question or topic and explores it through the work and voice of various authors. Throughout this study I will present and highlight content from different editions of the Report depending on which paid more attention to the specific matter I discuss.

The World Happiness Report (2017) utilizes the defines and utilizes the term happiness interchangeably with the term subjective well-being, as follows: "Good mental states, including all of the various evaluations, positive and negative, that people make of their lives and the affective reactions of people to their experiences" (p. 13). This definition of subjective well-being, utilized to assess and rank citizens around the world, considers three elements: 1) life evaluation or life satisfaction, a reflective assessment of a person's own life, 2) affect, an assessment of each person's feelings or emotional states, usually measured with reference to a particular point in time or life situation; and 3) eudaimonia, a personal sense of meaning and purpose that is based on moral values. In their most recent editions, their research pays special attention to specific daily emotions (WHR, 2021; WHR 2022).

There is also a large body of research related to personality and happiness, and another on whether the belief in God or religiosity is present or absent and how it relates to one's meaning of happiness. Research utilizes different measurements for subjective well-being, life satisfaction and affective evaluation (Krys et al. 2018), but all are essentially in agreement that the strength of the correlation between happiness and religious conformity, as well as happiness and subjective freedom, varies systematically across nations and is not random, but culturally influenced (Minkov et al., 2020).

The World Happiness Report (2018) analyzed international migration and its relationship to happiness. In this edition they expand the range of data utilized to evaluate consequences of migration. The life evaluations of immigrants and native-born populations are likely to have depended on the extent to which residents are happy to accept foreign migrants. Utilizing the Migrant Acceptance Index (MAI) developed by Gallup researchers, they found that migrants are happier in countries where migrants are shown hospitality or are highly accepted. Furthermore, the World Happiness Report of 2018 provides in-depth findings that migrants from Latin America to foreign countries have not had immense happiness gains relative to migrants from other locations. These researchers concluded that Latin Americans' happiness levels exceed that of any other immigrants and suggest that this is due to the footprint effect from these migrants' home country (WHR, 2018). I discuss this footprint effect in greater detail in Chapter Two.

The World Happiness Report explores which should be the correct scale and pattern of migration to support and build international cooperation of some kind which would help millions of people living in "misery" (WHR, 2018). The report further demonstrates that the capitals of the three happiest countries in the world: Helsinki, Copenhagen, and Reykjavik, may be the happiest cities; but not because of their geographical location. It is instead because the population, over time, have built proper levels of trust, social connections, cooperation, and innovation. The "missing link" is to search behind the average life evaluations and look for what makes for "happy lives."

Research on Happiness for Latin American Peoples

The largest compilation of happiness research in Latin America, *The Handbook of Happiness Research in Latin America*, which I discuss further in Chapter Two, compiles topics such as: 1) variance in methodological approaches to the study of happiness; 2) the quality of

family ties and how they relate to the happiness of elderly people; 3) how happiness is experienced in romantic relationships; 4) how happiness relates to health and health problems; 5) the gap between happiness and economic welfare; 6) the complex relationship between happiness, poverty, class identification, and socioeconomic mobility; 7) the importance of (reported) food deprivation in explaining people's happiness; 8) how life satisfaction data can be used to guide public policy; 9) levels of unemployment; 10) the difference between so-called individual and interpersonal explanatory variables, as well as between individual and social domains of well-being; 11) how values education in primary school influences children's well-being, as well as the impact of education in present and future happiness of children; and finally, 12) migration, between and across countries, to understand the causal relationship between intention to migrate and happiness (Rojas, 2016).

Just as the Nordic countries are identified as one region, Latin America, composed of 33 countries as recognized by the United Nations, arguably has one broad overarching identity as well. According to the *Handbook of Happiness Research in Latin America*, Latin Americans share a common history, and most members of this group hold similar central values about how and what to live for (Rojas, 2016).

Through a global lens, exploring how immigrants make sense of their happiness can provide nations greater opportunities to positively impact their residents and, therefore, their nationals too. To understand Latin American happiness is not just a cross-cultural curiosity, it is an important case study for happiness science and a basic building block to design happy cultures (Yamamoto, 2016). Regardless of the improved quality of life in developed countries, an immigrant's happiness and life satisfaction do not substantially increase with their length of stay or across generations, therefore their subjective well-being remains lower than that of natives

(Hendricks et al., 2019). Understanding the specific experiences of these migrants and how they have influenced their conceptualization of happiness would allow for both the discovery and transfer of deeper knowledge in happiness and subjective well-being studies, and its application through government and organizations impacting the three key dimensions of human development: health, education, and quality of life. Determined by the United Nations Development Program, the Human Development Index (HDI), is a summary measure of average achievement in these dimensions with indicators such as a long and healthy life (life expectancy), being knowledgeable (education index) and having a decent standard of living (quality of life).

Statement of the Problem

In an increasingly globalized society, technological advances, greater intertwining of national economies, and growing global workforces will continue to increase opportunities for cross-cultural interactions and the opportunity for individuals to migrate from one society to another (McAuliffe et al., 2021). Historically, happier host countries, as ranked by the World Happiness Report, are the major countries of destination for migrants seeking new personal and professional opportunities and footprint effects from their country of origin have the potential to influence the ways in which they adapt to and make sense of many aspects of their new lives (WHR, 2018).

Cultural assumptions in happiness research have traditionally been influenced by a Western worldview (Gardiner et al., 2020), and even though Latin Americans are considered within this geographical context, they have different conceptualizations of happiness from other Western populations (i.e., the United States, Canada, Europe) due to subjective indicators of happiness being more meaningful to this group than objective indicators (WHR, 2016; WHR,

2018, WHR 2020). Furthermore, Latin Americans, as a unique cultural group, bring a strong footprint effect from their home country that has the potential to influence their transition to the new society (WHR, 2108). Their footprint effect levels are shown to exceed that of any other group of migrants (WHR, 2018). Contemporary happiness studies successfully combine subjective and objective dimensions (Bruni & Porta, 2016), and the Nordic Countries consistently show elevated levels in both (WHR, 2013; WHR, 2015; WHR, 2016; WHR, 2018; WHR, 2019; WHR, 2020; WHR, 2021; WHR, 2022).

Considering the individual and collective impact of happiness, as mobility and migration continue to increase, what I seek to understand is how these individuals who have migrated from one Latin American country, the Dominican Republic, to one of the Nordic countries, make sense of their happiness and how cross-cultural factors in their home and host country influence their conceptualization of happiness. The knowledge generated from this study has implications for organizations and societies that will continue to host an increasing number of migrants and who aspire to integrate these migrants and their own citizens, providing a positive and healthy transition for all members of their national society.

Significance

Happiness research is growing in relevance, and it may have important consequences for ongoing revisions to Human Development Indexes (HDI). While one of humanity's primary objectives is to achieve greater happiness for a larger number of people (Veenhoven, 2010), the world has experienced a stunning decline in average subjective well-being since 2005 (Li et al., 2020).

In my review of the literature, I found 1,353,860 results on the topic of happiness, of which 287,087 were published in peer-reviewed journals. Databases found through Google Scholar, presented 2,660,000 results, for “happiness,” 385,000 results for “happiness in Latin America” and approximately 1,010,000 results for “cross-cultural happiness.” Even with the emergence and growing relevance of happiness literature, we still do not find sufficient publications with a deep level of understanding of migrants' cross-cultural experiences and how they relate to these migrants’ happiness.

The World Happiness Report (2022) demonstrates that there is a correlation between happiness, longevity and increased immunity against common diseases and has a positive impact on overall health. Happy individuals are more prone to engage in generosity, various forms of prosocial behavior, and benevolent actions towards themselves and others (WHR, 2019; WHR 2022). According to this same report, happier societies have higher levels of safety and security and deliver better government quality and political stability. Societies with elevated levels of happiness enjoy higher levels of trust, and are also better able to deal with adversity, both at the individual and collective level (WHR, 2022).

Additionally, a Resolution passed by the United Nations’ General Assembly in June 2011 invited national governments to "give more importance to happiness and well-being in determining how to achieve and measure social and economic development" (WHR, 2021), and for governments, research institutions, and global organizations to pay more attention to the importance of this topic. The knowledge generated from this study could be used by policymakers, government institutions, and global organizations to promote happiness awareness, education, and provide citizens and migrants with programs and policies that positively influence their individual conceptualizations of happiness.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this basic interpretive qualitative study is to examine how first-generation immigrants from the Dominican Republic residing in Nordic countries make sense of their happiness in the host culture. In addition, I sought to understand how their conceptualization of happiness is influenced by social factors from both their native and host cultures and am interested in focusing on the complex migratory transition experience and how individual constructions of happiness influence how migrants engage in organizations and societies across the globe.

Research Questions

The overarching research question for this study is: How do first-generation Dominican migrants who move to the Nordic countries make sense of their happiness? In addition, the following sub-questions will further guide the exploration of participants' experiences:

(a) How do participants in this study define happiness?

(b) How is their conceptualization of happiness influenced by social factors (GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, generosity, and perception of corruption or trust, as established by the World Happiness Report), in both their home and host cultures?

(c) How do the cross-cultural components of their migration experience (home vs. host culture) influence how they make meaning of their happiness?

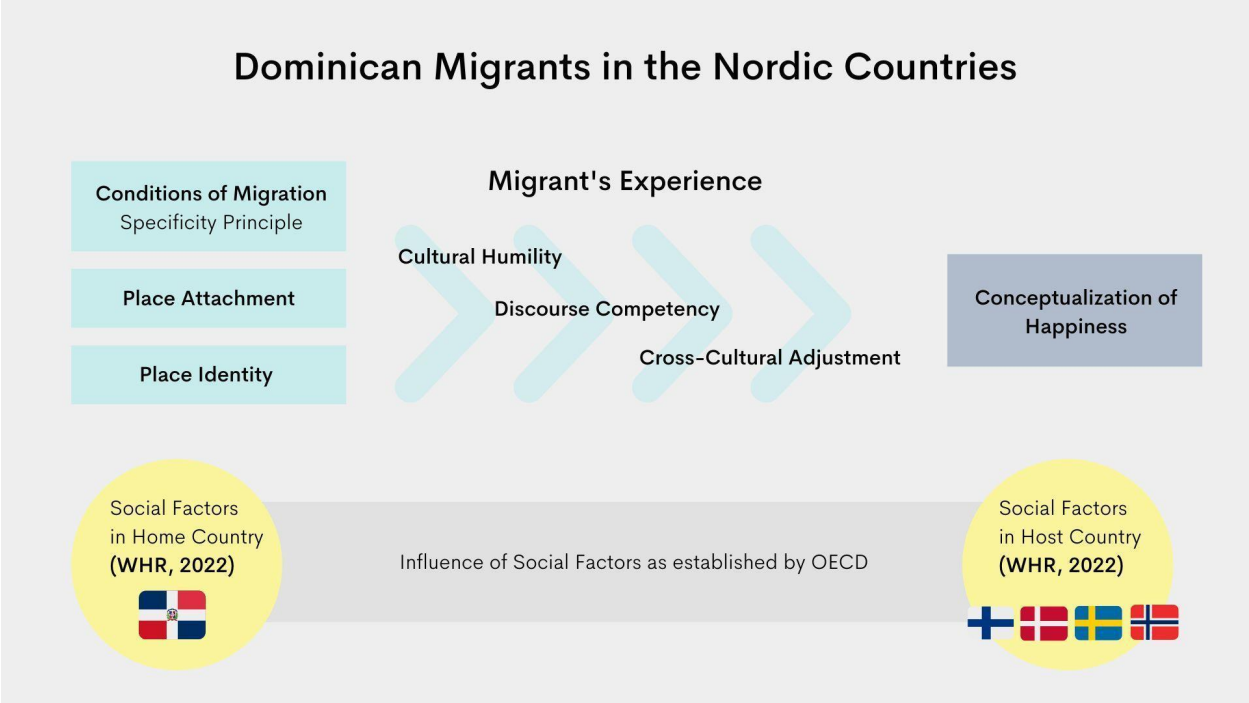
(d) What role has the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic had in shaping participants' conceptions of happiness?

Conceptual Framework and Narrative

A conceptual framework is a system of key factors, assumptions and beliefs, constructs and theories that apprise the research design (Miles et al., 2014). The conceptual framework I have developed to guide my study is diagramed in Figure 1. It illustrates the context in which I sought to analyze and understand how study participants make meaning of their happiness as it relates to their migratory and acculturation experiences.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework for Lajara (2022) Study



To better understand each participant's specific migratory situation, context, and acculturation process, I implemented Bornstein's (2017) specificity principle. This specificity principle in acculturation science asserts that specific setting conditions of specific people at specific times moderate specific domains in acculturation by specific processes (Bornstein). This

principle explains that acculturation depends critically on what is studied where, for whom, how, and when, and considers the factors pertaining to the participant's context and situation: (a) the setting condition (e.g., reason to migrate, place of migration, experience, status), (b) person (e.g., gender, personality, individual-difference characteristics), (c) time (e.g., age, penetration, adjustment history), (d) process (e.g., socialization, learning, instruction, opportunity, transaction), and (e) domain (e.g., multidimensionality, dynamic adaptability). Beyond definition, specificity has an impact on theory, design, measurement, and methodology, just as it has an impact on understanding the literature regarding acculturation. The principle of specificity furthers theory and aids in making sense of disparate findings in acculturation research, strengthens design of investigations of acculturation, and identifies gaps in its science.

As comparative factors, I utilized the six social factors determined by the United Nation's OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) World Happiness report, identified as the social foundations to measure happiness: GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, generosity, and perception of corruption or trust (WHR, 2022). Understanding how these social factors integrate in the migrant's transition and acculturation process will allow for a better understanding of the cross-cultural experience.

To explore participants' conceptualizations of happiness I utilized the three perspectives that are most widely used to define this construct, based on the broad theories recurrently described in happiness literature: (a) Affective happiness, which include emotional state theory and hedonic levels of affect; (b) Evaluative happiness or Life Satisfaction; and (c) Eudaimonia or happiness as a sense of meaning or purpose or as a moral value.

The other terms presented in the left-hand side of this framework, which influence the migrant's predisposition, such as the theories of place attachment and place identity emerged

after the data collection and data analysis process and had not been considered before the implementation of the study. Additionally, three other concepts were found to be determinant to the migrant's conceptualization of happiness as it relates to their migratory experiences, these are: cultural humility, discourse competency, and cross-cultural adjustment. In the following chapters, the relationship of these concepts with the findings of the study is explained.

Methods Overview

The indicators of human well-being should not be confused with the experience of being well, and the best way to understand this is by asking people directly (Rojas, 2020). When asked about their well-being, people tend to consider their various life domains and different aspects of being well but refer to their own preconceived conceptualization or judgment. The conceptualization or personal judgment of our own "happiness" can be described as stable, according to the widely cited literature by Veenhoven (1984). In his work, Veenhoven states that longitudinal investigations demonstrate that people tend to stick to their happiness judgements once these are formed. However, the author further explains that these judgements may be subject "to the so-called 'defense mechanisms' of the mind" (p. 45), which means that people can negate their reality, distort their reality, or defend themselves against admitting their reality if it is not as satisfying as they expect, just because they cannot deal with the consequences of realizing such reality.

A recent compilation of qualitative research methods that study this topic, *Researching Happiness: Qualitative, Biographical and Critical Perspectives (2021)*, argues that investigating the spectrum of experiences and emotions is central to understanding well-being and creating better societies that foster optimal experiences. In several studies presented in this dissertation,

authors utilize various qualitative and ethnographic techniques such as biographies and identity stories (Cieslik, 2021; Wallace et al., 2021), the use of board games to understand the various dimensions of happiness and well-being (Holthus et al. 2021), visual methods, which include image selection and interpretation, as well as visualization exercises to study happiness in the workplace (Suojanen, 2021)

Sutton (2021) explains that methods utilized to study happiness need to be comprehensive enough to uncover meaning and broad enough to explore the things that are important to the participants. In her study, Sutton (2021) asked participants to complete a "happiness map", using the words or phrases associated with happiness. This was followed by group discussions and a final phase of individual semi-structured interviews.

For my study, I employed a basic interpretive qualitative methodology (Merriam, 2009) to explore the experience of first-generation Dominican immigrants living in the Nordic countries and their conceptualization of happiness, with data being collected through the completion of a participant-produced drawing exercise, followed by in-depth, semi-structured interviews with each participant. Utilizing a drawing exercise to initiate and guide the in-depth interview allowed participants to provide more details about their transition through deep analysis and reflection of the visual representation of their experience. According to Glaw et al. (2017), the participant-produced drawing method evokes deep emotions and ideas, which helps to generate data and knowledge. Overall, the methods chosen for this study allowed participants to share their memories, thoughts, feelings, and experiences beyond words. I provide a detailed overview of the methods guiding this study in Chapter Three.

Reflections on my Identity

As part of the qualitative research process, it is crucial for me to be reflexive and provide information on my background and how my own identity has influenced the purpose, design, and development of this study. As a qualitative researcher, it is important to interrogate my biases, assumptions, and beliefs on this topic and recognize how my personal experience might influence the research.

I was born and raised in the Dominican Republic, and I have always been told I seem like a "very happy person." Clearly, this is an assumption based on affective happiness measures, where gestures and expression of emotion demonstrate happiness. I am sensitive to suffering and, from an early age, I learned to build and display strength for those around me. I grew up in a household where my parents each displayed the opposite ends of a "happiness" continuum. My father is extraverted, emotional, spontaneous, while my mother is more pragmatic, practical, and logical. My father has always managed to be resilient, even if his coping methods were not healthy or respectful of others' boundaries. My mother took medication as a way to fight the negative mental states she experienced. A part of me assumed this was "normal." However, around 2015, my sister adopted the same habits.

My natural approach to this was to be supportive, but my instinct told me I was doing something wrong. I felt a need to show them alternate solutions, to help them out. That's when I became obsessed with the study of happiness. In 2015, I committed myself to learning what I could about the construct.

It was not until 2018, when I fell into my own very deep depression, that I had to put everything I had learned into practice. I had never experienced these sustained moments of

self-induced misery, the recurrent visit of suicidal thoughts, nor a total aversion to those around me.

There I was, I had emigrated to the U.S., I was pursuing my dreams and goals of self-realization and studying for a doctoral degree, with a job that was a “blessing” to me. I had people who loved me and supported me. I was enjoying a better quality of life... So, why? Why did I feel this way? Getting through this with the help of people who genuinely loved me and a dog they made me adopt, I completely overcame it. I strengthened my belief in the possibility of being happy with inner resources, as well as learning to accept true impotence when those resources are forgotten.

Two years later, the COVID-19 pandemic began, and the world entered a crisis. In July of 2020, I started asking myself why some parts of the world were thriving while others were in complete chaos? It was as if I was reading about completely different viruses and approaches to deal with them depending on which country’s news feed I read. I began to ask myself how the “happiest” countries in the world were handling this. How are Latin Americans who are living in these countries managing to maintain their mental health as compared to those who remained at home. I had information that made me assume that these Latin Americans had learned to trust their new governments and comply to their sanitization rules and regulations. However, I was curious to learn about this at a deeper level. As a Latin American, specifically a Dominican native who also works with Dominicans all over the world, I feel a connection to the questions this study poses and the potential impact and change that can come from the findings.

Pursuing some of these answers on a personal interest journey, in the middle of the pandemic, during August 2020, I traveled to the Nordic countries and spent the rest of that year discovering the culture and trying to experience what makes them the “happiest countries in the

world". I realized each experience is very personal and everyone processes the migratory experience uniquely. However, I also learned that there are cultural traits and factors that can be perceived similarly by those that share a common home country.

I strongly believe studies of happiness and subjective well-being in general are needed, as generations evolve, as technology changes, and as what we know as reality transforms, our knowledge and abilities to cope with the outside world need to evolve as well. For me, for you, for us, and for those to come, I believe that we need to learn to be happy — whatever that means for each one of us.

Chapter 1 Summary

This first chapter presented an introduction to this study and the reasons why the understanding of happiness from a cross-cultural perspective is crucial. The revolution and emergence of happiness science implies a redefinition of the construct of happiness (Rojas, 2016). Due to culture being a key factor affecting happiness (Ye et al., 2015), and its conceptualization varies within and across cultures, it is important to generate data that helps decisionmakers, including both policymakers and organizations, enable higher levels of happiness across the world. In the following chapter I review past research and relevant findings that relate to this study to establish context and summarize existing knowledge in this area of interest.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

“The term 'happiness' has a long history. It has figured in Western thought ever since antiquity. Over the years the term has been endowed with many different meanings. Its history is in fact characterized by a continuous debate about what it constitutes.”

Ruut Veenhoven, Conditions of Happiness, 1984

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A literature review presents an overview of scholarly research related to the study being conducted (Creswell, 2006). This chapter will provide context on past research and relevant findings that drive this study, as well as the ongoing conversation on the topic of happiness and current gaps that should be filled. The sections in this chapter first include a brief introduction to the historical development of the study of happiness and how each relates to current conceptions of happiness. Following this introduction, I present a discussion on happiness as a cultural construct and the various constructions of happiness across the world. Finally, this chapter highlights research related to migration and its influence on happiness, and I conclude this review of the literature with a summary of research.

Historical Development of Happiness Research

Happiness is a new way of understanding society; however, the concept of happiness has been studied since ancient times (Greve, 2012). Even though some authors state that happiness cannot be defined (Haybron, 2013), literature provides three broad ways in which a person can assess, experience, and self-report their sense of happiness. These include: (1) through emotion

or affect, (2) through life satisfaction or cognitive evaluation and (3) as a moral value or virtue (Greve, 2012; Hyman, 2014; Haller & Hadler, 2006). To better understand the concept of happiness I include an overview of its applications and meaning and how these have evolved. Historically, happiness research has been influenced by a Western worldview, which is far from universal (Gardiner, 2020), with most of the cross-cultural research on this topic originating in the United States, or countries which Gardiner (2020) identified as WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic). It is important to note that ongoing debates concerning the nature of happiness were conceived in a distinct cultural, economic, and sociological environment from the one we experience today; and one that continues to evolve across the world. Happiness has been widely debated in philosophy, since the Classical period in Ancient Greece, and prominently researched through the lens of several sciences such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics, and biology (Haller & Hadler, 2006), as well as neuroscience (WHR, 2015). For the purposes of this study, I describe how the most prominent disciplines have influenced happiness research, namely philosophy, economics, and psychology, including the subfield of positive psychology.

Philosophy

The concept of happiness has been most extensively analyzed by philosophers and historians (Oishi et al., 2013), specifically Greek philosophers who aimed to explain the meaning of happiness (Greve, 2012). Philosophy consists of reflecting on who we are, what we do, making sense of it, and weighing it against alternative thought (Solomon & Barney, 2008). Since happiness has long been analyzed by philosophers (Haybron, 2013), I briefly described the most transcendental propositions made by them.

Democritus was the first philosopher in Western society to examine the nature of happiness (Kesebir & Diener, 2008). However, Socrates was the first known philosopher to argue that happiness is obtainable through human awareness and effort. In his teachings to his student Plato, he contemplates that to attain happiness through our own account, humans must become as wise as possible. According to Hayborn (2011), Plato argues that the way to happiness is through the practice of justice. Plato states that only the just man could feel happy, and the unjust man would be condemned to a miserable life (Hayborn, 2011). He attributes happiness to a circumstantial, internally oriented experience triggered by moral values rather than a goal-oriented emotion.

Despite these early arguments, it is Plato's pupil, Aristotle, who is most mentioned in recent happiness research and whose arguments are still relevant today. Aristotle describes happiness as a virtuous activity, and attributes happiness to being actively engaged. His writings state not that happiness is a virtue, but that it is a virtuous activity (Kraut, 2011). In his renowned work, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle describes the first parameters for ethics and morals of society, understanding that although the ultimate purpose of humans is happiness, our search or pursuit must be positive to society.

> …the function of man is to live a certain kind of life, and this activity implies a rational principle, and the function of a good man is the good and noble performance of these, and if any action is well performed it is performed in accord with the appropriate excellence: if this is the case, then happiness turns out to be an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue." (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1098a13)

Staking other views on happiness, Greve (2012) cites philosophers such as Aristippus, also a pupil of Socrates, who stated the goal of happiness was to maximize your total comfort,

and Epicurus who proposed the goal of human life was happiness, which according to him, resulted from absence or reduction of physical pain and mental disturbance. These ideas have influenced the universal meanings of happiness and the philosophical underpinnings of current definitions.

In Latin philosophy, the happy life is referred to as “vita beata”. Miller (2010) finds in his research that the quintessential Stoic idea defines "true happiness” as placed in “virtue alone". According to Miller (2010), the Stoics had the clearest conception of happiness. If happiness is a life lived according to how nature intended us to live then as rational beings, this reason is necessary for happiness. When we are rational, we are virtuous (Miller, 2010). Therefore, through this lens, happiness is attributed to reason and resignation, rather than an emotional response.

One final branch of philosophy that aimed at providing a definition for happiness is utilitarianism (Hyman, 2014; Greve, 2012). Emphasizing happiness in utilitarianism, Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill presented ethical theories on how to achieve a “good” society through promoting the greatest good for the largest number of people (Hyman, 2014). The latter philosopher, Mill, distinguished between intellectual and moral pleasures being superior to physical ones with regards to attaining happiness. This branch of philosophy is still the foundation for the field of Economics as it later entered the scientific conversation of happiness.

Economics

Economic activity is seen as a contributing factor to happiness and studying happiness has allowed scientists to extend economic theory into various and new areas (Frey et al., 2010). Over the last four decades, economists have referred to concepts such as individual utility,

happiness, or subjective well-being (Van Praag & Bernard, 2007). Utility was the preferred term used and it was determined to assess subjective priorities, as revealed by people's actual behaviors (Greve, 2012). According to Frey and Stutzer (2010), an economic analysis of happiness provides in-depth consideration for the effects of income, employment, unemployment, and economic and social factors. In recent years a whole section of economics, namely behavioral economics, has dealt with the study of happiness (Greve, 2012). Bruni (2010) states that through their perspective, economists further develop the behavior and consequences of each type of happiness mentioned before (emotional and affective, evaluative, or as a moral virtue). An example of this is what economists Kahneman et al. (2004) distinguish between the 'hedonic' (or affective) treadmill, where individuals are never satiated of gaining pleasure, and the 'satisfaction' (evaluative) treadmill, which relates to individuals pursuing satisfactory results and achievements in life. Furthermore, Eckerseley (2000) studied the diminishing returns in the pursuit of happiness, where proportionally smaller benefits are derived from efforts to become happier.

Over the last few decades, economists have further analyzed how happiness and economics can be combined to promote societal and community development (Greve, 2012, WHR, 2018; WHR, 2012; WHR, 2020; WHR, 2022). The ultimate objective within the field has been to understand what creates the greatest possible satisfaction for the greater number of individuals (Haller & Hadler, 2006; Greve, 2012; WHR, 2018). This conceptualization has been fundamental in the scientific conversation and global practice of the field of happiness. Psychology, like economics, is also a field that more recently joined the conversation on happiness by focusing on behavior and individual actions (Hyman, 2014; Greve, 2012).

