

FELIX REQUENA

FRIENDSHIP AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING IN SPAIN: A
CROSS-NATIONAL COMPARISON WITH
THE UNITED STATES.*

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ABSTRACT. This paper empirically examines three propositions which are derived from network theory, particularly the relationship between friends' network and happiness level as a subjective well-being indicator. Using friendship network data obtained from 1985 NORC General Social Survey for the U.S., and from 1993 CIRES Social Survey for Spain, a cross-national comparison between Spain and the U.S. was performed. Results are compared with previous major Davis' and Burt's works for the U.S. It was found that there was a significant, strong association between happiness and friends' network size for both countries, and that there was not a great happiness difference between them. However, close friendship has a contrary effect on happiness when data from both countries are compared. Concerning socioeconomic status, happiness increased with income, although this effect was higher in Spain than in the U.S.

1. INTRODUCTION

Several studies have demonstrated that happiness, as expression of well-being, is in general, associated with social density (Litwak, 1989; Litwak and Szelenyi, 1969), and in particular, with friendship (Burt, 1987; Kadushin, 1966). In terms of network theory, personal networks are made up of an individual and those to whom he or she is connected. These connected people offer important emotional support, and happy moments. Friends are the sort of people you can trust. As Burt (1987) and Rossi (1966) have found, happiness and well-being increase with the number of people in the immediate interpersonal environment. These findings suggest that persons with a bigger network of friends as part of their environment will have high happiness scores.

If support sense is considered as a welfare and happiness indicator, many network qualities could be discussed. Vaux (1988) has documented that the quality of network relationships is also important.

The quality of component relationships is very likely to influence welfare sentiment as supportive behaviour consequence. Compared to acquaintances, close friends are more likely to be responsive to one's troubles, to sense the nature, degree, and source of one's distress, and to engage in supportive behaviour that is appropriate to one's needs, even if costly in time or effort. This is the reason for why the degree of relation is relatively close. In another work, Vaux and Harrison (1985) found out that network composition factors associated with support satisfaction included the presence of a spouse and a high proportion of close friends.

In other words, it is more probable that anyone feels happy when he or she feels supported by another. Therefore, the composition of friends' network quite likely has implications for the subjective welfare and happiness. Empirical data collected in recent and some years ago showed how personal networks protect people from life distress. Matthews (1986) found that people with spouses and friends are more likely to be healthy and mentally better than people living alone. Furthermore spouse's role and friend's role provide emotional support and well-being.

However, not all friends mean the same for all people; for instance, a person can be very happy having two or three very close friends, whereas other people can be unhappy having dozens of friends. In any case, our main aim in this paper is to describe how friends are associated with happiness as subjective welfare sentiment in a cross-national comparison. For this task, three propositions which will be tested are stated below:

Propositions: (1) Individuals who have a greater network of friends will obtain better happiness level than those with fewer friends in their networks. (2) People with stronger friendship ties will have greater happiness score in the U.S. than in Spain. (3) It is supposed that socioeconomic status are directed associated with happiness both in Spain and in the United States.

The first proposition to be tested here is that the amount of friends and friendship variables are associated with happiness in both societies: Spain and the U.S. The positive effect of social network size on well-being is well documented in empirical researches, both in

classical literature (Durkheim's *Suicide*, Toennies' *Community and Society*, etc.), and recent papers on well-being and social support (Wellmann, 1981; Gottlieb, 1981). There are also an extensive literature analysing friendship and well-being, especially among elderly people (see Adams, 1986; Jerrome, 1984; 1991). Many dimensions of this proposition have already been documented by Burt (1987), but in this paper they will be compared with a Spanish sample. The present work would like to continue in that direction. We will, therefore, examine which kind of friend network is the most useful to get happiness in Spain, and then it will be compared to the U.S. situation.

The second proposition concerns the cross-national comparison of the strength of friendship's ties. In this proposition we predict that stronger ties in friends' relation have more effect on American than on Spanish society. Since in Spain weak ties are better for getting competitive information as job information (Granovetter, 1973; 1974), we assume in this work that, greater number of no-close relations would produce bigger happiness level. These no-close relationships provide support and no obligation. Obligation would be supplied by family ties (Cecil *et al.*, 1987). In this way we can predict that, in Spain, no-close relationships are more important to obtain certain happiness level. At the same time we will compare this effect with a U.S. sample.

