

A Phenomenological Exploration of Men's Experience of Happiness  
Lymarie Rodriguez-Morales  
University of Wales Trinity St David  
Tel 01792 482107

**Purpose:** This paper presents findings from a phenomenological study on men's experience of happiness and its accompanying feelings.

**Background:** There is a stimulating proliferation of 'happiness studies', in various fields of societal life (e.g. positive emotions, economics, well-being). Nonetheless, it has been argued that current research bypasses the question of what happiness *is*. Empirical research has relied mostly on nomothetic data, and although a host of position papers have proposed sound theoretical considerations, the meaning of happiness from an experiential perspective has been overlooked. Whilst some researchers have made the case for a phenomenology of happiness, the place of feelings in the experience of happiness has not been deliberated sufficiently. This study addresses some of these issues through the innovative use of Focusing (Gendlin, 1978) to investigate the felt sense of happiness.

**Methods:** Six adult men (aged 26 – 59) were recruited in the UK. Data collection consisted of an in-depth interview applying a Focusing technique to facilitate participants' pre-reflective awareness of happiness. Data was subjected to a thematic analysis embedded in a hermeneutic-phenomenological approach.

**Findings & Conclusions:** Three key themes emerged from the analysis: 1) 'embodied feelings of being happy'; 2) 'knowing the feeling vs. expressing it'; and 3) 'the paradoxical quality of happiness as an emotional experience'. Findings are discussed in light of extant literature on embodiment and emotion research. A thorough understanding of how the felt sense of happiness is experienced and interpreted can contribute towards current methodological developments in the field.