Psychology

Research in psychology reveals considerable discrepancies in how people describe happiness and experience well-being (Ushida, 2012). Currently, psychologists define happiness as "people's evaluations of their lives which encompasses both cognitive judgments of satisfaction and affective appraisals of moods and emotions" (Kesebir & Diener, 2008, p. 118). However, long before contemporary studies on happiness emerged, earlier psychologists attempted to define the concept. According to Thomason (2011), Sigmund Freud suggested that happiness is principally guided by the individual's need for pleasure. However, man's pursuit for pleasure can be insatiable, inconsistent with one's reality, whether social, economic, or psychological, thus leading to negative emotions such as disappointment. This reflects similarities to the parallel conversation in economics.

As highlighted by Greve (2012), behaviorism was the dominant scientific context of the 1930's before other perspectives eventually emerged. Among the many branches of psychology, logotherapy was born through meaning-centered therapy. Viktor Frankl, a Holocaust survivor, first posed his theories in 1969. Logotherapy is a form of psychotherapy based on an individual's motivation to search for meaning in their life. In his books, *Man's Search for Meaning* and *The Will to Meaning*, the author explains that happiness is not an on-going emotion nor what causes a joyful state. As a result, happiness as a concrete state of being is irrelevant. Instead, Frankl (1969) argues that happiness lies more within the meaning we give external situations and actions rather than the situation or action itself.

Despite coexisting definitions of happiness from different schools of psychology and authors, researchers have focused more on "how much" rather than "what is". As for happiness, conceived as an individual experience, researchers have attempted to measure the emotion rather

than explain it. There have been many psychological theories attempting to explain what happiness is, where it comes from, how and why we experience it. Positive psychology, a recent branch that focuses on the subjective level and other central aspects include intrinsic motivation and satisfaction of basic human needs (Greve, 2012), has been deeply interested in these measures.

Positive Psychology

Positive psychology creates a framework of capacity building where the individual can use his or her abilities to create opportunities for higher levels of happiness and life enjoyment (Greve, 2012). By founding "positive psychology", Martin Seligman (2010) stated that previous approaches to help patients in their pursuit of happiness was incomplete and focused on healing illness rather than human flourishing. The skills obtained to fight depression and anxiety are completely different from the skills for creating meaning in one's life (Seligman, 2010). Seligman (2011) proposes three elements to understand happiness: positive emotion, engagement, and meaning as the factors that could help individuals experience happiness as well as measure it. Through positive psychology we learn that the opposite of happiness is not sadness or depression but misery and suffering.

According to Wiking (2018), happiness is subjective, and it should be. The author and founder of the Happiness Research Institute in Denmark, affirms that positive psychology is effective in measuring happiness (Wiking, 2018). Positive psychology centered not on the sick but on the healthy, which has been influential to therapeutic, lifestyle, policy, and organizational discussions, and on its ability to support the scientific study of optimal human functioning (Hyman, 2014). Currently, enough evidence exists suggesting that happiness is, to some extent, moldable and trainable (Rastelli et al., 2021). The emerging subfield of positive psychology has

provided lay audiences with access to scientific research on the topic of happiness (Hyman, 2014), promoting popularity and depth to the concept.

Finally, Hommerich and Klein (2012) explain it is difficult to have a clear-cut definition of happiness due to its subjective nature. The authors highlight comments from Blumenberg (1987), which prompts researchers to avoid an objective determination of what happiness is:

> Happiness is what an individual understands as his or her happiness; it would be a potential catastrophe for mankind if one determined for all or all determined for one, or many for a few or a few for many determined what happiness should consist of. This is why determining what happiness is should not be left to the hands of reason. Therefore, one does not seek to shed light on what happiness is by objective means.

Constructions of Happiness

One of the most crucial debates in the study of happiness is presented in a question posed by Veenhoven (1984), *Is happiness a self-made construction or is it an uncontrollable gift?* Due to the inconclusive debate as to whether happiness is a 'rational' or an 'emotional' phenomenon, Veenhoven states that 'happiness as a gift' would be the most applicable, at least for its affective component. Since happiness is not necessarily stable nor are our judgements of our own happiness always definite (Veenhoven), our answer might change through time. Furthermore, as described in the earlier section, authors from different disciplines would argue that happiness is in fact a self-made construction. Following you will find the widely used constructions of happiness that guide the various tools and measurements used across nations (WHR, 2021).

Happiness as an Emotion or Affect: Hedonic Well-being

The World Happiness Report (2021) conceptualizes happiness as an emotional experience or affect. Individuals assess their happiness through the emotions and moods that people feel in their day-to-day life, whether positive or negative. Through a method called the "reconstruction of the day", individuals are prompted to think and record the experiences lived the day before and are then asked to classify them as positive or negative. This perspective provides an affective focus and assessment of their own happiness (WHR, 2022). When applying this concept across nations and cultures there is an issue that arises. According to Hyman (2014), culture-specific norms govern how an individual should feel in different situations and how people display an expressed emotion is surrounded by a framework of social norms and social expectations. For these reasons it is important to understand happiness within the cultural context.

Happiness as a Moral Value: Eudaimonic Well-being

As described in the previous section, philosophers and economists have focused their conceptualization of happiness on moral values. The transition of viewing happiness from non-agentic to agentic and external to internal, was a gradual process, but accelerated in the Enlightenment era (McMahon, 2006). According to Oishi et al. (2013), historians observed that the Greek term eudaimonia (the term often translated as happiness in English) was first used as: "Happy and lucky the man" (ευτυχισμένος και τυχερός άνδρας). Because the related term eudaimon is the combination of eu (εὖ, "good") and daimon (δαίμων "God", "spirit", "demon"), McMahon (2006) concludes that happiness is attributed to a good spirit within. Oishi et al. (2013) highlight antagonistic perspectives regarding the pursuit of happiness in earlier eras, referring to St. Augustine's and St. Thomas Aquinas' writings where the first states that "the

earthly quest for happiness is doomed" and the latter clarified the role of human effort in the process of eudemonia, which Oishi et al. (2013) describe as "becoming closer to God". Nonetheless, values change across regions and nations, even for countries belonging to the same cultural background as Britain and the U.S., they have different culture values (Ye et al., 2015). The World Values Survey (WVS), for example, unveils those substantial cross-country differences persist and are stable. For this, among other reasons, life satisfaction has become the most generalized measurement for happiness in cross-cultural studies.

Happiness as Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction has been one of the most popular conceptualizations of happiness (Krys, 2021). Happiness can be most simply defined as the subjective appreciation of one's life (Veenhoven, 2011), or as a very basic sense of satisfaction (Layard, 2005). The word "appreciation" is important in this definition as it becomes the individual's "evaluation" or "satisfaction" with life and refers to a state of mind but leaves ambiguity when attempting to uncover the precise nature of its state. Veenhoven (2011) states the nature of a state of happiness can be cognitive evaluation or affective experience. The cognitive aspect rests on a judgment that ultimately measures up favorably against one's expectations. The affective side of happiness is the level to which an individual finds his or her life "rewarding" or "fulfilling".

Besides these three broad ways in which a person can assess, experience, and self-report their sense of happiness, (1) through emotion or affect, (2) through life satisfaction or cognitive evaluation and (3) as a moral value or virtue (Greve, 2012; Hyman, 2014; Haller & Hadler, 2006), there are three other that influence the content of this study: happiness as purpose or meaning (Beng et al., 2021), happiness as a human right (Greve, 2012; McMahon, 2016) and happiness as spiritual or religious practice (Dolcos et al., 2021).

Happiness as Purpose and Meaning

As described earlier, various studies within psychology have connected happiness to purpose and meaning. Frankl (1959) referred to purpose as a source of motivation in a person's life and a deep reason for living. Similarly, Bronk (2011) referred to purpose as an "enduring, personally meaningful commitment to what one hopes to accomplish or work toward in life" (p. 32). Other authors such as Kosine, Steger, and Duncan (2008) define purpose as a lay concept, a person's most important goals that help them manifest their true potential and achieve satisfaction. Kauppinen (2013) argues that subjective meaning is a key constituent of happiness, which is best described as a multidimensional affective condition.

Researchers utilize the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ) and other variations of this tool to comprehend the multidimensionality of individuals make meaning of their lives (Steger, 2006). Steger (2006) evaluates two dimensions of meaning in life: (1) Presence of Meaning, or how much individuals feel their lives have meaning, and (2) Search for Meaning, or how much individuals strive to find meaning and understanding in their lives. Another tool that is utilized to study purpose is the Sense of Purpose Scale, a list of 48 items that assess one's multidimensional conceptualization of purpose. According to Sharma and Yukhymenko (2020), it is divided into three subscales: awareness of purpose (e.g., my purpose in life is clear), awakening to purpose (e.g., I am in the process of formulating my long-term goals), and altruistic purpose (e.g., my goals extend beyond benefits for myself). As demonstrated by Beng et al. (2021), many believe that true happiness lies not in its pursuit, but in pursuing meaning. Their results showed that finding meaning was not an explicit constituent of happiness, however, meaning was implanted implicitly in every theme used to describe the concept (Beng et al., 2021).

Happiness as a Human Right

As described in Chapter One, as Thomas Jefferson asserted in the 1776 Declaration of Independence included the "pursuit of happiness" as an unalienable right, along with life and liberty. McMahon (2006) emphasizes the contrast between an active pursuit of happiness with the more passive conception of happiness as one that is "given" (e.g., luck, fortune, or fate). According to Oishi et al (2013) historians have debated the meaning of happiness in the Declaration of Independence and discussed that the rights to "life, liberty, and property" had been a matter of interest a century earlier. They propose that Jefferson meant "the pursuit of private property and wealth". However, scholars speculated that what Jefferson meant was the pursuit of private (individual) happiness (McMahon, 2006).

Spiritual and Religious Perspectives on Happiness

In recent studies, religion has been integrated as a prime concept when evaluating happiness due to religious values associated with overall well-being. Nonetheless, previous research has left remaining questions regarding the association of personal values with subjective well-being (Lee & Kawachi, 2019). For the purposes of this study, I point out that my review of research was limited to the Christian faith, since it is the major religion in the top ten happiest countries of the world. In a review of the World Happiness Report (2021) ranking of countries, as of 2010 their top religion is Christianity according to the World Population Review (2021). The Christian populations in these countries list as follows: Finland (4,300,000), Iceland (300,000), Denmark (4,630,000), Switzerland (5,570,000), Netherlands (8,410,000), Sweden (6,310,000), Germany (56,540,000), Norway (4,140,000), New Zealand (2,490,000), and Austria (6,750,000).

Dolcos et al. (2021) used the Brief COPE self-report measure, a brief form of the COPE Inventory (Calver et al.1989), to assess how individuals respond when confronted with difficult or stressful events in their life. The tool consisted of two items within the survey and included questions relevant to religion as a coping strategy. The rating of the items reflects the extent to which a person resorts to religious coping or coping via religious beliefs or practices. Higher scores conclude that, when dealing with stressful situations, a person demonstrates a higher frequency of resorting to their religious belief system as a coping strategy (Dolcos et al., 2021). The authors proved religious and spiritual coping mechanisms showed a positive correlation with life reappraisal and was found to be negatively linked with anxiety and depression scores. Studies that will be mentioned below provide more detail on religion and spiritual influence of happiness in Nordic countries.

Despite the various disciplines described above, which have attempted to define happiness and the different constructions that scientists have found, there is an underlying understanding that happiness can be a synonym to subjective well-being (Veenhoven, 2007; WHR, 2012; WHR, 2015; WHR, 2018). For this reason, it is important to understand the difference between subjective and objective well-being,

Objective Well-being vs. Subjective Well-being

The indicators of human well-being should not be confused with the experience of being well, and the best way to understand this is by asking people directly (Rojas, 2020). When asked about their well-being, people tend to consider their various life domains. Two conceptual approaches have been the primary focus on well-being research: objective and subjective (Western & Tomaszewski, 2016; Voukelatou et al., 2020). The objective approach examines objective components of a good life within society, assessed through the extent to which human

"needs" are satisfied (Voukelatou et al., 2020), and how the subject examines their own well-being experience is not relevant (Western & Tomaszewski, 2016). This approach looks at objective data such as income. On the other hand, the subjective approach examines people's subjective evaluations of their lives (also known as life satisfaction), which studies how objective well-being relates to subjective well-being. This second approach has been traditionally collected through self-reports and surveys. The World Happiness Report (2012) explains that when evaluating how good their lives are, humans often compare their own lives to the lives of those around them. This makes an individual's subjective perception of his position in society more predictive of well-being than other objective measures, such as their income, for example.

According to Krys (2021), life satisfaction has been the most popular conceptualization of subjective well-being in psychological research with Diener et al.'s 1985 paper having been cited over 10,000 times. Subjective well-being combines emotional state theory and life satisfaction theory. Although research demonstrates each metric can influence the other, each uses different research methodologies and instruments to assess. In either case, both objective and subjective well-being metrics are "self-reported" (WHR, 2012). This leads to several limitations, which according to Nettle (2005), begin with people's exaggeration, bias, and mood when being asked to evaluate their happiness. The challenge for a comprehensive, universal method of both objective and subjective approach is that what is good for an individual might not necessarily be good for society (Greve, 2012).

Limitations in the Study of Happiness

An important source of uncertainty in happiness research is the possibility of cultural bias (Veenhoven 2012; Méndez, 2020). One of the limitations on happiness literature is cultural relativism as explained by Veenhoven (1984). Cultural relativism proposes that any set of

customs and institutions, or way of life, is as valid as any other (Kanarek, 2013) and even though truths exist, they are always relative to some cultural placement or context (Booth, 2001). This means that many researchers have been focused on specific and tangible conditions of happiness and may have lost sight of the context of the findings, failing to highlight that these conditions of happiness possibly vary significantly across cultures and times (Veenhoven,1984). According to Leone and White (2021), this has led to the concept of cultural relativism, which rose from cross-cultural comparisons and efforts by researchers to, at least temporarily, abstain from judgments based on their own cultural premises.

In his research, Veenhoven (1984) proposes three biases or limitations in the measurement of happiness. First, interviewer bias, which explains that interviewers might project their own happiness or form a biased impression about the respondent among other interviewer effects. The second bias is response-style bias which considers whether the respondent answers with 'eccentricity and carelessness in responding', with 'test evasiveness' or with 'habitual yes-saying'. And finally, contextual bias, which refers to the order and tone of the questions and how they impact other variables and create a frame of reference for questions on other life domains.

Additionally, because the conceptualization of happiness varies across cultures, the method of measuring the concept must also vary (Gardiner, 2020). According to Morris (2012), the various definitions and approaches that literature offers and the inability to determine a definitive definition of happiness is a major obstacle to science.

The World Happiness Report

As presented in Chapter One, in 2011, the General Assembly of the United Nations (GA) adopted resolution 65/309 as an invitation to Member States to continue to pursue additional actions and measures that better reflect the relevance of happiness and well-being in development to guide their public policies. A year later, to recover their initial invitation, the GA established March 20 to be the International Day of Happiness in resolution 66/281 of 2012. The following statement explains why the decision was made:

> To recognize the relevance of happiness and well-being as universal aspirations of human beings and the importance of their inclusion in government policies. The resolution also recognizes the need for a more inclusive, equitable and balanced approach to economic growth that promotes sustainable development, the eradication of poverty, the happiness and well-being of all peoples.

This declaration led to the creation of a yearly publication on World Happiness developed by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Solutions Network, a nonprofit created by the UN in 2012. This document, The World Happiness Report, assesses happiness levels around the world, publishing a yearly ranking of the World Happiness Index. The publication is compiled by researchers and scientists who act as independent experts.

The World Happiness Report (2022) studies and analyzes the trends of happiness over 15 years of data from the Gallup World Poll and examines how interest in measures and policies that impact happiness has evolved before and since the first World Happiness Report published in 2012.

Application of the World Happiness Report

Since its conception, the World Happiness Report serves as a guide for governments, international organizations, policy makers, and educators to consider a more holistic understanding of human development and subjective well-being. In this report, six factors, described as social foundations, are utilized to measure happiness: GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, generosity, and perception of corruption or trust. Each year, the report publishes rankings of overall happiness of citizens from over 150 countries along with complementary research on topics that impact the social foundations of happiness.

Measurements and Data

The World Happiness Report (2022) uses data from the Gallup World Poll surveys from 2019 to 2021. The typical annual sample for each country is 1,000 people. However, many countries have not had annual surveys and the researchers utilize responses from the most recent years (WHR, 2022). In the latest report (2022), authors combine various data sources to establish a global sample size large enough to help reduce sampling errors. The Report utilizes an imaginary country that has the world's least-happy people, Dystopia, as a benchmark against which all countries can be favorably compared. Dystopia would be the country with the world's lowest incomes, lowest life expectancy, lowest generosity, most corruption, least freedom, and least social support (WHR, 2022). The reports are based on answers to the main life evaluation question asked in the poll, which is the Cantril ladder. This measure asks respondents to think of a ladder, with the best possible life for them being a 10 and the worst possible life being a 0. Afterwards, they are asked to rate their own current lives on that 0 to 10 scale.

Social Foundations

The six factors mentioned above also known as social foundations, are utilized for positioning countries in the ranking and are defined as follows:

GDP per capita. According to the World Happiness Report (2019), GDP per capita is in terms of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) adjusted to constant 2011 international dollars, taken from the World Development Indicators (WDI) released by the World Bank on November 14, 2018. The equation used by the researchers extends the natural log of GDP per capita, as this form fits the data significantly better than GDP per capita.

Social support. Social support is the national average of the binary responses (either 0 or 1) to the Gallup World Poll (GWP) question "If you were in trouble, do you have relatives or friends you can count on to help you whenever you need them, or not?" (WHR, 2019).

Healthy life expectancy. Healthy life expectancy at birth is constructed for this Report based on data from the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Health Observatory data repository, with data available for 2005, 2010, 2015, and 2016. To match the sample period of the 2019 Report, scientists used interpolation and extrapolation.

Freedom to make life choices. Refers to the national average of binary responses to the GWP question "Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with your freedom to choose what you do with your life?"

Generosity. According to the Report (WHR, 2019), this factor is the residual of regressing the national average of GWP responses to the question "Have you donated money to a charity in the past month?" on GDP per capita.

Perception of corruption or trust. Perceptions of corruption are the average of binary answers to two GWP questions: "Is corruption widespread throughout the government or not?" and "Is corruption widespread within businesses or not?" Where data for government corruption is missing, the perception of business corruption is used as the overall corruption-perception measure (WHR, 2021). The World Happiness Report shows the estimated extent to which each of six factors (levels of GDP, life expectancy, generosity, social support, freedom, and corruption) is estimated to contribute to making life evaluations higher in each country compared to Dystopia.

Happiness as a Cultural Construct

Is happiness similar for all humans, or is it something that varies across cultures? This is a classic question in the study of happiness (Veenhoven, 2012). According to Veenhoven, in a universalistic view, happiness can be compared to pain, whereas all humans know what pain is and tend to avoid it. However, in a cultural view, happiness is more comparable to beauty, which is subjective and varies across time and culture (Veenhoven, 2012). Current research has concluded culture is a key factor affecting happiness (Ye et al., 2015). According to Wierzbicka (2022) the construct of happiness is culturally specific and comparison across cultures can be problematic. Krys et al. (2020) affirm that a large body of literature states that within and across cultures people conceptualize happiness differently.

Happiness Across Cultures

The widest compilation of cultural perspectives on happiness is the text, *Happiness Across Cultures* (2012), which reveals the diverse and unique perspectives of happiness and quality of life which are rooted in rich cultural heritage and histories. Some of the factors that

influence or provoke cultural and cross-cultural studies in happiness and subjective well-being are linguistic differences (Wierzbicka, 2004), levels of education (Veenhoven, 2012), levels of collectivism or individualism in nations, geography, the economy, and political climate (Ye et al., 2015). One example of cultural influences on happiness is related to the factor of linguistics discussed previously. It is important for researchers to note that how the word “happiness” is used in a nation’s language influences how the citizens respond to questions on what it means and how they feel about it. According to Greve (2012), for example, in America, the word has been given a very lay, everyday meaning. Consider the common, popular concepts of Happy Hour, Happy Meal, Chief Happiness Officer, and the presumption that these are things that should make us happy. For this reason, when approached with questions on happiness, Americans feel comfortable to answer as compared to other cultures (Greve, 2012).

Further, Delle et al. (2016), studied how happiness has changed throughout time and across cultures. To begin, they researched happiness definitions in dictionaries from 30 countries to find which cultural similarities and variances existed. The researchers sought how often the phrases “happy nation” versus “happy person” were present between 1800 and 2008, and found that across cultures and time, happiness was frequently described as “good luck” and “good external conditions”. However, in American English, this conceptualization or definition was replaced by definitions that focused on favorable internal feeling states. Along with the temporal changes in the definition of happiness, it is important to consider how the definition of the word "happiness" varies across regions of the world (Lu, 2001; Uchida & Kitayama, 2009). Based on the review of current literature, Delle et al. examined lay definitions across nations and their relative cultural aspects, assessing their components and their relationship with participant’s demographic characteristics. From assessing 2,799 individuals (30–60 years old, 50% women)

from Argentina, Brazil, Croatia, Hungary, India, Italy, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, South Africa, and the United States, the researchers found that inner harmony dominated among psychological definitions, and familial and social interactions predominated among contextual definitions, with little change by age and gender across countries.

Additionally, the idea of happiness is conceptualized differently across nations and cultures (Oishi et al., 2013; Lu, 2001; Uchida & Kitayama, 2009). Beyond culture, other factors such as climate influence how happiness is conceived and used (Oishi & Graham, 2010). This could be associated with the harshness of climate, where obtaining food and shelter has historically been challenging, luck and fortune might have become central to societal assumptions. As predicted, individuals living in the nations where happiness is not based on luck or fortune reported having experienced happiness more than those living in the nations where happiness is associated with luck. The reports conclude stating that the nations where happiness is mostly defined by luck or fortune, experience lower levels of happiness.

Happiness literature is commonly divided into two large groups, European-American cultures, and East-Asian cultures (Ye et al., 2015). According to Uchida et al. (2004), the main differences between these two groups include the meanings of happiness, the motivations underlying happiness, and the predictors of happiness. The most relevant difference in the influences on happiness for East-Asian and European-American cultures is that East-Asian cultures tend to be more socially-oriented (collectivist) while European-American cultures focus on individuality (Ye et al., 2015). Furthermore, Schimmack et al. (2002) state that East-Asians' attitude towards happiness and unhappiness may be rooted in Asian philosophies, while individuals from Europe and the Americas are more inclined to interpret their well-being based on their direct feelings and emotional experiences of happiness (Western perspective). The

impact of a country's culture on happiness has been explained through different culture-dependent definitions of individual achievement (Ye et al., 2015). Most Americans relate well-being to personal achievement and other positive experiences (Oishi et al., 2016). Regardless of the geographical location, there is also uniformity in the requirements for happiness (Veenhoven, 2012). A clear pattern affirms that people live happier in modern nations, where there is economic development, freedom, rule of law and good governance (Veenhoven, 2012).

Constructions of Happiness in the Nordic Countries

Average life satisfaction in the top ten happiest countries in the world is more than twice as high as in the bottom ten countries (WHR, 2021). According to the World Happiness Report (2020), "Nordic happiness levels are dependent on the measure of happiness used". Oxfeldt et al. (2017) describe two types of happiness: *evaluative* happiness, which is overall contentment with life and its possibilities generally provided by a social structure and *affective* happiness, or a feeling of joy at a particular moment. The authors argue that although the World Happiness Report (2012) reported Denmark in the top position relative to evaluative happiness, it ranked 100th relative to affective happiness. Rojas (2012) explains that a high level of life satisfaction does not directly translate into experiencing a high frequency of positive emotions. Furthermore, Rojas (2016) proposes that if the report considered positive emotions over generalized life satisfaction, then Latin American countries, and not Nordic ones, would occupy the top positions.

The World Happiness Report (2019) also considers and segregates data between the locally and foreign-born populations in each country and determined that happiness rankings were essentially the same for the two groups. The report stated that, "Although with some footprint

effect after migration, and some tendency for migrants to move to happier countries, so that among twenty happiest countries, the average happiness for the locally born was about 0.2 points higher than for the foreign-born" (WHR, 2019).

Rankings of the Nordic Countries as Related to Happiness

The top ten countries ranked in the report's Happiness Index (WHR, 2021) have fluctuated over the years. The only exception within the ranking is of the country that occupies the place of the "happiest", Finland, which has occupied this position for five consecutive years. Among the other countries occupying the top ten, there are no significant variations, since the difference is less than one percent variation, compared to the previous three years. The countries leading the way in the World Happiness Report are those that have the highest scores on the Corruption Perceptions Index, meaning they have the lowest levels of perceived corruption. These are Denmark and New Zealand, with eighty-eight points, followed by Finland, Singapore, Sweden, and Switzerland with eighty-five each. The Report (WHR, 2018) further demonstrates that Helsinki, Copenhagen, and Reykjavik may be the happiest cities but not because of their geographical location but because the population, over time, have built proper levels of trust, social connections, cooperation, and innovation. The lowest scores on the World Happiness Report correspond to South Sudan and Somalia with a score of twelve each, followed by Syria at fourteen, and Yemen and Venezuela at fifteen. From these scores, it is of note that countries with the lowest scores in terms of transparency are the same as those that, in the World Happiness Report, score as the least happy countries in the world.

Nonetheless, Nordic happiness levels are dependent on the measure of happiness used (WHR, 2020). Authors Oxfeldt, Nestingen, & Simonsen (2017) argue that although these countries rank in the top position relative to evaluative happiness, they rank lower relative to

affective happiness. A high level of life satisfaction does not translate into experiencing a high frequency of positive emotions (WHR, 2012).

Nordic Exceptionalism explained. The World Happiness Report (2021) analyzes the characteristics of the Nordic countries, as well as New Zealand, Canada, and Australia, which share various elements in their culture. The World Happiness Report (2021) confirms that there is no secret which the Nordic countries have that is not available to the rest of the world and explains that what does exist is a general conception on how to promote high life satisfaction of citizens. The World Happiness Report (2021) suggests that ensuring that state institutions are of high quality, exempt of corruption, capable of delivering promised results, and generous in caring for their citizens in the face of different adversities they are likely to face is a great start. Since its conception, and in its earliest edition, the World Happiness Report (2012) states that:

The Nordic countries are characterized by a virtuous circle in which various institutional and cultural indicators complement each other, including: a functioning democracy, a generous state on the subject of well-being with effective benefits, low levels of crime and corruption, and satisfied citizens who feel free to trust themselves and their government institutions.

Happiness Myths in Nordic Countries

The World Happiness Report (2020) focuses on this topic, specifically the "Nordic Exceptionalism" and dives deep into related research. In this section I will heavily focus on the World Happiness Report (2020) and utilize their structure of subtopics. In this report (WHR, 2020) The authors identified four myths, commonly perceived as the reasons why the Nordic countries should not be the happiest countries in the world, even though research determines otherwise.

Myth 1: Weather. The first popular belief that evidence refutes is the relationship between the weather in this region and their reported levels of happiness. The World Happiness Report (2020) determines that climate is something that people adapt to throughout their lives and therefore generally does not affect levels of life satisfaction in those who are accustomed to a certain climate. In this sense, no scientific relationship has been found between the Nordic climatic conditions and the level of satisfaction or overall well-being with life in this region.

