Est. 1841 | YORK ST JOHN UNIVERSITY

Anderson, Emma ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8909-3335 (2019) "You can actually choose to be happy at any time": A critical discursive psychological analysis of accounts of happiness in 'expert' and ordinary discourse. Doctoral thesis, York St John University.

RaY

Research at the University of York St John

For more information please contact RaY at ray@yorksj.ac.uk

"You can actually choose to be happy at any time": A critical discursive psychological analysis of accounts of happiness in 'expert' and ordinary discourse

Emma Jane Anderson

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

York St John University

School of Psychological and Social Sciences

September 2019

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own, except where work which has formed part of jointly authored publications has been included. The contribution of the candidate and the other authors to this work has been explicitly indicated below. The candidate confirms that appropriate credit has been given within the thesis where reference has been made to the work of others.

The work in Chapter *2* of the thesis has appeared in publication as follows:

Social citizenship & social psychology. In Personality & Social Psychology Compass, (2020), E. Anderson & S. Gibson

I was responsible for the introduction and first four sections (pp. 1-17). The contribution of the other author was the final section and the concluding remarks (pp. 17-23).

Acknowledgments

Abstract

In recent years, an interest in measuring and increasing citizens' happiness has characterised many Western democracies, including the UK. At the same time, the new scientific discipline of positive psychology has produced a set of knowledges, techniques and instruments that encourage people to work on and understand themselves in specific ways. While there is a substantial body of work critiquing this turn to happiness, there is a lack of empirical research that examines what it looks like at an everyday level, and how it may inform ideas about successful citizenship. To address this gap, this thesis takes a critical discursive psychological approach to analysing two datasets – four best-selling books, and interviews with 30 UK residents on the subject of happiness. It was found that the books worked to generate a public health-style narrative around happiness, positioning it as "threatened" due to a mismatch between humans' "fallible" brains and the challenges of the modern world, such as consumerism. To counter this universalised danger, individualised solutions of working on one's habits, thoughts and choices were proposed, with happiness constructed as an ongoing practice. There were considerable similarities in the interview data, with participants forming affective-discursive practices of cultivating appreciation, being mindful and making 'good' choices. However, participants took up a range of complex and shifting subject positions during the interviews, and their talk was dilemmatic, argumentative and occasionally troubled, particularly when they mobilised taken-for-granted, culturally dominant ideas about happiness in personal narratives. The thesis concludes that engaging with the rhetoric of positive psychology risks living out unresolvable contradictions. However, there were also resistances to the idea of being responsible for one's happiness and to the habit of individualism, suggesting that alternatives are possible to the apparent dominance of neoliberal models of selfhood.

Table of contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

In recent years, a notable interest in citizens' happiness has characterised many Western democracies, including successive British governments. This "Turn to happiness" (Ahmed, 2010a) provides the context to this thesis, which examines contemporary constructions of happiness in the UK in the early 21st century. It aims to build on the links that many scholars have drawn between neoliberal ideology and the burgeoning imperative for individuals to work on themselves to increase their happiness (e.g., Binkley, 2014; 2018; Davies, 2015; McDonald & O'Callaghan, 2008). Through analyses of two datasets – best-selling books, and interviews with 30 UK residents on the subject of happiness – it makes an original contribution to the extant literature by outlining the subject positions, affective-discursive practices and technologies of self that are prescribed, taken up, negotiated or resisted, as well as the ideological dilemmas encountered in accounts of happiness. In doing so, this thesis also aims to contribute to social citizenship and governmentality scholarship, based on the understanding that psy technologies of the self, such as those prescribed by happiness experts, are also technologies of citizenship (Rimke, 2000), and have implications for selfhood and how we understand and act on the world. This introductory chapter provides the contextual and theoretical background to my research, starting with an outline of the concept of social citizenship and the potential of critical social psychology to contribute to scholarship in this area.

1.1 Psychology and social citizenship

Citizenship has long been a topic of social scientific research, yet there has been a notable lack of engagement with it in social psychology (Andreouli, 2019; Condor, 2011). This is particularly surprising as social psychology seems ideally situated to study this phenomenon, which manifests at both a structural level, in terms of

institutions, laws and societal norms, and a psychological level, in shaping how we come to understand ourselves, our relations to others, and how we can act (Andreouli, 2019). Social citizenship, the dimension of citizenship concerning rights to a basic standard of living – education, healthcare, housing and income support – has been even more overlooked within the discipline (Gibson, 2009; Gibson, Crossland & Hamilton 2017). However, the topic of rights and responsibilities around welfare and inclusion in society is a crucial area of investigation for a social psychological approach that combines a focus on the structural and the psychological, particularly given the wide-ranging and ongoing changes to the British welfare system in recent years, which continue to be a focal point of national debate.

Western democracies experienced a shift in economic and political policies from the late 1970s onwards. The social democratic governments that emerged from the devastation of World War II, and which were characterised by social and economic redistribution, state ownership of national assets and a focus on solidarity, were replaced by a new economic system that prioritised the interests of market forces. Reforms included the privatisation of industries and assets, shifting production overseas and rolling back welfare provision (Dwyer, 2000; 2010; Peck, Brenner & Theodore, 2018). While Cerny's (1990) theory that welfare states would collapse and be replaced by 'competition states' has not come to pass, it is widely acknowledged that late 20th- and early 21st century governments have come to redefine social citizenship rights, with discourses around conditionality being key in rewriting social contracts to prioritise individual responsibilities and obligations to work over social rights (e.g. Dwyer, 2000; 2010; 2017; Horsfall & Hudson, 2017; Wiggan, 2012; 2017). In recent years, some scholars have argued that this conditionality now extends to psychological and emotional life, with attitudes such as resilience, positivity and optimism marked out as desirable (e.g. Burman, 2018;

Gill & Orgad, 2018) or even obligatory, with certain groups such as jobseekers having been targeted with interventions based on cultivating these attitudes (Cromby & Willis, 2014; Friedli & Stearn, 2015).

1.2 Neoliberalism and governmentality

The evolution of a different form of government is accompanied by changing sets of habits and patterns of thoughts about oneself and one's relation to society (Binkley, 2014). The program of economic and political reforms rolled out from the late 1970s onwards in the UK and other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries is often conceptualised as 'neoliberalism', a term that has been criticised for being over-simplistic and overused to the point of rendering it meaningless (e.g. Dunn, 2017). In this thesis, however, I follow various social and political theorists who argue for the usefulness of the concept of neoliberalism as a means of investigating modern subjectivities. For example, Peck, Brenner and Theodore (2018) approach neoliberalism as an ideology based on competitive individualism, idealised visions of liberal freedoms and hostility towards redistribution and solidarity, in which the logic of the market comes to inform other areas of life such as intimate relations. Nikolas Rose (1990; 1996) has argued that the 'psy disciplines' have been instrumental in shaping the subjectivities associated with Western neoliberal governance, specifically in terms of being an active, choosing, and self-realised subject. Illouz (2008) writes of the 'therapeutic self' of modernity, which is characterised by narcissism, intense privatisation of life, and a self that has become severed from communal relationships. As such, neoliberalism is approached in this thesis as an ideology that shapes a particular and preferred subject, summed up by McGuigan (2016) as a "successful entrepreneur, sovereign consumer and hard-working taxpayer" (p.118) or, more bleakly, by Brown (2015) as "roving bits of human capital" (p.30).

The notion of governmentality grew from Foucault's ideas about power, and refers to the complex of ideas, strategies and mechanisms through which various authorities (e.g. medical, governmental, economic) seek to act on the lives and behaviours of people (Foucault, 1991; Rose, 1996). Neoliberal political economies are thus understood to manage the conduct of citizens, not through direct control, but "at a distance" (Rose & Miller, 1992, p.173), encouraging people to take up particular ways of relating to themselves and others through the promotion of specific desires, attitudes and values (De La Fabián & Stecher, 2017). Positioning people as having agency and the capacity for self-determination in this way implicitly confers accountability on the subject for their own decisions, behaviours and outcomes. Instead of complying with a universalised, external code of conduct and set of values, individuals are encouraged to carve out their own meanings, fulfilments and pleasures through their own activities and choices (Binkley, 2014; Rose, 1996; 2000).

Various authors (e.g. Binkley, 2011; 2014; De La Fabián & Stecher, 2017; Cabanas, 2016; 2018; McDonald & O'Callaghan, 2008) have argued convincingly that happiness, specifically, has become a new site of governmentality. Through the new scientific discipline of positive psychology, a set of knowledges, techniques and instruments has emerged that encourages and enables people to work on themselves in specific ways. This thesis aims to contribute to governmentality studies by building on work that asks what new effects this technology of self-government may enable, and what new links between the political and the personal it may facilitate. However, while this thesis is informed by governmentality studies, it does not take the position of seeing people as passive recipients and replicators of neoliberal ideology. Instead, following Billig et al. (1988), it theorises people as creative, thinking social actors who are also able to engage with ideological

discourses in novel ways to resist, argue, subvert or create new versions of 'reality' through wrestling with dilemmatically opposed themes.

1.3 The turn to happiness

A governmental concern with happiness or wellbeing is not new – the happiness of citizens has been a cornerstone of Western governance since Enlightenment times, formalised in the US Declaration of Rights and espoused in Mill's eighteenth century utilitarian principle of the "greatest good for the greatest many" (cited in Jugureanu, Hughes & Hughes, 2014). However, the turn to happiness seen in the UK and beyond in the past 20 years marks a distinctive moment in time (Davies, 2015). The UK happiness agenda has often been spearheaded by Richard Layard, a behavioural economist and leading thinker in the Happiness movement, who was appointed the 'Happiness Tsar' under Tony Blair's government in the 1990s, and made a Lord in 2000 (Segal, 2017). In 2006 Layard co-edited the Depression Report, which called successfully for funding for the mass roll-out of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) to alleviate growing levels of depression in the UK. This initiative was also, explicitly, framed as helping to improve productivity, stating "the total loss of output due to depression and chronic anxiety is some £12 billion a year... Of this the cost to the taxpayer is some £7 billion – including incapacity benefits and lost tax receipts" (The Centre for Economic Performance's Mental Health Policy Group, 2006, p.5). The link between happiness and the economy was further cemented with the 2006 appointment of Professor David Blanchflower, a pioneer of 'happiness economics', to the Bank of England's monetary policy committee (Gunnell, 2006). The happiness agenda continued under the coalition government of 2010, with David Cameron announcing the 'measurement' of gross national happiness – something that has been conducted by the Office for National Statistics from 2011 onwards at a cost of £2million a year (Segal, 2017).

This recent political interest in happiness has been underpinned and legitimised by the new academic discipline of positive psychology, which emerged in the US in the late 1990s. Yen (2010) traces its remarkable rise since then, noting that it now has two dedicated journals, the *Journal of Happiness Studies* launched in 2000 and the *Journal of Positive Psychology*, founded in 2006, as well as special issues of journals, text books, handbooks and popular books aimed at lay audiences. Positive psychology also attracts billions of dollars of funding, notably from the conservative John Templeton Foundation in the US (Whippman, 2016). As Latour (1987) suggests in his work on how science is 'done' and who by, it may be useful to see the rapid spread of positive psychological theory as stemming from a realignment of interests to enlist millions of social actors who have a stake in the success of the research, rather than the traditional view of a groundbreaking new theory persuading and changing outlooks as it makes its way across society.

The precipitous rise in the influence of positive psychology and happiness rhetoric in public and private life has not been without criticism. Among others, Binkley (2011) suggests that positive psychology's message that unhappiness is caused by a person's *interpretation* of their circumstances – rather than the circumstances themselves – has the result of transforming social problems, such as injustice, marginalisation, debt, insufficient wages and the rising cost of living into issues of individual self-care. Similarly, Davies (2015) and Ehrenreich (2009) argue that businesses' increasing attention to maximising their employees' happiness can become yet another way to audit and control them. There have also been a number of critiques of the way 'happiness' is defined and measured (e.g. Pérez-Álvarez, 2016; Smith, 2008) and the narrow, ethnocentric idea of the self that it assumes and reinforces (e.g. Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008; Slife & Richardson, 2008). However, what is missing from this literature is an empirical analysis of how contemporary ideas about happiness and selfhood promoted by positive psychology

may be put into practice in everyday lives. As Andreouli (2019) and Neveu (2014; 2015) have argued, a focus on the ordinary or 'common-sense' is frequently missing from citizenship scholarship, and I would argue this is also true of the body of critical work on happiness. Extending the arena of research to ordinary life through an investigation of people's accounts of their everyday understandings and practices allows us to approach these as political and ideological, and to explore how the grand narratives of individualisation and neoliberalism identified by theoretical work on governmentality and citizenship may play out on an everyday scale.