In order to establish the third proposition, we are based on a previous work (Requena, 1991), where it is documented that the kind of relations vary according to social classes. So it is predictable that relationships between "especially close" friends and happiness will be function of respondent socioeconomic status. Some attributes as age, sex, religion, and domestic situation will be considered too. In this third proposition we will compare the extent to which degree of happiness is affected by socioeconomic status and respondent attributes in Spain, and whether it is greater or smaller in Spain than in the United States.

2. DATA AND VARIABLES

The Spanish data used in this study came from a CIRES social survey undertaken in October 1993 by the Centro de Investigación

sobre la Realidad Social -CIRES- (*Social Reality Research Center*). The sample size was of $N = 1200$, both sexes, 18 years of age and over who resided in Spain. The credibility gap was 95,5% (2σ), and estimated error, for the most unfavourable case, was $\pm 2.89\%$.

The American data came from 1985 NORC General Social Survey (GSS). The GSS sample represents English-speaking persons 18 years of age and older, living in non-institutional arrangements within the continental United States. The total 1985 sample consisted of $N = 1534$ (see Davis and Smith, 1993, Appendix A, for sampling design details).

The variables examined were measured as follows:

- (a) *Happiness*: Obviously, this is the key dependent variable in this analysis. Happiness was measured in the Spanish data in a four categories question: "Generally, in this moment, would you say that you feel very happy, pretty happy, not too happy, or not happy at all?". And in the U.S. data in a three categories question: "Taken all together, how would you say things are these days – would you say that you are very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy?". For cross-national comparison we recoded the Spanish four categories into three: very happy = very happy; pretty happy = pretty happy; not too happy plus not happy at all = not too happy, and then happiness ranges recoded as (1), (0), and (–1) respectively for regression and path analysis.
- (b) Friends' network describes the number of friends mentioned by respondents. "Especially close" and no-close friendships have been computed by frequency of interaction: "especially close" means high frequency, and no-close means low frequency. Finally, the strength of relation is the count that respondent feels each people named as a close relation.
- (c) Socioeconomic status. Three socioeconomic status items are considered in this paper: occupational prestige, family income, and education attainment. Occupational status is measured by the Standard International Occupational Prestige scores (Treiman, 1977). The total family income

is expressed in U.S. dollars after applying the appropriate exchange rate. Education is represented in highest years of school completed.

- (d) Attributes: Respondent's attributes considered were age, sex, and religion. For Spanish respondents Catholic religion was the only category considered, since the majority of Spanish people (91 percent of the population) belong to the Catholic church. For American respondents both majorities were considered: Protestants (62%), and Catholics (27%); other religions were not included.
- (e) The domestic situation was measured by marital status and household size.

3. ANALYSIS

Basic Results on Happiness

The main indicator of overall respondent well-being in both CIRES Social Survey and NORC General Social Survey is the happiness item described above. Comparing CIRES Social Survey and GSS, most respondents felt pretty happy, 70.7% for Spain versus 60% for the U.S. A lot fewer felt very happy, 12.6% for Spain and 28.6% for the U.S. And last but not least, 16.6% for Spain and 11.4% for the U.S. were not too happy.

Concerning Spanish data similar proportions have been obtained in other social surveys with similar happiness items (Andres-Orizo, 1991; De Miguel, 1992). However, the U.S. data show extremely crude distinctions among respondents, being less precise than other works (Veenhoven, 1984).

Friendship Effects on Happiness

Correlations, means, and standard deviations of all variables used in this analysis are listed in Table I, in which friends' network is significant associated with happiness, both in Spain at $p < 0.001$ level, and in the U.S. at $p < 0.01$ level of significance.