Myth 2: Suicide. The World Happiness Report (2012) states that the apparent paradox about these happiest countries, having the highest suicide levels, appears to be based on outdated information. Nordic suicide rates are not especially high and are easy to project from theoretical models where the same factors contribute to higher life satisfaction in the Nordic countries as at lower suicide rates. Contrary to international perceptions, the Nordic countries are not particularly affected with higher suicide rates than other developed countries enjoying high levels of happiness.

Myth 3: Small and homogeneous societies. The third myth is the belief that small, homogeneous societies are happier. According to findings in the World Happiness Report, first, research on the subject has found no relationship, negative or positive, between the size of a country's population and life satisfaction. Second, ethnic homogeneity does not explain the happiness of the Nordic countries– The Nordic countries are diverse in the ethnicity of their population. The ten happiest countries, according to this Report, have more than twice as many immigrants as the world average, currently seventeen-point two percent; While countries like Sweden report nineteen percent.

Myth 4: Migration. The World Happiness Report (2012) assures that, over time, immigrants to a country tend to be as happy as people born locally. According to the Report

(2012), the welfare benefits provided by the governments of the Nordic countries also extend to those who migrate to these countries.

Determining Factors for Happiness in Nordic Countries

Researchers and scientists who collaborate in the writing of the World Happiness Report affirm they have identified determining factors for the so-called "Nordic exceptionalism", or the consistency in the high scores of the Nordic countries in the World Happiness Index. “Most of the potential explanatory factors for Nordic happiness are highly correlated with each other and often also mutually reinforcing, making it hard to disentangle cause from effect.” (WHR, 2020, p. 130). Below, each of these factors is described, as presented in the WHR (2020):

Determining factor 1: Welfare state generosity. Previously, government spending was analyzed in relation to gross domestic product (GDP), as a variable, to understand whether state spending had a correlation with happiness. The results showed a neutral effect. However, the variables studied have been made more precise to better understand the benefits of a generous state, in terms of welfare, and there is a positive relationship between the generosity of state spending on welfare issues and happiness. In this regard, there is also a positive relationship between labor market regulations to protect the exploitative worker, and the self-reported happiness of these citizens (WHR, 2020).

Determining factor 2: Quality of institutionalism. The second determining factor is the quality of institutionalism (WHR, 2020). The studies carried out for the World Happiness Report differentiate the quality of institutionalism in two dimensions: one is democratic quality, and the other is quality of delivery. The first concerns access to power, including factors such as the ability to participate in the selection of government, freedom of expression, freedom of

association, and political stability. The second is about the exercise of power, including control of corruption, regulatory quality, and government effectiveness.

A positive relationship is found between the quality of government exercise and the happiness of citizens. The quality of the government's institutional framework is a determining factor as studies find that it is this ultimate type of government quality, the quality of delivery, that is most strongly related to happiness. citizen. However, in countries with a high quality of delivery, such as the Nordic countries, the quality of democracy plays an increasingly important role in better explaining citizens' satisfaction with life (WHR, 2020).

Determining factor 3: Freedom to make life decisions. The third determining factor is the freedom that citizens feel to make life decisions (WHR, 2020). A positive relationship is found between the sense of freedom and happiness. These studies define the sense of freedom on the following three factors: first, material freedom or opportunity to overcome scarcity; second, to have democratic institutions that liberate from political oppression, and third, liberal cultural values and tolerance that allow people to express themselves and have their own identity. According to the World Values Survey, the data analyzed between one thousand nine hundred and eighty-one to two thousand seven affirm that the sense of freedom can have a weight of up to 30% in the report of happiness or "Subjective well-being" of an individual (WHR, 2020).

Determining factor 4: Trust in others and social cohesion. The fourth, and last determining factor is, trust in others and social cohesion. A positive relationship is found between trust and happiness of citizens (WHR, 2020). Trust is measured as social trust or the belief that those around us are honest, upright, and trustworthy, and horizontal trust refers to trust towards peers mainly in the context of work. Social cohesion is a more generalized concept of trust. Delhey & Dragolov (2016) define social cohesion in three dimensions: the first, the

connections we build with other people; the second, having good social relationships, and third, feeling concern for the common good. Similarly, there is a positive relationship between social cohesion and citizen well-being.

Determining factor, not conclusive: Income inequality. To explain "Nordic exceptionalism" further, there is a determining factor, but not conclusive, and it is income inequality. The World Happiness Report (2020) shows that low levels of inequality are important for the happiness of Nordic citizens, however the same effect is not observed in other regions. This means that the low level of inequality in the Nordic countries affects their happiness, but we could not conclude that the lower the level of inequality, the higher the level of happiness in the other regions.

Other explanations of "Nordic exceptionalism". A final explanation that supports the high score of the Nordic countries over time and why these countries differ from others is what researchers call the “virtuous circle”. Scientific investigation has shown that social comparisons have a significant impact on individual well-being (WHR, 2020). According to this report, in the Nordic countries, this effect is reduced, because since the state is generous in terms of well-being, people's perceptions of their position in society have less influence on their own happiness than in other countries.

Research on Happiness for Latin American Peoples

“Latin Americans’ evaluation of life is also above what income levels would predict. There is more to life than income and that there is something to learn from the Latin American case about the drivers of happiness” (WHR, 2018, p.115)

To understand Latin American happiness is not just a cross-cultural curiosity, it is an important case study for happiness science and a basic building block to design happy cultures (Yamamoto, 2016). It should be noted that the Latin American country that occupies the highest position is Costa Rica, occupying the sixteenth place, with a result of seven point zero seven in their average national life satisfaction or Cantril ladder. In this year's survey (WHR, 2021), Costa Rica did not participate, so its data in this most recent Index presents the average of the three previous years. Latin Americans report high levels of happiness, considering their relatively low levels in objective measurements and social factors (WHR, 2018). Understanding these specific migrants' experiences and how it has influenced their conceptualization of happiness would allow for both the discovery and transfer of deeper knowledge in happiness and subjective well-being studies. The socio-political and economic indicators in this region often portray a situation of weak political institutions, high corruption, high violence and crime rates, very unequal distribution of income, and high poverty rates (WHR, 2018).

Positive Affect and High Frequency of Positive Emotions

Latin Americans report outstandingly high levels of positive affect (WHR, 2018). Considering the average of questions associated with positive affect in the Gallup World Poll, the report shows that eight of the top ten countries and ten out of the top fifteen in the world on this measure are from Latin America. Furthermore, the correlation between evaluative and affective states is smaller in Latin America compared to other regions (WHR, 2018). According to that same report (WHR,2018), the explanation of happiness based on variables such as income, social support, generosity, freedom in your life, perception of corruption, seems to be ignorant of other important drivers.

Individual Goals and Values

Latin Americans exhibit high desirability for life satisfaction, as well as a strong positivity bias towards it (Tov, 2017). In this sense, personal goals and values play a central role in the relationship between drivers of happiness and the construction of happiness itself (WHR, 2018). A finding very peculiar to the personal achievement aspect in Latin American is the relevance of relational goals, such as “making parents proud” and “watching children grow up” (WHR, 2018).

Deep Family Ties

According to the World Happiness Report (2018), the patterns of interpersonal relations in Latin America differ significantly from those in other regions of the world. The abundance and relevance of close and warm interpersonal relations in the region are one of the most determinant factors of happiness. These deep emotional interpersonal relations lead to enjoying high family satisfaction levels and experiencing frequent and high levels of positive emotions (WHR, 2018). In Latin America, it is natural for people to have an extended family living close to each other or holding a relevant role in one another's life, such as cousins, uncles and aunts, nieces and nephews, grandparents, grandchildren, godparents and so on. Nonetheless, the degree of involvement of the aforementioned extended-family members in a Latin American’s life may vary across cultures in the region (WHR, 2018).

Corruption

Considering that “trust in our fellow citizens and towards the government” is important for happiness (WHR,2012; WHR, 2018; WHR, 2021), it is not a coincidence that the happiest countries in the world are also the same ones at the top of the International Transparency Index, and they report the lowest rates of corruption. An individual and collective sense of trust can be

reflected through a country's corruption index and as stipulated in the World Happiness Report, some countries do not show variation. Therefore, they remain in similar positions to previous years. The most recent Corruption Perceptions Index highlights that almost half of the countries have been stuck at the same level for nearly a decade, without having made significant progress in their score or in the fight against corruption in the public sector. According to the Corruption Perception Index (2021), most countries have not presented improvements in their fight against corruption, stating that the "analysis indicates that corruption not only undermines the health response global to Covid-19 but also contributes to maintaining democracy in a state of permanent crisis". Even though, nations that enjoy more economic and political freedom, less corruption, and more migrants are happier than those nations with less freedom, more corruption, and fewer migrants (Oishi, 2016), "life satisfaction in Latin America is substantially higher than would be predicted based on income, corruption, and other standard variables, including having someone to count on." (WHR, 2018, p. 9). Given the many social and economic problems that are predicted to diminish happiness, research has shown that it would be a wrong assumption that these problems overwhelm the daily lives of Latin Americans (WHR, 2018).

Latin American Migrants

The World Happiness Report (2018) provides in-depth findings that emigrants from Latin America to foreign countries do not have significant happiness gains relative to migrants from other locations. This case is true for Latin Americans immigrants in the United Kingdom and Canada. The proper course of action to be taken to know how well Latin American migrants do, would be to compare immigrants from other source or origin countries while maintaining the country of destination fixed. For the cases of the UK and Canada, immigrants from Latin American countries of origin have a higher life evaluation than the average of source countries.

The case of Latin American immigrants, in both the United Kingdom and Canada, shows better than other migrants from the same origin in other countries of destination, having higher points in the UK (0.10+) and Canada (0.17+), reflecting they already had a strong life satisfaction and were already happy in their home countries. This data reflects immigrants from Latin America frequently have life evaluations higher than those of locally born. The WHR (2108) suggests that Latin Americans' happiness levels exceeds that of any other immigrants and that this is due to the footprint effect from their home country.

Happiness for Dominican Natives

The World Happiness Report (2022) ranks the Dominican Republic in 69th place, four points happier than they were the year before. Historically, there has been an indifference to Dominican research in Caribbean studies, which while lamentable, according to Thornton (2016), is not entirely surprising. The author states that the Dominican Republic has never been an interesting fit in the "savage slot" envisioned for it in the scholarly American academy and has historically been seen as too common or ordinary.

The Minority Rights Group International Report (MRG) (2003) argue that defenders of Dominican culture have always stressed that the nation is essentially Hispanic, Roman Catholic and Spanish-speaking, and its traditions are drawn from those of Spain. However, Haiti and the United States are two important psychological borders that have helped to create Dominican culture or Dominicanidad, (Domincan-ness in English) (García, 2008). García (2008) further explains that Dominican discourse seeks to portray Dominicans as a non-black race by claiming Hispanic heritage and culture. However, there is no Domincan-ness without Haitian-ness, since invasions by Haiti have had an influence on Dominican cultural development and identity (Thornton, 2022). According to Deckman, scholars have ignored how Haitian migration has left

an emotional footprint in such a way as to accentuate a nationalism in the Dominican Republic and help construct Dominican cultural identity. The author states that this has also influenced constructing the Dominican family/nation as an object of happiness.

As it relates to happiness research specific to the Dominican Republic, there is not a body of scholarly literature to be found. However, I find that the following two pieces from ethnographic fieldnotes, collected from field studies of a volunteer trip to help build homes for those in extreme poverty, portray the essence of Dominicanidad:

Excerpt from Landino (2019) field notes:

> After I finished eating, the waiter cleared my plates. Of course, I said, "Gracias," and he quickly replied, "Siempre." Usually, a "De Nada" would suffice, but there was something refreshing about his unusual response. Before that moment, I was uncomfortable asking people who have so much less than we do to do anything for me, especially cleaning up after my messy dinner plates. Hearing that he'd "always" be willing to help revealed the complete selflessness of the people here (or that he's good at his job. That's up to you to decide). Whenever anyone gets hurt or can't carry something alone, at least three people rush to help. Though I don't know his name, he taught me that the people with the least are often willing to do the most to help others. I can't say if I was exactly surprised by the empathy and kindness by locals, but I can say that, if I take anything home with me, it will be the spirit and attitude towards life that these people have so graciously shared with me for just a few days, Siempre.

As a Dominican national myself, after reading through these field notes, I believe these sentences portray pieces of our beliefs, behaviors, and culture in general. Moreover, as I

interviewed participants, I was able to better understand how these experiences translate into other contexts, specifically into a culture as different as Nordic culture.

Dominican Migrants

It remains true that for the Dominican Republic, as a nation, is identified as a Latin American and Caribbean country, its migratory flows include urban middle class, and not only the rural poor as affirmed by Bray (1984). The causes of the Dominican emigration are various and have changed over time. The first significant immigration wave from the Dominican Republic to the United States was in large part the product of political and social instability in 1965. In later decades, even though the political situation stabilized, Dominicans continued to emigrate, because of limited employment opportunities and poor economic conditions (Dominican Americans). According to Buffington (2022), studies show Dominicans who migrate are better educated and were more likely to have been employed at the time they left the Dominican Republic. Even after emigrating, Dominicans maintain a strong interest in their home country, and the number of Dominican migrants who return to the Dominican Republic either to visit or to resettle permanently is relatively high, and the return movement is significant (Buffington, 2022).

The Influence of COVID-19 on Conceptions of Happiness

The COVID-19 pandemic brought external factors such as (1) social capital issues or lack of access to alcohol, concerns about education, and increased social media usage, and (2) economic issues, such as job insecurity, the prospect of layoffs, and decreased consumption levels, which according to Rossouw and Adhikari (2021) are inversely correlated to happiness. Research found individuals with resources, capacities, and psychological qualities such as

pleasant emotions (e.g., positive affect), positive personality attributes (e.g., optimism), and social environmental elements (e.g., social support) can sustain positive mental health. Yildrim et al. (2021) concluded positivity had a great, direct effect on death distress and happiness during the COVID pandemic in 2020. Positivity allowed individuals to mediate the effect of perceived risk on death anxiety, which according to Özgüç et al. (2021), was one of the highest experienced negative feelings during the COVID-19 pandemic which detriments our well-being and happiness.

COVID-19 regulations enacted by governments during the pandemic impacted their citizens and immigrants' levels of happiness and well-being. For this study, I have focused on governmental regulations enacted during the pandemic in Nordic countries (subject's host countries) as compared to the Dominican Republic (subjects' reference and home country).

COVID-19 Regulations in the Nordic Countries

Some of the countries in the Nordic region handled the health and safety protocols differently than in other parts of the world. Specifically, Denmark, Finland, and Sweden became objects of study as they faced the global pandemic through unique strategies.

Denmark. Denmark was the first European nation to enforce a temporary border closure. Nonetheless, the level of strictness applied by Danish authorities in the spring of 2020 was equivalent to the world government response (Petersen et. al., 2021). In their longitudinal, population-based study, Petersen et. al. (2021) found, when comparing before and after the pandemic, minor increases in emotional distress and physical symptoms of anxiety. Overall, the sample of over 2,000 participants reported trust or faith in their authorities and believed the pandemic had been effectively managed**.**

Finland. The first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Finland was confirmed on January 30, 2020 (Nanda & Sharma, 2021). Finland implemented lockdown where penalties were imposed to ensure the population adhered to restrictions. Finland moved gradually toward a complementary strategy to combat the spread of the virus escalating from restrictive measures to a more stringent epidemic management. According to a preliminary analysis on their health system response (Tiirinki et al., 2020), findings show the overall resilience of the Finnish society was comparatively high. Finland had "strict" regulation in public governments, but the government tightened their prevention through the Emergency Powers Act. Under this act, municipalities and hospital districts were allowed to limit non-urgent care, except for assessing patients in need of it (Tiirinki et al., 2020). Due to their "hybrid" approach, the government's decentralized public health functions have allowed for local-level actions to be taken actively for public health. Also, the pandemic prompted the creation and evolution of digital health services and telemedicine in different areas of the Finnish healthcare system.

Sweden. As the coronavirus spread across Europe in early 2020, Sweden stood out in regulatory implementation to slow down contagion, selecting mitigation as its prevalent strategy. The decision to keep the population "free", to a certain extent, was based on a historical element of the Swedish constitution, which forbids the government from declaring a state of emergency outside of times of war (Nanda & Sharma, 2021).

A survey conducted by Helsingen et. al. (2020), with more than 500 Swedish respondents showed more than half reported feeling well-informed about the pandemic. Also, Swedish respondents reported, in majority (>70%), expressed not feeling depressed, sad or lacking energy. The same percentage reported feeling proud of themselves and the way they were coping

with the pandemic. Swedes also showed loyalty to their authorities and complied with regulations posed, although very few.

COVID Regulations in Nordic Countries Compared

After reviewing regulations and comparing confinement status with the place each country holds in the World Happiness Report (2021) there may be an apparent correlation in levels of happiness with regulations implemented. Happier countries recommended little to no quarantine or forceful lockdown, while the Dominican Republic continuously declared a state of emergency. Nordic countries, as compared to the Dominican Republic, faced the pandemic differently (Richie, 2020).

Most Nordic countries recommended citizens to stay home but did not enforce full lockdowns. According to Nanda et al. (2021), the governments in all the Nordic countries have borne the treatment costs of COVID-19 patients, and the region was lauded for its early success in combating the virus spread compared to other European countries (although it witnessed a resurgence in cases from September 2020). Conversely, in the Dominican Republic, the government declared a national state of emergency, with strict social distancing restrictions, and establishing national curfews. In the case of the Dominican Republic, several presidential decrees were issued from March to July 2020 ranging from declaring a state of emergency for more than 45 days to a mandatory quarantine and national curfew, where the populace was not able to leave their homes from 5pm to 5am.

A Health Crisis During a Political Crisis. The first case of COVID-19 in the Dominican Republic was confirmed in times of political turmoil (Tapia, 2020). Political demonstrations and public upheaval were present due to elections being postponed and the

populace considering this was an obvious demonstration of the corruption within the government only weeks before the pandemic started. During times of public unrest, according to WHO (2021), there were 550,020 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the Dominican Republic from January 3rd, 2020, to January 28th , 2022, with 4,295 deaths. A total of 14,441,546 vaccine doses have been delivered as of January 21st, 2022. The Ministry of Health took steps to counteract the presence of COVID-19 in the country by declaring a public health emergency. Thus, the country went into a lockdown for months, announced in 45-day periods.

The socio-economic consequences suffered by the population due to continuous lockdowns were, to name a few: percentage of informal workers who became unemployed increased, key performance indicators in school-age children decreased, and the poverty index increased overall (Barinas & Viollaz, 2020). The psychological consequences of post-pandemic range from feeling hopeless, uncertain, and an overall disenchantment with life. Thus, the term "silent pandemic", or the effects of the pandemic on mental health, has been used by experts to describe this occurrence. Loss of jobs, the necessary physical distancing, and confinement increased cases of anxiety, depression and even the number of suicides in some countries (CNN Español, 2021). In the Dominican Republic, research carried out by the Emotions, Health and Cyberpsychology Laboratory of the Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra (PUCMM) found that four out of 10 Dominicans suffer anxiety attacks because of the pandemic, and over 70% of these patients had never experienced this type of crisis. Furthermore, because the government implemented strict curfews and closure of public places, thousands of civilians were detained due to the constant non-compliance of government-enforced measures.

Impact of COVID-19 on Migration

The International Organization for migration (IOM) confirmed an estimate of more than 2.5 million stranded migrants in July 2020 (Guadagno, 2020). Ullah et. al. (2021) stated that many US companies laid off H1B visa employees as many organizations around the world were reconsidering their hiring and retention policies. Various suspended work visas and visa-on-arrival as the pandemic continued to escalate during 2020. Furthermore, many member states of the European Union (EU) suspended relocation, return and resettlement provisions for migrants when the outbreak of COVID-19 occurred, as well as decreased availability of services meant for migrants.

Future Implications of COVID-19 Pandemic

As travel restrictions and mobility disruptions increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, migration decreased by 27% as compared to the year prior to the start of the pandemic (World Migration Report, 2022). However, thanks to technological advances and digital transformations resulting from social distancing during the pandemic, migration is now expected to increase as global opportunities for migrants become more available (McAuliffe et al., 2021). The multiple ways in which changes in technology and mobility affect migration are discussed further in this Chapter.

Migration and Its Influence on Happiness

As globalization evolves and the number of migrants and cross-cultural interactions among world citizens increases, understanding various aspects of their experience, including their subjective well-being and happiness will become fundamental to organizations, governments and societies. Emerging literature on digital nomadism, a term that refers to mobile and

geographically independent professionals, is fragmented and scattered through different disciplines and perspectives and continues to grow due to important societal changes, mobility and technology, as well as an increasingly flexible and precarious employment (Hannonen, 2020). As described before, there are substantial cross-cultural differences in how people understand their happiness and make sense of experiences that influence happiness (Uchida and Ogihara, 2012). Regardless of the improved quality of life in developed countries, immigrant's happiness and life satisfaction do not substantially increase with their length of stay or across generations, therefore their subjective well-being remains lower than that of natives (Hendricks et al., 2019). To better understand migratory behavior, subjective well-being literature recommends considering people's perceived well-being and opportunities in the home country as well as aspirations and expectations for the future in the host country (Méndez, 2019).

The term *migrant* usually describes someone who makes a free decision to move to another region or country, often to better material or social conditions and improve prospects for themselves and their families. A migrant is defined as, "A person who moves away from their place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons" by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). However, people also migrate for many other reasons (IOM & UNCHR, 2009). According to the United Nations' International Migration Report (2022), there are 281 million international migrants living in a foreign country. Nowadays, migrants account for approximately 3.6 per cent of the world's population. This number has increased over the last two decades, compared to 173 million in 2000 and 221 million in 2010. Exploring how immigrants make sense of their happiness can provide nations greater opportunities to positively impact their legal residents and, therefore, their nationals too.

Reasons to Migrate

Durán (2022) states that a historical perspective on intention to migrate prevails and sees migration as a "flight from misery" reaction caused by global capitalism. Studies that focus on the intention to migrate have been increasingly including individuals' life satisfaction as a key factor of influence for this behavior (Méndez, 2019). Even though the type of migration that will be most likely explored and exposed in this study is voluntary labor migration or a consequence or dependence of this type, the following are the four most common types of migrations:

Labor Migration. Labor migration applies to people moving for the purposes of employment. Labour migration policies apply strict economic criteria based on the labor requirements of the country concerned (IOM & UNHCR, 2009).

Forced Migration or Displacement. The movement of persons who have been forced to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular because of or to avoid situations of armed conflict, generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters (Population Education, 2022).

Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery. The practice of illegally moving people from one country to another, without their consent, typically for the purposes of forced labor or sexual exploitation (Population Education, 2022).

Environmental Migration. The movement of people predominantly for reasons of sudden or progressive changes in the environment that adversely affect their lives or living conditions, are obliged to leave their habitual homes, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move within their country or abroad (IOM, 2011).

Push/Pull Factors

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (IOM & UNHCR, 2009), there are push and pull factors that influence a migrant's decision. These organizations define a push factor as a generally negative reason that tends to drive people out of their country (e.g., conflict, persecution, political instability, social inequalities and poor economic opportunities). On the other hand, they describe pull factors as more positive reasons driving the migrant towards a new host country, such as higher standards of living, jobs, educational prospects, family reunification, or freer or safer communities in the country of destination. These factors are weaved into the migrants' stories and experiences.

Types of Migrants

The International Academy for Intercultural Research (2017) describes three different types of migrant workers: "assigned expatriates (AEs)" who are mobilized overseas by their employer or for a specific work task, "self-initiated expatriates (SIEs)" who seek work opportunities abroad to move and obtain employment in foreign countries, and "immigrant workers (IWs)" who are typically migrant laborers in lower-paid sectors, such as agricultural, healthcare, domestic, & textile work. Some authors use "immigrant workers" interchangeably with "expatriate", but their reason to migrate is work. Regarding the length of stay, literature states a difference between expatriates and immigrants, expatriates are expected to spend a limited time in the host country, while immigrants not necessarily.

Migration and Happiness

The World Happiness Report (2018) poses the following question: What determines the happiness of immigrants living in a different country than their homeland? As presented (WHR, 2018), there are several factors to consider. First, there is little difference in the level of happiness when comparing locals to immigrants in any country. Second, the happiness of all immigrants does not depend solely on the happiness of the locals but on the happiness levels of the country of origin too. Lastly, the happiness of migrants depends a lot on how welcoming the locals are towards foreigners.

Further in the report, the analysis argues that there is no impact on the happiness of immigrants who move from a "less happy" to a "happier" country (WHR, 2018). The happiness of migrants is compared to that of individuals from their country of origin whose "attitudes" or personalities are as close as possible. The Gallup World Poll (2018) establishes that migrants who moved to a happier country gained only 0.47 points out of 10 (as measured by the Cantril ladder) in comparison to people who stayed in their country of origin.

The Report (WHR, 2018) continues with further inquiry: The longer a migrant has been in the country of destination, do they become more or less happy? According to the WHR (2018), on average, neither, as their happiness levels remain the same. When immigrants move, their reference groups are still those of their country of origin. Nonetheless, they experience a small surge of happiness, which over time changes (WHR, 2018). This change occurs as their reference groups become those of the destination country, which in turn makes them less happy. Therefore, their happiness level maintains its initial position. This process is passed on to second-generation migrants.

The World Happiness Report (2018) analyzes international migration and happiness specifically. Most, if not all, global analyses of subjective well-being levels refer only to assessments of life; specifically, the Cantril ladder. However, the WHR analyzed measures of positive and negative effects, expanding the range of data utilized to evaluate consequences of migration. The life evaluations of immigrants and native-born populations are likely to have depended on the extent to which residents are happy to accept foreign migrants (WHR, 2018). The Migrant Acceptance Index (MAI), developed by Gallup researchers, reported and summarized in the Report (WHR, 2018), investigators found a positive coefficient 0.068, proposing migrants (immigrants, specifically), local-born residents, or perhaps both, report higher levels of happiness in countries where migrants are shown hospitality or accepted. Studies reveal that immigrant populations can decrease trust in society when they are geographically segregated. The World Happiness Report (2021), states that it is not ethnic diversity per se that generates reduced trust, but ethnic residential segregation that undermines it.

To retrieve a proper measure, the United Nations measured and compared the happiness of migrants and locals in host countries by segmenting them into groups: foreign-born individuals and the rest of the populace. The UN estimated total numbers of foreign-born in each country every five years (WHR, 2018). Then, they combine both data with annual estimates for total populace to derive an approximation of foreign-born populations for each country. According to the World Happiness Report (2018), average happiness of foreign born, from 2005 to 2017, provided the following ranking: Finland (7.662), Denmark (7.547), Norway (7.435), Iceland (7.427), followed by New Zealand, Australia and Canada, and then Sweden (7.184). It is important to note that happier countries are often the major countries of destination, and footprint effects of countries of origin remain in the migrants, which would help explain why immigrants

in happier countries are less happy than locals. The inverse is also true when immigrants come from the unhappiest countries and show life evaluations which are slightly below the mean of immigrants in happier countries.