1.4 Research questions

This thesis investigates contemporary constructions of, and practices around, happiness. The empirical work is based on two sources of data: four best-selling books on happiness aimed at the general public, by Paul Dolan, Richard Layard, Paul McKenna and Gretchen Rubin; and interviews with a sample of 30 UK residents aged 20-71. Binkley (2014; 2018) suggests that discourses around happiness operate as a hinge between the conduct of others and the conduct of self, and the dual analysis of this thesis aims to broadly reflect two corresponding types of technologies identified by Foucault (1988), technologies of power – how the subject is objectified by expert or institutional discourses (book analysis); and technologies of the self – the way people transform themselves by working on their bodies, thoughts and behaviours (interview analysis). It explores how certain states or ways of being are worked up as 'happy' or 'unhappy' and what the implications of this are for how we understand ourselves and our relationships to others, particularly in relation to ideas around responsible neoliberal citizenship. While there has been much sound theoretical work on this relationship, there is a surprising lack of empirical work that examines what it may look like at an everyday level. This thesis aims to help fill this gap in knowledge and contribute to the small but growing body of social psychological work on social citizenship and happiness by looking at

how neoliberal ideology may manifest in the mundane talk of ordinary people, and what actions, understandings and explanations these can help facilitate – or hinder. Is it the case that technologies of the self now extend to cultivating 'happiness' as described by the positive psychology movement, requiring people to radically transform themselves through habits and behaviours such as mindfulness, positive thinking and cognitive-behavioural techniques (e.g. Binkley, 2014; Cabanas, 2016; 2018; Davies, 2015)? Alternatively, are there contrasting social and political understandings of happiness, which do not seek to 'treat' but to listen to and act on certain forms of unhappiness, such as anger, resentment or injustice (Davies, 2015)?

It has been suggested by De La Fabián and Stecher (2017) and Binkley (2011; 2014), that positive psychology has shifted these technologies from the therapeutic (an understanding of the self as flawed and affected by past events) to a more cognitive account of subjectivity that sees people as responding to triggers and stimuli in the outside world in patterned ways that can be purposefully overwritten. Such an account of humanity would arguably serve to further decontextualize people's thoughts, feelings, behaviours and actions from the social, cultural and political world they are embedded in. This thesis is well placed to trace whether and how such a shift is enacted in the books' constructions of happiness, and in people's accounts of themselves, their relationships and activities.

1.5 The discursive subject

To take up the project of investigating contemporary constructions and practices of happiness in the books and interview data, an epistemological position of social constructionism is adopted. From this perspective, language is not a neutral reflection of facts or 'inner' thoughts, feelings and attitudes, but a form of social action in which people have a stake (Burr, 2015). As such, language is approached

as a practical activity that is both public and private, individual and social at the same time (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Following the approaches of Margaret Wetherell and Nigel Edley (e.g. Edley, 2001; Edley & Wetherell, 2001; Wetherell, 1998, 2008; Wetherell & Edley, 1998; 2014) among others, the critical discursive psychological approach I take synthesises a 'micro' attention to interactional moment-by-moment meaning making and identity formation, and 'macro' attention to the wider ideological underpinnings of the constructions of happiness and how it is 'done' by both the book authors and the interview participants. As such, I aim to move beyond a Foucauldian idea of people as caught up in, and bound by ideological discourses, but as able to use, manipulate, resist and subvert these to accomplish their own ends in particular local contexts.

As well as investigating the rhetorical work of the books' and participants' constructions of happiness and associated identities, or subject positions around it, this analysis is also informed by a focus on what Wetherell (2012; 2015) calls affective-discursive practices. She argues that a problematic separation has arisen between affect, which is seen as 'other' and unruly, and discourse, which has traditionally been approached as ideology in language. This ignores the fact that much of the power of ideological rhetoric comes from its engagement of people's emotions. Instead, Wetherell (2012; 2015) calls for an approach that does not separate affective reactions from the ideas, actions or objects that trigger them. Investigating affective-discursive practices involves "...exploring the relations between semiosis and feeling, to identify patterned forms of human activity articulating, mobilising and organising affect and discourse as a central part of the practice" (Wetherell, 2015, p.57). Such affective-discursive practices reflect different forms of governmentality as different cultures generate, and ascribe varying values to, different emotional styles at different times. As Breeze (2019) points out, movements such as political parties do not just promote particular ideas and

discourses but also ways of feeling about the issues they construct as important. It is arguable that positive psychology shares these features with political parties, in that its theories and techniques are often distilled into 'expert' discourses around happiness such as those put forward in the books, and formalised in popular movements such as Action for Happiness, a UK-based charity set up in 2012 with the aim of "building a happier and more caring society" (Action for Happiness, 2019, p.1) through taught courses and local groups.

1.6 Overview of the thesis

This chapter has provided a brief initial outline of the theoretical and contextual background to the thesis and introduced the main research questions guiding its production. These ideas will be developed in greater detail in the chapters that follow.

Chapter 2 provides a review of theoretical and empirical literature on social citizenship. This is the dimension of citizenship that concerns citizens' rights to a basic income and standard of living, which was first theorised in the late 1940s by TH Marshall (1950/1992) alongside the creation of the British welfare state. I provide an overview of key developments in social citizenship, and consider the impact of four decades of neoliberal governance, which has resulted in ongoing changes to how welfare rights and responsibilities are configured, such as policies that make social citizenship rights contingent on conduct. I move on to outline social scientific work that examines these shifting ideas of citizenship, personhood, welfare and conditionality, and briefly consider the lack of engagement with social citizenship in social psychological research. I make the case for a critical discursive psychological approach as particularly well suited to exploring social citizenship, especially welfare provision. Such an approach allows for the analysis of how psychological assumptions are built into both policy and lay discourse, and how

these can legitimate interventions designed to work on the conduct of the unemployed, such as therapeutic and behaviour change initiatives.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the critical scholarship on the turn to happiness. Again, rather than restricting my review to psychological literature, this spans approaches from the social sciences and humanities. This review is organised into four different strands. First, genealogical approaches to how the concept of happiness has changed over time. Second, critiques of how happiness is defined, theorised and operationalised. Third, critiques of 'scientific' approaches to happiness – both in terms of attempts to measure it and interventions to augment it. Lastly, critiques that focus on the problematic way the 'self' is conceptualized in happiness literature and research, as well as in self-help media. In common with Chapter 2, I then make an argument for a critical discursive approach as a useful addition to this body of critical literature, in that it addresses the largely overlooked area of the functions of discourses of happiness and the social actions they may facilitate or restrict.

In Chapter 4, I build on these discussions of the merits of critical discursive psychology to outline my methodological approach to investigating the multiple, complex and shifting subjectivities occasioned by talk about happiness and how it might be 'done'. I start with a brief overview of the evolution of discursive approaches, which can be broadly categorized into 'macro' and 'micro', and explain why this thesis adopts a stance that combines both. I then outline the specific procedures used in each stage of data collection and analysis, starting with my rationale for the selection of literature to analyse, and the processes of coding, analysing and presenting the book analysis. I then discuss the recruitment of the 30 participants for the second part of my analysis, the interview process, transcription and analysis stages. This is followed by a discussion of the potential problems of

using semi-structured interviews as a source of data, and a reflexive section that considers my role as a co-creator of the data, rather than the misleading idea of being a 'collector' of it.

The empirical analysis is presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. Chapter 5 outlines the main findings from the analysis of best-selling books on happiness, starting with an outline of each book's aims and how its authors rhetorically work up their expertise to address the subject of happiness. I then outline five main repertoires and the resultant subject positions identified in the books: that happiness is a natural object; that it is threatened by modern life; and that the problems to be addressed take place at a cognitive level as a result of the mismatch between the modern world and our wiring – a repertoire I am calling the "fallible brain". In forming these 'scientific' accounts of the problems of happiness, I argue that the books create an understanding of humanity as objects rather than subjects; sites of biological processes and cognitive mistakes rather than active social agents. The solutions they propose are based around the fourth repertoire I identify – the "supervisory-self", in which a person is understood as having the capacity to observe and monitor themselves in an objective way, and is therefore tasked with modifying their thoughts, feelings and behaviours to augment happiness. This leads to the fifth repertoire of happiness as a practice and the resulting subject positions offered to readers: to become a "happiness project manager", a desirable identity that signifies responsible, successful selfhood, and the implied opposite position of irresponsibly neglecting one's happiness. I conclude the chapter by arguing that these repertoires enable a construction of the 'problem' of happiness as a public health concern, but one that is best addressed at an individual level.

In Chapter 6, I present the first set of findings from my interview data – the ways in which participants constructed happiness, and some of the ideological

dilemmas and moments of trouble that they encountered during the interviews. Participants drew on various interpretative repertoires about happiness, such as it being 'in-built', 'different for everyone', 'fleeting', that it was about 'freedom and choice' and that it came from 'relationships with others'. These repertoires tended to cluster together in patterned ways, and I present them in three broad accounts of happiness: Fatalistic (happiness as luck or genetic inheritance), Social (happiness comes from relationship with friends and family), and Agentic (happiness comes from individual choices and purposeful actions based on individual preferences). These accounting practices reflect the dilemmatic nature of how happiness is understood and enacted, demonstrating the contradictory ideological underpinnings to everyday language suggested by Billig et al. (1988). As such, I move on to examine four examples of ideological dilemmas and moments of trouble faced by participants in the context of the research interviews, which I sum up as "Inner control vs outer influences"; "Living by a moral code vs pleasing oneself"; "Freedom vs responsibility"; and "Socially sanctioned vs individually defined happiness". The chapter concludes by considering how such ideological tensions may arise when people form accounts of what makes people happy in principle versus in practice.

Chapter 7 outlines the main activities and behaviours that participants constructed as being helpful or necessary to feel happy. These are presented in three categories: happiness as a cognitive activity involving deliberate management of one's thoughts in patterned ways; happiness as dependent on making the right choices; and formalised techniques of happiness, including being mindful, practising gratitude and praying. I discuss these findings in relation to some of the theoretical work outlined in Chapter 3, paying particular attention to the functions of the work of being mindful, appreciative and managing thoughts and moods, which were oriented to as something that must be done on an ongoing basis. I argue that that in taking up these practices, participants' accounts of themselves as responsible, self-

improving and autonomous provides some evidence for suggestions that neoliberalism, and positive psychology more specifically, are working to reconfigure subjectivity (e.g. Binkley, 2011; De La Fabián & Stecher, 2017).

Finally, Chapter 8 concludes the thesis, recapping my main findings and discussing them in light of the theoretical themes outlined above. I consider some of the notable similarities and differences between the two datasets and focus on two main discussion points. First, I look at the notable contradiction produced by both the books and the participants of orienting to the self as an augmentable product, while also problematising consumerism and, by association, capitalism as a dangerous siren that prevents happiness. Second, I return to the idea raised by Binkley (2014; 2018) and De La Fabián and Stecher (2017; 2018) that the language and techniques of positive psychology are working to transform a therapeutic understanding of the self into a more cognitive version. I suggest that this proposal is evidenced in the book analysis, with the supervisory-self repertoire, whereas a more nuanced picture emerges from the interview data. Here, participants' meaning-making around happiness drew on a therapeutic understanding of the self as affected by the past, as well the idea that one can approach happiness as a purely present- and future-focused activity involving emotional regulation. I finish the chapter by suggesting some avenues of enquiry and questions that have emerged from this thesis as potentially useful and important areas for future research.

Chapter 2: Social citizenship, welfare and psychology

2.1 Introduction

Social citizenship concerns rights and responsibilities around welfare, including education, healthcare, and social security benefits. It was theorised as a new dimension of citizenship by TH Marshall (1950/1992) at the advent of the British welfare state. This review will cover literature that discusses the philosophical underpinnings of ideas about citizenship, which are essential in unpicking the dilemmatic nature of social citizenship as we currently understand it. It will also look at the many criticisms of Marshall's ideas, then go on to consider how his rights-based model of social citizenship has been challenged in the UK by neoliberal ideals and successive policy changes. I then address some of the most influential social scientific literature on social citizenship including work that traces how discourses around citizenship have changed over time. I argue that what is largely missing from the literature is empirical work that pays attention to the complex, shifting and dynamic nature of social citizenship.