Figure 1 reports the resulting path model for both countries. In this figure we can see friends networks's direct and indirect effects on happiness. The model proposes that friends' network has a

TABLE Ia
Correlations, means, and standard deviations of all variables for Spain and the U.S.
a. [Spain]

Variables	H	SR	FN	ECF	NCF	OP	I	E	A	S	C	M	HS
Happiness (H)	-	0.0526	0.1292*	0.0530	-0.0221	0.1264*	0.1252*	0.1295*	-0.1605*	-0.0363	0.0389	0.1396*	0.0655
Strength of relation (SR)	-	-	0.1088*	0.8235*	-0.7199*	-0.1078*	-0.0158	-0.1359*	-0.0558	-0.0723	0.1164#	0.0231	0.1109#
Friends' net. (FN)	-	-	-	0.0569	-0.1291	0.1377*	0.1213*	0.2270*	-0.1631*	-0.0222	-0.0683	-0.0307	0.0270
Especially close friendships (ECF)	-	-	-	-	-0.3522*	-0.1171#	-0.0343	-0.1673*	-0.0121	-0.0587	0.0389	-0.0269	0.0723
No-close friendships (NCF)	-	-	-	-	-	0.0446	-0.0430	0.0373	0.0548	0.0816	-0.0924#	-0.0744	-0.0961*
Occupational prestige (OP)	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.1320*	0.4292*	-0.2497*	-0.1368*	-0.0274	0.0469	0.0077
Income (I)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.4056*	-0.4942*	0.0593	-0.1219*	-0.1605*	0.0682
Education (E)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.4354*	-0.0675	-0.1842*	-0.1022#	0.0221
Age (A)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.0484	0.1521*	0.2235*	-0.3090*
Sex (S)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.0110	-0.0676	0.0395
Catholic (C)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.0215	0.0183
Married (M)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.1099#
Home size (HS)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mean	-0.04	2.17	2.66	1.21	0.32	26.24	16.634	7.59	44.78	0.52	0.91	0.63	3.52
S.D.	0.54	0.64	1.80	1.00	0.59	23.54	9.060	4.41	18.35	0.50	0.29	0.48	1.51
N	1193	778	1084	1200	1200	1196	1188	1136	1200	1200	1186	1199	1200

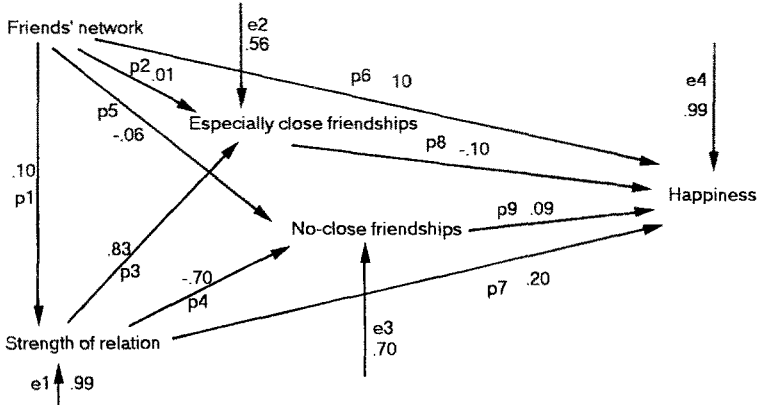
Note: Significant at # $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.001$ level.

TABLE Ib
Correlations, means, and standard deviations of all variables for Spain and the U.S.
b. [U.S.]