Guiding Theoretical Models

As presented in Chapter One, this study utilized a conceptual framework that included various guiding theories and other concepts that were included after the data was collected and analyzed. Besides the concepts explained previously in this chapter, another relevant guiding theory is Bornstein's (2017) Specificity Principle.

According to Bornstein (2018) during acculturation, immigrants learn to retain or surrender beliefs and behaviors from their culture of origin while abstaining from or adopting those from their host country's culture. "Thus, acculturation is a complex phenomenon comprising multiple processes and is rightly thought of as an instance of the most thoroughgoing sort of individual disorganization and reorganization" (Bornstein, 2018). An important nuance that must be taken into consideration is the reason for migrating and the types of migrants. This is a relevant nuance and the migrant's acculturation process may vary according to their specific situation or context (Schwarts et al., 2010).

Specificity Principle in Acculturation Science

Bornstein (2017) proposed the specificity principle as a form of heuristic in acculturation science. This principle argues that researchers need to dive into five factors of acculturation to study the process: (a) the setting condition (e.g., reason to migrate, place, experience, status), (b) person (e.g., gender, personality, individual-difference characteristics), (c) time (e.g., age, penetration, adjustment history), (d) process (e.g., socialization, learning, instruction,

opportunity, transaction), and (e) domain (e.g., multidimensionality, dynamic adaptability). The conditions of the principle used to guide the interview protocol that was used in this study includes the following components.

The setting conditions. This is composed of three factors: (1) *Reason to migrate.* According to Bornstein (2017), while some immigrants choose to leave their countries to pursue personal or professional aspirations, the decision to migrate can be voluntary or involuntary, temporary or permanent. (2) *Place.* Refers to the achieved condition of a different geographical setting, whether it is the culture of origin or the destination. (3) *Experience and status.* Which include differences in the experience of acculturation and the legal status of immigrants.

Person. The second term in this specificity principle where individual characteristics are key to the immigrant's process. These include (1) gender, (2) personality and (3) motivation. According to Bornstein (2017), personality not only affects the cultural adaptation process, but is also affected by it.

Time. An important moderator of the acculturation process. Included in "time" are three factors considered: (1) age of the immigrant, (2) time in the target culture, and (3) historical period.

Process. There are three defining pathways to acculturation: (1) socialization, or the process of acquiring new skills, (2) learning, or the process of acquiring new behaviors and beliefs, (3) mechanism of cultural practices which involves formal guidance and instruction, opportunity and transactions. This component was assessed within the context of labor migration and how the acculturation process was or has been assisted by the employer of the participant.

Domain. In general, throughout the acculturation process, migrants will draw meaning from every situation to guide future beliefs, actions and social conduct (Bornstein, 2017). There are two domains identified by the author that were considered (1) Multidimensionality or the various dimensions in a complex experience and (2) dynamic adaptability or the ability to adapt to the new situation.

As described in Chapter One, other theories and concepts emerged after the study was implemented. During the process of data collection and analysis several concepts within culture and migration studies surfaced. These included place attachment and place identity theories as well as three other concepts which were found to be determinant to the migrant's conceptualization of happiness as it relates to their migratory experiences, these are: cultural humility, discourse competence, and cross-cultural adjustment. These concepts will be described in greater detail in Chapter Five.

Chapter 2 Summary

This chapter provided context on the historical development of happiness research, including the disciplines and sciences that have been fundamental for current conceptualizations, such as philosophy, economics, psychology, and positive psychology. Following that introduction, I presented a discussion on the different constructs utilized to define happiness, which include emotion or affect, life satisfaction, purpose and meaning, as well as other perspectives that have influenced the concept such as religion and spirituality and happiness as a human right. Furthermore, to deepen the conversation of cultural relativism, I discussed happiness as a cultural construct and the various constructions of happiness across the world. After comparing Eastern and Western meanings of happiness, I presented findings on happiness in the Nordic countries, Latin America, and in the Dominican Republic. Finally, this chapter

highlighted research that explains the experience and reasons driving migration, its impact on globalization, and its influence on happiness.

The following chapter presents the methodology for the proposed study. This includes a description of the selected population, sampling procedure, and the data collection protocols utilized to conduct the study.

CHAPTER III

"In effect, happiness studies represent an important advance of moral philosophy since age-old questions about human well-being can now be tested."

World Happiness Report, 2016

METHODS

As discussed in Chapter One, the various ideas used by societies and individuals to define happiness vary across cultures (Minkov et al., 2020; Ye et al., 2015). This basic interpretive qualitative study sought to examine the experiences of first-generation Dominican migrants in Nordic countries and how they make sense of their happiness in the host culture. I was interested in understanding how their conceptualization of happiness is influenced by social factors in their home country and how the cross-cultural components of their transition influence their experience in the host country.

The overarching research question for this study is: *How do first-generation Dominican migrants who move to the Nordic countries make sense of their happiness?* In addition, the following sub-questions further guided exploration of participants' experiences:

(a) How do participants in this study define happiness?

(b) How is their conceptualization of happiness influenced by social factors (GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, generosity, and perception of corruption or trust, as established by the World Happiness Report), in both their home and host cultures?

(c) How do the cross-cultural components of their migration experience (home vs. host culture) influence how they make meaning of their happiness?

(d) What role has the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic had in shaping participants' conceptions of happiness?

This chapter presents the methodology for the proposed study. In the first section, I discuss the research design, approach, and rationale for the study. Next, I present the selected population, sampling procedure, and the data collection protocols to conduct the study. I further describe data collection and analysis procedures, as well as how trustworthiness was ensured. Finally, the limitations and delimitations of the study are presented.

Research Design, Approach & Rationale

According to Marshall and Rossman (2014), qualitative research is "inherently interpretive, emphasizes context, and is emergent and iterative", among other characteristics. This basic interpretive qualitative study was conducted through a constructivist perspective, which acknowledges the subjectivity of participants' realities and understands that they make meaning of their experiences based upon their past and present perspectives and interactions (Laukner, 2012). The constructivist perspective used herein accepts knowledge as subjective, constructed through human interactions and entangled with those who study it (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Understanding that this constructivist approach conceives knowledge as a reality that is constructed by the participant, the goal of this basic interpretive qualitative study is to better understand how participants make meaning of their own happiness.

Basic Interpretive Qualitative Research

Basic interpretive qualitative studies attempt to determine, "(1) how people interpret their experiences; (2) how they construct their worlds; and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences. The overall purpose is to understand how people make sense of their lives and their

experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 23). Since the primary focus of this study was to explore how Dominican migrants make sense of their happiness and what meaning they attribute to it; a basic interpretive qualitative methodology is appropriate for adding value to current literature on this topic. As highlighted in the previous two chapters, recent research argues that investigating the spectrum of experiences and emotions related to the influence of cross-cultural emigration on migrants' levels of happiness in the way qualitative methods allow for is central to understanding well-being and creating better societies that foster optimal experiences (Cieslik, 2021). Accordingly, Sutton (2021) explains that methods utilized to study happiness need to be comprehensive enough to uncover meaning and broad enough to explore the things that are important to the participants, which an approach like basic interpretive qualitative research provides for.

Visual Methods

Visual methods in qualitative research are evolving because they provide a powerful strategy to answer complex global research questions (Denzin et al., 2013). Glaw et al. (2017) highlight that visual methods in qualitative research have been used widely in anthropology and sociology; nonetheless, they are a comparatively new method for many disciplines, including educational and organization studies. The authors argue that visual methods magnify the richness of data by allowing deeper layers of meaning and depth to be shared by participants, which can result in higher levels of trustworthiness. Using visual methods to study participants' feelings helps them to articulate the often-intangible parts of their experience and promotes a deeper perspective on the situation being described (Ward et al. 2012). Also, this method requires participants to project their feelings through drawings, photographs, and other participant-produced artifacts, which helps them to "articulate thoughts, feelings and

impressions" (Ward et al., 2012). The visual methods approach utilized in this study can be broadly defined as participatory visual methods, which includes approaches such as graphical elicitation, photo elicitation, video diary, video elicitation, photovoice, timelines, and other arts-based methods (Denzin et al., 2013).

Participant-produced drawings. More specifically, the visual research method selected for this study was participant-produced drawings. The purpose of using participant-produced drawings was to enrich the participant's narrative with emotion and long-term memories. Research has found that this visual method can reveal the underlying emotional experience of study participants (Vince, 1995). Through using this research method, participants were asked to draw how they define their own happiness, without using any words or other language symbols, followed by an in-depth, individual semi-structured interview. This approach better allowed participants' ideas, constructs, and meanings to reveal themselves.

According to Brailas (2020), having a "visual as an outcome" allows the qualitative researcher to access a different aspect of participants' experiences, and provides "the visual as a process," which allows participants to approach and capture previously "untouched" experiences. Gameiro et al. (2018) indicate that the request to draw provides participants with freedom of expression, which is the goal of my study as I collect information related to how participants make meaning of their happiness.

Further, Mazzetti (2020) states that drawings accomplish similar rich benefits as other visual research methods, such as photo elicitation and auto photography, while alleviating the ethical challenges of maintaining participant confidentiality and/or anonymity. Although the use of participant-produced drawings has its own challenges, with one being the creative pressure the participant may experience, Kearney (2004) stated that most participants in her study did appear

to enjoy or become excited about the opportunity to draw observing that the activity may have increased respondent response rates. Nonetheless, to ensure that participants understood that their creative ability would not be judged, the drawing instructions in this study included the following statement, "*You will not be evaluated on your artistic ability. Stick figures, for example, are fine*".

Gameiro et al (2018) argue that drawings can help generate and disseminate research on complex topics. Considering this, participant-produced drawings can be an effective method to explore the meaning of happiness with participants in the current study. Kearney and Hyle (2004) provide further information on participant-produced drawing as a method that: a) creates a path toward feelings and emotions; b) leads to a more succinct presentation of participant experiences; c) requires additional verbal interpretation by the participant for accuracy; d) acts as an unpredictable tool for encouraging participation in the research; e) combats researcher biases when left unstructured; f) are affected by the amount of researcher-imposed structure in the scope of how they could be interpreted; and g) helps to create triangulation of study data (p. 361). For these reasons, utilizing participant-produced drawings to guide the in-depth interviews conducted in this study allowed participants to provide a more detailed analysis of their experiences, as well as deeper reflection on how they make meaning of their happiness.

Field Test

During Fall 2020, I field tested the core ideas for this study. I recruited and pilot tested broad interview questions on this topic with 42 individuals who met the study criteria. These individuals were recruited through social media, as well as formal communications through the Embassy of the Dominican Republic in Sweden and the Dominican Honorary Consul in Denmark. Selection of pilot study participants was based on my professional contacts, which

according to Shiraev and Levy (2010), is an approach that represents one of three major strategies to conduct cross-cultural studies.

This field test generated rich dialogues with participants, and it was intended to help me refine my thinking about the design of my dissertation research. The major takeaways from this field experience relate to better understanding of the cultural values in each Nordic country I visited and learning how these immigrants lived and worked. I was able to visit their homes and stay as a guest for several days and in some cases, several weeks. This allowed me to experience the daily activities an immigrant would engage in, such as riding a bike, tram, or bus to work, going to the supermarket, and at one point even to receive medical attention (COVID testing). I also visited a few of these Dominican immigrants in their work environment or accompanied them to their social activities with their work groups. This experience also resulted in conversations with local and native-born Nordic citizens, which led to my own experience as I tried to make sense of their customs and behaviors. One specific example is the concept of "Sisu" in Finland. Sisu is a Finnish term that is as part of their identity as "Fika" and "Lagom" is to the Swedish. Sisu doesn't have an exact translation in English, but it's generally described as determination, tenacity of purpose, grit, and resilience. I had read about it, but while interviewing a Finnish HR professional, I asked if she believed Finland was the happiest country in the world, and if so, why. She explained "sisu" and I remember her exact words and expression: "Ivanna, we just don't give up". She explained that this concept is a truth that Finnish people have accepted that their inner strength can take on any adverse situation that could occur outside of them. Since HSIRB approval had not been obtained through my institution, the resulting information has not and will not be used in this study or any other. Another takeaway was one of

the common concepts through which each Nordic country defines Happiness, which were not necessarily shared by the participants.

Nonetheless, this field test was important for me to learn the depth of my biases. I was confronted with my own assumptions of the home and host cultures of participants, as well as my thoughts regarding the transition experience I imagined I would have if I were to emigrate to a Nordic country. Another important lesson learned through my pilot study work was related to my sampling criteria. Before the pilot study, I believed that my sample would be any Latin American migrant, however I realized that because of the growing number of Dominican migrants around the world (WMR, 2020), and considering the Dominican population I interact with in my professional work, I modified the target population and sample for the current study.

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board

Before conducting the study, I obtained approval from the Western Michigan University Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) to proceed with the research, included as Appendix H.

Population, Sample and Setting

The overall population from which I drew my sample are native-born individuals of the Dominican Republic who are currently residing in one of the Nordic countries. Since its establishment, the Dominican Embassy for the Nordic region, (including Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Iceland) and situated in Stockholm, serves the Dominican diaspora in the entire Nordic region. The number of migrants to Nordic countries is relatively small compared to the U.S and other European countries. According to the DatosMacro Report (2021), there are currently 1,558,668 Dominican migrants, mainly distributed around the world as follows: United

States (75.30%), Spain (10.73%) and Italy (2.96%). The same report indicates that the current population of Dominican migrants in the Nordic region are Norway, 962; Sweden, 914; Finland, 244; and even fewer in Denmark (less than 200) and Iceland (less than 100).

For this study, I utilized a purposive sampling method called criterion sampling. According to Palinkas et al. (2015), purposive sampling is widely utilized in qualitative research to identify and select information-rich cases related to the central issue of the study. Criterion sampling, which involves selecting cases that meet predetermined criteria of importance (Patton, 2001), was utilized to identify and select the participants for this study. According to Patton (2011), the logic behind criterion sampling is to review and study cases that meet predetermined criteria of importance and are commonly used for quality assurance purposes.

Specifically, the sampling criteria for participation in my study were that participants must be: (a) 19 years of age or older, which is the age established as an adult by the World Health Organization; (b) a native-born Dominican citizen living in one of the Nordic countries for over a year and who expects to live there indeterminately, as acculturation is described as an "interactive and continuous process" by Kim (1982); (c) is in the process of cross-cultural adjustment, which according to Rosenbusch (2010), refers to the process of adaptation to living and working in an unfamiliar cultural environment; (d) left their country of origin and must be a first-generation Dominican migrant; and (d) is actively engaged in any type of "occupation" or "job", as defined by the International Standard Classification of Occupations [ISCO], which seeks to facilitate a framework to make internationally comparable occupational data available. Further, the anticipated overall number of participants for my study sample will include twelve migrants.

Interactions with study participants took place virtually using the Zoom virtual meeting platform. Participants were physically located in the countries of the Nordic region and the researcher was in the United States. The sample was identified and recruited with the assistance of the Embassy of the Dominican Republic in the Nordic Region and the Consulate for the Nordic countries.

Recruitment

Individuals were recruited through formal communications approved and shared by the Dominican Embassy and Consulates that serve the Nordic region, as well social media posts. The selection of the sample was based on the contacts provided by the Embassy of the Dominican Republic in the Nordic countries. According to Shiraev and Levy (2010), this approach represents one of three major strategies to conduct cross-cultural studies. For this approach, I utilized the communications presented in Appendices A, B, and C.

I also utilized snowball sampling during the recruitment for this study. According to Johnson (2014), this widely used, non probability method of sample selection is preferred when the researcher is trying to locate very specific or "hidden" populations. Snowball sampling relies on referrals from sampled respondents to other potential participants who have characteristics of interest, in this case, other Dominican migrants in the Nordic region.

This process led to the recruitment of sixteen participants, of which eleven were interviewed. From these eleven interviews, ten were selected for data analysis. Due to HSIRB approval of all protocols in English, one interview that had to be carried out in Spanish was dismissed and is not included in the analysis or reporting of data**.**

Informed Consent

A brief explanation of the purpose of this research and approved consent forms were provided to all participants prior to setting up and beginning interviews, respectively (see Appendix D). The consent forms were shared electronically and asked to be sent with a digital signature. During the interview, the criteria for participation were also discussed and whether the participant matched the criteria were affirmed.

Data Collection Procedures

As this study employed a basic interpretive qualitative design that sought to examine the experiences of Dominican migrants in Nordic countries and how they make sense of their happiness in the host culture, I collected data through virtual semi-structured, in-depth interviews and participant-produced drawings that represented participants' conceptualization of their happiness and resurfaced memories of their transition experience and acculturation process to date. Participants were asked beforehand to bring a pencil and paper to the Zoom meeting. Since English is a widely accepted and spoken language in the Nordic countries, the interviews were held in English. According to Horne et al. (2017), this participatory approach of drawing shifted the power imbalance from the researcher to the participant, by helping establish rapport and increase the participant's comfort.

Interview Protocol and Process

Individuals who agreed to participate received a Demographic Profile, found in Appendix E, through an electronic form which validated criteria for participation as indicated by the recruitment criteria articulated for this study. This electronic form also included schedule availability for the participant to set up the interview meeting. In the confirmation and reminder

email sent prior to the scheduled interview, they were asked to bring with them a blank page of paper (at least 8.5" x 11") as well as a pencil or other drawing utensil of their choice. Each participant was allowed up to 10 minutes to complete the drawing activity. Since the sessions were virtual, the interviewer remained silent while the drawing was generated.

The following instructions were given to guide the participant-produced drawing exercise:

> *Draw a picture or series of pictures that describes what happiness means to you. Please do not use words or other language symbols. You will not be evaluated on your artistic ability. Stick figures, for example, are fine.*

After completing the exercise, participants were then asked to interpret their drawings. I encouraged the participants to reflect on the drawing and elaborate further on the experiences, memories, thoughts, and feelings reflected in the drawing. These interpretations provided context and served as a guide for the semi-structured interview that immediately followed and took place for an additional 60-90 minutes during the virtual meeting. To satisfy the requirement of "additional verbal interpretation by the participants themselves" (Kearney & Hyle, 2004), the interviews were recorded (with permission of the participant), and handwritten notes were taken simultaneously.

The entire interview protocol which included the greetings, initial drawing prompt, the interpretation questions, and in-depth interview structure are included in Appendix F. The questions were designed to empower participants to respond in a personal way, understanding there are no right or wrong answers. Due to the possible risk of experiencing strong emotions while answering sensitive questions, participants were provided a list of helpful resources to help

them navigate any potential emotional and mental challenges stemming as a result of their participation in the study. The resource provided to the participants can be found in Appendix G.

Data Analysis

It is important to understand the context and conversation under which the participants generated the drawings (Woodhouse, 2012). According to Literat (2013) the analysis of drawn images, followed by a discussion of these drawings in the context of their creation, has the capacity of "revealing a more nuanced depiction of concepts, emotions, and information in an expressive, empowering, and personally relevant manner" (p. 84). The use of participant-produced drawings in this study was not meant as a data source, but as a data-elicitation method. To analyze the data obtained through the individual, semi-structured qualitative interviews, I utilized thematic analysis, which is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data, as established by Braun and Clarke (2006) in their six-step process.

Braun and Clarke (2006; 2013) distinguish between two levels of themes: semantic and latent. The first relates to the explicit or surface meanings of the data and the second examines underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations.

A common mistake is to refer to responses to the main interview questions as themes (Clarke and Braun, 2013) Instead, I considered Clarke and Braun's (2013) six-step process as I analyzed the data. This six-step process includes: (1) *Become familiar with the data:* I conducted the interviews myself, read and reread the transcription of the interviews as well as examine the drawings and the participants' discussion about the drawing; (2) *Generate initial codes:* I then analyzed and categorized the raw data, as well as utilized the literature to better organize the dataset; (3) *Search for themes:* As recommended by the authors, I considered how different

codes combine to form overarching themes. Finally, I engaged in their final three recommended steps; (4) *A review of the themes; (5) Defining the themes; and (6) Creating the write-up.* According to Maguire and Delahunt (2017) these final three steps are the most critical ones in the qualitative research process, as they seek to identify surface and underlying patterns in the data.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, or rigor of a qualitative study, refers to the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the overall quality of a study (Pilot & Beck, 2014). According to Lincoln and Guba (1982) there are four key aspects of trustworthiness: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

Credibility

To address credibility I employed member checking of data collected and my interpretations of this data to ensure confidence in the truth of my findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To corroborate that immigrants' experiences and description of their transitions were as accurate as possible, I emailed the participants the themes that arose in my analysis to assess whether they believed those themes accurately captured their experiences as they shared them during the interview. I also provided thick description of my findings and contextual elements of the experiences of the participants in my study, which according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), describes the phenomenon in sufficient detail so that the reader can evaluate the extent to which the conclusions from my study are transferable to different times, settings, situations, and people. Furthermore, the intent and purpose of this study had been shared openly and in goodwill to the

pertaining authorities that relate to my sample population, this helped participants share timely, truthful, and accurate information during the interviews.

Dependability

Dependability establishes that the study is repeatable if it were to occur with the same, or similar, cohort of participants, data analysis, and context. To address dependability in this study, I followed guidelines including: (1) the use of analytic memos that include the application of reflexivity, examining my own judgments and belief systems while I engaged in the process of data collection; and (2) keeping an audit trail, which according to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), is a detailed description of the decisions and procedures carried out throughout the various stages of the study. The memos served as a record of the research process and informed the audit trail. Given that I engaged in these procedures, other researchers would be able to audit, critique, or replicate the steps taken during data collection and data analysis.

Confirmability

To ensure confirmability, or confidence that the results would be corroborated by content experts, I implemented two strategies: reflexivity and member checking, as described above. Through the first technique, reflexivity, I became attentive to my ideological origins and I was able to ensure that the data and analysis derived from the interviews was not unduly influenced by my own perspective on the topic nor my own voice. The second technique, member checking, allowed me to confirm the degree to which the findings of this study, its interpretations, and the discussion are not my personal fabrication but derived from the data.

Neutrality, which is also a relevant aspect of confirmability, was achieved through reflexivity. Furthermore, the member checking strategy that was implemented, by corroborating findings, helped me ensure confirmability.

Transferability

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), this aspect of trustworthiness refers to the possibility of findings being transferred to other contexts. As mentioned above, I engaged in thick description of my findings and contextual elements of the experiences of the participants in my study, which according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), describes the phenomenon in sufficient detail so that the reader can evaluate the extent to which the conclusions from my study are transferable to different times, settings, situations, and people. In addition, it relates to Bornstein's specificity principle. Applying Bornstein's (2017) specificity principle to this study provided thick descriptions of each participant's specific migratory situation, context, and their acculturation process. This principle explains that acculturation depends critically on what is studied where, for whom, how, and when, and considers the factors pertaining to the participant's context and situation: (a) the setting condition (e.g., reason to migrate, place of migration, experience, status), (b) person (e.g., gender, personality, individual-difference characteristics), (c) time (e.g., age, penetration, adjustment history), (d) process (e.g., socialization, learning, instruction, opportunity, transaction), and (e) domain (e.g., multidimensionality, dynamic adaptability). Specificity ensures transferability by providing thick description to contextualize the findings, such that the readers can determine whether their situation matches the research context, and, hence, whether the findings can be transferred (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). While being immersed within the context of the immigrant's home and host culture, considering

specific, detailed references about social interactions and the behaviors of participants, the reader is able to externally validate the findings that are being shared.

Finally, to ensure these key aspects of trustworthiness, the specific methods employed in this study assisted in reducing some of the biases to which traditional research methods in happiness research are subject (Veenhoven, 1984). These biases include: (1) the interviewer bias, where interviewers may project their own happiness into the words of the respondent or when the interviewer deems the respondent's verbal or non-verbal cues and relates them to perceived levels of happiness, and (2) response-style bias and assessing the word choice of the subject (e.g., defensiveness and desirability bias). As well as the fact that open-ended questions may leave more room for evasive answers (Veenhoven, 1984).

Limitations and Delimitations

According to Creswell (2014) the limitations of a study are the attributes of design or methodology that impact the interpretation of the findings. Regarding the design of this study, the insights obtained from Dominican migrants represent only the experiences of those participants involved in this study and at the specific time at which the study was conducted, as it relates to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, recent research explains that following the COVID-19 pandemic, the range of emotions covered in happiness research has grown. Even though the Western view has tended to ignore them, emotions which involve low arousal, such as calm, peace, and harmony have become significant to contributing to life satisfaction (WHR, 2022).

Two other important limitations were the sample and sample size. The current sample may not be representative of other nationalities within the Latin American region nor of

Dominican natives who emigrate to other parts of the world. Furthermore, the sample size is a limitation given the small population this study examines. However, a benefit of exploring a small sample is the opportunity to gain deeper knowledge of each participant's happiness conceptualization and transition experience. I ensured an adequate quantity for sampling among this homogenous population to reach data saturation, which according to Faulkner (2017) refers to the moment when no new information is discovered in data analysis, and data collection can cease.

As for the methods used in this study, the first and foremost limitation is that the interviews were held virtually. Traditionally, and as seen in the studies mentioned earlier in this chapter, participant-produced drawings are usually an in-person exercise during individual or group interviews. In this case, participants had to attend the Zoom meeting prepared with a pencil and paper, and there was no guarantee that they would do this. The best way for me to mitigate this was by highlighting the importance of bringing materials to ensure an effective process in all previous communications. Additionally, it is important to be aware of a limitation stated by Gameiro et al. (2018) that some participants may find drawing "challenging and intimidating" and this may increase the participants' aversion to engage with research. If participants are reluctant to engage in drawing, this might alter the data elicitation component of the process. To reduce the risk of receiving an adverse reaction or reluctant behavior from the participants, I assured them through both written and verbal communication, that the purpose of the drawing is not to evaluate them on their drawing skills, and that they could feel free to express themselves through pen and paper.

This proposed research study is delimited to examining how Dominican migrants who live in Nordic countries make sense of their happiness. The research is specifically delimited to

Dominican natives who have moved over a year ago to one of the Nordic countries identified in previous chapters.

Chapter 3 Summary

The purpose of this basic interpretive qualitative study was to examine the experiences of first-generation Dominican migrants in Nordic countries and how they make sense of their happiness in the host culture. From a constructivist perspective, the research methodology selected for this study was basic interpretive qualitative research, which included participant-produced drawings followed by a semi-structured interview with each participant. This visual methods approach helped participants "articulate thoughts, feelings and impressions", the often 'intangible' parts of their experience and promotes a deeper perspective on the situation being described (Ward et al. 2012). According to Brailas (2020), this allowed me as the researcher to access a different aspect of the participants' experience, but also that "the visual as a process" allows participants to approach and capture previously "untouched" and deeper emotional experiences.

In the following chapter, I present the findings that emerged from the data collection and data analysis process.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

"And that's happiness too, being able to go back to look inside ourselves. And I say beginning another process of learning and deconstructing ideas, [slight pause] structures that we think we have, [pause and smile] to be able to continue forward. I think that's happiness."
Girasol

The purpose of this chapter is to present findings from my study following the data collection and analysis procedures I presented in the previous chapter. First, I present ten individual vignettes for each study participant that provide an overview of their life experiences and migration process. The purpose of these vignettes is to provide greater context regarding the experience of each Dominican migrant who participated in this study. Next, I share the results of the data analysis process and present the themes that emerged from the data collected. Finally, I reintroduce the concept of participant-produced drawing, presented in Chapter 3, and provide examples of how this data elicitation method proved useful as part of my data collection and analysis efforts.