Moving on to consider psychological work on citizenship, I will build on recent arguments (e.g. Gibson, 2011; Gibson, Crossland & Hamilton, 2017) that, despite the unique contribution that social psychology could play in investigating citizenship, it has largely failed to engage with it as an area of research. Furthermore, after Rose (1996, 1999) and others (Cromby & Willis, 2014; Friedli & Stearn, 2015), I will also argue that psychological language, concepts and methodologies are becoming increasingly influential in shaping how citizens are constructed in the UK, both through changing social policy and in everyday interactions. In particular, I will focus on work that traces how this changing construction of the citizen has had profound implications as people's social rights have gradually eroded, while their 'duties' as citizens have grown. I will then lay the groundwork for the empirical work in this thesis by making the case that, in the UK,

those duties may now extend to cultivating particular psychological properties in order to signal one is the 'right' kind of citizen. I will briefly discuss recent sociological work on the 'turn to character' (Bull & Allen, 2018) which argues that contemporary social and political discourses around the need to cultivate resilience, positivity, entrepreneurship and 'grit' work to position character as both a cause and solution to social problems such as inequality, poverty and educational underachievement. As Cromby and Willis (2014) and Segal (2017) argue, examining which particular attitudes and emotions are currently constructed as being desirable or even necessary for full participation in British society also allows us to ask what *isn't* privileged, such as social justice, solidarity and bravery.

2.2 What is social citizenship?

Citizenship in general, and social citizenship more particularly, is a contested idea and an agreed definition is elusive if not impossible (Condor, 2011; Dwyer, 2000). At its most basic, citizenship is concerned with the relationship between individuals and the communities they live in, particularly the state. This relationship is continually being renegotiated, and it is in this space that much social science research on citizenship has been conducted.

Conceptualizations of social citizenship are based on principles developed from TH Marshall's seminal 1949 lecture 'Citizenship and Social Class', published in 1950, in which he proposed three interrelated dimensions of citizenship: civil, political and social. Marshall proposed that these developed over the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, respectively, alongside major changes in social institutions and the material conditions of people's lives (Dwyer, 2000; Humpage, 2014). Marshall (1950/1992) argued that a rights-based system of social welfare, which included education, health, housing and unemployment welfare services, was a right of British citizenship, intended to allow citizens full participation in British society. He thus saw social citizenship rights as a means of transcending traditional inequalities

associated with capitalism and the class structure, by emphasising the equality of status and opportunity.

There have been various suggested expansions of Marshall's three dimensions of citizenship, and many criticisms of his work, which will be examined in Section 2.4. However, Marshall's idea of social citizenship arguably remains the most useful starting point for a discussion, thanks to its continued influence on social scientific approaches to citizenship (e.g. Dean & Melrose, 1999; Dwyer, 2000; Condor 2011; Gibson, 2009, 2011; Hooghe & Oser, 2018; Horsfall & Hudson, 2017; Oliver & Heater, 1994; Turner, 1993), and its status as the foundational text for studies of citizenship and social policy (Turner, 2009).

The conceptual basis for approaching social citizenship in this discussion will borrow from Isin and Wood (1999) who have built on Marshall's classic framework of citizenship to see it as "*both* a set of practices (cultural, symbolic and economic) and a bundle of rights and duties (civil, political and social) that define an individual's membership in a polity" (p. 4, italics in original). This status-practice dichotomy is underpinned by differing philosophies of citizenship – liberalism and communitarianism – which have contrasting answers to the questions of whether it should protect the rights of individuals or promote solidarity, and which will be explored in Section 2.3. It is by examining what the duties of social citizenship might be; how they are linked to rights; and how this has changed over time and context that a lot of fruitful theoretical and empirical work has been done.

2.3 Philosophical underpinnings of social citizenship

Marshall's (1950/1992) idea of citizenship is usefully seen as an attempt to fuse the emphasis on individualism inherent in liberalism with the encouragement of community coherence found in the communitarian tradition (Dwyer, 2010). The liberal tradition of citizenship emerged from the late 17th century, when philosophers

such as John Locke emphasised the centrality of individual freedom. These ideas were rooted in social changes of the time, when capitalism started to overtake the feudal order, and over the following century ideas of individual rights to liberty, such as Thomas Paine's, were instrumental in the revolutions in France and what became known as the USA, and enshrined in the constitutional bill of rights (Hampsher-Monk, 2005). In 1869, utilitarian philosopher John Stuart Mill argued for people to be free from state interference to pursue "our own good in our way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it" (Mill, cited in Dwyer, 2010, p. 21). It is worth noting, though, that Mill's idea of citizenship was conditional – although he made no exclusion on the basis of gender, he thought only educated – that is to say, middle class – people would have the necessary ability to participate in political affairs (Dwyer, 2010).

Liberalism can be further subdivided into two broad versions: libertarian, and egalitarian. The former sees a limited role for the state in ensuring only civil and political rights, sometimes described as 'negative' rights, in that they uphold the freedom *from* coercion or interference (Dwyer, 2010). Modern-day neoliberal economists and thinkers, such as Hayek and Friedman, drew on this version of liberalism, arguing for a 'laissez faire' approach to the market to regulate the distribution of goods, and calling for an 'enterprise culture' where the activities and choices of independent businesses, organisations and individuals would be focused on maximising their own advantage (Rose, 1996). Egalitarian liberalism, on the other hand, rejects this idea and argues for 'positive' rights *to* certain services, which allow for the redistribution of resources to allow all citizens the freedom to choose their own good in their own way. Marshall's (1950/1992) theory of citizenship, and social citizenship, sits within this tradition.

While liberalism, speaking generally, sees citizenship as a status or set of rights that does not have to be 'earned' but can be passively enjoyed,

communitarianism conceives of it as a responsibility, involving contribution and virtue (Dwyer, 2000). The communitarian or social contractarian tradition has roots in the Ancient Greek concept of the 'civic republican', in which (male) citizens were to live according to prescribed social rules including active participation in political life. Here the wider community takes precedence over individual considerations, and the role of the community in shaping identities and ideologies is emphasised (Dwyer, 2010). Although liberal theories of citizenship rose to prominence in the 17th and 18th century, such social contractarian ideas did not die out, with Enlightenment philosophers such as Hobbes and Rousseau talking of a 'social contract' between individual and community, albeit in very different forms. Traces of these ideas are still with us, and Dean and Melrose (1999) outline two contemporary manifestations of a social-solidaristic tradition of citizenship: the conservative, Christian democratic traditions and the reformist, social-democratic, which will be explored in more depth in the consideration of discourses of social citizenship in Section 2.7.

The influence of these ideas can also be seen in the 'new communitarian' approaches of citizenship scholars Selbourne (1994) and Etzioni (1995; 2011) who, despite framing their work with a narrative of the risks of dominant liberal individualistic ideas, actually seem to share a lot with the neoliberal ideas they claim to oppose. These similarities include a proposal to limit the welfare state, use of a strong moral discourse, an aversion to regulation of the market and redistribution policies, conditionality, and the backdrop of a perceived 'crisis' (Dean & Melrose, 1999). For example, Selbourne's (1994) 'principle of duty' sees rights as of secondary importance to duties and argues for welfare benefits to be conditional on behaving in a certain way. It is, therefore, necessary to be cautious of seeing 'communitarian' approaches as ideologically opposed to liberal or neoliberal ones, as such discourses can be used for similar ends.

2.4 Critiques and challenges to the idea of social citizenship

Marshall's ideas have been influential, and are frequently reflected in understandings of social citizenship, such as Harrison's (1995) who states that being a citizen means being included in a system of welfare provision and rights that are mediated by the state, and having your needs met through political intervention. However, there have been many criticisms of Marshall's concept of social citizenship, which Revi (2014) usefully divides into two lines of argument: that the ideals are outdated and misguided, or that the analysis was wrong. It is worth briefly highlighting some of these objections in order to examine the usefulness of social citizenship as a theoretical framework for current work, and where it might be lacking. Such criticisms also contribute to shaping current debates around citizenship, welfare and conditionality.

Many people have argued that Marshall's concept of social citizenship is severely limited, as it is based on an outdated, exclusionary, Anglocentric, white, able-bodied, middle-class male model, and therefore is not at all universal, as he claimed. Feminist criticism of his work argues that it denies women substantive citizenship status as they are frequently engaged in unpaid 'caring' work in private rather than paid 'public' work (Lister, 1998; Young, 1989). It has also been problematized in terms of inclusion/exclusion for other groups, such as the disabled (Oliver & Barnes, 2012; Wiggan, 2017), ethnic minorities (Dahrendorf, 1988) and people with a mental health diagnosis (Sayce, 2000). Dwyer (2000) also argues that Marshall's statement that "Inequalities can be tolerated within a fundamentally egalitarian society" (Marshall, 1950/1992, p.44) is evidence that he wrongly assumes a set of universal values shared by everyone in a community.

Lister (1998) argues that this 'false universalism' of social citizenship, while having the intention of being a force for inclusion, actually works to further exclude marginalised groups in practice. Both the liberal and communitarian traditions

construct the citizen as an abstract, disembodied individual, which serves to mask

the degree to which 'otherness' – being female, black, disabled or poor – can

exclude people from enjoying full citizenship (Lister, 1998). Hall and Held (1989)

describe the conflict between the universalism at the heart of the idea of citizenship

and the post-modern privileging of diversity as fundamentally 'irreconcilable'.

However, one response to the problem of universalism has been Young's (1989)

'group rights' argument, which proposed that oppression and marginalisation of

certain groups in a polity can be ameliorated by attending to their specific

differences, by giving self-formed groups the right to generate, comment on and

veto policies that affect them. Examples of this might include land-rights laws for

indigenous populations or reproductive rights for women. She argued that this helps

move towards a universality of citizenship – inclusion and participation for all – by

separating it from another meaning of universality that it sits in tension with – equal

treatment for all (Young, 1989). Highlighting the dilemmatic nature of universality

here is key, as it contributes to the contested nature of citizenship by offering

different and sometimes conflicting ways to understand, talk about and practise

citizenship.

Marshall's (1950/1992) attempt to isolate the social element of citizenship

from its political and economic context has also been criticised, on the grounds that

individuals and society coexist interdependently (Bottomore, 1992; Dwyer, 2000;

Lister, 1998; Oliver & Heater, 1994). As Hooghe and Oser (2017) point out, citizens'

own opinions and actions were given little attention by Marshall, who saw the

development of the welfare state as purely achieved by actions of the state.

Arguments for alternative ideas of citizenship have been proposed, such as

economic citizenship – the rights to work and responsibility to pay tax (Kessler-

Harris, 2003); cultural citizenship, which involves rights related to language and

sense-making (Turner, 1993), biological citizenship (Rose & Novas, 2005) and, in

response to various other contemporary concerns, European, global and ecological citizenship (e.g. Dean, 2014; van Steenburgen, 1994). Such fragmentation carries the danger of citizenship collapsing into a confusion of overlapping strands (Bulmer & Rees, 1996).

Finally, Marshall grounded his theory in the material conditions of society and while this can be seen as a strength, saving it from the realm of the abstract, it can also be seen as a fundamental weakness as the theory may not have sufficient flexibility to cope with the huge social changes that have taken place since the welfare state was created, which are summarised briefly in Section 2.5. For example, when the welfare state in the UK was created, there was the assumption that full employment would continue, and the social security system was based on this belief, as was the theory of social citizenship. However, from the 1970s onwards, major economic changes such as rising unemployment, increasing inflation, more women in the workforce and globalisation led to the abandonment of Keynesian economics in Western industrialised nations (Handler, 2004). There are debates about which factors were most influential in the cutbacks to the British welfare state from the late 1970s onwards, but Huber and Stephens (2001) suggest it was the high rate of unemployment and the accompanying realisation this would be permanent. From this time, then, there has been a growing acceptance that the idea of social citizenship is in crisis (Dean & Melrose, 1999). This has intensified in recent years, and Farnsworth and Irving (2015) suggest that the economic crisis of 2008 onwards has been used by governments, economists, international organisations and other political interests to frame welfare states as unsustainable. Horsfall and Hudson (2017) point out that Cerny's (1990) prediction that welfare states would give way to 'competition states' has not come to pass, but argue that the role of state welfare and social citizenship rights have been fundamentally reconceptualised – a process that the following section examines in more detail. A

more profound departure from social and political citizenship as nationally located is suggested by Rose and Novas's (2005) idea of the 'biological citizen', in which new connections between biology and identity are transcending national boundaries, aided by a global marketplace that encourages the consumption of enhancement technologies and pharmaceuticals.