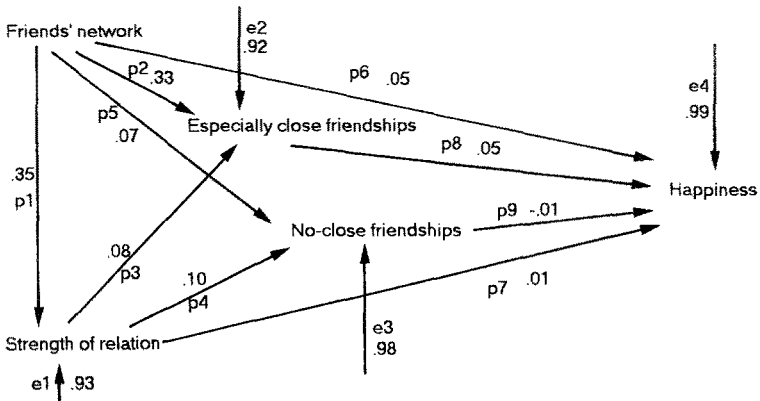
Variables	H	SR	FN	ECF	NCF	OP	I	E	A	S	C	P	M	HS
Happiness (H)	--	0.0199	0.0755#	0.0725#	0.0089	0.1103*	0.1497*	0.1049*	-0.0258	-0.0240	0.0009	0.0007	0.1921*	0.0209
Strength of relation (SR)	--	--	0.3371*	0.1833*	0.1321*	0.2279*	0.1742*	0.2996*	-0.1953*	0.0502	-0.0256	-0.0255	0.0415	0.0553
Friends' net. (FN)	--	--	--	0.3331*	0.1104*	0.1272*	0.1308*	0.2496*	-0.2719*	0.0852*	0.0056	-0.0455	0.0107	0.0753#
Especially close friendships (ECF)	--	--	--	--	-0.1369*	0.0680#	0.1663*	0.0960*	-0.2469*	0.0903*	0.0498	-0.0344	0.0942*	0.1653*
No-close friendships (NCF)	--	--	--	--	--	0.0527	0.0620	0.1024*	0.0317	-0.0488	-0.0286	0.0134	0.0466	0.0269
Occupational prestige (OP)	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.3842*	0.5843*	-0.0093	-0.0534	0.0331	-0.1036*	0.1055*	-0.0115
Income (I)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.3700*	-0.0888*	-0.1070*	-0.0128	-0.0578	0.3150*	0.2231*
Education (E)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	-0.3104*	-0.0407	-0.0092*	-0.1011*	0.0444	0.0659#
Age (A)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.0014	-0.0026	0.0743	-0.0278	-0.3407*
Sex (S)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	-0.0165	0.0562	-0.1073*	-0.0078
Catholic (C)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	-0.7695*	-0.0165	-0.0164
Protestant (P)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.0455	0.0216
Married (M)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.4305*
Home size (HS)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Mean	0.17	0.57	2.06	1.44	0.14	40.60	30.440	12.41	45.71	0.55	0.27	0.62	0.57	2.68
S.D.	0.61	0.96	1.71	1.21	0.47	14.77	27.752	3.17	17.91	0.50	0.44	0.48	0.50	1.50
N	1530	1534	1534	1534	1534	1453	1419	1534	1527	1534	1529	1529	1534	1534

Note: Significant at # $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.001$ level.

a. Spain *



b. U.S. **



Note: Statistical significance: * $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.03$.

The path coefficients are computed by setting up four structural equations:

- (1) Strength of relation = $x1$ Friends' network + $e1$
- (2) Especially close friendships = $x1$ Friends' network + $x2$ Strength of relation + $e2$.
- (3) No-close friendships = $x1$ Friends' network + $x2$ Strength of relation + $e3$.
- (4) Happiness = $x1$ Friends' network + $x2$ Strength of relation + $x3$ No-close friendships + $x4$ Strength of relation + $e4$.

Fig. 1. Path model for Spain and the U.S.

direct effect on happiness (p6). However, indirect effects of friends' network on happiness are also proposed: friends' network affects "especially close" friendships (p2) which in turn affects happiness

(p8); friends' network affects no-close friendships (p5) which in turn affects happiness (p9); friends' network affects strength of relation (p1) which in turn affects "especially close" friendships (p3), which in turn, again, affects happiness (p8); friends' network affects strength of relation (p1) again, but this time it affects no-close friendships (p4) which in turn affects happiness (p9). In addition friends' network affects strength of relation (p1) which in turn, finally, affects happiness (p7).

The first difference is that in the U.S. there is a small direct effect of friends' network on happiness ($\beta = 0.05$), whereas in Spain there is a more significant effect ($\beta = 0.10$), but not too much. It is important to note the inverse effect of "especially close"/no-close friendships for both countries. In Spain, "especially close" friendships have a negative effect on happiness, whereas in the U.S. have a positive one; on the contrary, no-close friendships have positive effect on happiness in Spain, and negative in the U.S. In order to calculate the total effect, it would be made up of the direct effect plus the total indirect effect.¹ These total effects can then be compared to each other to establish which one has the greater overall effect on happiness. For both countries, the greater effect on happiness was the number of friends named, although in Spain the association was almost double than in the U.S. (0.11 vs. 0.07).

To analyse the first proposition it is necessary to study Table II. This table shows how happiness has significant association with friends' network and the strength of relation produced inside. First column of Table II shows the results of regressing happiness over the strength of relation. The tendency for happiness to increase with the mean of the relation strength is significant. These significances have different magnitude for different countries: higher in Spain (0.095) than in the U.S. (0.028), but in both cases this association is quite weak.