The overarching research question for this study is: *How do first-generation Dominican migrants who move to the Nordic countries make sense of their happiness?* In addition, the following sub-questions further guided exploration of participants' experiences:

(a) How do participants in this study define happiness?

(b) How is their conceptualization of happiness influenced by social factors (GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, generosity,

and perception of corruption or trust, as established by the World Happiness Report), in both their home and host cultures?

(c) How do the cross-cultural components of their migration experience (home vs. host culture) influence how they make meaning of their happiness?

(d) What role has the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic had in shaping participants' conceptions of happiness?

Participant Profiles

The participants in this study are all native-born citizens of the Dominican Republic (Dominican) living in one of the Nordic countries. These first-generation Dominican migrants, who I present below, vary in age, ranging from 26 to 42 years old, and have been living in their host country between a year and up to 22 years in one case. They were all actively employed and are not currently expecting to leave or move from their current Nordic country of residence. Only two of the migrants who were interviewed had been approached during the field test I carried out in 2020, which led to the discovery of new, unknown migratory experiences that enriched the scope of this study. All Nordic countries are represented except Finland, as one of the interested potential participants who reached out, had recently left Finland and was no longer living there.

The vignettes for each of the migrants in this study served the purpose of providing context for their individual, unique migratory experience and acculturation process. To ensure confidentiality, the names provided for each participant are pseudonyms and details regarding their current places of work or exact jobs have been generalized. According to Gourlay et al. (2014), vignettes are short stories about a person or character, used predominantly in research on psychology, to study sensitive social issues. In the following vignettes, I share each migrant's

story of their decision to move, their subsequent migratory experiences and their efforts at sense-making regarding their happiness. To develop the vignettes, I utilized direct quotes from the interview transcriptions and synthesized their stories. I have also included each of the participant-produced drawings and a narrative of the interpretation of each drawing by the participant who created them.

Rex

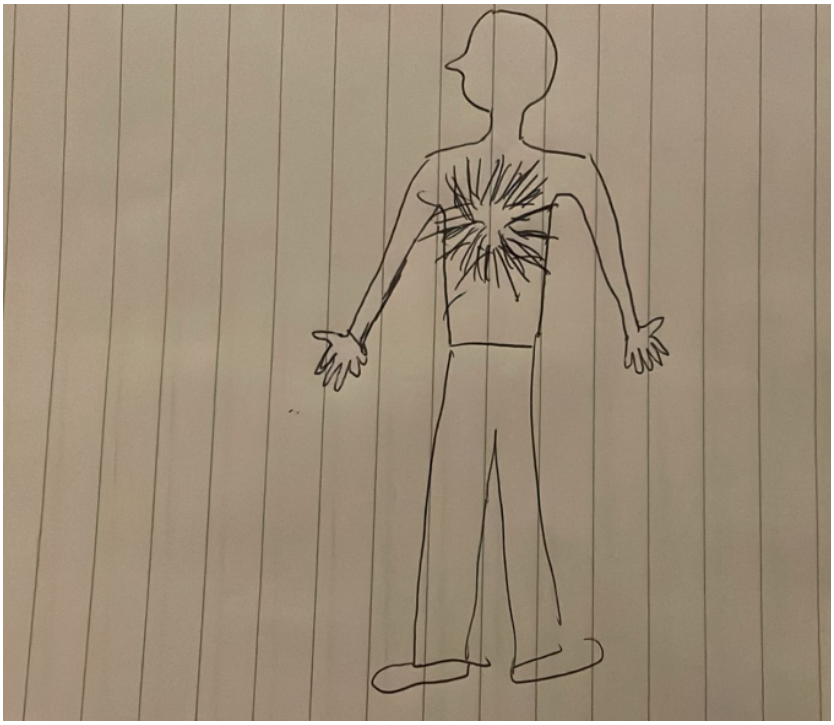
Male, 34, married and father of twins. Engineer and Comedian. Living in Iceland since 2017.

"To me, happiness is about being at peace…"

Rex had completed his undergraduate and graduate studies in STEM fields and while completing his master's degree in Barcelona, he met the Icelandic woman who would later become his wife. After finishing his master's, he went back to the Dominican Republic to work and live. Two years later, he traveled to Spain to attend a wedding, and decided to meet his ex-girlfriend in Denmark. He had left for a trip that was supposed to be a vacation but plans changed. During his visit, the couple considered getting back together but were once again faced with deciding which country would be "home" for them. After being back home with a higher education degree and a low-paying job, he had different thoughts on what it meant to move to Iceland. His exact thought was "there's nothing holding me back" and decided to "just do it". So, that vacation turned into a one-way trip, that rekindled the relationship, and led the couple to marry and move to Iceland. To this day, he described that even though he does not like to have expectations, so he does not experience disappointment, he believed finding a job quickly and, in

his field, would be easier than it was. Since things did not turn out as expected, his sources for happiness and income changed with this reality.

Figure 2. Rex's Drawing with Associated Narrative



"It's a person having a bit of an explosion in their chest... of just yeah, it's just like this feeling that comes out of just being overwhelmed by being okay. Or being happy.... I think well, happiness would be I think happiness is just about being extremely at peace with the situation you're in at the moment and just overwhelmed with positive feelings of the present and the future and what's going on and just feeling safe. But also overwhelmed. That's why I think the explosion there."

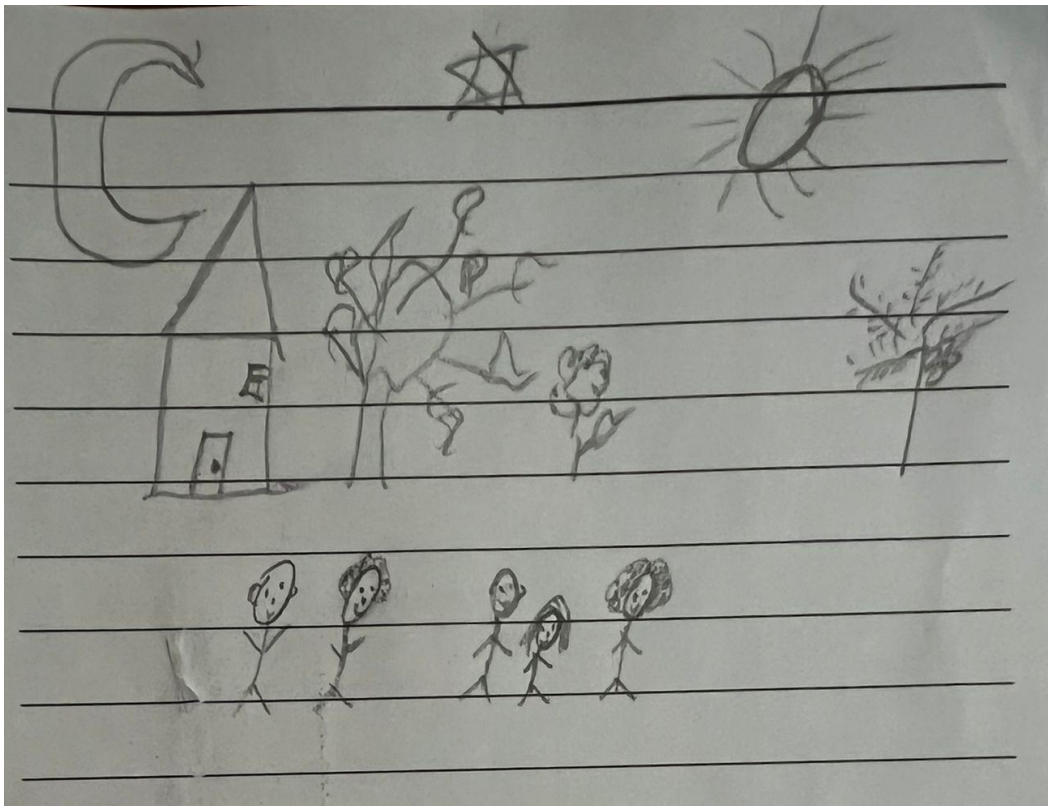
Gabriela

Female, 43, divorced mother of two. Restauranteur. Dominican born and raised, now an Icelandic citizen who moved to the host country in the year 2000.

"Happiness is about family, grandparents."

She arrived in Iceland at a young age, because she married an Icelandic man. A few years after her move, they divorced, and her partner thought she would leave and go back home. She decided to stay and told him the country "is big enough for both". She focused on learning the language, working hard in different industries and whatever job opportunities became available. She decided to pave the way for other Latin Americans who arrived, as well as for her children. From her perspective, life is good in Iceland. Even though her family has asked her to return home, she believes in the quality of life that's now available for her children, and herself. After having multiple jobs, she became an entrepreneur and business owner. She developed her passion for gastronomy and owns a restaurant. Whenever she is asked about the transition and life in the Nordic countries, she says that even if she could, she wouldn't leave. Besides, no other Dominican that she knows of wants to leave. She highlights that every Dominican who has moved to Iceland, never left.

Figure 3. Gabriela's Drawing with Associated Narrative



"For me happiness is about being in a home (casita) like this with my grandparents and my siblings... Because I only have to think about my family and that's enough to be happy."

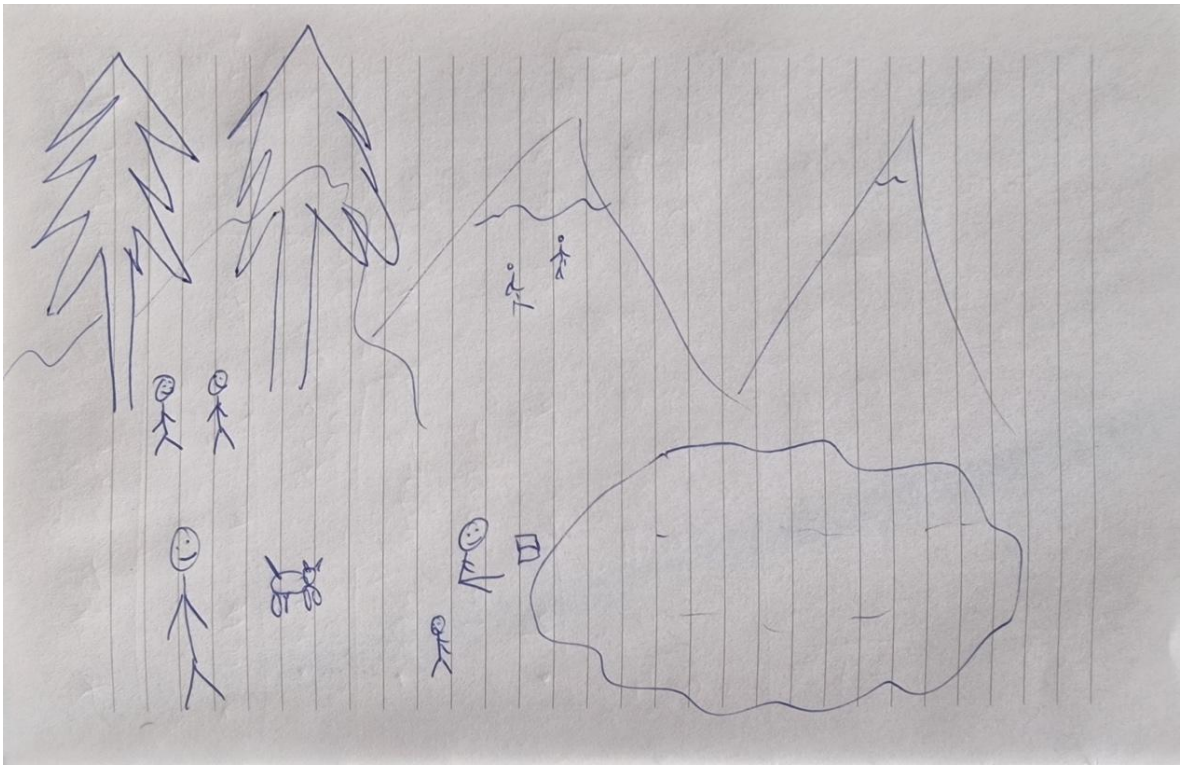
Dora

Female, 28, married. Works in logistics and customer experience design. Moved to Sweden in 2019.

"Te va' a morir del hambre", "You'll die hungry"
[Referring to what people said to her when she explained what she wanted to become professionally if she stayed in the Dominican Republic].

She had done some research before moving and finally decided to move because of her husband. Even though her family was sad, there were many expectations regarding her move. She expected to live in a safer society and enjoy stability. Since she had done her research, she felt that her expectations were matched. Besides, throughout her life, she did not ever truly identify with some Dominican traditions and cultural behaviors. While the language was a big shock, she describes the positive aspect of the new mindset in her host country as a "slow down" and "connect with nature" mindset. She believes her personality helped her adapt to the new culture. She explains that she now enjoys a closer circle with less friends, but deeper connections. To her, Dominicans bring their culture wherever they go, and she believes that it would be difficult for some Dominicans to adapt to this new culture. However, the opportunities for "Achieving your goals" and doing "whatever you want to do" has a lot of weight in her considerations of the host country.

Figure 4. Dora's Drawing with Associated Narrative



"So, basically, people surrounded by nature, with like, mountains with like, you know, some different scenery over here and people in peace and enjoying their time without like bothering people. And there's no, you know, like, the only thing I kind of drew that people were with here, it was over here and it kind of represents a bit of like food or, you know, something like that. So with that as well, I kind of want to put that the sounds of nature are a big part of that."

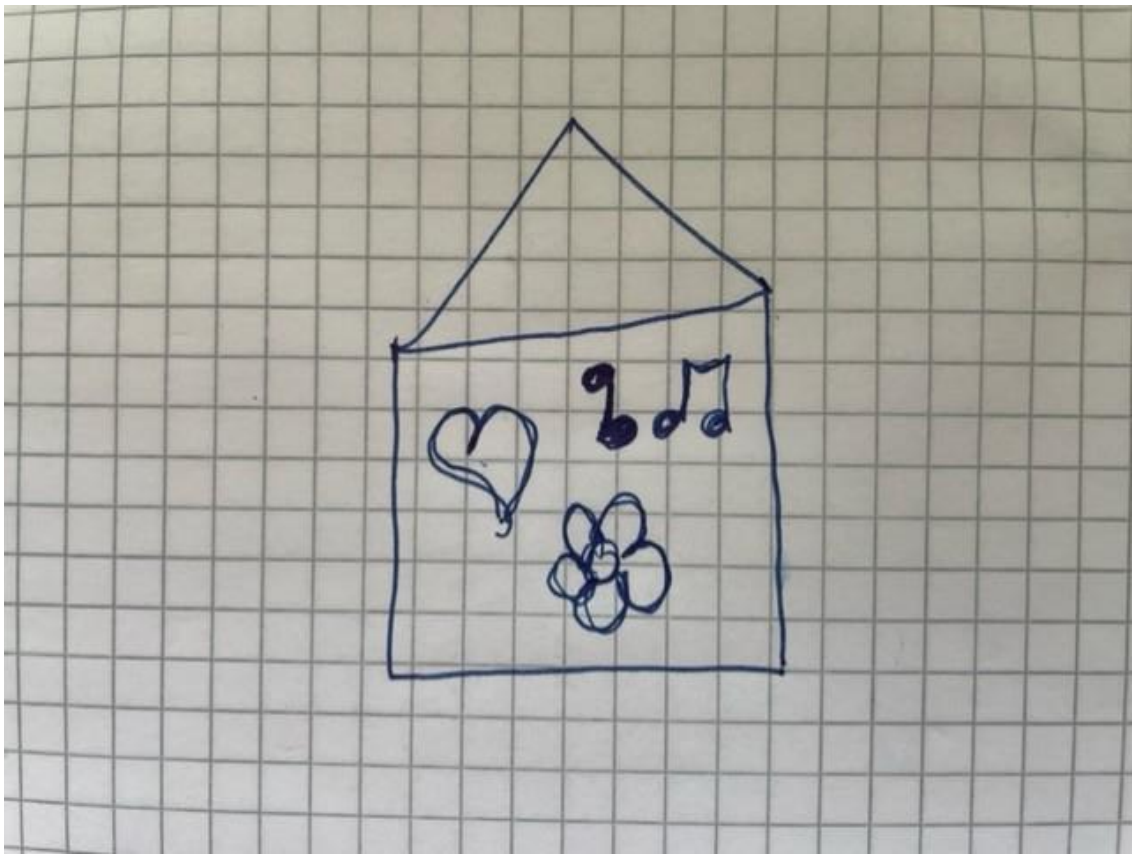
Vanessa

Female, 31, married. Supply chain specialist. Lives in Sweden since 2013.

“It's the little things.”

For Vanessa, moving to Sweden started as a vacation. She knew very little about the country and had never even thought about the difference between “Suiza o Suecia”, since they’re translated similarly to Spanish (Sweden and Switzerland). She moved to Sweden with her husband, whom she’d met while she completed her undergraduate studies in the United States. To her, home is not a place but a state of mind. However, one of the greatest struggles was integrating into the community and learning the language. In the years she has been in Sweden, she has worked as a substitute teacher. Having worked different jobs to keep herself busy and productive, she highlights that work and job dynamics are very different, especially the hierarchy, the formality, and the management style. She also highlighted the difference in religious belief. To her it’s sometimes very emotional to see what her friends are up to in the DR, but then she focuses on the good things she has going on in Sweden.

Figure 5. Vanessa's Drawing with Associated Narrative



"I will say when I think of happiness, I think of home. I think of love as friends, families, as people you like to be around. So not not being alone or not feeling alone. And when I also think of happiness, I think of things you enjoy, like music, like, its in your hobby, things, things that brings you a little moment of joy. And as well as, for example, happiness, to me is also what I can grow. And that's why I put a flower there. See that I can put effort in something and then see it grow and see it like give me fruit... So yeah, that's what I think about... It home is well... Where do you feel comfortable? I will say it doesn't relate specifically to a place but more of a state of mind. I feel like when I say I feel at home, it means I feel comfortable in a piece. I can say what I what I think without having to filter out anything and I can just relax, I can let my guard down."

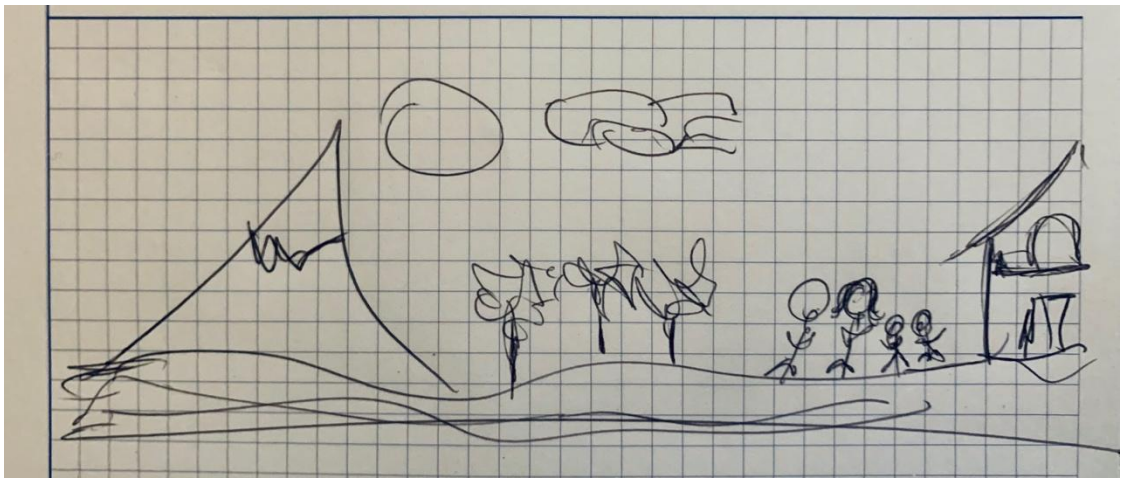
Rodrigo

Male, 42, in a relationship. Architect. Living in Norway since 2005.

“In Norway, I found my ‘soul home’.”

To him happiness relates to nature and family. He moved to Norway because of work and better professional opportunities. For him, his decision to move was an “easy” one because he was offered an opportunity with an engineering firm. He had no expectations, but lived through a transition, going back home regularly for the first 5 years. He always felt like he could go back if he wanted to, and that moving was more of a choice. He had always felt that his behaviors were different than his fellow Dominicans and he explained how this made it easy for him to adapt to this new culture and learn the language. Five years later after he arrived, he decided he would stay for good. In Norway, he’s discovered it’s a “mandate” to spend time with nature as well as with your family. To him, work is the best, and the opportunity of work-life balance positively influences his optimist outlook of the country.

Figure 6. Rodrigo's Drawing with Associated Narrative



"When I arrived in Norway, I noticed there was a lot of nature on the country and not only that, is that the society actually lives by this nature that surrounds all the small towns in even the city of Oslo. So I always saw myself like okay. It's so much calm and peace in this chaotic world. We are living on that. It was like, mandated to find time to spend with the family and to be outside. What is the, your normal routine? That is work, school and everything on the car and just go to the countryside. So I guess that's how I say okay, my family taking... always find time to take off from the routine. Go to the mountains, or go to the Nature Explore things like that."

Girasol

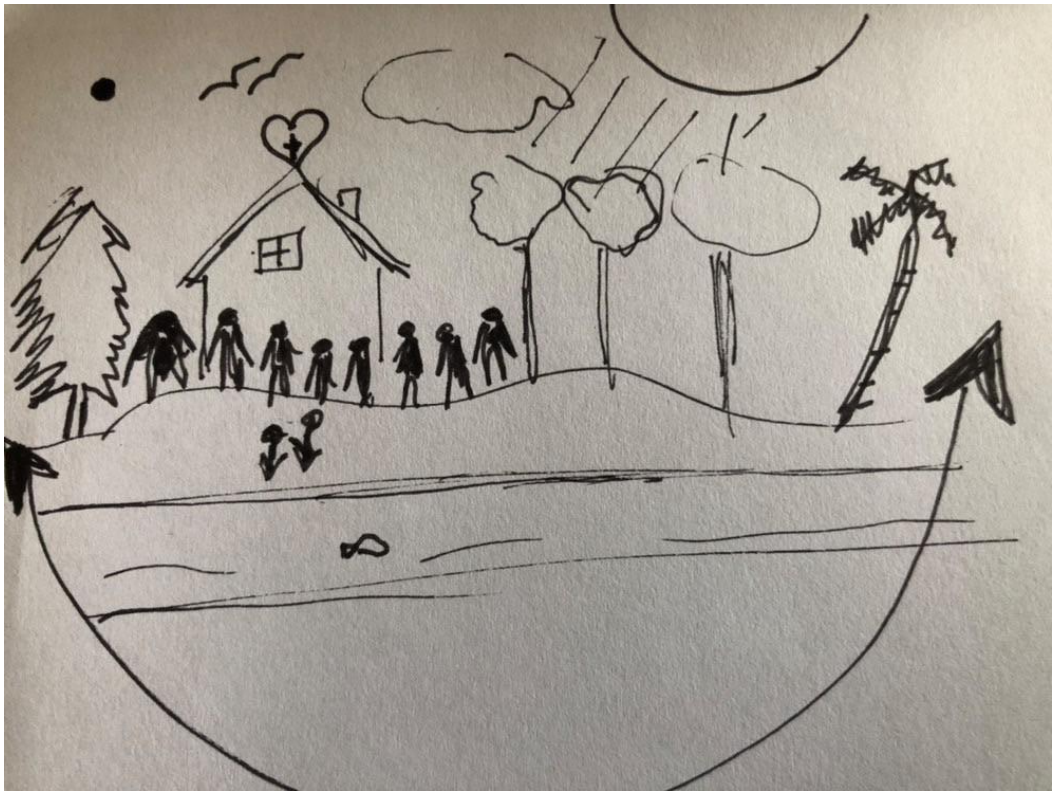
Female, 33, single. Landscape architect. Living in Sweden since 2013.

"I feel like a 1-year-old, 2-year-old, learning to speak."

Her brother had moved to Sweden a few years ago and he inspired her and invited to look at the opportunities in the host country. She felt confident that she had better "chances" in life if she studied abroad. She quit her job in the Dominican Republic and enjoyed reading about the country and the lifestyle before she moved. She pursued opportunities to study and work in Sweden and successfully achieved them, despite language differences, discrimination, and cultural shock and other barriers. She remembers that back home, she experienced feelings of not

being good enough or needing to impress others constantly, and she was ready to leave that behind. However, once she arrived in Sweden, there was a "cultural clash" with both positive and challenging experiences. She realized that Swedes believe that "you don't need to do more to be worthy". She found herself capable of adapting, learning the language, and discovering the "big role" a language can have in the way you think and how you define and perceive happiness.

Figure 7. Girasol's Drawing with Associated Narrative



"I think is a really interesting process. Because what I was doing, the first thing I did was like a home, like a house. And then I was just like, trying to represent this feeling of home. Like, translate that feeling of what home is to me. And then it just occurred to me just draw a lot of small pieces of people, surround them because they may be related to the family and not quite the size. If it's the my family or the family, I'm going to form in the future with a future partner or something. I'm thinking I'm just talking about union, togetherness, and gathering and so on. And that's why it made me think I get but then I need to unite my two worlds. That's why I draw a pine tree, a palm tree, like representing Sweden and Dominican Republic in the contrast, and being able to to create that that link in those maybe extreme opposite cultures, is you correct to say, and I think I'm thinking a lot of calmness, like the nature around and like the being able to appreciate the little things. And yeah, I think it's it's, yeah, maybe about the peace, the feeling of

calmness, that slow pace, and also having like, the opportunity to seize the moments with the family and union and so on. And maybe even world union in some way."

Claudia

Female, 28, married. Chef. Arrived in Denmark in the summer of 2020.

“It was the first time I felt cultural shock.”

For Claudia, moving to Denmark was a two-week decision. She had never been to Europe before, but she had lived abroad in Latin America. She had lived and worked in Perú in her efforts to have a better quality of life while pursuing her preferred occupation. There she learned how to use a bike as her means of transportation, which proved familiar when she moved to Denmark during the pandemic. She didn’t think language was going to affect her so much or that it would be such an important part of the transition process. After learning Danish, she would feel happiness just by understanding a sign. In her area of work, besides pay, the biggest difference in her host country compared to her home country, is how harassment is such a natural and expected part of work back home, and that cultural difference at work is strong and meaningful. She has experienced discrimination in the host country and the more outside of Copenhagen she finds herself, the worse it is. She reflects on how the Danes don’t know how to experience imbalance, or how to deal with stress. Even though there are characteristics that still feel like a disconnect, “the good part is bigger than the bad part”, she assures. Two years later after her arrival, he's still discovering Denmark because she arrived during the pandemic.

Figure 8. Claudia's Drawing with Associated Narrative

"Okay, so this is supposed to be my husband and I, and my or dog... For me, Happiness is when we're together... sharing whatever, a simple thing, just eating together or at the bar, basically."