2.5 Social citizenship and welfare in the UK: 1940s to present day

As we have seen, Marshall's ideas took shape at the beginning of what we now know as the 'welfare state' in the UK, the creation of which was instigated by the Beveridge report of 1942. Between 1944 and 1948 laws were passed to establish free education to age 15, the National Health Service, and national insurance in case of illness or unemployment. These reforms were mirrored by Keynesian economics, a radical new approach that promoted increased state spending as the best way to keep the economy afloat as well as improve conditions for citizens (Revi, 2013).

In the intervening years there has been a huge amount of societal change, and the welfare state as Marshall knew it has irrevocably altered as a result of four decades of neoliberal policies, which have attacked many of the fundamental principles of social citizenship. Many social scientists such as Dwyer (2000; 2010; 2017), Dean (2000), Dean and Melrose (1999), Taylor-Gooby (2000; 2009; 2015), Humpage (2014; 2015) and Wiggan (2012; 2017) have used welfare – specifically the areas of provision, conditionality and membership – as a terrain to explore the differing approaches to social citizenship that have been taken in the post-war years. Here, a brief outline of the recent history of the UK welfare state will be considered in terms of the associated constructions of citizenship rights and responsibilities. As Marshall (1950/1992) stated, there is no universal principle underlying competing claims to welfare as a 'right' or the state's duty to meet such claims. It is in these competing constructions of 'needs' and 'rights' that prevailing ideologies can be identified.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the new Conservative government instigated wide-reaching changes to the UK economy by de-industrialising, shifting production overseas and deregulating the financial industry. Unions were marginalised and demonised and the economy was deregulated to allow for a 'purer' form of market economics. These 'new right' or neoliberal policies led to increased unemployment and a major problem for the welfare state: globalisation led to a swift and ongoing reduction in available jobs, increasing the burden on the welfare state, while simultaneously decreasing the available pool of paid workers who could be taxed to fund it (Taylor-Gooby, 2009). The dominant ideologies accompanying these neoliberal economic policies of the 1980s and 1990s included the Conservative government's construction of the 'active citizen' who is individually and socially responsible, and a general increase in individualism, as illustrated by Norman Tebbit's famous speech at the 1981 Conservative Party Conference: "I grew up in the 30s with an unemployed father. He didn't riot; he got on his bike and looked for work and he kept looking till he found it" (cited in Burke, 2007, p.18). Conditionality around social rights became increasingly important in this era, and the ideas of 'benefits dependency' and the 'underclass' – a term referring to socially excluded citizens – started to grow (Deacon, 1994; 2002; Dean & Taylor-Gooby, 1992).

The 13-year New Labour government that came to power in 1997 ushered in 'Third Way' politics: another radical reformulation of the welfare state that extended the duties of all citizens, not just welfare claimants. Powell (1999) identified the key themes of Third Way politics as: emphasising the centrality of paid work; downplaying Labour's traditional focus on redistribution of income in favour of equality of opportunities; constructing the welfare state as active and preventative; and the balancing of rights with responsibilities. This was heavily influenced by the work of sociologist Anthony Giddens (1999), who outlined his ideas for a 'new capitalism' in *The Third Way,* which included reconstructing the citizen by seeking a

new relationship between the individual and the community in which "no rights without responsibilities" became the "prime motto" (1999, p.66). Rose (2000) argues that the Third Way was not a political program as such, but a new way of visualising political problems that fused a new communitarianism with the language of self-realisation. Citizens were conceptualised as ethical creatures who must engage in self-management to promote collective goals of economic advancement, social stability and happiness through membership of communities – neighbourhoods, subcultures, regions, age groups, lifestyle sectors – which inform the values, aspirations and guidelines to frame individuals' behaviours. Rose (2000) called this new style of governance 'ethopolitics' (p.1399) and argued that it worked through the promotion of particular values and emotions that underpin responsible self-management and relationships with others. Similarly, Clarke (2005) argues that citizens were reframed as "empowered, activated and responsibilised" (p.447) in this era, reflecting the growing shift from the idea that it is the responsibility of government to ensure full employment to the notion that individuals themselves bear the main responsibility to find and keep work. As Tuffin, Morgan, Frewin and Jardine (2000) argue, it is an aim of neoliberalism to individualise risk factors such as illness, poverty and unemployment, and as a result of these changes, poverty and unemployment became more stigmatised (Clarke, 2005; Lister, 2002) and citizens were no longer seen as the bearers of rights but as consumers (Clarke, 2005; Humpage, 2014).

This trend continued apace with the New Conservatism of the Coalition government of 2010, and the current (at the time of writing) Conservative administration. Ginn (2013) notes that while the Coalition government's austerity measures were framed as necessary and as evenly distributed, this was in fact inaccurate as they were more likely to affect women and those on low incomes. Taylor-Gooby's (2015) analysis of the effects of austerity policies distinguishes

between 'new social risk' (NSR) services – those for low-income people such as jobseekers allowance and housing benefit – and 'old social risk' (OSR) services, which incorporate healthcare, pensions, education and disability benefits. He argues that by targeting NSR services for dramatic cuts, despite them costing less (around 5 to 6% of GDP compared to 25% for OSR), the governments' austerity policies have not just disproportionately affected women, children and low-paid people, but also created an increasing divide between provision of OSR and NSR services, with the latter being highly moralised by political and media discourses. Taylor-Gooby (2015) regards NSR as having become central to the debate on the future of the welfare state, as public attitudes towards people claiming unemployment or disability benefit or people on low incomes are increasingly unsympathetic. Brown (2017) notes the rise of the rationale of 'vulnerability' in recent times, arguing that focusing on the 'most vulnerable' leads to intensified competition among the least well off for resources. The key issue becomes who is or is not vulnerable, with those deemed non-vulnerable excluded from help, masking the questioning of how resources and opportunities are distributed across society more generally.

At a political level, this shift can be seen in former Prime Minister David Cameron's 2011 speech introducing the Welfare Reform Bill: "The benefit system has created a benefit culture. It doesn't just allow people to act irresponsibly, but often actively encourages them to do so" (p.1). In this reckoning, the safety net provided for people who are unable to work or find work is reframed as actively *contributing* to unemployment and creating a distinct 'irresponsible' behaviour. The rhetoric around the development and rolling out of Universal Credit, a controversial new benefit system that merges six benefits and tax credits paid to people in or out of work into one monthly payment, has also laid the ground for more punitive conditionality being attached to welfare, stigmatised the receipt of welfare benefits and further distanced the state from the responsibility of ensuring employment

opportunities, by framing unemployment as an individual failing (Wiggan, 2012).

These effects are felt in practical, as well as ideological, terms. Early research on

the impact of Universal Credit (UC) in areas where it has been rolled out suggests it

limits recipients' ability to support themselves, with just 8% of respondents to a

survey saying that their full UC award covered their cost of living, a figure that fell to

5% for the disabled and those in ill health. Furthermore, foodbanks saw a 54%

increase in demand in the 12 months after a rollout of UC, compared to a 13%

increase in areas where UC has been live for three months or less (The Trussell

Trust, 2018). That UC undermines the key marker of social citizenship described by

Marshall (1964) as the right 'to live the life of a civilized being according to the

standards prevailing in the society" (p.72) is clear.

These years of reforms have been theorised by Peck and Tickell (2002) as

two distinct periods of neoliberal policies, the 'destructive' roll-back years (1979 to

1999), where Keynesian social-collectivist institutions were discredited and

destroyed, and the subsequent roll-out period, when neoliberal modes of

governance were constructed and consolidated. Humpage (2014) suggests an

addition to this of the 'normalising' roll-over period of neoliberalism, which resulted

from the financial crash of 2007-2008 in which public attitudes fell into line with

neoliberal agendas in some – but not all – policy areas. The result of these phases

of neoliberalism is that social citizenship rights have become increasingly

conditional on conduct, with paid employment being the key citizenship marker, and

those excluded from membership being constructed as deficient and in need of

rectification (Clarke, 2005; Humpage, 2014; Lister, 2002; Wiggan, 2012; 2017). This

conditionality around welfare is now expanding to encompass disciplinary practices

aimed at modifying psychological properties such as attitudes and attributes (e.g.

Friedli & Stearn, 2015). This is also reflected in recent educational policy in the UK,

which has been characterised by discourses around the need to encourage

particular character traits in young people, notably resilience, 'grit', optimism and entrepreneurship. These developments in education and welfare policy have been termed the "Turn to Character" by Bull and Allen (2018, p. 392), who situate it in the broader psychological turn within neoliberalism. The functions of this discourse will be further explored in Section 2.9.

2.6 Empirical approaches to social citizenship in the social sciences

Social citizenship has been the subject of a solid body of research within sociology, political science and social policy (For overviews see Dean & Melrose, 1999; Dwyer, 2010; Humpage, 2014; Horsfall & Hudson, 2017). Much of this research has focused on tracking public attitudes about welfare provision and conditionality using quantitative data derived from questionnaires. However, this approach arguably loses a lot of the inherent complexity and richness of ideas about citizenship, and it is unlikely that examining citizenship in this way can deal adequately with the complex nature of how individuals and the state interact. For example, Humpage's (2014) investigation of the degree to which attitudes reflect neoliberal practices, policies and discourses used data from public attitude surveys and case studies from different Western countries. A key strength of this work is that, by looking at political processes over time, gradual shifts and trends can be identified. For example, while early neoliberal reforms generally created an outcry and led to policy reversals in some areas, Humpage (2014) found that this public resistance lessened in the late 2000s. Her conclusion is that neoliberalism *has* shaped social values and that, in certain policy areas, the public have 'rolled over' and accepted its central tenets. Attitudes to social security and, to a lesser extent, redistribution have hardened over time in all the countries she researched, which she contrasts with the varying attitudes to universalism in healthcare, attributing this to differing policies, economic conditions and public discourses between countries. For example, opinion polls from the UK suggested strong support for free, non-conditional healthcare, as

opposed to Australia, where – she argues – a familiarity with paying for healthcare has helped pave the way for a 'rolling over' of attitudes.

Seemingly contradicting this idea of a 'rolling over' of public attitudes are findings from Hooghe and Oser's (2018) survey of different nationalities' attitudes, undertaken with the explicit aim of investigating if citizens still actually expect social citizenship rights to be guaranteed by their political systems, given the far-reaching changes to welfare rights in recent years. They analysed democratic ideals reported in the 2012 European Social Survey (ESS), finding that 65% of European citizens attributed similar levels of importance to social and political dimensions of citizenship, noting that the ESS questions did not allow for an examination of civil rights. A further 20% reported social ideals, such as economic equality among citizens, as more important, compared to 16% who emphasised political ideals as most important. Interestingly, while the authors expected that those who emphasised social rights would be more likely to object to austerity policies, they found no ideological divide, with right-wing citizens also foregrounding social rights as important.

Hooghe and Oser (2018) acknowledge that using data from public attitude surveys is limiting – for one thing, they do not allow for an examination of how such ideas developed. Their data came from questionnaires where people were asked to agree or disagree with statements such as "People who are unemployed should have to work for their benefits" (Humpage, 2015) or answer on a scale of 0-10 questions like "Please tell me how important you think it is for democracy in general that the government protects all citizens against poverty" (Hooghe & Oser, 2018). It is never known how respondents have interpreted the questions, or in what context they have replied. The well-documented phenomenon of demand characteristics may be at play here – the tendency of participants to give answers they perceive to be desired by the researcher. As Cromby (2011) among others has argued, self-

report measures are inadequate for gauging the complexities of 'attitudes' or affective states as they can end up modelling rather than measuring, while simultaneously reifying the idea of an inner unitary 'attitude'. Also, whereas a kneejerk 'agree' to the statement that people should have to work for their benefits might be elicited through a five-minute engagement with a questionnaire, an in-depth interview would generate far richer data, including crucial information such as under what circumstances people think benefits claimants should have to work, what kind of work might be appropriate, and what kind of benefits claimant this policy should be applied to and why. It could well be that a participant, on being asked to expand on an answer, might contradict themselves and even end up disagreeing with their original assessment (see Gibson, 2011, for such an example). Humpage (2014) acknowledges that the attitudes she uses for analysis are shifting, incomplete and sometimes contradictory. However, by translating the ever-changing, dilemmatic way we think and talk into coded representations of 'attitudes', not only is much complexity lost, but the idea of an 'attitude' as a fixed, measurable entity, and an individual as a rational subject who uses language merely to reflect and report on an inner state is reinforced.