The remaining regression equations in Table II present results for different hierarchical models. These models distinguish several effects within friendship effects.

Friends' network and "especially close"/no-close friendships are used to predict happiness in Eq. (2) to Eq. (4). The size of network always has a significant positive effect on happiness, but this effect is greater in Spain (0.030) than in the U.S. (0.023). At the same

TABLE II
Friendship effects on happiness in Spain and the U.S.

Terms in regression equation	Eq. (1)	Eq. (2)	Eq. (3)	Eq. (4)	Eq. (5)
[Spain]					
Multiple correlation	0.095	0.122	0.123	0.127	0.133
Constant	-0.196	-0.210	-0.229	-0.290	-0.440
Strength of relation	0.016 (2.64)	0.010 (1.56)	0.013 (1.16)	0.016 (1.75)	0.034 (1.83)
Friends' network	-	0.030 (2.69)	0.030 (2.65)	0.031 (2.76)	0.031 (2.71)
Especially close friendships	-	-	-0.011 (-0.35)	-	-0.043 (-1.13)
No-close friendships	-	-	-	0.040 (0.91)	0.077 (1.41)
[U.S.]					
Multiple correlation	0.028	0.065	0.081	0.067	0.081
Constant	0.162	0.124	0.101	0.125	0.101
Strength of relation	0.018 (1.10)	0.004 (0.24)	0.002 (0.09)	0.005 (0.28)	0.002 (0.10)
Friends' network	-	0.023 (2.31)	0.016 (1.60)	0.023 (2.34)	0.017 (1.60)
Especially close friendships	-	-	0.026 (1.84)	-	0.026 (1.83)
No-close friendships	-	-	-	-0.016 (-0.49)	-0.005 (-0.14)

Note: Probabilities for effects are based on one-tail tests at 0.05 level of confidence. The *t*-tests for ordinary least squares regression estimates are presented in parentheses.

time, happiness is less determined by the strength of relation than by friends' network size in both countries.

Let us now move to the second proposition which states that stronger friendship ties have a different importance in determining the happiness score for different countries. Eq. (3) to Eq. (5) of Table II show that "especially close" friendships have a contrary effect in Spain and in the U.S. For Spain this effect is negative, whereas

for the U.S. is positive. In the U.S. it is important to have better friends than many friends. On the contrary, in Spain people pay more attention to get a high number of friends but intimacy is less important. In a recent work (Requena, 1994) it has been documented that in Spain family relationships are more important for intimacy than friendships. For this reason, it can be supposed that weak ties produce higher happiness level than "especially close" ties.

Other Social Effects

We have already seen a significant association between friendship density and happiness, then we determined how strong the detected friendship effects were as the other factors were held constant (third proposition). The most essential information to this question is displayed in Table III.

From a comparative perspective, three points are demonstrated with Table III: First, for the U.S., friends' network, "especially close"/no-close friendship, survives these controls. Only no-close friendships have a little increment on each new equation. However, strength of relation changes to negative effect when it is controlled by socioeconomic status, domestic situation, or both. For Spain, friends' network and strength of relation hold up those controls. In addition, there are two peculiarities: on the one hand, no-close friendships always remain constant, only Eq. (3) and Eq. (4) showed higher effects. On the other hand, "especially close" friendship turned to positive effect when it was controlled by socioeconomic status (Eq. (2) and Eq. (5)).

Second, overall, for both countries, happiness increases with socioeconomic status. As it can be seen in Tables IIIa and IIIb, income is the main socioeconomic effect on happiness, varying from 0.031 for Spain to 0.024 for the U.S. Occupational prestige and education have higher effect in the U.S. than in Spain (0.002 and 0.006 vs. 0.001 and 0.003), but in any case, they always have much less effect than income. The same results have been presented by Davis: educational attainment and occupational prestige are not important correlates of subjective welfare (happiness), but family income is (1984, pp. 326–327).

Third, in Spain, when socioeconomic status increases, "especially close" friendships become more important than no-close friendships

TABLE IIIa

Friendship effects on happiness with other factors held constant for Spain and the U.S.