Lucas

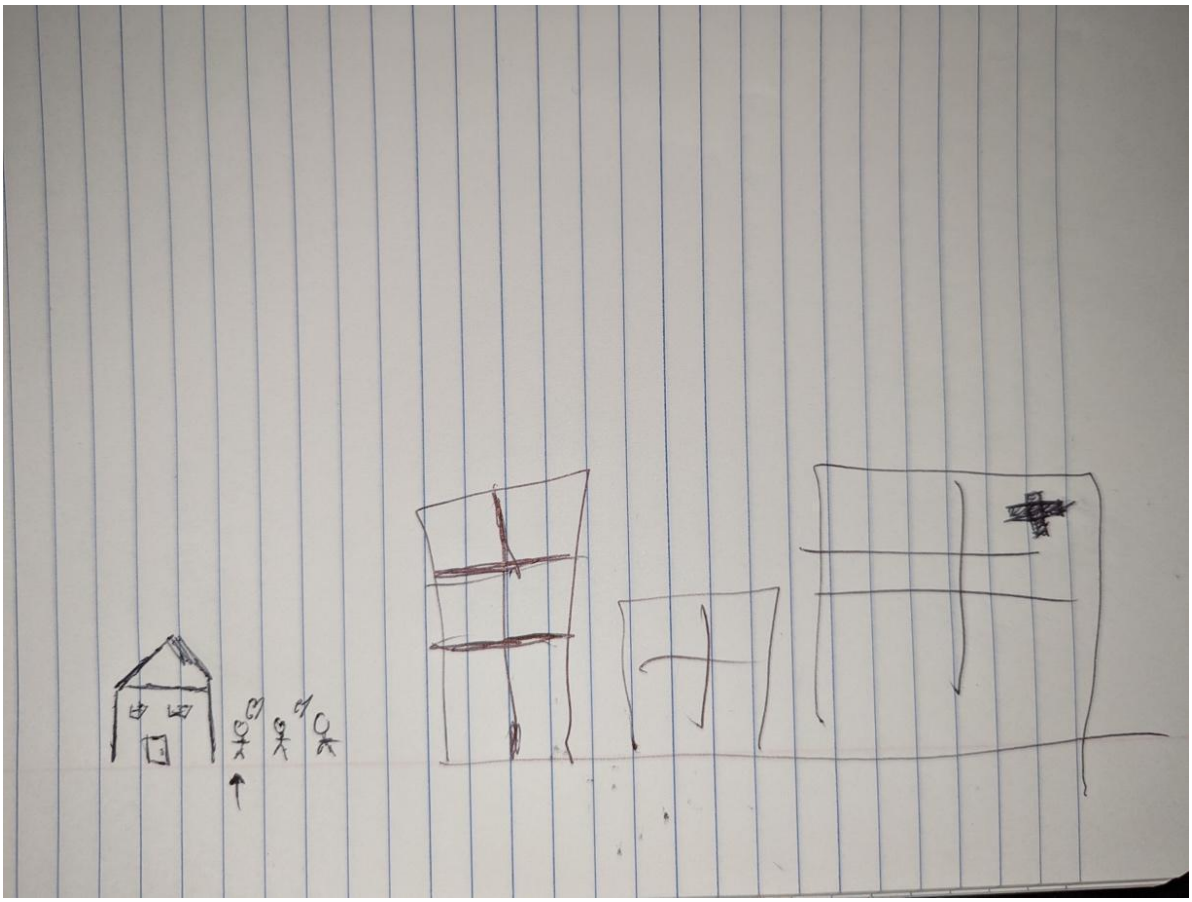
Male, 26, single. Psychologist. Arrived in Denmark in 2021.

"I'm from the only country with a Bible in their flag".

For Lucas, happiness is about feeling safe and able to excel professionally. Thinking about what the future could look like while he still was back home, he felt unsafe, uncertain, and that it would be "expensive as hell" if he stayed. He decided to move to Denmark because he wouldn't have to pay tuition due to his dual citizenship. He recalls he had only heard about this country in history class. He believes firmly he would never have gotten an opportunity of doing what he loves to do and be compensated for his experience and education. Once he arrived in Denmark, he experienced cultural shock. He explained that the Danish language makes it harder to socialize and to integrate. But once you do, you're in. He explains that his definition of

happiness has been put to a test, as he faces the challenges that any expatriate would. After living in the host country, he's become more aware of the reality of his home country, its culture of ignorance, and the fact that it is still a country he loves. He states how important it is to know the "Irons of your truck" or what your home is made up of.

Figure 9. Lucas's Drawing with Associated Narrative



"So, quite literally, I just drew a home... stick people, and this will be infrastructure, you know, buildings and whatever. It's interpretation, it's, to me, happiness is having no place to be where I feel safe, being surrounded by the people I love. And, you know, having opportunity, which I described as the city not only to do the things that I enjoy, but to excel professionally, or, you know, to challenge myself to happiness. At its core, it is for me, like safety and family and, and or friends. And, of course, you know, as I say, this describes opportunity..."

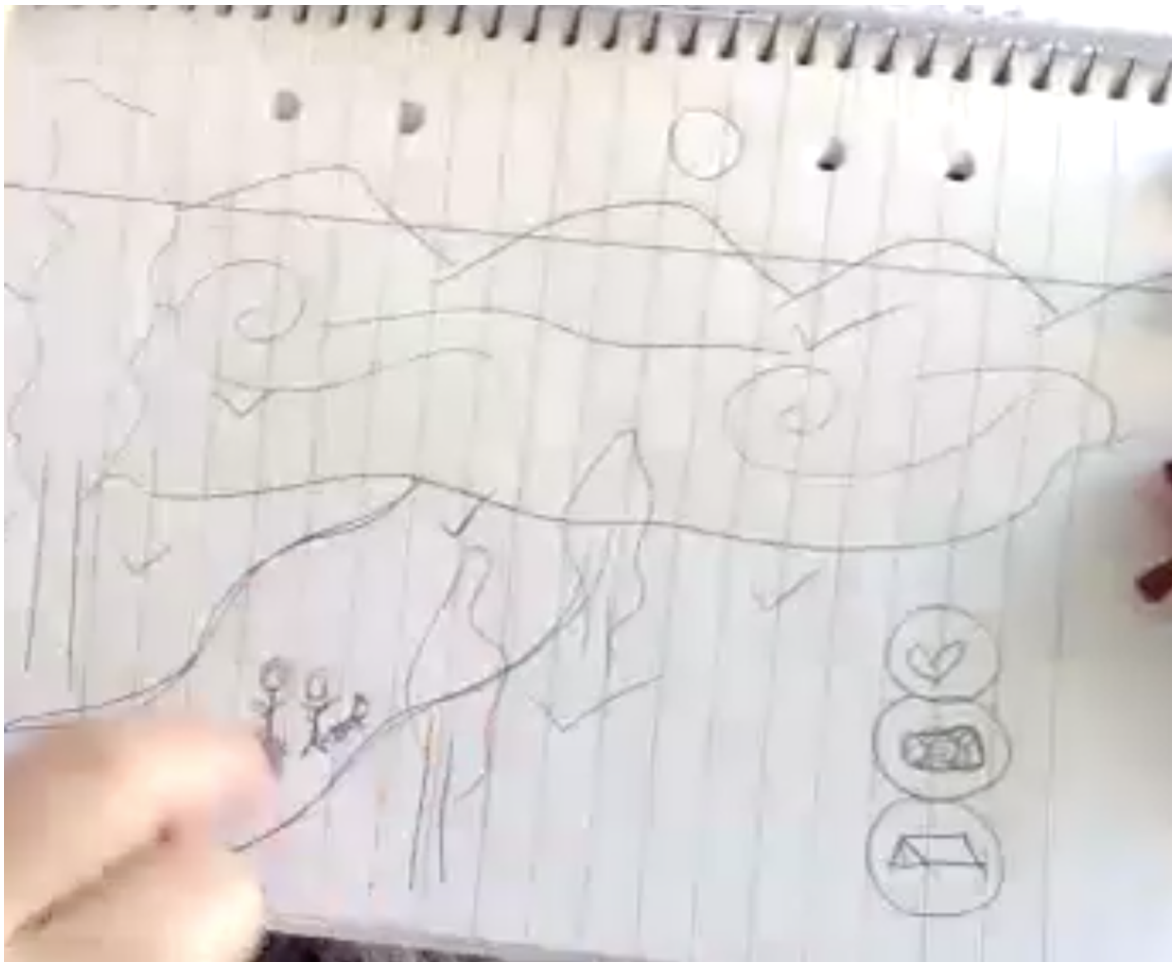
Gina

Female, 31, married. UX designer. Moved to Sweden in 2020.

"Then you realize there's a Nobel prize sitting on the bus next to you."

Gina moved from the Dominican Republic because her husband was offered a great job opportunity in the banking and finance sector. As she navigated culture shock, comparing the noise levels and quality of daily routine back home, she highlighted how quiet the city can be and the true meaning of the Swedish concept *Lagom*. After having an extensive career in the Dominican Republic, she's finally realized that work will continue with or without her. For this reason, the balance that Sweden has taught her has transformed the way she lives and works. In the spiritual aspect of her life, she's learned another story about who Jesus is. In her home country, she was taught that God died for humans and people should feel guilty about it… in Sweden, she explains, you don't see Jesus in the cross, you see him resurrected. The fact that LGBTQ communities are accepted inside a church, and to see a rainbow carpet inside churches more than 300 years old has made a big difference in how she conceives the world around her. Everything regarding religion in Sweden gives her a platform to be spiritual. Even though there's been great challenges, regarding language, culture shock, and social differences, she's learned to surrender to the idea that it is where she lives now. When she feels strongly about something and compares it to her host country and then lingers on the idea of returning home, she thinks to herself: "I don't want to leave' I'm just complaining."

Figure 10. Gina's Drawing with Associated Narrative



"For me, happiness feels like the peace that you get when you're in nature and feels. For me, it's also like a state of mind. And I remember hearing I think it was also you that said that happiness is the way you decorate like that. Like, the way you do the decoration of your heart. Like you will prep everything around your feelings around how you feel around how you exist around happiness. So for me happiness lives and feels like adventure like a state of mind. And like being around people I love and specifically like the peaceful that is around, but that is better you can find being around nature. So yes."

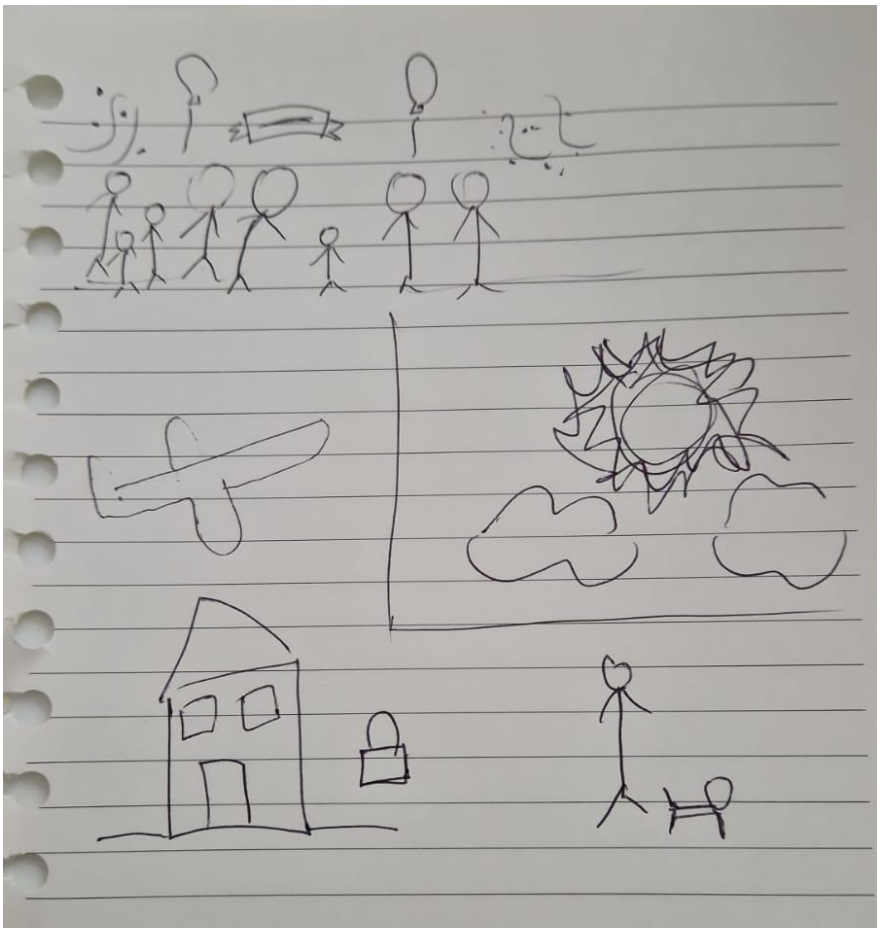
Karla

Female, 33, married. Works in the technology field. Arrived at Sweden in 2019.

“I think not everyone can thrive here”.

She had lived abroad, in the United States, specifically. She and her partner established a long-distance relationship, and their goal was to live permanently there. Compared to her current host country, immigration is difficult in the U.S., and it is more competitive in her industry. Her partner got offered a job opportunity in Sweden. Therefore, they got married and moved, to take advantage of the opportunity in 2019. “If it doesn't work out then they can go back to the US”, she thought. To her, work life has been one of the biggest differences, specifically in the way she is expected to behave at work and the workload she’s expected to carry. There’s also no rush to do work, and not a lot of pressure. She tells the story of people being outside at 11 am having brunch or fika, the Swedish art of eating sweets pastry and cinnamon bun as a break from work, twice a day. She also explains how the darkness and lack of sunlight impacts your body, and how you feel. She drinks vitamin D and makes sure to get herself out of bed even when it's dark. According to her, it takes an effort to survive as a Dominican in Sweden. It takes specific traits to adapt to this culture and succeed. For example, she would never recommend her brother to move there, she jokes. Some Dominican traits that she doesn’t have is wanting to be on top of each other, meeting people and hanging out regularly, being too sociable or even dancing. She explains that to the Danes, social life is a chore, and they plan weeks in advance for every interaction. “Four weekends from today, you know what your plans are” she says”.

Figure 11. Karla's Drawing with Associated Narrative



"So the first thing up here, it's a bunch of people and there's some kind of balloons and kind of celebration thing and what that represents to me is being around my family. For whatever occasion I'm assuming in this visual but it's great good occasions and kind of celebration. But all the people it's the main thing is my family. My family is very important to me and being with them whenever I can throughout the year is very important to me that that's a big part of of happiness throughout the year for me and then Sun is a big part of happiness. I didn't know it was until I'm just looking at it is very important. Then traveling, it's a point of happiness for me through life and then at home. And that's supposed to be a lock, showing that it is secure a safe home. And then just going on walks and the visual here, I put my dog in person, but I, yeah, I wanted to put my partner as well. But just going on walks is a daily thing that I do that really gives me a lot of happiness, because I feel safe doing it. And yeah, the city that I live in is very beautiful. Yeah, those, those are some of the things that provide happens."

Presentation of Themes

"Knowing that as long as you feel good, you have helped, you can continue... it doesn't matter in what country you are; you carry [happiness] with you."

Girasol

In Chapter 3, I shared Braun and Clarke's (2006) recommended approach to data analysis, which distinguishes between two levels of themes: semantic and latent. The first relates to the explicit or surface meanings of the data, which specifically answers the research questions and will be addressed in Chapter Five. The second, latent themes, examine underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations, and will be presented in this chapter. The themes and clusters of meaning and the evidence presented in the table below delve deeper into the underlying stories and experiences.

Table 1. Themes/Clusters of Meaning and Evidence

Theme/Meaning Unit with Associated Evidence from Participant Statements

Theme	Subtheme	Quote
The Meaning of Home		"When I think of happiness, I think of home."
		"Happiness is when we're together" [Image of people and pet inside house]
		"But just going on walks is a daily thing that I do that really gives me a lot of happiness, because I feel safe doing it."
	Happiness starts when you can feel safe	"Then traveling, it's a point of happiness for me through life … and then at home. And that's supposed to be a lock, showing that it is secure... a safe home."
		"Because you can walk around you don't feel safe. And it's simple things like going to walk with my husband to the park or going to new places, just walking around. Just having the ability to take my bike and go anywhere. It's like, I love it."
Language as a Roadblock to Happiness		"There's a sense of excluding people if you cannot speak it good enough."
		"And the language, I didn't think it was going to affect me that much."

Table 1—Continued		"because you could feel a little bit lonely and homesick if you cannot communicate with others".
		"If you're not able to make Icelanders feel comfortable around you speaking the language, then it's hard. And it's one of the most difficult languages in the world."
I will be alright		"And it was difficult to make this decision. But I think okay, I'm gonna be alright."
		"they give me the opportunity, so I just didn't, I didn't look back, not even think twice".
		"there was no reason for me not to go ahead and pursue this".
		"So might as well go to [host country] to be a bartender and it's pretty much what I did".
		"So, for me was easy. And I just saw like an opportunity. And then I could come back [home country] and retire".
Culture shock is real		"for the first time, I have felt this cultural shock".
		"It was hard for me to adapt. Because of the culture, it was very different".
		"The culture shock with Danish people I didn't expect it."
		"Culture shock is real."
	People are colder	"I think it impressed me how cold they can be."
		"They don't understand other people, even though they can be very welcoming, and very nice."
		"The thing is that if we don't know each other, I don't have to talk to you. And you don't have to talk to me. That's it".
Happiness is not about the country, it's about you		"but it's all focused on the greater good, you know, the community benefit. So, I feel like that even stabilizes my emotions".
		"And I'm like, no, I'm smart. And I'm funny. I can say a lot more than this".
		"And yeah, first it was terrible for me. I cried every day. But I say no, I'm here. I have to learn the language. I have to work. I have to do something".

Méndez (2019) stated that to better understand migratory behavior, happiness or subjective well-being, literature recommends considering people's perceived well-being and opportunities in the home country as well as aspirations and expectations for the future in the host country. This facilitated the discovery of some of the themes and connection of findings to literature, such as language as a roadblock to a sense of well-being, the professional aspirations participants had as a motivator to migrate, the impact obtaining a job had on their sense of fulfillment, as well as their expectations being unmet, met, or exceeded after moving to the Nordic countries.

The Meaning of Home

"When I think of happiness, I think of home."

Vanessa

As read in the narratives presented before, most of the participant-produced drawings reflected the participants' connection of the concept of "home" to their definition of happiness. There was a difference between their reactions and explanations when the word "home" came up in each conversation. Beyond referring to their home country as home, or the physical house where they live or used to live, to them, happiness is deeply connected to how they conceive "home" and how much "at home" they can make themselves feel. When participants mentioned the term "home" they referred to that place where they could feel "comfortable" or "at peace", "where they can have their guard down", or where they can be "safe". They made it clear that their definition of happiness was related to their concept of "home".

"Happiness starts when you can feel safe"

Participants provided both generalized and specific examples of situations they have experienced, as well as their perspective of what others in their home country live regularly, that portray the need for a sense of safety. "In our country, there are some things that we crave as citizens that we don't get, like safety, feeling safe" whether it was "walking on the street", "getting out of your car", "riding your bike" or just as "a women arriving late to your house at night". Both male and female participants mentioned that they would feel afraid when they went out, regardless of the neighborhood or area. Participants also expressed that when they thought about the future, they just felt it was "unsafe" if they stayed home. One of the main reasons the participants shared when answering what their motivations to emigrate were, was the need to feel safe or conversely the constant fear and insecurity experienced in their home country being a strong push factor. Arriving at a place where they felt "safe" had a strong connection with their ability to be resilient through other challenges and build their "home" in the host country. Finally, from the ten participants, seven included an image that represented "home" when they were asked to draw the meaning of happiness.

Language as a Roadblock to Happiness

"You'll feel sad, it will feel lonely. Maybe the reason you migrated to another country was for a better life. And [language], that's the door for a better life."

Vanessa

All participants described the importance of knowing the host country's language to feel "welcomed", to feel seen and "included", as well as to feel a sense of belonging. Beyond mentioning the "culture shock" they experienced due to how different their native language is to their host country's language, they shared their experiences explaining that language is a

roadblock to feelings of self-esteem, self-worth, sense of happiness or well-being, as well as feeling capable of developing social or professional relationships. When sharing their experience struggling with learning the new language, they shared how *"that's the main reason why they [other Dominicans] cannot be happy. I can see that if you don't know the language, you won't be happy [here]."*

Participants were surprised or caught off guard by the impact language had on their experience and process (e.g., *"And the language, I didn't think it was going to affect me that much"*). This is mainly because English is spoken in all Nordic countries, and they expected having English as a second language enough to be able to succeed in everyday activities. This wasn't the case for any of them. Other participants mentioned the reason language is so important and impactful or "big", is *"because you could feel a little bit lonely and homesick if you cannot communicate with others"*.

> "So of course, you can live here without knowing Danish, but everything's in Danish, so you need to kind of learn Danish, the supermarket, the transportation, everything. So, when I will go to the supermarket, I will spend like three hours just to buy milk and sugar or whatever, because it didn't know the name for it".
>
> "So, it was like slowly I was getting to know like the supermarkets around me what the hell What is this? Like? This is sugar. Okay, this is salt. Like, it was a very slow process. But I remember now I know a little bit of English and I remember that there were like some signs in the street, and I didn't know what they say what they say. And then when I started learning Danish, I was like, wow, I feel like such a, like happiness just getting to know what the hell did it say in the in the, in the sign industry? And it was like one way".
>
> "Yes, they Norwegians know English, but if you're not fluent in their language yet, then, you know" (sighs).

Furthermore, those participants who asked host country natives or locals if they knew English just to let the person know that they need help, they would obtain help, but relationships would not develop further into friendships unless they learned the language. Another interesting factor that participants highlighted was that even though words can have exact translations, the

meaning we give them in our cultures do not translate. One participant shared the story that saying “always” is how Dominicans reply to “thank you”, meaning more than “you’re welcome” I’m always here for you. However, they explained that in Swedish, when they said “alltid” which translates to “always” or “forever” they would get a “strange” reaction or even the question: “why would you say that”.

> “They are very protective of their language. There's a sense of excluding people if you cannot speak it good enough. That was very shocking to me. Even though they speak English, and they are interested in listening to your story, once that curiosity is gone, then they don't open their arms anymore. They don't invite you out. They don't”.
>
> “So, it was not about ‘hurry up and get that big job’. But more about, ‘Okay, step one, you need to learn language. Step two, you need to learn the culture and so forth.’ So, I try to focus on those things. Because otherwise, it's easy for me to feel sad, because I felt behind”.

Culture Shock is Real

“I have felt it's been hard because I, for the first time, I have felt this cultural shock, or I don't know how to describe it in the right word for it”.

Girasol

In most interviews, the term “shock” was used by participants when describing their experience discovering the host culture and learning how to adapt to it. Participants did not necessarily understand the objective term, they were trying to describe the feeling and used it. I highlight this because in two cases, participants tried to clarify that they didn’t know if that was the right term, but it’s how they felt.

> “I think at the beginning, it was very hard. It was hard for me to adapt. Because of the culture, it was very different”.
>
> “The culture shock with Danish people... I didn't expect it. I trust my sister, but I was like you're exaggerating, and she was not exaggerating”.

A participant further explained how the culture shock has made them wonder if their "view" and "happiness" fit their new host country.

> "Maybe people are very different here from Dominican people. And, well, there are things that I dislike about living in my home country. It is a different challenge here. So, while I feel safe, people are colder. So, this experience with people has also made me wonder about my view and happiness, if it fits here".

Evidently, there were negative and positive factors to this sense of 'shock'. On the positive side, when asked if they had expectations, what these were, and how these compared to the reality they faced when they arrived, some participants expressed they had no expectations at all, while others shared what they expected. Most of the expectations related to a better quality of life, and greater work opportunities, were met. However, for those participants the time it would take to find a job or employment in their field was a shock.

> "My expectations were to have less insecurities and more order, more stability and basically be in a safer environment".
>
> "I think it meets my expectations in what I was looking for, like the job conditions and the quality of life".

Other positive surprises related to the work itself. Participants expected higher income and better benefits compared to what they could earn in their home country. This expectation was met after they'd found jobs, even though the process of finding work and being hired, for the participants who did not travel because of work, was harder than they expected. However, the most common positive stories mentioned by participants regarding work and the cultural shock were the power dynamics with their direct supervisors, or bosses, and the contrasting experiences to the lack of formal interactions or "formalities".

> "The work culture in the Dominican is very old fashioned, you really feel the hierarchy. The boss is putting someone on a pedestal maybe and you must pay your dues to whoever's above you. But here the experience has been extremely horizontal, I've been

left to my own devices to do my work. And people expect things from me, I can expect things from them back. And there's a lot of respect and equality".

"So in Dominican Republic, it was more like, um, I would always feel like I have to be in the defensive mode. There's a lot of like, unhealthy competition in all the workplaces, in all the departments and everything. So it's almost like you had to walk in a straight line. Or if you would, like, go out of there, then immediately, like, you would feel the criticism, you would feel the negativity. And it's just like a lot of fear. That is like, you know, that there's a lot of people that will easily step on you just so they could climb just so they could so yeah, I think that is probably like the biggest change".

"In Sweden, you can even barely tell someone's role by their behavior, which I think you could in Dominican, because they behave differently. Like they know they have some kind of power, and that other people should treat them differently. But here, everyone's like, very equal. So, I think the egalitarian part of their culture is very palpable in the workplace".

"Even the Queen of Sweden picks up her dog's poop and these kind of things like yeah, like a bit of a contrast, like the rule perception how the rules work and why they are they have to they have to be respected".

Another positive aspect is that they've been able to discover and create a lifestyle with work-life balance. Participants shared how impressed or shocked they were about the flexibility and health focus of the work environments.

"If I complete my 40 hours, for example, in three days, I can take off without any explanation".

"I think people are more relaxed... I worked throughout the summer and he [husband] would tend to just chill, nobody's really in the office, everyone's off, like work less".

"But, in general, it goes slower. They like, right, there's a lot more of like, talking and asking, like, how do you feel? Do you feel like this is too much? Should we change anything? What do you think of me? Am I doing a good job, and stuff like that? Even though I work in logistics, logistics is stressful everywhere. This is something of the industry. So of course, I do feel like a lot of stress. But there's more follow up on like, you know, preventing, of course, people from collapsing from stress".

"But for the most part, like work environments are like, very healthy, very, very good quality of like, conditions. And people really try to respect the whole, like, when you get like your vacation, or your sick days and stuff like that, like everybody seems to be on top of that. And everybody like, as a people, they all seem to be cool with it. Also, like the, like the understanding of this is not a country where people have maids. So when you have a job, and you have kids, people were very understanding of that".

Two of the main factors rooted in the negative shock were that Nordic people are "colder" and that they would unknowingly but expressly discriminate.

"People are colder"

In the words of Rex, "Icelandic people and Dominican people are very, very different." When sharing their experiences about their acculturation process, participants went into detail to describe the natives of their host country. Not only did most participants contrast common Dominican behaviors with what they had found in the Nordic customs, but they provided details and experiences to explain what they meant.