There have also been attempts in sociology and social policy to move beyond the reliance on quantitative data from surveys and examine in more depth how people talk about and understand citizenship rights and responsibilities. Two qualitative studies worth mentioning are those by Dwyer (2000) and Dean and Melrose (1999), which interviewed British people about welfare – specifically issues around conditionality and membership. Among the findings in both studies were that most participants said 'citizenship' as a concept meant little or nothing to them, but that when talking about 'good' and 'bad' citizens, it became clear that participants attached importance to social citizenship rights and responsibilities, which Dean and Melrose (1999) took as evidence of a rejection of the neoliberal idea that social

rights are categorically different to political and civil ones.

Dwyer (2000) conducted focus groups with 69 welfare recipients in Bradford, finding that half of them reported feeling stigmatised by and resentful of the 'scrounger' tag. Participants talked about both rights and responsibilities when it came to welfare, sometimes in contradictory ways, and Dwyer concluded that the degree to which they accepted the principle of conditionality was dependent on the context – greater conditionality was generally attached to housing and little or none to healthcare, for example. This seems to reflect Humpage's (2014) findings that certain aspects of the welfare package are more often seen as rights than others, roughly breaking down into Taylor-Gooby's (2015) division between OSR and NSR. Dean and Melrose's (1999) research also found that people spoke in shifting and contradictory ways about welfare rights and responsibilities. An advantage of their data was that they had interviewed a wide selection of people about poverty and welfare. While it is important to examine benefits recipients' understandings of conditionality and membership, to make them the sole focus of research risks making the assumption that they are somehow different from the society that excludes them (Lister, 1998). Furthermore, as Dean and Melrose (1999) among others point out, poverty is frequently treated as something that affects 'other people' even by people who are themselves poor. Dean and Melrose draw on Foucault's (1975) idea of the 'disciplinary society' to argue that measures to discipline the poor are a symbolic presence for all citizens, many of whom live with the possibility of being poor. It therefore makes sense to sample a wider selection of people in terms of socio-economic status and social class for their views on welfare to allow an exploration of how everyday ideas about citizenship may relate to understandings of poverty and wealth. However, the analytical assumptions and conclusions reached by such sociological and social policy research are open to question in terms of how they interpret the conflicting discourses of citizenship

drawn on by participants. Gibson (2011) argues that important aspects of "human discursive consciousness" (p.451) are overlooked by merely observing that participants make contradictory statements, as Dean and Melrose (1999) and Dean (2004) do, or by seeing it as confusion that masks underlying attitudinal differences that are relatively fixed, as Dean (2000) seems to. This idea will be examined further in the next section, and a new perspective from critical discursive psychology offered.

Finally, it is worth commenting on an apparent lack of more recent qualitative empirical work in the social sciences on social citizenship, especially since the substantial and ongoing overhaul of welfare instigated in 2010. Given the fast-moving changes in 'attitudes' found in recent sociological and social policy research this is a notable gap and an important area for further research.

2.7 Discourses of citizenship

As discussed above, the research by Dwyer (2000), Humpage (2014; 2015), Dean and Melrose (1999) and Dean (2004) on social citizenship includes considerations of discourses of citizenship as a central focus. Tileagă (2013) comments on the mutual relationship between politics and discourse, arguing that discursive practices frame the 'realities' of how people, society and politics are understood. As such, identifying the rhetorical conditions in which politics are performed on an everyday basis as well as in elite political language, facilitates engagement with the complex and dynamic nature of social citizenship.

When looking at discourses of social citizenship, one fruitful area of research is to look at policy documents. Wiggan's (2012) discourse analysis of the 2010 Green and White Papers on welfare reform found three linked themes: of 'worklessness', which, he argues, further serves to pathologise a lack of paid employment through unemployment or disability as both an individual failing and a societal phenomenon to be addressed; of a 'culture of dependency' preventing

people from taking up available work; and of the rationality and necessity for punitive measures to reform welfare. While Wiggan (2012) acknowledges that the documents do not entirely gloss over the institutional and financial barriers faced by people living on benefits and low incomes, he makes a strong case that these dominant discourses serve to make poverty the fault of those suffering it due to their unacceptable choices and behaviours. This piece of work is useful in tracing the gradual shift of responsibility from state to individual, especially when considered alongside analyses of previous policy documents from earlier administrations.

Taylor (2018) points out that contemporary uses of character discourses in education and employment policy contain traces of those used in the late 19th-century. In particular, a concern with improving human capital, the foregrounding of the importance of a strong work ethic and parental responsibility to explain outcomes such as social mobility, and the necessity to foster "performance virtues" (p. 409) such as perseverance, resilience and future-mindedness. By merging a social conservatism – evidenced by the valorisation of the heteronormative family unit – with the neoliberal injunction to be a free, enterprising individual in this way, he argues that character education is form of "cruel optimism" (Berlant, 2011) in that it encourages working class children and adults to identify habits, personality and attitudes as the barriers to upward mobility, rather than deeper structural inequalities.

Of course, public awareness of policy practices and discourses is strongly influenced by the media, and so looking at media discourses is also essential. Mulheirn (2013) writes of the reinforcement of blaming rhetoric in the frequent media depictions of benefit 'scroungers' saying that, although this group of people are frequently represented as lazy and dependent, in actuality 76 per cent of claimants spent more than three out of the previous four years off benefits – a statistic entirely overlooked by the media. Jensen and Tyler (2015) argue that anti-welfare views are encouraged not just through policy and political discourses, but through cultural

ones. They use the example of the Mick Philpott case, a man who was jailed for the murder of his six children in a house fire, which, although described as an act of domestic abuse by the judge, was translated into a damnation of the British benefits system by much of the UK press, which published exaggerated figures of how much income the family received in benefits. The frequency of this type of reporting, they argue, amounts to a deliberate crafting of "misperceptions" (Jenson & Tyler, 2015, p. 486) about welfare that add to and even create new common-sense neoliberal narratives.

In terms of everyday discourses of citizenship, Dean's (2004) taxonomy of moral repertoires is an influential idea. He argues that the practice of citizenship, which calls on conflicting political and philosophical traditions, translates to competing moral repertoires in modern discourse. He identified four main repertoires: the entrepreneurial, reformist, survivalist and conformist, with the former being overwhelmingly dominant. This has the associated ideas of welfare as being an opportunity for all, and responsibility as a civic duty – to carry out, or refrain from certain actions to fulfil societal expectations, in an individualised, self-regulatory way.

However, although Dean (2004), like Dwyer (2000) and Humpage (2015), acknowledges that attitudes are complex and contradictory, they all fail to follow up on this. Instead, their work seems to theorise individuals as rational actors with internal consistency of mind, who take up or resist one of a number of available discourses (Gibson, 2011). When people draw on competing ideological themes it is taken as an indication of confusion and contradiction, rather than of the inherently dilemmatic nature of citizenship ideology. So whereas Dwyer and Dean tend to look for a dominant repertoire – for example, libertarian or communitarian – in participants' talk; the small amount of discursive psychological work on citizenship treats this discourse as situated social action, reflecting that we talk and think by drawing on competing ideologies of citizenship (Condor & Gibson, 2007; Gibson,

2009; 2011). This advances our understanding by looking at what people are *doing* when they use conflicting ideologies of citizenship, such as the negotiation of one's own identity as a 'good' or 'successful' citizen as opposed to 'bad' or 'failing', and the construction of such identities for others (Clarke, 2005; McAvoy, 2009; Walkerdine, 2003). To understand the practices and implications of constructing such identities around citizenship, a social constructionist view of the subject is necessary, as one that is complex, dynamic, varied and context-bound, and in which people have a stake (e.g. Billig et al., 1988; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; 1998; Shotter, 1993).

Billig et al.'s approach (1988), which embraces ideological dilemmas as crucial to human thought and language, offers a useful framework to explore social citizenship. This approach doesn't take individual motivations or cognitions as its starting point, but is grounded in the assumption that knowledge is socially shared. It distinguishes between ideology as formal philosophy, and lived ideology – the common-sense understandings and actions of everyday people. Whereas most conventional understandings of ideology are that it is non-dilemmatic, Billig et al. contest this, arguing that ideologies and philosophical traditions are translated into everyday ideas with dilemmatic natures. This is not a one-way street, however, with popular, everyday language influencing that at the intellectual level. In this understanding, our thoughts and actions are shaped by ideology but not blindly beholden to it. Philosophical tensions, such as the liberal-communitarian debate around social citizenship, are reproduced in everyday discourse, not as positions to be occupied, but as dilemmas that give rise to arguments and discussion (Billig et al., 1988). A social psychological approach that pays attention to everyday practices and talk could therefore make a unique contribution to the theoretical and empirical work on social citizenship. However, there is currently only a small amount of work on social citizenship within the discipline (Gibson, Crossland & Hamilton, 2017), which is outlined in the next section.

2.8 Social psychological approaches to social citizenship

Before moving on to consider specific work on social citizenship, it is worth looking at the trends of work on citizenship more broadly in psychology, to examine what questions are – and aren't – being asked. The bulk of the psychological research on citizenship has come from organisational psychology, which generally has the aim of investigating how to foster 'good citizenship' in workers. While Smith (2002) correctly suggests this serves to abstract citizenship from its social and philosophical roots, and Condor (2011) purposefully excluded it from her overview of psychological research on citizenship, it is arguably worthy of more detailed critical attention. As Stevenson et al. (2015) among others (e.g. Clarke, 2005; Wiggan, 2012) point out, there is a heavy focus on the centrality of work in current understandings of citizenship, and organisational psychology has had a considerable impact on welfare policy. More recently, it has also informed 'behavioural change' initiatives used by government social service contractors (Friedli & Stearn, 2015; Jones, Whitehead & Pykett, 2011). This influence is lent an authoritative air thanks to the 'scientific' rhetoric of the 'findings' used (Stenner & Taylor, 2008).

One potential danger of this type of research in organisational psychology is that findings may be used to further restrict workers' rights and promote a neoliberal agenda. Just as the 'new communitarian' approaches of Etzioni (1995; 2011) and Selbourne (1994) work to reinforce a traditional, conservative, family-centred status quo, it is arguable that talking of 'good citizenship' and 'community' in the workforce may have a similar effect of silencing dissent and harnessing people to the company's interests, while diminishing their workplace rights. For example, Marwick's (2013) research on technology companies found that the widespread rhetoric of creating a communal, participatory culture is rarely matched by the reality, where companies hire a succession of freelance workers, who are responsible for keeping their own skillsets up to date. The companies thus absolve

themselves from having to provide employment benefits such as holiday or sick pay and any responsibility to train staff. It is tempting to see this work culture mirrored in the way un- or underemployed people are increasingly conceptualised in the UK: as active, responsible agents operating within a passive, neutral system.

In social psychology, there is a small but growing engagement with citizenship, much of it focused on issues around immigration, exclusionary practices, intercultural relations and identity formation (for overviews, see Andreouli, 2019; Condor, 2011; Stevenson, Dixon, Hopkins, & Luyt, 2015; Xenitidou & Sapountzis, 2018). However, as we have seen, there is barely any work on social citizenship. Following Condor (2011) who found only 267 results when she used the search term 'citizenship' in the psycINFO database, a similar search was made in early 2016 with the search term 'social citizenship' yielding just 11 articles on the psycINFO database in the last 15 years. Repeating this exercise in early 2019 elicited only five additional results.