Terms in regression equation	[Spain]				
	Eq. (1)	Eq. (2)	Eq. (3)	Eq. (4)	Eq. (5)
Multiple correlation	0.133	0.194	0.204	0.196	0.299
Constant	-0.440	-0.500	-0.246	-0.576	-0.222
Strength of relation	0.034 (1.83)	0.020 (0.93)	0.028 (1.46)	0.032 (1.73)	0.011 (0.54)
Friends' network	0.031 (2.71)	0.027 (2.05)	0.025 (2.21)	0.033 (2.87)	0.027 (2.09)
Especially close friendships	-0.043 (-1.13)	0.009 (0.21)	-0.30 (-0.79)	-0.037 (-0.99)	0.006 (0.14)
No-close friendships	0.077 (1.41)	0.038 (0.61)	0.075 (1.36)	0.084 (1.56)	0.041 (0.67)
<i>Socioeconomic Status</i>					
Occupational prestige	-	0.001 (0.93)	-	-	0.001 (0.50)
Income	-	0.031 (1.79)	-	-	0.014 (0.81)
Education	-	0.003 (0.52)	-	-	0.007 (0.10)
<i>Attributes</i>					
Age	-	-	-0.005 (-3.95)	-	-0.006 (-3.76)
Sex	-	-	-0.041 (-1.01)	-	0.021 (0.44)
Catholic	-	-	0.104 (1.55)	-	0.055 (0.67)
<i>Domestic situation</i>					
Married	-	-	-	0.154 (3.67)	0.240 (4.58)
Household size	-	-	-	0.013 (0.94)	-0.018 (-1.05)

Note: Probabilities for effects are based on one-tail tests at 0.01 level of confidence. The *t*-tests for ordinary least squares regression estimates are presented in parentheses.

Dummy variables:

Sex = (1) female, (0) male.

Catholic = (1) if catholic, (0) otherwise.

Protestant = (1) if protestant, (0) otherwise.

Married = (1) is married, (0) otherwise.

TABLE IIIb

Friendship effects on happiness with other factors held constant for Spain and the U.S.

Terms in regression equation	[U.S.]				
	Eq. (1)	Eq. (2)	Eq. (3)	Eq. (4)	Eq. (5)
Multiple correlation	0.081	0.176	0.094	0.201	0.247
Constant	0.101	-0.290	0.038	0.044	-0.275
Strength of relation	0.002 (0.10)	-0.019 (-1.03)	0.003 (0.19)	-0.002 (-0.11)	-0.022 (-1.19)
Friends' network	0.017 (1.60)	0.016 (1.46)	0.021 (1.98)	0.020 (1.98)	0.020 (1.83)
Especially close friendships	0.026 (1.83)	0.021 (1.45)	0.030 (2.10)	0.022 (1.54)	0.021 (1.45)
No-close friendships	-0.005 (-0.14)	-0.004 (-0.11)	-0.008 (-0.18)	-0.014 (-0.40)	-0.011 (-0.32)
<i>Socioeconomic Status</i>					
Occupational prestige	-	0.002 (1.72)	-	-	0.002 (1.13)
Income	-	0.024 (3.91)	-	-	0.011 (1.65)
Education	-	0.006 (0.85)	-	-	0.007 (1.67)
<i>Attributes</i>					
Age	-	-	0.001 (1.24)	-	-0.001 (-0.13)
Sex	-	-	-0.019 (-0.61)	-	0.012 (0.36)
Catholic	-	-	-0.005 (-0.08)	-	0.012 (0.20)
Protestant	-	-	0.009 (0.18)	-	0.019 (0.36)
<i>Domestic situation</i>					
Married	-	-	-	0.246 (7.34)	0.248 (6.37)
Household size	-	-	-	-0.030 (-2.69)	-0.037 (-2.79)

Note: Probabilities for effects are based on one-tail tests at 0.03 level of confidence. The *t*-tests for ordinary least squares regression estimates are presented in parentheses.

For dummy variables see Table IIIa.

to get a higher happiness level. So in higher socioeconomic positions it seems better to have closer friends than many friends, whereas in lower socioeconomic positions people get intimacy from family more than from friends (Requena, 1994). On the contrary, in the U.S. “especially close” friends have the same effect across different socioeconomic positions.