> "I think it impressed me how cold they can be. Like, I don't think they are shy, they're really open".
>
> "They don't talk much. Sometimes they say the Norwegians are cold. No, they're not cold. The thing is that if we don't know each other, I don't have to talk to you. And you don't have to talk to me. That's it".
>
> "They are more reserved, for lack of a better definition, they stay in their lane. You know, whereas Dominican people are very warm, sometimes to an uncomfortable degree. There's a Spanish word for that, "confianzú" I don't have a translation to but it's comprehensive, they overestimate the relationship between people. So sometimes that can be uncomfortable. The people that I've met here really respect their privacy, which is great. Something that I really liked. I sometimes think it's probably going to be a shock when I visit home again, because I haven't yet, but people are definitely very different. And it's not a bad thing. It's just different".

Most participants shared stories about discrimination. In some cases, they had never felt discriminated before, or had never experienced this form or racism. Participants would describe moments during their interactions with the Nordic natives, these latter ones would say a comment that was perceived as racist. Two participants used the terms "it's in the little things" when referring to racism.

> "Like kind of a discrimination just because I'm not from here or European or whatever. But yeah, I felt I was a little bit shocked when I started to learn this side of Denmark. And the more outside you are of Copenhagen the worse it is".

> “Like a woman called me Django once, and she thought that it was a compliment. She smiled at me. Yeah. She said, you look like Django. And I said, do you mean Jamie Foxx? She said, No. I mean, Django the character. So are you- and I literally said this to her, I said, So you are you saying I looked like a slave? And she said yes... But it's so little, those little things that have kept on happening over and over, it's taking a toll.”

> “Let's say like the Norwegians and you learn the language, then they will not be like, racist against you or anything like that. But if you try to introduce your own, you know, like, customs and your own, like traditions, then they will be like, Whoa, what are you doing? You are the one who moved here, you're not supposed to do that”.

Through their narratives it was evident that participants were aware of why they were being discriminated against or why they could be perceived as foreign. For example, explaining it’s because of their skin color, their hair type, or their accent. To cope, Dominicans seek other Dominican or Latin American social groups, such as Argentinians, Colombians, or Venezuelans, or lead private lives with their partners and close friends, which compared to their former customs back home, it is a lifestyle to adapt to.

I Will be Alright: Deciding not to look back, but just knowing they can

“I didn't, I didn't look back, not even think twice. Yeah, so yes. Let's go.”
Rodrigo

As the interviews developed, it became evident that the participants’ decision to move was made in different ways and under various circumstances. Two participants had just gone to one of the Nordic countries for a vacation and decided to stay. Two were preceded by a sibling, and had been considering that option for several months, others had their partner who had been offer an opportunity in the host country, and the rest who just found what they had been looking for: a country that would offer them quality of life, safety, possibilities of professional development, and had open doors for immigrants.

> “It was easy, to be honest. Yeah... the opportunity came to Norway, because I started in a project with when an engineering company, and they give me the opportunity, so I just, I didn't, I didn't look back, not even think twice. Yeah, so yes. Let's go”.

> “It was very clear in my mind that there was no reason for me not to go ahead and pursue this”.
>
> “So, for me was easy. And I just saw like an opportunity. And then I could come back [home country] and retire”.

A few participants did extensive research and knew explicitly why they were making the decision, others didn’t have too much background information on where they were moving but were trusting their partners or family members. However, there was a mixed feeling of “excitement” with “sadness for leaving home and family”, and in many cases, the awareness that if this didn’t work, they could always go back.

> “I must be honest; I didn’t research this country too much. I'm like, let's do it. Let's take a gamble, whatever”.
>
> “I barely knew Denmark was a thing right now. I think a lot of people it's like, like Denmark. Yeah, I've heard about that in history class or whatever”.
>
> “I've never been to Europe before. And then I'm coming to Denmark, where not only you need to speak English, but also need to be hearing Danish the whole day. So, it was like, I was so stressed. I was like, excited, but also like, wow, I don't know what's going to happen when I get there. Yeah, it was very stressful”.
>
> “It was extremely exciting. It was something I wanted to do for so many years ago.
>
> “Oh, these are the IKEA colors. It's the clear, the flag, and you start noticing, who knew about Sweden before? And it becomes more real”.

Most of the participants shared this feeling, as Gabriela asserted, “it was difficult to make this decision. But I think okay, I'm gonna be alright.” Regardless of the main motivation for their decision or whether they had planned and prepared to move or not, all participants shared a sense of security or confidence in the fact that they had to take the opportunity and proceed with moving, and if anything failed, they could always return home. At the time of the interviews no one thought about returning.

Happiness is Not about the Country, It's about You

Even though all participants were prompted to compare their home and host country, they would explain how their agency, adaptability, or efforts impacted their well-being. In some cases, it was evident that not only how they managed their expectations, but self-esteem and self-worth were related to their ability to adapt and succeed in their transition.

> "[In host country] It's not important to be showing off, you don't need to actively work on your reputation, but just the fact that you exist is good enough, you are worthy of having a private life, you're worthy of living here, you're worthy of doing this. Of course, you have some obligations towards the country, but it's all focused on the greater good, you know, the community benefit. So, I feel like that even stabilizes my emotions".
>
> "I am a 23-year-old, and I can speak. When you are learning a new language, you feel like if you're a baby, I could say very simple things. And I'm like, no, I'm smart. And I'm funny. I can say a lot more than this".
>
> "And yeah, first it was terrible for me. I cried every day. But I say no, I'm here. I have to learn the language. I have to work. I have to do something".

Most participants concluded that happiness was not a result of moving to the host country, but rather rethink what they could tell themselves to act, what these actions were that could help adapt better to a very different and not always positive or comfortable environment. Above all, almost half the participants asserted that in any country there will be difficulties and challenges, these are just different ones, and you must choose which to face, and focus on the "good things" and "what you have going on" wherever you are.

Discussion of Participant-Produced Drawings and Their Role in This Study

In addition to generating many meaningful themes related to the migratory experiences of participants who participated in my research, this study also served as an example for the utility of participant-produced drawings as an effective data-elicitation tool for exploring abstract concepts in education and the social sciences, such as happiness. When prompted to engage in

drawing, as described in the protocol, participants agreed and showed no reluctance at all. In only one case did the participant forget to bring paper and pencil, and quickly looked for options around her. Most participants would state they would try their best, expressing a slight insecurity of their drawing ability, such as: *"I'm glad you said I'm not being evaluated on artistic ability... So, I'm going to draw out what happiness means to me"* or *"Okay, I'm terrible at drawing but I will do my best to show you."*

The drawings in most cases were finished within three or four minutes. After participants had finished their drawing, they asked if I wanted to see it and, after showing it to me through their video camera, they quickly asked if I understood what they meant. Regardless of what they were showing, which in some cases included images of a house, stick people, representations of their pets, and elements of nature, I proceeded to ask if they could interpret the drawing for me. Their reaction was positive, and they engaged in the details, as it appeared that they felt there was more to the images or that they did not feel pressured into putting too much effort into the drawing but wanted to further explain what they tried to describe through a pencil (e.g., *"Let's interpret them, because I did not put a lot of effort into them."* Or *"Quite literally, I just drew a home, stick people."*)

Some participants also reflected on how their drawing process allowed them to think more objectively of their happiness and its relationship to their cultural background and current reality, such as *"I think it's an interesting process... I need to unite my two worlds. That's why I draw a pine tree and a palm tree, (point to the trees) like representing Sweden and the Dominican Republic in the contrast and being able to create that link in those extreme opposite cultures."*

The post-drawing exercise of explaining and interpreting their drawing provided an objective perspective to a subjective construct. Compared to Mazzetti (2020) who highlighted

the challenge of creative pressure the participant may experience; this study aligns best with Kearney (2004) who stated that most participants in her study appeared to enjoy or become excited about the opportunity to draw. I would add that the positive reaction was stronger after the participants interpreted their drawings. The drawing became a catalyst for a deeper and more fluid conversation, which means that after they had drawn and explained their drawing, they appeared, at least to me, to be more open and comfortable in the interview.

As Kearney and Hyle (2004) stated, this exercise creates a path toward feelings and emotions, leads to a more succinct presentation of participant experiences and prompts additional verbal interpretation by the participant for accuracy of their responses. Even though drawing has been used less with adults than with children (Lyon, 2020), visual representation is being used more often in the social sciences, and specifically qualitative research, due to the increasing role of visuals in our life and mass engagement with social media (Rose, 2014). Furthermore, according to De Rosa (2014), "drawing may create possibilities for the articulation of naturalized social representations beyond the drawers' conscious awareness". Starting the interview protocol with the participant-produced drawing exercise allowed the participant to experience a safe space to dive into memories and details, and to make mistakes without feeling judged. This ultimately had a positive effect on how the interviews and interactions developed.

Chapter 4 Summary

In this chapter, I shared my analysis of the semantic themes, or surface meanings of the data I collected and analyzed for this study. These themes delved into the underlying stories and experiences and included: a) The meaning of 'home', b) Language as a roadblock to happiness; c) Culture shock is real, d) I'm going to be alright, and e) Happiness is not about the country, it's about you. The participant-produced drawings helped generate meaningful themes and proved to be an effective data-elicitation tool for exploring abstract concepts such as happiness.

In the following chapter, I answer the research questions presented in Chapter One and address the findings of this study in relation to the relevant scholarship within happiness research, as well as other literature connected to the data shared in this chapter.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

"Before, I thought happiness was being successful. Happiness to me was like, I need to get the job, I need to have a house, I need to have like all these things that society says you need to get in order to be happy. But now, after going through all this process and just a whole new culture and experience, happiness is about the little things. It's just accomplishing the little things and enjoying them."

Gina

The intent of this final chapter is to answer the research questions posed by this study while also discussing the findings of the study, as presented in Chapter Four, in relation to the relevant scholarship within happiness research, Latin American cultural perspectives on happiness, and the influence of migration experiences on individuals' conceptions of happiness. As explained before, Braun and Clarke (2006; 2013) distinguish between two levels of themes: semantic and latent. The first relates to the explicit or surface meanings of the data and the second examines underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations. In the previous chapter, the semantic themes emerged and were presented as findings. Conversely, in this chapter, the latent themes are uncovered to answer the research questions. The overarching research question for this study is: *How do first-generation Dominican migrants who move to the Nordic countries make sense of their happiness?* In addition, the following sub-questions further guided exploration of participants' experiences:

(a) How do participants in this study define happiness?

(b) How is their conceptualization of happiness influenced by social factors (GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, generosity,

and perception of corruption or trust, as established by the World Happiness Report), in both their home and host cultures?

(c) How do the cross-cultural components of their migration experience (home vs. host culture) influence how they make meaning of their happiness?

(d) What role has the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic had in shaping participants' conceptions of happiness?

Before addressing the research questions and connecting study findings to current literature, I review the conceptual framework and guiding theories from Chapters One and Two and describe how they influenced the ultimate findings of this study. Next, I examine how insights from participants' experiences assist in answering the study's central research question and sub-questions and present a discussion of study findings, highlighting linkages to contemporary research. Finally, I define potential limitations of the current study, the actions taking to mitigate these, and propose the implications for future research, theory, and practice in the field of organizational change leadership, the study of happiness, and global happiness policymaking broadly.

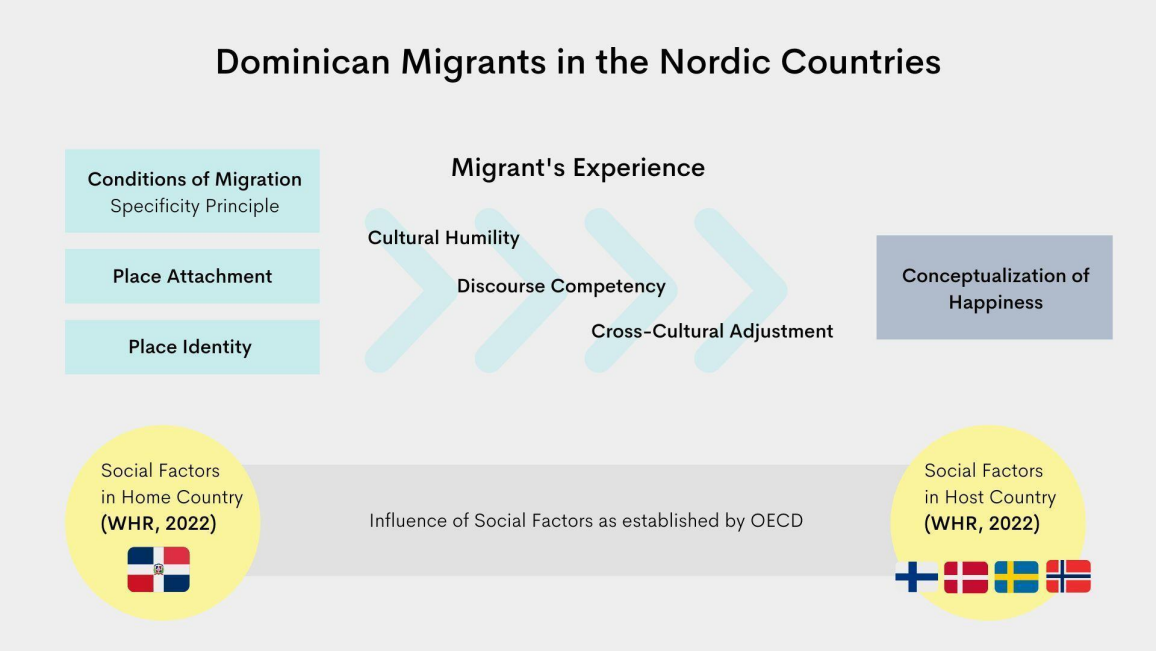
Conceptual Framework and Theories

As defined in Chapter One, a conceptual framework is a system of key factors, assumptions and beliefs, constructs and theories that apprise the research design (Miles et al., 2014). The conceptual framework I used to guide my study is diagramed in Figure 1. It illustrates the context under which I sought to analyze and understand each participant's definition of happiness as it relates to their migratory and acculturation experience.

In the original proposal, I had included two other theories that I believed would have impacted or guided my study. These were (a) Law and Eckes' (2000) four stages of the acculturation process: Honeymoon, Hostility, Humor, and Home and (b) Bridge's Transition Model, which aimed to connect migration and acculturation literature to a change model that has been widely used to understand individual experiences in organizational change literature.

Figure 12

Conceptual Framework for Lajara (2022) Study



To better understand each participant's specific migratory situation, context, and their acculturation process, I utilized Bornstein's (2017) specificity principle, as described in Chapter 2. This principle in acculturation science asserts that "*specific*" setting conditions of "*specific*" people at "*specific*" times moderate "*specific*" domains in acculturation by "*specific*" processes Bornstein's (2017). This theory was useful not only to guide my interview protocol, but to better understand the participant's story and the context of their migration. It helped me consider: (a)

the setting condition (e.g., reason to migrate, place of migration, experience, status), (b) person (e.g., gender, personality, individual-difference characteristics), (c) time (e.g., age, penetration, adjustment history), (d) process (e.g., socialization, learning, instruction, opportunity, transaction), and (e) domain (e.g., multidimensionality, dynamic adaptability). Beyond definition, the specificity principle had a positive impact in the design, measurement, and methodology I utilized.

To allow a better understanding of the cross-cultural experience the participants lived, I also utilized the six social factors determined by the United Nation's Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OCED) World Happiness report as comparative factors, among home and host countries. These factors, identified as the social foundations to measure happiness, were implicit within the protocol, which means I did not explicitly mention or reference them, but used them in development of the interview protocol used with participants to gather data that helped me to better understand how the participants' answers compared to the framework that the World Happiness Report proposes. These OCED factors include GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, generosity, and perception of corruption or trust (WHR, 2022). Relying on these factors as a framework, I was able to observe how these social factors served to influence migrants' experiences and perspectives. In the following sections, I describe how the participants' experiences and opinions demonstrate that from these factors, specifically income, social support, freedom to make life choices, and the perception of corruption play an important role in how they make sense of their happiness in the host country. As discussed below, comparing these factors, such as low income, high sense of corruption, low sense of freedom in the home country, provided participants with a strong sense of confidence and peace of mind that they are now in the right place.

Finally, to examine participants' conceptualizations of happiness, as shared through their participant-produced drawings and interviews, I utilized the three perspectives that are most widely used to define this construct, highlighted and described in the various editions of the World Happiness Report: (a) Affective happiness, which includes emotional state theory and hedonic levels of affect; (b) Evaluative happiness or Life Satisfaction; and (c) Eudaimonia or happiness as a sense of meaning or purpose or as a moral value. Participants were not informed of these perspectives, but as discussed below, these perspectives vary depending on the migrant's footprint effect, which is how the cultural background influences the individuals' perception, and that variation and comparison was evident in the findings.

Analysis and Discussion of Major Findings

"In the DR, people worry about having the car, the iPhone, the clothes, looking this way or the other. Some people even wear makeup on to go to the supermarket… Priorities are superficial."

Claudia

In Chapter Four, I presented several significant themes which emerged from participant-produced drawings and interviews. In this Chapter, I revisit these themes, as well as various additional findings, in order to frame them within the context of existing literature. By relating these findings to contemporary research, the contributions they make to this area of scholarship are more readily apparent. Research affirms culture as a key factor affecting happiness (Ye et al., 2015). According to Krys et al. (2020) a large body of literature states that within and across cultures people conceptualize happiness differently. To answer the overarching question, how do first-generation Dominican migrants who move to the Nordic countries make sense of their happiness? I focused on three concepts rooted in Latin American happiness, spread by the World

Happiness Report. First, how their perspective of happiness changed from Affective Happiness to Evaluative Happiness, second, the meaning of deep family ties and finally, the relevance of individual goals and values.

According to the World Happiness Report (2020), "Nordic happiness levels are dependent on the measure of happiness used". Oxfeldt et al., (2017) describe two types of happiness: *evaluative* happiness, which is overall contentment with life and its possibilities generally provided by a social structure; and *affective* happiness or a feeling of joy at a particular moment. Rojas (2012) explains that a high level of life satisfaction does not directly translate into experiencing a high frequency of positive emotions. Furthermore, Rojas (2016) proposes that if the report considered positive emotions over generalized life satisfaction, then Latin American countries, and not Nordic ones, would occupy the top positions.

How do first-generation Dominican migrants who move to the Nordic countries make sense of their happiness?

"Living in the Dominican Republic, my definition of happiness was always around what I had, since I moved to Sweden, I realize that happiness is not the things I have, but the things that I experience with what I have."

Gina

The World Happiness Report (2018) poses the following question: What determines the happiness of immigrants living in a different country than their homeland? As presented (WHR, 2018), there are several factors to consider. First, there is little difference in the level of happiness when comparing locals to immigrants in any country. Second, the happiness of all immigrants does not depend solely on the happiness of the locals but on the happiness levels of the country of origin too. Lastly, the happiness of migrants depends a lot on how welcoming the

locals are towards foreigners. The Report (WHR, 2018) continues with further inquiry: The longer a migrant has been in the country of destination, do they become more or less happy? According to the WHR (2018), on average, neither, as their happiness levels remain the same. When immigrants move, their reference groups are still those of their country of origin. Nonetheless, they experience a small surge of happiness, which over time changes (WHR, 2018). This change occurs as their reference groups become those of the destination country, which in turn makes them less happy. Therefore, their happiness level maintains its initial position. This process is passed on to second-generation migrants.

Through this study, I found there are strong connections of migrant's conceptualization of happiness to theories of place identity and place attachment, which became a useful framework for me to process the answer to this overarching question. This study found there are three significant components regarding the meaning of happiness for these Dominican migrants: nature, family, and enjoyment. As mentioned in Chapter 4, these three factors surfaced in each interview and in some cases, participants described how these make them feel, whether at peace or safe. However, for these migrates to discover and become aware of these definitions, they experienced a process that led me to the following theories.

Place Attachment and Place Identity

Various studies treat place attachment as a complex multidimensional construct, although there is yet no general agreement about precisely what these dimensions are (Anton et al., 2014). The authors further explain that developing place attachment to one's home and local area is beneficial to individuals, as it has been linked with positive health and community participation outcomes. However, in the case of the participants in this study, the population portrayed low "place attachment" to their home country and low place identity. According to Williams et al.

(1992) place identity is defined as a substructure of self-identity consisting of memories, feelings, attitudes, meanings, and conceptions of behavior and experience that occur in places that satisfy an individual's biological, psychological, social, and cultural needs. Low place attachment and low place identity with the home country has been a factor that has evidently assisted the participants in adapting or thriving in the new culture. This also reflects the reason why one of the participants declared that not all Dominicans could live there [Sweden]. Such as the participant who said that in Norway, he found his "soul's home", or the participant who explained that she never felt like she had "Dominican: behaviors, or the third participant who explained "Not being on top of each other but having enough space for all of us to coexist in our own spaces." To make sense of their happiness, Dominican migrants first reflect on their place attachment and place identity with their home country.

This consideration ties back to "Dominican-ness", as García (2008) explains that Dominicans accentuate their nationalism and have constructed a strong cultural identity. The author states that this has also influenced constructing the Dominican family/nation as an object of happiness. Participants in this study suggest that Dominicans who strongly identify with this "Dominican-ness" would struggle to adapt to Nordic cultures. Another factor that is strongly related to how these migrants make sense of their happiness, is their approach to learning the language and communicating with others in the host country.

A "Difficult" Language

Language as a barrier has been widely studied and Squires et al (2019) establish that to be able to communicate effectively, individuals need to have discourse competence, which refers to holding a conversation in a particular language without having to look up words and their meanings. This study found that the discourse competency and mastery of the host country language directly impacts the migrants' sense of happiness, self-worth, ability to establish social relationships and to fulfill their professional aspirations. Forrester et al. (2006) recall Garfinkel and Sacks' (1970) insights that mastery of language itself is perceived as an accomplishment, and that speakers who display hold a sense of membership. Furthermore, feelings of homesickness, exclusion, and discrimination were more prevalent for those participants who have not yet become competent in the new language.

Participants who demonstrated cultural humility, as defined by Lekas et al. (2020), admitting that one does not know and is willing to learn about the new culture, had adapted better and were able to learn the language and pursue success in various areas of life. It was interesting to discover that those participants who described themselves or their situations portraying low cultural humility were struggling with language, and therefore had a harder time finding jobs or feeling a sense of belonging within the host country's community.

How do participants in this study define happiness?

"Since I moved to Iceland, I don't know if the definition of happiness has changed. I know that my happiness or the way I see my life here has changed dramatically."

Rex

The Meaning of Happiness

The first sub-question was: how do participants in this study define happiness? Through the drawings and their interpretations, participants explained what happiness meant to them, how it relates to what they prioritize or value, and how this has been influenced by the migration experience and acculturation process. First, it is evident that there are three significant components regarding the meaning of happiness for these Dominican migrants: nature, family, and enjoyment. These three factors surfaced in each interview and in some cases, participants described how these make them feel, whether at peace or safe.

> "Just experiencing nature with my family".
>
> "Happiness feels like the peace you get when you're in nature".
>
> "Happiness is when we're together".
>
> "To me it's being around my family".
>
> "Just going on walks is a daily thing that I do that really gives me a lot of happiness".
>
> "Basically, people surrounded by nature".
>
> "When I think of happiness, like I think of home. I think of love as friends, families, as people you like to be around. So not like being alone or not feeling alone. I think of things I enjoy, like music".

In general, these responses were direct, succinct, and very objective, in most cases. Compared to other questions and explanations provided, as participants presented their drawings and interpreted them, verbally explaining what happiness meant to them, they were quick to find the words and concepts to define it. The participants in this study define happiness through an affective perspective of their evaluation of life, which differs with literature that states that Latin Americans have an affective definition for happiness itself, meaning happiness is defined as experiencing joy, excitement and other positive emotions. It was interesting to learn that participants expressed how they felt about their current situation, making the emotion a consequence, and not defining happiness as the emotion or affect itself.

Adapting Their Happiness to a New Perspective

The World Happiness Report (2012) assures that, over time, immigrants to a country tend to be as happy as people born locally. The outstandingly high levels of positive affect reported by Latin Americans (WHR, 2018) is validated through this study, as most participants described a relationship between their definition of happiness and experiencing positive affect or emotions. Furthermore, the correlation between evaluative and affective states is smaller in Latin America compared to other regions (WHR, 2018), however, as these Latin American migrants, specifically from the Dominican Republic adapt to their host culture in the Nordic countries, their conceptualization of happiness as it relates to the general evaluation of their lives became more apparent. Furthermore, when explicitly asked whether their definition has changed after moving to the Nordic country, only two participants explained that it didn't change, but stated that it was definitely "*tested*" or "*refined*". Most participants had transitioned into a strong sense of evaluative and eudemonic happiness, compared to a more affective definition.

> "I think it changed in the way that I assume it's more about looking for peace, like inner peace. Here in Denmark, people are very chill, they don't care about professional stuff, or brag about what they have, or their achievements. It's the total opposite, they are somehow shy about it. And it's this simple way of living. I love it. And now when I'm happy, I'm having less drama, a simpler life is happiness".
>
> "Something else that changed by looking at the drawings; walking is something I didn't do a lot... And it's become a big part of my mental well-being. It's a way to decompress and connect with my partner".
>
> "So, in our country, there's a faster life. That's the first thing and you must be surrounded by people all the time, and you must be doing a lot of things. And if you don't, then it's interpreted as you're either doing something wrong, or you're failing".

It's a Matter of Priorities

As mentioned before, participants also shared their perspective on the difference between what's important to people in the Dominican Republic, compared to what's important to people in the Nordic countries. It appears to be of great importance to them that having a shift in their priorities impacts their definition of happiness and sense of how happy they are. Participants described how their priorities have shifted following their migratory experience and this was a direct reflection of what the natives value in their home and in their new host country. Throughout the Dominican migrant's testimonies, it is evident that in their home country priorities are different than in their host countries. When asked whether their definition or conceptualization of happiness had changed, participants explained that what the Dominican society expects of you as well as what they prioritize is different to what citizens of the Nordic countries do. In a sense, priorities shifted to a deeper level, away from "having" and closer to "being".

How is their conceptualization of happiness influenced by social factors in both their home and host cultures?

"Here [host country], it doesn't matter which career you choose; you are going to make a decent living."

Lucas

Considering that "trust in our fellow citizens and towards the government" is important for happiness (WHR,2012; WHR, 2018; WHR, 2021), it is not a coincidence that the happiest countries in the world are also the same ones at the top of the International Transparency Index, and they report the lowest rates of corruption. It can also explain why participants consistently

mentioned “the mistrust in their [home country] government”, feeling like “voting really didn't make sense, and we're just recycling through corrupt politicians”, paying taxes without seeing “an improvement in our lives”. The second sub-question this study aimed to answer how is their conceptualization of happiness influenced by social factors in both their home and host cultures? This study found that there is a deep connection to four of these factors. The social factors are itemized as GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, generosity, and perception of corruption or trust, as established by the World Happiness Report.

The participants' experiences and opinions demonstrate that income, social support, freedom to make life choices, and the perception of corruption play an important role when they make sense of their happiness. The freedom to make life choices is portrayed in the simple examples, when one of the participants expressed that in their home country, they couldn’t walk without feeling safe, or they could head to the countryside because there weren't proper means of transportation. In several interviews the perception of “not missing” or being thankful of not having to deal with safety concerns seemed relevant as a social factor.

How do the cross-cultural components of their migration experience (home vs. host culture) influence how they make meaning of their happiness?