One small strand of research that has recently emerged involves using the concept of social citizenship in the new 'dementia-friendly communities' agenda. Bartlett (2016) argues that the new understanding of citizenship as playing out in everyday spaces and practices allows for a more in-depth consideration of how social citizenship rights may be realised for people with dementia. Silverman's (2019) participatory research with carers of dementia sufferers suggests that neighbourhood walks help the practice and maintain their social citizenship through connecting with themselves and their built environment. This reflects earlier research by Phinney et al. (2016) who found that staying active through walks helped dementia sufferers themselves claim a sense of belonging and agency. However, this work is informed by Bartlett and O'Connor's (2010) model of social citizenship which involves "engaging in opportunities for growth, maintaining identity, having a sense of purpose, participating in the world as a social agent,

retaining a sense of community, and enjoying freedom from discrimination"
(Silverman, 2019, p. 639). As such, while there are similarities with Marshall's
model, this new iteration of social citizenship makes no mention of state or
institutional responsibilities, although this is implicated in the final item. Instead,
these new social citizenship rights seem to have a distinctly neoliberal hue in that
they enable individual entrepreneurial activity.

This malleability of the meaning of social citizenship is itself an interesting
development and can perhaps be partially explained by a lack of familiarity and
therefore engagement with social citizenship in psychological research. One
potential reason for this gap in the literature could be the academic division between
sociology and psychology that arose in the early 20th century, which Stenner and
Taylor (2008) argue resulted in sociology focusing on the social project of welfare,
and psychology on individual 'wellbeing'. They call instead for a psychosocial
approach to welfare that merges the two, as the welfare state plays a fundamental
role in constructing human subjectivity, and wellbeing cannot be fully considered
outside the context of welfare. This is a compelling argument, and I would suggest
that, within social psychology, a critical discursive perspective is well placed to
follow through the implications of such a psychosocial approach. As Wetherell
(1996b) points out, it makes little sense to theorise the individual outside of the
social: "In talking, people are constituting their social realities and collective cultures,
manufacturing and constructing their lives, and are themselves manufactured as
personalities and subjects in the process" (p.281).

Only a few studies in the critical discursive psychological literature have
directly addressed social citizenship. Gibson, Crossland and Hamilton (2017) focus
on the intersection of social citizenship and class with their analysis of online
comments about immigration, in which issues around welfare were often invoked. A
repertoire of 'effortfulness' was frequently used to negotiate debates about who was
or wasn't entitled to the status of full, competent citizen. Among the findings, the

researchers identified a lay version of the 'dependency culture' argument (Dean & Taylor-Gooby, 1992; Wiggan, 2012) whereby people used the psychological constructs of laziness and unreliability to position a sub-group of British people as lacking the necessary psychological or moral resources in comparison to 'hard-working' immigrants. This builds on earlier work by Gibson (2009; 2011) who found 'effortfulness' to be frequently used as a condition for the status of citizen when people were grappling with the dilemmatic tensions between welfare as a citizenship right, and the responsibility to contribute to society, reflecting the liberal-communitarian ideological clash inherent in citizenship.

Goodman and Carr's (2017) analysis of the use of Just World arguments in two televised debates on UK benefit claimants also found that people drew on notions of effortfulness to make sense of welfare payments. They showed how participants were able to draw on opposing ideas simultaneously, by using the Just World argument to position benefits claimants as personally responsible for their lack of a job, while employing an argument that the world was unjust to position 'effortful' workers as having to unfairly pay for this.

Andreouli and Dashtipour's (2014) analysis of citizenship officers' talk also found contrasting ideas being drawn upon simultaneously. Specifically, participants could emphasise fairness for UK inhabitants on one hand, versus the moral imperative to show mercy to asylum seekers on the other. These dilemmas were negotiated with a discourse of 'earned' citizenship – the people who were deemed deserving "put back into society" (p. 106) through economic work and by fulfilling the moral obligation to be 'proud' of their new British citizenship. These findings underline how assumptions about the psychological, as well as being used by policymakers, are also drawn on to do discursive work in everyday talk. They also suggest that it may be simplistic to regard nationhood as the foremost condition for social citizenship rights (Gibson, Crossland & Hamilton, 2017).

Another piece of critical discursive psychological work that is of interest is McAvoy's (2009) analysis of how middle-aged British women constructed notions of success and failure. She found that participants also formed psychologised accounts when talking about success, with the ideas of making good choices, achieving work-life balance and security being frequently drawn on to demonstrate good, responsible citizenship. Furthermore, an account of "being happy" was often used to navigate moments when a successful identity was threatened, such as in accounts of being 'just' a home-maker and not a wage earner. She argues that this high discursive value of happiness demonstrates how accepted it has become that individual happiness is unquestionably a good thing and a fundamental requirement of successful neoliberal citizenship.

This body of research usefully demonstrates that citizenship identities are fluid, context-dependent and, as theorised by Billig et al. (1988), associated with contrasting ideologies. By looking at how people negotiate, establish and contest rights and duties, a discursive approach enables a focus on what is achieved at an individual, relational and institutional level when ideas such as 'deserving' and 'undeserving'; 'responsible' and 'failing' are used (McAvoy, 2009). This helps to shift the focus away from individualised notions of 'attitudes' and 'behaviours' to investigate structural limitations that may be currently preventing us thinking or talking about social citizenship in different terms (Condor, 2011). As we have seen, the dominant discourses in UK society around social citizenship centre on the idea of the 'responsible' or 'effortful' individual, who is able to work to support themselves. This has the effect of transforming social problems such as underemployment, unemployment, debt, insufficient wages and the rising cost of living into issues of individual self-care, with people who are under- or unemployed being blamed for their situation. Furthermore, a critical discursive approach also allows for an exploration of how subjectivities are constructed – how we understand ourselves as individuals – which, again, has an important contribution to make when

looking at citizenship, and which we will go on to consider in the next section on governmentality.

2.9 Governmentality and social citizenship

The way we conceptualise the 'self' varies between cultures and over time, and Foucault (1976) accounts for this variation by showing how practices of the self are intimately tied to structures of power. His notion of governmentality refers to how our social and subjective selves are shaped to suit the projects of market economies, through operating within institutional discourses that construct particular 'truths' (Burchell, Gordon & Miller, 1991). He rejected the idea that power simply flows from the top down to repress or deny subjectivity, seeing it instead as circulating through all social relations and practices, working *through* subjectivity, or our idea of our self. Discourses, then, can also be potential sites for argument, resistance and alternative conceptions of 'reality' (Foucault, 1984). Billig (1991) and Condor (2011) emphasise this point more strongly, asserting that, far from being ideological dupes, people are able to wrestle with the dilemmas conferred by competing ideologies – indeed, to do so is a fundamental part of human thinking.

As we have seen, there is now a prevailing neoliberal vocabulary in which the individual is morally obliged to draw from the resources of the self, rather than the group or state, with terms such as autonomy, choice, responsibility and enterprise given a high political value (Andrade, 2014; Foucault, 1973; 1976; Miller, 1986; Rose, 1996). Rose (1996) argued that social psychology, with its post-war projects of conceptualising and measuring attitudes and behaviours has been instrumental in creating this new image of subjectivity, and that the 'psy-complex', a body of knowledge and techniques from psychology, psychiatry and psychotherapy (Rose, 1996; 1999; Miller & Rose, 2001), is an individualising discourse that can be directly linked to the agenda of neoliberal governmentality:

The novel forms of government being invented in so many 'postwelfare'

nations at the close of the twentieth century have come to depend, perhaps

as never before, upon instrumentalising the capacities and properties of 'the

subjects of government', and therefore cannot be understood without

addressing these new ways of understanding and acting upon ourselves and

others as selves "free to choose" (Rose, 1996, p. 13)

2.9.1 The role of positive psychology in welfare initiatives

Positive psychology, a recent branch of the discipline initiated in the late 1990s,

aims to investigate what contributes to emotional and psychological wellbeing.

McDonald and O'Callaghan (2008) argue that positive psychology is increasingly

being used as a tool to steer people towards adopting neoliberal values by placing a

moral burden on them to do so. They note the founders of positive psychology,

Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihályi (2000) talking about its aims: "At the

group level, [positive psychology] is about the civic virtues and the institutions that

move individuals toward better citizenship: responsibility, nurturance, altruism,

civility, moderation, tolerance, and work ethic" (p.5). There are notable absences in

this depiction of "better citizenship": solidarity, activism, debate, a commitment to

social justice, which could all be seen as valuable civic virtues too.

This selectivity surrounding the characteristics of 'good' citizenship is also

highlighted by Cromby and Willis (2014), whose research suggests that a moral

burden to adopt certain attributes is becoming institutionally reinforced for some

members of the population. They found that an obligatory new test to be taken by

benefit claimants, based on the Values in Action (VIA) signature strengths test

(Peterson, Park & Seligman, 2005) developed by prominent positive psychologists,

was deeply problematic and unethical. They completed the test themselves 10

times, strategically giving vastly different answers, yet found a surprising uniformity

to the 'values' they were credited with. They argue that this unhelpfully nudges

welfare claimants into adopting talents or attitudes that conform to neoliberal values, such as flexibility, independence, enterprise, competitiveness, dynamism and individuality, while ignoring experience, knowledge and transferable skills – which are far more relevant for employment (Cromby & Willis, 2014).

The use of positive psychological values and measures to outline obligatory ways of being has also been highlighted by Friedli and Stearn (2015). Their research documents what they call the "psycho-compulsion" (2015, p. 40) in current workfare practices used by private companies such as Ingeus, A4e and G4S, which organise work placements and employment services on behalf of the government. These involve courses such as Ingeus's 'Healthy Attitudes for Living' and the use of 'therapy discourse' and characteristics from positive psychology as work-related requirements for claimants to be measured against. This, they argue, means "the duties of citizenship are expanded to include enforced rational self-governance so that liberal subjects' capabilities, inclinations and desires are in accord with… the values of the labour market" (2015, p. 42). This has the simultaneous effect of reframing unemployment as a psychological failure and obscuring alternative discourses of solidarity or interdependency.

The supposed psychological deficiencies of benefits claimants have also recently been written about by Perkins (2015), who controversially proposed that long-term unemployment causes epigenetic changes leading to "employment-resistant personalities", typified by low conscientiousness and agreeableness. While there is no room for a full critique of this idea here (though see Lambert, 2016; Walker, Speed & Taggart, 2018), it is notable – and worrying – for a number of reasons. The use of an epigenetic 'explanation' and scientific language further reifies the idea of 'personality' as a fixed, measurable entity, with more- and less-desirable versions. It also lends support to the rhetoric of the current UK government by positioning benefits-claimants as the hapless victims of a

supposedly generous welfare system rather than considering the effects of neoliberal economics on employment practices in the UK. The effects of the social processes that shape our understandings, actions and opportunities, and how we understand and interpret those of others are invisible, and instead biological processes are foregrounded as the best way to understand the intergenerationality of poverty.

As Dean and Melrose (1999) suggest, modern welfare systems have not failed but "succeeded in creating poverty as a manageable and less explosive form of social deprivation" (p.26). 'The poor', they argue are not an excluded minority but a closely regulated group. This regulation seems now to extend to their psychological selves, which according to Perkins (2015) can be measured and found biologically deficient, and which need 'working on' to demonstrate the appropriate mindset for finding and maintaining work (Friedli & Stearn, 2015).

2.9.2 The 'turn to character' in education

Billig (2005) notes the social context of this increased use of psychological themes in government policy. He argues that we live in a state of constant change with high levels of insecurity in terms of our social and work identities – we are less constrained by norms of behaviour based on gender or class, and the notion of a secure job for life is largely obsolete. We need, therefore, to constantly recreate our own identities in a way previous generations have not, and the creation of a positive self becomes a key target – and an individualised one: "The positive mind-set is not directed to social change but to inner change. To be positive, the individual has to learn to adapt positively to life's negatives" (Billig, 2005, p. 32).

This idea can be clearly seen in British educational policy, where the vocabulary of positive psychology has also taken hold. In 2014, it was announced by the former Secretary of State for Education, Nicky Morgan, that teaching

'character' in schools is of equal importance as getting good grades (Morrin, 2018).

A recent white paper, Education Excellence Everywhere (2016) transforms this

relationship into a causal one, with the acquisition of particular character traits

predicting "academic success":

> A 21st century education should prepare children for adult life by instilling
>
> the character traits and fundamental British values that will help them
>
> succeed: being resilient and knowing how to persevere, how to bounce back
>
> if faced with failure, and how to collaborate with others at work and in their
>
> private lives. These traits not only open doors to employment and social
>
> opportunities but underpin academic success, happiness and wellbeing
>
> (Department for Education, 2016, p.9).