Concerning variables set named respondent’s *attributes* (age, sex, and religion), in Spain age always has a negative effect on happiness; young people are happier than the older. For the U.S., age turns its effect as it is controlled by socioeconomic status as Burt (1987) has noted. Concerning sex differences, it can be said that women are affected by different circumstances from men with regard to happiness. For instance, sex effect increases when happiness is controlled by socioeconomic status. In both countries, women happiness level increases with their socioeconomic positions. Concerning religion, there are two different points: on the one hand, for American sample, religion has positive effect on happiness when socioeconomic status are controlled; in this case we have only considered Catholics and Protestants, because the rest of the categories have low frequency percentages. On the other hand, for the Spanish sample, religion effects on happiness decrease when they are controlled by socioeconomic position; whereas in the opposite case religion effect is double (0.055 vs. 0.104).

The remaining variable, *domestic situation*, demonstrates two effects: First, married people are more likely to be happy than the unmarried (see Burt, 1987, p. 320, and Davis, 1984, p. 331 for the same findings).² Hughes and Gove (1981, p. 68 – Table V) also showed in their extensive analysis that married people had high happiness level, life and home satisfaction. Second, household size has a negative effect on happiness for American people, whereas for Spanish people had only negative effect on happiness when it was controlled by socioeconomic status; otherwise its effect was positive. This confirms that in low socioeconomic positions family is very important.

4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of our data we can make the following summary statements:

- (1) There is not too much difference between Spanish and American people happiness. Indeed, in absolute frequencies, if we add up pretty happy frequency plus very happy frequency, we obtain a wider category (88.6 percent for American people versus 83.3 percent for Spanish people). In most cases regression equations for the U.S. data show higher constants than Spanish data; this means that when independent variables, for both countries, are zero then happiness values are higher in regression equations based on American data. For Spanish data, constants are negative in all cases, which means that happiness levels are between not too happy and pretty happy. In Burt's research note (1987), constants were always positive because he used network size as control variable, not friends' network size.
- (2) First and second propositions are supported by the data analysis. There is a significant, strong association between happiness and friends' network size, for both countries. For second proposition, in Spain "especially close" friendships have a negative effect on happiness, whereas in the U.S. they have a positive effect. In the U.S. better friends are more important than many friends.
- (3) Socioeconomic status has an important effect on happiness in both countries. Happiness increases with income, although this effect is higher in Spain than in the U.S. Occupational prestige and education attainment have less effect on happiness than income. When happiness was controlled by socioeconomic status, "especially close" friendships change their effects on happiness for Spanish data. For the U.S. data, "especially close"/no-close friendship hold almost constant across all controls.
- (4) Finally, married people are happier than the nonmarried people for both countries. Household size always has

negative effect on happiness for the U.S. data. As Davis (1984), for previous years, found out family size reduced happiness after size two.

The results we have reported above are, for the most part, in accordance with Davis (1984) and Burt (1987). For the U.S. data Burt's research note presented higher effect of occupational prestige on happiness than income, whereas Davis showed income as principal effect on happiness. Nevertheless, our Spanish data do not show the same results on "especially close" friendships. Burt (1987), for this kind of close relationship, show positive effect on happiness.

One thing is true, the number of friends has a positive effect on happiness, although we never know if people who have more friends are happier, or if happy people make more friends. But in any case data show that it is better to have them. Finally, it is shown how friendship amount has social utility to account for happiness as welfare social indicator.

NOTES

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¹ For Spain total effects are:

- (1) Total effect of friends' network = $p6 + (p2)(p8) + (p5)(p9) + (p1)(p7)$
= 0.1136
- (2) Total effect of strength of relation = $p7 + (p3)(p8) + (p4)(p9) = 0.054$
- (3) Total effect of especially close friendships = $p8 = -0.10$
- (4) Total effect of no-close friendships = $p9 = 0.09$

For the U.S. total effects are:

- (1) 0.0693
- (2) 0.013
- (3) 0.05
- (4) -0.01

² For each three nonmarried categories regression coefficients, when socioeconomic status was controlled, were negative in all cases for both countries:

U.S.: single:	-0.147	Spain: single:	-0.160
divorced/separated:	-0.378	divorced/separated:	-0.333
widowed:	-0.190	widowed:	-0.289

(for the U.S., 7.16 *F*-test with 15 and 1317 df, $p < 0.001$, and for Spain, 4.47 *F*-test with 14 and 637 df, $p < 0.001$).

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