“The things I don't miss about being in the Dominican Republic is [the lack of] security, social security. Criminality.”

Lucas

As seen throughout previous chapters and the findings presented in this study, cross-cultural factors have played a relevant role in the migrants' sense-making process. The

following sub-question is how do the cross-cultural components of their migration experience (home vs. host culture) influence how they make meaning of their happiness?

Cross-cultural adjustment, according to Rosenbusch (2010), refers to the process of adaptation to living and working in an unfamiliar cultural environment, which can be different for every individual. The individual emotional experience of change is described as a transition, however, the factors highlighted by the participants overlap throughout their experiences.

One of the main drivers of migration, labor migration, applies to people moving for the purposes of employment (IOM & UNHCR, 2009), which is true as one of the factors driving this population as well. Durán (2022) states that a historical perspective on intention to migrate prevails and sees migration as a "flight from misery", and even though "misery" was not a term utilized by the participants, other concepts such as "being unsafe" and "being poor" demonstrate this perspective. Studies that focus on the intention to migrate have been increasingly including individuals' life satisfaction as a key factor of influence for this behavior (Méndez, 2019), and these participants have experienced an increase in their satisfaction in life.

The participants in this study fall under the category of labor migrants and qualify as "assigned expatriates (AEs)" or "self-initiated expatriates (SIEs)", as explained in Chapter 2.

According to Buffington (2022), studies show Dominicans who emigrate are better educated and were more likely to have been employed at the time they left the Dominican Republic. Even after emigrating, Dominicans maintain a strong interest in their home country, and the number of Dominican migrants who return to the Dominican Republic either to visit or to resettle permanently is relatively high, and the return movement is significant (Buffington, 2022). This too was evident as participants still pay attention to what happens in their home

country at the national and social level. One of the participants even mentioned that they would still “retire” back home.

As participants explained whether they were highly motivated to move from the Dominican Republic, or if the opportunity simply rose and they took advantage of it, something that became evident is that there are common motivators to emigrate for these first-generation migrants. The main reasons were to obtain a sense of safety and stability, and the possibility of career development and growth. Another factor that played a relevant role was whether they felt a sense of support from family members or if they were directly related to or involved with someone from the host country.

The Opportunity to Pursue Their Dream and “Do Whatever They Want”

“I was sad about the opportunities I had in my country. So, there is a little bit of a melancholic feeling, like I was running away from there, because there I don't have opportunities.”
Girasol

“Latin Americans’ evaluation of life is also above what income levels would predict. There is more to life than income and that there is something to learn from the Latin American case about the drivers of happiness” (WHR, 2018, p.115). Tov (2017) established that Latin Americans exhibit high desirability for life satisfaction, as well as a strong positive bias towards it. In this sense, personal goals and values play a central role in the relationship between drivers of happiness and the construction of happiness itself (WHR, 2018) and this is evident throughout the participants stories, as one of their main motivators were their personal aspirations of a better quality of life and the possibility of a better professional future.

In all the interviews, participants mentioned that the possibility of professional opportunities and thus higher income, was an important motivator. Some participants highlighted that in their home country, you're not truly able to follow your passion or pursue a non-traditional career, because only a few careers are well-paid. They compared this to their host country where, regardless of their occupation and degree, everyone has access to a decent income and quality of life. To them, this meant the possibility of pursuing a career they loved or truly wanted. Furthermore, this was connected to a sense of freedom, in choosing what to do for work and what to pursue as a career, knowing they'd still be able to enjoy a good or "decent" quality of life.

Two of the most common expectations shared by the Dominican migrants were related to work. First, the participants expressed expectations of finding and obtaining a decent job in their area of expertise or studies while earning a "decent living". Participants explained that in their home country, "more work doesn't translate to more money", "they don't pay you for your knowledge", or that there are some fields and industries "that don't traditionally pay well". They also highlighted that in their host countries you could study and work in "whatever you want to do" because there are "opportunities to achieve your goals", and through their stories they shared how they were earning up to "three times their last or potential salary" compared to their home country. Participants affirmed that their opportunities and possibilities for career development were limited in their home country. The certainty of better professional opportunities was one of the reasons why the families of the participants would support them to move. As described before, this is an important factor for Latin American migrants.

The Support of Family and Leaving Family Behind

"They thought 'Just go because maybe in the Dominican Republic you won't achieve certain development in your career. You have this opportunity, just make the most of it.' And that's what happened."

Girasol

According to the World Happiness Report (2018), the patterns of interpersonal relations in Latin America differ significantly from those in other regions of the world and deep family ties play a fundamental role for happiness in this region. This statement supports what was found in this study, where participants felt a sense of support from family members towards their decision to move or were already directly related to or involved with someone already living in the host country, such as a sibling.

The relevance of close and warm interpersonal relations in their home country and region are one of the most determinant factors of happiness (WHR, 2018) which explains why these migrants prioritize deep emotional interpersonal relations and highlight how contrasting interactions with host country nationals affect them and their well-being.

A finding very peculiar to the personal achievement aspect in Latin American's is the relevance of relational goals, such as "making parents proud" and "watching children grow up" (WHR, 2018), which was also found to be supported by the findings of this study.

Two of the ten participants had siblings who had moved to the Nordic countries before they did. Direct relationships such as this, as well as marriage and or "best friends" were common denominators among the participants. Three participants had married a Nordic citizen prior to their move, two participants got married before their move, to be able to bring their partners with

them and as mentioned before, two participants had siblings already living in the Nordic countries. Another evidence to highlight is the fact that the majority of participants stated that their family, whether they felt "*skeptic*" or "*sad*" about them leaving, they were confident or supportive to an extent, as these family members "*knew*" that it meant an improvement in their lives.

In one case, where the participant has lived in the Nordic country for over 20 years, and lived through an experience such a divorce, even though this participant has started their own business and established their life in the host country, the family members would still ask them to come back or move closer. "My parents, mostly my mother... (pause) to say she was torn is a big understatement... (continues) she knows that I'm in a good place, safe place." -Rex

Happiness and the Weather. One of the concepts that World Happiness establishes as the myths, described in Chapter 2, is the first popular belief that evidence refutes is the relationship between the weather in this region and their reported levels of happiness. The World Happiness Report (2020) determines that climate is something that people adapt to throughout their lives and therefore generally does not affect levels of life satisfaction in those who are accustomed to a certain climate. Even though participants in this study did share details of their adaptation process and how hard it was to understand what 24 hours of sunlight or 24 hours of darkness meant, they would also share how to cope with that.

> "The sun is something I associated with happiness... I was not familiar with the darkness that came with the end of the year and the beginning of the year".
>
> "The summer... we have some 24 hours of sun. Yeah. 24 hours. So, for some people this crazy. For me, it's okay. If I want to go to sleep, I just close my window. I go to sleep".
>
> "It's true, the climate can be a little bit hard. But they have a saying, there's no bad weather, just the wrong clothing. And it's... it's true".

What role has the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic had in shaping participants' conceptions of happiness?

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted human mobility and travel worldwide (International Migration Report, 2020). In its last two publications, the World Happiness Report has utilized individual-level data from 2017 through 2021 to examine how life under COVID-19 has changed for people in different countries and varying circumstances. The last sub-question of this study aimed to examine what role the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic had in shaping participants' conceptions of happiness.

In previous chapters, I reviewed and compared COVID-19 regulations enacted by governments during the pandemic and focused on governmental regulations enacted during the pandemic in Nordic countries (subject's host countries) as compared to the Dominican Republic (subjects' reference and home country). Even though Rafeifar et al. (2021), establishes that the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on immigrant, refugee, and migrant communities, and data showed the impact of various government decisions to face the virus and how it influences citizens' and immigrants' happiness, participants in this study did not share a particular opinion or information on the relevance of this regarding their sense of happiness.

Participants did utilize the COVID-19 pandemic as a reference, timeframe, or context of their move (e.g., "a few weeks before the lockdown", "I moved during the pandemic", etc.), but did not specifically tie this situation to their sense making or conceptualization of their happiness. This leads to an understanding that the migratory experience itself, the transition and acculturation process played a more significant role in how these migrants define happiness and how their definition has evolved after their move, than the pandemic itself.

Connection of Findings to Practice

"And then you also feel again, like what am I doing here? Do I even belong here? Or did I make the right choice? What am I doing with my life? So, it's, it's a roller coaster (pause) It's so many different emotions."

Vanessa

From an Organizational Perspective

In an increasingly globalized society, technological advances, greater intertwining of national economies, and growing global workforces will continue to increase opportunities for cross-cultural interactions and the opportunity for individuals to migrate from one society to another (McAuliffe et al., 2021). Historically, happier host countries, as ranked by the World Happiness Report, are the major countries of destination for migrants seeking new personal and professional opportunities and footprint effects from their country of origin have the potential to influence the ways in which they adapt to and make sense of many aspects of their new lives (WHR, 2018). For this reason, organizations need to become aware of what is most important to these migrants and their families. Understanding their cultural footprint allows organizations to provide more efficient support structures and more effective hiring, onboarding, and retaining experiences.

Latin Americans, as a unique cultural group, bring a strong footprint effect from their home country that has the potential to influence their transition to the new society (WHR, 2108). Their footprint effect levels are shown to exceed that of any other group of immigrants (WHR, 2018). However, this study shows that when migrants have a low sense of place attachment to their home country or feel very strongly that the opportunities for quality of life, income, or safety, are higher in the host country, they adapt sooner, and successfully overcome barriers such as

language. Contemporary happiness studies successfully combine subjective and objective dimensions (Bruni & Porta, 2016), and the Nordic Countries consistently show elevated levels in both (WHR, 2013; WHR, 2015; WHR, 2016; WHR, 2018; WHR, 2019; WHR, 2020; WHR, 2021; WHR, 2022). This becomes an opportunity for organizations located in Nordic countries or other countries that occupy the top ten or top twenty place on the World Happiness Index and currently experience an increased influx of Latin American talent in their teams.

From a Policy Perspective

Since its conception, the World Happiness Report has served as a guideline for governments, international organizations, policy makers, and educators to consider a more holistic understanding of human development and subjective well-being. Along with the complementary research topics that impact the social foundations of happiness, the results presented in this study could be utilized to establish or develop systems that assist national citizens in welcoming immigrants as well as providing immigrants with the necessary tools regarding employment and day-to-day activities as new citizens in the host country. Developing targeted policies for assigning work visas, residencies, and citizenships, through labor migration, should consider the factors presented herein, especially for Latin American migrants.

Happy individuals are more prone to engage in generosity, various forms of prosocial behavior, and benevolent actions towards themselves and others (WHR, 2019; WHR 2022). According to this same report, happier societies have higher levels of safety and security and deliver better government quality and political stability. Societies with elevated levels of happiness enjoy higher levels of trust, and are also better able to deal with adversity, both at the individual and collective level (WHR, 2022). Even though the findings of this study are not necessarily true for all migrant groups all the time, policymakers could apply these insights to

other groups of Dominican or Latin American migrants. For this reason, governments and policy makers should pay special attention to how their local-born and foreign populations define, conceive, and experience their happiness.

Limitations of This Study

Pertaining to the general limitations described above, one of the limitations of this study is that I am culturally biased, as I share nationality and home country with the participants. This means I share a set of customs or way of life, and even though each of them shared their journey and their truths, they remain relative to our shared cultural context and background. To mitigate this limitation, it was crucial for me to be reflexive and provide context about my background and how my own identity has affected the purpose, design, and development of this study as well as my own conceptualization of happiness. I engaged in an exercise to understand what my biases, assumptions, and beliefs on the topic are, as well as how my personal experience might influence my research practice. Furthermore, selecting the participant-produced drawing data elicitation method and having a "visual as an outcome" allowed me to access a different aspect of participants' and avoid giving meaning to words and concepts that are common to our culture.

There are three more limitations associated with this study. First, it considers more participants from Sweden and Denmark than from other Nordic countries, and it had no participants in representation of Finland. This limitation is a potential for loss of information. However, this study included participants from all the other countries, and I believe they are strong enough and could be transferred. Future researchers might need to consider including participants from Finland and larger migrant populations from the Nordic area to continue to refine the findings. Second, even though there was an age span from 26 to 42, most of the participants were between the 28 and 33 age gaps. To address this limitation, I had followed the

sampling and recruiting protocol I had shared in Chapter 3. However, the most effective method turned out to be snowball sampling, and in most cases the participants were members of Dominican communities in these countries and were close in age. Finally, out of ten participants, only three were male.

Since I was able to engage in thick description through Bornstein's specificity principle, examining each participant's specific migratory situation, context, and their acculturation process, and due to my analytic memos, application of reflexivity, and keeping an audit trail, I believe these findings are dependable and the study is repeatable among the same group and context. Even though this may not be a generalizable population, the goal was to generate findings informing future research that could be transferred to similar populations.

Future research should build upon the findings shared through this study and include participants who were not represented in this study.

Implications for Future Research

While much has been written on these topics, recent cross-cultural studies (Gardiner et al., 2020) have found there is a need for further research that can provide a more universal and comprehensive definition of happiness. Additional exploration should be conducted regarding factors such as how culture variables affect happiness (Ye et al. 2015) as well as studies that help in the construction of more culturally balanced measurement scales of happiness (Pflug, 2018). This observation remains true following this study.

Current research has concluded culture is a key factor affecting happiness (Ye et al., 2015). However, the question that emerges is, what happens when natives do not fully identify with "normal" culturally accepted behaviors in their home country? Future research could potentially

explore the relationship between a low sense of identity with the home country and the sense of belonging, social support, and happiness in the host country or culture.

Another important factor to analyze further is how the conceptualization of happiness changes during migratory transitions through longitudinal studies and across various cultures. Gaining a deeper understanding through correlational research that studies at variables over an extended period of time would provide greater knowledge and better tools to effectively and positively influence migrant's happiness or sense of well-being.

Finally, a concept to be explored further is the impact of the language barrier on the immigrant's sense of well-being or their definition of happiness. The widest compilation of cultural perspectives on happiness is the text *Happiness Across Cultures* (2012), which reveals that the diverse and unique perspectives of happiness and quality of life are rooted in rich cultural heritage and histories. Some of the factors that influence or provoke cultural and cross-cultural studies in happiness and subjective well-being are linguistic differences (Wierzbicka, 2004). Pertaining to linguistics, it is important to note that how the word "happiness" is used in a nation's language influences how the citizens respond to questions on what it means and how they feel about it. This study presents evidence on the roadblock that language becomes to the immigrants' sense of well-being and acculturation process. However, future research should explore this language barrier and its effects, and how it differentiates if migrants arrive to a less happy country but one where they speak the language.

Concluding Thoughts

One of the most crucial debates in the study of happiness is presented in a question posed by Veenhoven (1984): is happiness a self-made construction or is it an uncontrollable gift? Due to the inconclusive debate as to whether happiness is a 'rational' or an 'emotional' phenomenon, Veenhoven states that 'happiness is a gift' would be the most applicable, at least for its affective component. Since happiness is not necessarily stable nor are our judgments of our own happiness always definite (Veenhoven, 1984), our answer might change over time. Most of the participants in this study demonstrated self-made constructions of happiness through their new realities, however, two of the participants evidenced that happiness is not about the country but about you.

There's a popular saying, attributed to North American President Theodore Roosevelt, that states that "comparison is the thief of joy", and well-being research describes interpersonal comparison as a tool for us to measure our happiness, Chai (2021) found that when participants compared the life they had, or think they would have back home, and the life they have now, the better parts are always greater than the challenging parts. Even when the "right" factors, as determined by OECD for happiness are present, (e.g. high GDP per capita, high social support, high levels of healthy life expectancy, sense of freedom to make life choices, sense of generosity, and perception of low corruption or trust in the government), if the migrant does not engage in self-observation and exercises of self-awareness, they would not be able to make sense of their experience and build a definition and self-identity of happiness.

To answer this ultimate question, this study shows that cultural, geographical, and social factors can be a gift or a challenge, and, in different places around the world, they scientifically are. However, happiness, according to these migrants, is not a mere gift, but evidently a self-made construction. They carry this happiness with them wherever they go, and it is more

present in the life of those who did not agree strongly with the identities shared or imposed in their home country.

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Appendix A

Email to embassies and organizations

Dear Embassy/ Consulate/ Organization,

My name is Ivanna Lajara, and I am a doctoral student in the PhD program in Education and Human Development at Western Michigan University, USA, under the supervision of my advisor, Dr. Eric Archer.

I am writing to kindly ask for your support in inviting the Dominican community to participate in the research study that I am conducting, titled ***How Dominican Migrants in the Nordic Countries Make Sense of Their Happiness.***

The purpose of this study is to explore how immigrants from the Dominican Republic residing in Nordic countries experience their happiness in the new culture.

If possible, I would appreciate you sharing the attached letter of invitation to the members of your Dominican community in [host country].

If you require more information or have any questions, I would be happy to address them.

Thank you in advance for your time.

Sincerely,

Ivanna Lajara
269 220 1381
Ivanna.m.lajara@wmich.edu
Doctoral Student
Western Michigan University, USA

Appendix B

Email to Dominican community

Dear Member of the Dominican Community,

My name is Ivanna Lajara, and I am a doctoral student in the PhD program in Education and Human Development at Western Michigan University, USA, under the supervision of my advisor, Dr. Eric Archer.

I am kindly inviting you to participate in a research study that I am conducting titled ***How Dominican Migrants in the Nordic Countries Make Sense of Their Happiness.***

The purpose of this study is to examine how first-generation immigrants from the Dominican Republic residing in Nordic countries make sense of their happiness in their new culture.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please feel free to contact me using the information below and I will provide further information.

Thank you for your time and for your willingness to participate in my study.

Contact Info Here:

Sincerely,

Ivanna Lajara
269 220 1381
Ivanna.m.lajara@wmich.edu
Doctoral Student
Western Michigan University, USA

Appendix C

Social media publication

To the Dominican Community in the Nordic Countries,

My name is Ivanna Lajara, and I am a doctoral student in the PhD program in Education and Human Development at Western Michigan University, USA, under the supervision of my advisor, Dr. Eric Archer.

I am kindly inviting you to participate in a research study that I am conducting titled ***How Dominican Migrants in the Nordic Countries Make Sense of Their Happiness.***

The purpose of this study is to examine how first-generation immigrants from the Dominican Republic residing in Nordic countries make sense of their happiness in their new culture.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please feel free to contact me using the information below and I will provide further information.

Thank you for your time and for your willingness to participate in my study.

Ivanna Lajara
269 220 1381
Ivanna.m.lajara@wmich.edu
Doctoral Student
Western Michigan University, USA

Appendix D

Informed consent

Western Michigan University

Educational Leadership, Research, and Technology

Principal Investigator: Ivanna Lajara

Faculty Advisor: D. Eric Archer, PhD, CCLS

Title of Study: How Dominican Migrants in the Nordic Countries Make Sense of Their Happiness

You have been invited to participate in this research project titled *"How Dominican Migrants in the Nordic Countries Make Sense of Their Happiness"*.

STUDY SUMMARY: This consent form is part of an informed consent process for a research study, and it will provide information that will help you decide whether you want to take part in this study. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of first-generation Dominican migrants in Nordic countries and how they make sense of their happiness in the host culture and will serve as Ivanna Lajara's dissertation in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education and Human Development at Western Michigan University. If you take part in the research, you will be asked to sign up for a virtual interview. Your time in the study will take approximately 90 minutes. Possible risk and costs to you for taking part in the study may be experiencing strong emotions while answering sensitive questions and taking the time to do so. There are no direct benefits to taking part. Your alternative to taking part in the research study is not to take part in it.

The following information in this consent form will provide more detail about the research study. Please ask any questions if you need more clarification and assist you in deciding if you wish to participate in the research study. You are not giving up any of your legal rights by agreeing to take part in this research or by signing this consent form. After all your questions have been answered and the consent document reviewed, if you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to sign this consent form.

What are we trying to find out in this study?

We are trying to learn more about the experiences of Dominican migrants who move to the Nordic countries and how they make sense of their happiness in the host culture.

Who can participate in this study?

Any native-born, Dominican citizen, older than 19 years of age who is living in one of the Nordic countries indeterminately.

Where will this study take place?

This study will take place through the digital platform Zoom.

What is the time commitment for participating in this study?

The total amount of time you will spend in connection with this study is approximately 75-95 minutes.

What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?

A possible risk for taking part in this study may be experiencing strong emotions while answering sensitive questions.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?

You will not benefit directly from your participation in the study. The benefits to science and humankind that might result from this study are an increased understanding of expatriation and happiness or subjective well-being.

Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?

There are no costs of any kind associated with participating in this study.

Is there any compensation for participating in this study?

There will be no compensation of any kind (monetary or other means).

Who will have access to the information collected during this study?

The findings from this study will be part of Ivanna Lajara's dissertation and might be presented at a conference or published in educational journals and newspapers. Your confidentiality will be ensured.

What if you want to stop participating in this study?

You can choose to stop participating in the study at any time for any reason. You will not suffer any prejudice, penalty, or consequences by your decision to stop your participation. You will experience no consequence. The investigator can also decide to stop your participation in the study without your consent.

Should you have any questions prior to or during the study, you may contact Ivanna Lajara at (269) 220-1381 or at ivanna.m.lajara@wmich.edu. You may also contact the Chair, Institutional

Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the Vice President for Research and Innovation at 269-387-8298 if questions arise during the study.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Western Michigan University Institutional Review Board (WMU IRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the lower right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

I have read this informed consent document. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I agree to take part in this study.

_____

Please Print your Name

_____ _____

Participant's signature Date

Appendix E

Demographic profile

Please complete the following information and select a date a time for our interview:

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Gender:
4. Marital Status:
5. Parent's Nationalities:
6. Home Country:
7. Host Country:
8. Family Composition:
9. Occupation:
10. Date of arrival to host country:
11. Current legal status in the host country:

Appendix F

Interview protocol

Making Sense of Dominican Migrants' Happiness in the Nordic Countries

Part One: On the construct of happiness

Basic Structure of Interview

1. **Introduce study and answer participant questions about the study**

"As stated in the consent form, the purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of first-generation Dominican migrants in Nordic countries and how they make sense of their happiness in the host culture. I am interested in understanding how their conceptualization of happiness is influenced by social factors in their home country and how the cross-cultural components of the transition influence their experience in the host country."

2. **Complete participant drawing(s)**

"The interview will be divided into two parts. The first part of this interview, and the reason why I asked you to bring paper and pencil is because I will ask you a question and allow 10 minutes for you to draw your answer."

"Draw a picture or series of pictures that describe what happiness means to you. If possible, try not to use words. You will not be evaluated on your artistic ability. 'Stick people', for example, are fine."

1. Ask participant to explain/interpret his/her drawing.
2. Based upon the participants' comments, the researcher responds with a series of probing or follow up questions specific to each drawing.
3. Collect additional interview information according to the interview guide as necessary.

Potential probing questions about the drawing:

1. How does your drawing reflect your own definition of happiness?
2. How has your definition of happiness changed since you moved to [host country]?
3. What have you experienced since your move that has influenced your current views on happiness the most?

In addition, the Interview protocol will further guide the exploration of participants' experiences:

Part Two: On being an immigrant (Acculturation and Specificity of immigration)

Next, I will ask you questions regarding your immigration and acculturation process.

1. How did you make the decision to move from the Dominican Republic to [host country]?
2. What did you feel when you first decided/learned that you were going to move to [host country]?
3. Whether they accompanied you or not, how did your family feel about the decision?
4. What expectations did you have about your move?
5. How did your expectations compare to reality?
6. How did you navigate the local culture when you arrived?
    a. If they don't mention it: Whom did you mainly socialize with? (e.g., other Dominicans, other migrants or locals)
7. What are your big "Aha's" about [host country] culture?

Closing questions:

8. Is there anything that you wish I would have asked you about your experience in your host country that I didn't ask?
9. Is there anything that you wish I would have asked you about your own happiness that I didn't ask?

Potential probing questions, if they haven't mentioned religion or spirituality:

a. What role do you think spirituality or religion plays in your definition of happiness?

Potential probing questions, if they haven't mentioned work:

b. How would you describe work life there?
c. How does it compare to work life back home?

Appendix G

Helpful resources

The following is a list of virtual resources that can be beneficial to you as you navigate the various transitions in your life.

Digital Resources:

- Struggling with Anxiety: anxietysocialnet.com
- Struggling with Depression or bipolar disorder: dbsalliance.org
- Struggling with Obsessive-Compulsive Thoughts and Behaviors: iocdf.org
- Self-Harming: dailystrength.org/group/self-injury
- **Telehealth Apps:** Teladoc, MDBox, AmWell, Doctor on Demand, LiveHealth Online
- **Apps for mental health:** Calm, TalkSpace, BetterHelp, Headspace, Cerebral

Sweden:

- A personal guide to accessing psychiatry, therapy, and other **mental health services:** https://studyinsweden.se/blogs/2020/11/25/mental-health-in-sweden/
- Public Mental Healthcare Website: https://Mind.se

Finland:

- Resource site by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health: https://stm.fi/en/mental-health-services
- Counseling and mental health helpline: https://mieli.fi/en/support-and-help/

Denmark:

- Emergency resources and mental health services and resources: https://www.regionh.dk/english/Healthcare-Services/Emergency-Medical-Services/Pages/Psychiatric-admissions.aspx
- Danish approach to mental health with digital and in-person resources: https://www.healthcaredenmark.dk/media/vbhmxkzk/triple-3i_mental-health_brochure_a5_low.pdf

Norway:

- Resources and guides for mental health assistance in Norway: https://napha.no/content/13939/ressurser

Iceland:

- Icelandic Mental Health Alliance resources: https://ibpf.org/resource/gedhjalp-icelandic-mental-health-alliance/#:~:text=The%20Icelandic%20Mental%20Health%20Alliance,users%2C%20of%20psychiatric%20health%20services.
- **Dominican Embassy for Nordic Countries:** Söder Mälarstrand No. 21, Stockholm, Sweden; +46 (0) 8-667 46 11; stockholm@domemb.se;
- **Consular Services:** consulrddk@gmail.com

Appendix H

HSIRB approval letter

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board

Date: July 18, 2022

To: Eric Archer, Principal Investigator
[Co-PI], Co-Principal Investigator

Re: Initial - IRB-2022-227
How Dominican Migrants in the Nordic Countries Make Sense of Their Happiness

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled "How Dominican Migrants in the Nordic Countries Make Sense of Their Happiness" has been reviewed by the Western Michigan University Institutional Review Board (WMU IRB) and **approved** under the **Expedited** 7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application. **Please note:** This research may **only** be conducted exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes to this project (e.g., ***add an investigator, increase number of subjects beyond the number stated in your application, etc.***). Failure to obtain approval for changes will result in a protocol deviation.

In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the IRB or the Associate Director Research Compliance for consultation.

Stamped Consent Document(s) location - Study Details/Submissions/Initial/Attachments

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Sincerely,

Amy Naugle

Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair
WMU IRB

For a study to remain open after one year, a Post Approval Monitoring report (please use the continuing review submission form) is required on or prior to (no more than 30 days**) July 17, 2023** and each year thereafter until closing of the study. When this study closes, complete a Closure Submission.
Note: All research data must be kept in a secure location on the WMU campus for at least three (3) years after the study closes.