There is a clear linking here between happiness and citizenship. Certain

states and traits are put forward as being associated with success and wellbeing,

and it is strongly implied that to fail to achieve such a culturally approved mindset, is

to risk failure as a citizen.

A recent special section of *Sociological Research Online* focuses on this

Turn to Character (Bull & Allen, 2018) in educational policy, political and cultural life

in the UK, problematising the growing use of positive psychology agendas and

resilience frameworks. Burman (2018) analysed the UK government's 2014

Character and Resilience Manifesto, written to inform education and social care

policy strategy. She identified various ways in which the document's claims were

legitimised, including the use of neuroscientific claims and quotes from 'ordinary

people' to justify the proffered policy positions. Of particular interest to this thesis is

her identification of the way emotions are made to disappear in the text, through

their reconfiguration into "non-cognitive skills" such as "motivation, perseverance

and self-control", "social intelligence" or "psychological outcomes" (cited in Burman,

2018, p. 426). This works both to suggest a thinking vs. not thinking binary, with the latter inferred to be compliant behaviour, and also to make 'bad' emotions such as anger, fear or anxiety a notable absence. Burman builds on work by Illouz (2007; 2008) and Hochschild (1994; 2012) that suggests stereotypically feminine, relationship-building emotions are central to modern, knowledge-based economies, to argue that these are now being "hardened up" through reference to "mental toughness, application and self-control" (p. 427). She argues this reimposes a gendered hierarchy of emotions and facilitates the disappearance of relational, interactional emotions. These repertoires work to underpin a refocus from the problem of inequality to one of "social immobility' in the document, with its associations of stubborn refusal to change reinforcing the suggestion that the problem is one of lack of individual application (Burman, 2018).

Burman's research is usefully complemented by Morrin's (2018) ethnographic study of what 'character education' actually looks like in practice in a Northern Academy. She points out that, although the Character initiative was officially decommissioned in late 2017, these agendas can linger on in British schools – including the one she spent 10 months observing. She outlined how the school operationalised 'character' through its official "Badges of entrepreneurship" (p.465) scheme, an incentive-based program in which children earn "entrepreneurial currency" if they have displayed the prescribed attributes (e.g. "high energy levels, self-belief" (p. 465) for the "passion" badge). She then considered how teachers implemented the badge scheme, noting that while they all saw some value in it, there was variation in how they reproduced it in their lessons. While many considered it useful for children's future working life, others contested its usefulness for 'all' students, while the creative art department worked towards resisting it in favour of teaching critical thinking, and only used the Badge scheme strategically to get their alternative practices signed off. Morrin (2018) notes that agendas based

around fostering 'character' are disembodied in that they never consider how a person's cognitive capacities may be connected to their material conditions and affective experiences. As a result, despite subtle resistance among some of the teaching staff, the school ignores or downplays how structural and material resources are unequally available to students, often based on inequalities along race, gender and class lines (Morrin, 2018).

2.9.3 The role of self-help literature

It is not just closely controlled groups like benefits claimants and schoolchildren who are targeted with injunctions to work on their positivity, gratitude, optimism and resilience. These terms and traits have also emerged more widely in popular culture and media as desirable and valued aims, particularly in magazines, reality TV shows, social media culture and self-help literature. Gill and Orgad (2018) argue that these regulatory discourses around resilience – the ability to bounce back from negative events through a positive, adaptable mindset – are particularly aimed at middle-class women who possess the economic material and psychological resources deemed necessary to achieve it. Their analysis of women's magazines, self-help books and mobile apps found patterned ways in which resilience was operationalised as specific attitudes and feelings, which they connect to the 'happiness industry' (Davies, 2015) and affective governance (Isin, 2014). As they point out, while the call to be resilient is an imposed one, it is also voluntary and 'freely' chosen, with women buying the magazines, books and apps in high volumes. Gill and Orgad (2018) note how a strong emphasis on ideas of elasticity, affirmation and inspiration, often reinforced with pictures of nature – sunsets, waterfalls – and a vague sense of rebellion, works to form an idealised subject. However, without a political or social cause, this works as a kind of "magical thinking" (p. 13) that outlaws negative emotions in lives that are often marked by precarity and injustice.

In their review of analyses of self-help literature, Riley, Evans, Anderson and Robson (2019) note that while these texts are differentially informed by various psychological frameworks – from humanistic to evolutionary, cognitive behavioural therapy and even neuropsychology – the ability to use psychological language to understand oneself has become a central requirement for neoliberal subjecthood. In this way, everyday life is politicised, with citizens being expected to take personal responsibility for more aspects of their lives as the state involves itself less with their welfare (Andreouli, 2019; Gill & Orgad, 2018). Further research that captures how this is received, resisted or otherwise acted on at the everyday level, is of great importance. As McAvoy (2009) pointed out, there is little work that explores how the overarching narratives of individualism and neoliberalism that shape ideas of subjectivity, citizenship, welfare and conditionality might appear in everyday discourse, and what the implications of this are for how we make sense of ourselves and others. Ten years on, the situation is not much changed, and I intend to help bridge this gap by looking at how neoliberal ideology may manifest in the talk of ordinary people, and what actions, understandings and explanations these can help facilitate – or hinder.

It is at this, under-explored, level of "lived" citizenship in the field of everyday life that my thesis is situated in, and as such, a close attention to what is invoked as "common sense" is crucial. As Andreouli (2019) explains, "The politics of everyday common-sense are about the discursive struggles over who has the power to institute meaning over others" (p. 7). Following Billig et al. (1988), Wetherell (1998) and Condor and Gibson (2007) I intend to examine the rhetorical use of common-sense in everyday interactions, as well as how it is informed by cultural-ideological traditions, such as a communitarian ideal of social responsibility, versus a neoliberal one of individual enterprise.

2.10 Concluding remarks

To conclude, social citizenship, first theorised by TH Marshall in 1949, is a highly contested idea, and has been subject to a number of challenges on both a theoretical and practical basis. As an ideal type, Bode (2008) describes it as "a set of institutionalised ties between members of a (political) collectivity that are grounded in common rights and duties, with the former being a prerequisite to the fulfilment of the latter" (p193). However, due to the gradual erosion of rights, especially in the area of what Taylor-Gooby (2015) calls new social risks (welfare and tax credits for low-wage workers), this idea is challenged. In fact, increasingly, duties are becoming a prerequisite for status, with paid work being the prime condition for citizenship. Here, I have argued that recent welfare policy changes that impose sanctions for certain behaviours and that make demands on people to adopt particular attitudes and characteristics take this conditionality further than ever before in the history of the British welfare state, into the realm of the psychological. Furthermore, the influence of ideas from positive psychology have entered the cultural lexicon, informing day-to-day ideas about desirable attitudes and behaviours to face the demands of early 21st century life.

Rather than see the recent and ongoing wide-scale restructuring of the welfare state as a death knell for the idea of social citizenship, many social scientists argue for its continued relevance and importance as it supplies a benchmark against which to measure the relative statuses of groups and individuals, and lets us explore social divisions in a way that factors in other complex dimensions such as gender, class, disability and race (Dean, 2004; Dwyer, 2010, 2017). Here, I have discussed a number of theoretical and empirical approaches to social citizenship, many of which point to the changing nature of how it is conceptualised and acted on at an institutional and everyday level. Following Andreouli (2019) and Gibson (2011), however, I have argued that the way the social

actor is theorised in such sociological and social policy research may be problematic. By treating contradictions and complexity in the way people talk about citizenship, welfare and conditionality as problems to be solved, such research reifies the dominant, common-sense individualist ideology of our time that attitudes and behaviours are tangible entities resulting from an internal cognitive-affective state, which can be measured, worked upon and reformed (Rose, 1996).

A psychosocial, critical discursive approach sees such contradictions as the inevitable consequence of the dilemmatic way we think and talk by drawing on competing ideologies, such as liberal versus communitarian accounts of citizenship, or individual versus social explanations of poverty or wellbeing. Rather than approaching contradictions as a problem for the analyst, they are seen as a problem for the participant, and the way they resolve it, to what ends and in what contexts, becomes the focus of research (Gibson, 2011). As Wetherell (1996b) points out, a critical discursive approach is also well suited to investigate the processes of categorisation, identity formation, movements for social change and the operation of power, all of which are fundamental to the notion of social citizenship, and which play out on a mundane basis in common-sense formulations and everyday habits. The small amount of discursive psychological research on social citizenship is an important addition to the literature, allowing us to investigate how ideological assumptions regarding entitlement to welfare and its attendant conditionality may be reinforced. The use of psychological terms such as 'effort' (Gibson, 2009; 2011) 'pride' (Andreouli & Dashtipour, 2014) and 'resilience' (Gill & Orgad, 2018), and the mobilisation of discourses of choice (McAvoy, 2009) indicate a common-sense idea of the individual as operating autonomously in a social system, and serves to promote an individualistic understanding of social problems such as unemployment and poverty.

However, despite the growing body of scholarship on governmentality and the small amount of social psychological work on social citizenship, there has been no explicit link made between the two that investigates how our understandings of social citizenship rights and responsibilities may be shaped by current ideas about the 'ideal' self and the psychological properties that make someone a good or successful member of society. To that end, while my research does not directly investigate 'social citizenship' in terms of asking people about what they perceive as legitimate rights and responsibilities around social welfare, I take up the subject of wellbeing – and more specifically happiness – to investigate how the influence of positive psychology and the creeping rhetoric around happiness and resilience in British social policy and cultural life may be shaping everyday subjectivities, understandings and practices. This enquiry also builds on the body of critical work concerning the turn to happiness in Western democracies, which is reviewed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Critical literature on 'happiness' and 'wellbeing'

3.1 Introduction

The rapid growth of interest in happiness in psychology, economics, politics, social policy and cultural life in recent years has been well documented. This has variously been called the 'turn to happiness' (Ahmed, 2010a), the 'happiness industry' (Davies, 2015) and a 'dispositif' (Greco & Stenner, 2013) – a Foucauldian term denoting a loose convergence of various semi-autonomous institutions – in this case, the UK government, academia, mass media and business culture. The late 1990s saw the rise of the new discipline of positive psychology. This was heralded by Martin Seligman's now-famous speech to the American Psychological Association in 1998, in which he declared that psychology's traditional focus on 'negatives' such as mental illness was outdated and there was a need to look at what made humans flourish. There has since been a huge amount of research and academic literature in positive psychology, with handbooks, textbooks, special issues of journals and two dedicated journals (Yen, 2010). In addition, there are close to 100 positive psychology programs at US universities (Whippman, 2016) and in 2006 it became Harvard's most popular course (Gunnell, 2006).

While it is tempting to see positive psychology as a US-centric enterprise, there has been considerable uptake of its ideas in UK academia, business circles, the self-help industry, media, public policy and educational policy and practice. Two notable recent examples are Bristol University's announcement of a new, optional credit-bearing Happiness Course for all students for the academic year 2019/20, developed in response to a number of suicides among its students. Students will be taught various happiness exercises, asked to practice one for a week, and have their happiness levels measured over the duration of the course (Woolcock, 2019). Similarly, in May 2019 Eton College revealed plans to teach their students how to be kind and grateful, with the stated aim of making them

happier (Bloom, 2019).

In political life, maximising citizens' happiness began to be a stated objective of the UK government from the early 2000s, when economist and 'happiness expert' Richard Layard was appointed as Happiness Tsar under Tony Blair's government. Layard outlined his goal to measure and maximise happiness thus:

We need a revolution in academia, with every social science attempting to understand the causes of happiness. We also need a revolution in government. Happiness should become the goal of policy, and the progress of national happiness should be measured and analysed as closely as the growth of GNP (Layard, 2005, p. 145).

The growing focus on national happiness continued following the election of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition in 2010, and in one of David Cameron's first speeches after becoming prime minister, he promised to measure gross national happiness. This arguably reflects "one of the most distinctive features of political life today: the shift from policies focused on the public to policies focused on the personal" (Furedi, 2006, p. 1).

Ideas from positive psychology started to take hold strongly in mainstream culture from the early 2000s, with the publication of numerous books, magazine and newspaper articles on the subject of happiness and how to improve it, and the establishment in 2012 of the Action for Happiness charity, which aims, through its website and network of associated local groups, to help people work to increase their emotional wellbeing at work, home, school and local communities (Action for Happiness, 2019). There is also evidence for the discipline's influence on UK health policy. Layard's book *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science*, first published in 2005 and updated in 2011, made a case for increased access to psychological therapies as a key way to improve UK citizens' happiness, which played a role in

the government's large-scale provision of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) on the NHS (Davies, 2015; Duncan, 2014).

The influence of the happiness industry in business and organisational culture is also clear, with growing numbers of interventions and courses aimed at boosting workers' wellbeing. For example, mindfulness has become a lucrative industry, generating more than $1 billion globally in 2015 alone (Cabanas, 2018). Cederström (2018) also points out that modern-day workplaces expect their employees to be happy and stimulated, and that this affective labour is used as a marketing strategy. He argues that the notion of work/life balance has thus been superseded by an idea of work-integration. Similarly, Cabanas and Illouz (2017) point to an inversion: that instead of workers thinking that finding employment would lead to greater happiness or satisfaction, they are now encouraged to believe that happiness is a prerequisite for finding work.

Various authors have argued that happiness has become a new site of governmentality, a Foucauldian term denoting the way in which people think about and act on themselves in a way that fits with neoliberal society (e.g. Binkley, 2014; Foucault, 1991; Greco & Stenner, 2013; McDonald & O'Callaghan, 2008). This chapter aims to review the range of critiques of this turn to happiness, which come from various disciplines and theoretical standpoints. It then goes on to consider what is missing from this literature, and proposes a discursive psychological investigation of everyday understandings of happiness as a useful and necessary contribution to this body of work.

3.2 Overview of critiques

There is a growing body of critical work on positive psychology and the turn to happiness in social and political life. A recent sociological review of such critiques by Frawley (2015a) classified them into three strands of related arguments: First,

that positive psychology promotes a culture-bound, normative view of happiness; second, that it involves individualization and diminished subjectivity; and third, that it constitutes 'bad science'. However, while this is a considered and helpful way of organising the literature, I propose a slightly different approach to better suit a discursive social psychological consideration of contemporary understandings of happiness. First, I discuss literature that traces the different ways in which happiness has been understood historically and evoked as a tool of government in the West, and how this has shaped subjectivities or ways of being. This paves the way for the second section, which provides an overview of work that critiques how happiness, or subjective wellbeing (SWB), is currently defined by positive psychology and behavioural economics. This helps demonstrate how 'happiness', when talked about and acted on, is a complex, ever-changing construct based on different ideas and histories. It also helps us understand the difficulties involved in measuring happiness, which I move on to consider, along with critiques of the methods and conclusions of positive psychological research. In the fourth and final category of critical work on happiness, I outline literature that problematises how positive psychology and the turn to happiness have assumed and reinforced a certain idea of the self, and how this is reproduced in self-help literature. I then build on the previous chapter's consideration of how particular psychological properties have become a marker of successful personhood to argue that it is useful to look at happiness and social citizenship as interrelated.

This intersection of happiness and social citizenship represents an original contribution to the extant literature and is helpful in looking at how everyday understandings of, and practices around happiness may inform common-sense ideas of desirable and undesirable ways of being and ways of relating to each other. Different philosophical, ethical and political ideas feed into the way people construct and act on happiness, and these underpinning ideologies contain fundamental

contradictions, particularly in terms of how we understand ourselves and our relationships to others. This is usefully explored through a critical discursive approach, which sees such talk as social action with particular functions and consequences, both in terms of micro-interactions as well as broader structural implications, such as by examining how the scientific clothing of positive psychology may cloak a traditional concern with maintaining the status quo (Davies, 2015).

3.3 Genealogical approaches to happiness

While there is substantial scholarly work looking at the different iterations of happiness over the centuries and millennia (e.g. McMahon, 2006), it is not my aim to give a full account of this. It is, however, useful to survey literature that traces the genealogy of the current version of happiness we see in contemporary life. The periods of history invoked by positive psychology texts themselves are of interest. In their positive psychology "manifesto" Seligman and Csikszentmihályi (2000) mention Athens in the Classical period, Renaissance Florence and Victorian Britain as important eras in which the virtues, character and positive feelings of citizens played a defining role. However, as Becker and Marecek (2008a) point out, this only refers to the population's elite – the bigger picture of slavery in Ancient Athens, or the fact that Victorian wealth was built on imperialist plundering of British colonies and the grinding poverty of the working classes is overlooked. They argue this lack of a consideration of privilege, power dynamics and social hierarchy, and how it might affect who can and can't attain the good life is also reflected in the current positive psychology agenda (Becker & Marecek, 2008a).

Davies (2015) traces the beginnings of the rise of positive psychology to the late 1960s when the first questionnaires to measure happiness and depression were created. Since then, he argues, a vision of the human psyche as amenable to expert calculation, scientific measurement and improvement has been growing. Becker and Marecek (2008a) consider that its roots go back further, and point out

parallels between positive psychology, unusually also referred to as a "movement" by its proponents, and the "New Thought" movement of late 19th century America. This eschewed the Puritan focus on sin and instead extolled the benefits of the "mind cure" of positive thinking – a belief, based on Greco-Christian dualism, that the mind can control the body, which it shares with positive psychology (Becker & Marecek, 2008a). Another parallel they draw is with the mental hygiene movement of the early 20th century, which played an influential role in US society. This aimed to create (and fulfil) a desire for physical and mental health in all citizens, and pledged to scientifically study sources of happiness (Becker & Marecek, 2008a). Again, the similarities with positive psychology are clear, especially in what the authors identify as the language of adjustment to a particular social order.

While Becker and Marecek (2008a; 2008b) consider positive psychology as a particularly American outpost of individualism, Cederström (2018) argues that our current focus on happiness as being "authentic" can be traced to early 20th century European thinkers, such as psychiatrist Wilhelm Reich. Reich – a student of Freud – rejected the aims of minimising human suffering based on "Freudian unhappiness" as too humble and formed instead a loftier goal for humanity of self-actualisation. Cederström (2018) argues that Reich's promotion of an alternative understanding of the human psyche as capable of continued self-development paved the way for the Beat generation's focus on dropping out and 'finding themselves'. Later, its maximizing rhetoric was echoed in positive psychology, although this latter iteration inverted the Beatnik urge to retreat from capitalism, to position work as the means to achieve self-actualisation.

Binkley's (2014) essay on neoliberal happiness and how it evolved is useful in understanding these developments. He outlines two recent 'happinesses' evoked by distinct technologies of government. One can be traced to the creation of the welfare state in Western countries after the Second World War, which he argues

had the indirect role of making people happy by creating opportunities for inclusion in society through social citizenship rights. Binkley (2014) writes that this "meant making citizens interdependent, responsible for each other, capable of identifying with each other's needs and sharing in the fostering of security and safety against threats to well-being" (p. 105). He contrasts this with the newer version of happiness fostered by neoliberal regimes, which is explicitly one of "individual wager and personal enterprise, and thus of risk and success" (p. 105). Here, happiness is based on a scientific understanding of self-society relations that are organised to satisfy the drive for accelerated production, and new kinds of affective states are worked up as achievable and desirable to encourage the self-work required for this system to function.

Binkley's (2014) work builds on Foucault's genealogical approach to investigating how different subjectivities or ways of being have been shaped by different governmental rationalities. For example, Foucault (2007) outlines the Christian pastoral tradition of governance in the centuries preceding the Enlightenment, with its associated objectives of obedience, transparency, self-knowledge and confession. Happiness was approached as something to be experienced in the next life, and as such did not operate through appeals to rationality or the law, but through subordinating oneself to God, via the clergy. While this is now an outdated way of governing, Binkley argues that we still display traces of its logic to this day, in terms of the drives to be an open book and demonstrate self-awareness. The imperatives to be obedient and dependent, on the other hand, could be seen as reworked into the socialising mandate of welfarist governments. Foucault's work (e.g. 1991) in tracing the formation of the modern liberal governance from the late 16th century is invaluable in understanding contemporary ideas of both happiness and citizenship, which became explicitly interlinked at this time, with happiness reimagined as an individual right and a responsibility of

government (Jugureanu, Hughes & Hughes, 2014). The French Revolution, US

Constitution and German and Scottish Enlightenment decreed that a government's

legitimacy must be based on the consent of the citizens it governed (Binkley, 2014;

Dwyer, 2010). An individual's right to civil liberty was paramount, but this freedom

must be directed in the correct way, and technologies of happiness were crucial to

promote citizens' ability to "derive emotional affirmation from the optimal outcomes

of one's wagers" (Binkley, 2014, p. 115). This need to map out and measure how

happiness is produced was undertaken by the Enlightenment philosophers Bentham

and Mill, and the logic of utilitarianism is still clear in policy making today (e.g.

Layard, 2011).

Cabanas (2016) suggests neoliberal happiness discourse combines the

utilitarian call for rationality and self-control with the Romantic valorisation of

emotions as inner drivers of action. However, he argues that this idea of rationality

has been transformed from a virtue into a psychological ability that we all possess,

and proposes that neoliberal happiness therefore dispenses with the traditional

Enlightenment division between how we act (naturally) and how we *ought* to act

(ethically). By assuming humans have the natural ability of self-mastery, achieving

the liberal ideal of the "self-made man" (p. 471) becomes a psychological

undertaking, not an ethical or political one – transforming the subject into what

Cabanas (2016) calls the "psytizen" (p. 467). As well as "emotional rationality" – the

ability to control and take responsibility for one's feelings, thoughts and attitudes –

two other features characterise this new form of subjectivity shaped by the

neoliberal discourse of happiness: "authenticity" and "flourishing". The former

outlines the ability to make sensible and strategic choices that align with one's "true"

self and personal interests, which draws on an idea of authenticity that was popular

in the Romantic movement of the late 19th century, and revisited in the mid-20th

century, notably in humanistic psychology. Cabanas (2016) argues that this was

given scientific legitimation in positive psychology through the creation of measuring and codifying technologies, such as the "hierarchical classification of positive traits" (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) and the associated strengths test. "Flourishing" refers to people's capacity to perform self-work on their emotions and choices on an ongoing and ever-expanding way, by identifying new areas for self-improvement. This leads to the idea of a self that is fundamentally incomplete as it can always be improved upon. This idea, reinforced by self-help discourses, is more fully explored in Section 3.6.2.

Binkley (2014; 2018) and De La Fabián and Stecher (2017; 2018) situate their critiques of positive psychology in a governmentality framework, arguing that the language of positive psychology and the technologies of the self it promotes are transforming the therapeutic self into something different – still individualised and psychologised, but with a different temporality. Instead of looking to the past – childhood difficulties or traumas, historical wrongs – people are encouraged to look to the present or future only. There is debate between these authors, however, about the specifics of the novel subjectivities promoted by positive psychology. De La Fabián and Stecher (2017) contest Binkley's (2014) assertion that the substance that positive psychology works on is people's "welfarist traces" – the habits and personalities associated with social dependencies, which should be replaced with an entrepreneurial drive. Instead, they argue that positive psychology works to transcend the traditional capitalist division between production (effort in the present) and consumption ('earnt' pleasure in the future) by recasting happiness not as the *effect* of variables such as work, effort, money or health, but as the *cause* of them. As the authors acknowledge, empirical work is needed to analyse how people are making sense of neoliberal ideals of happiness, and this thesis seeks to follow through on this project.

3.4 Problems with the definition of happiness

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the multifarious philosophical traditions feeding into our understandings of happiness, there is much critical literature that problematises the way happiness is currently described and operationalized in positive psychology and related outputs. As Jugureanu, Hughes and Hughes (2014) point out, within the social sciences, happiness is still an 'immature science' (Kuhn, 1962) in that it lacks consensus over key terms and a coherent underlying paradigm. Similarly, Matthews and Zeidner (2003) argue that the many different meanings of happiness and resultant vagueness render it conceptually incoherent. Etymologically, the earliest meaning of the word 'happy', derived from 'hap', meant 'luck' and it is sometimes still used in this way – as in a happy circumstance (Ahmed, 2010a; Duncan, 2014). It can denote a brief, intense experience, or a surprisingly prosaic one – such as being happy with your gas supplier (Duncan, 2014). This section will consider critiques that problematise this non-specificity, as well as arguing that descriptions of happiness are reductive, ethnocentric, and prescriptive rather than descriptive.

Happiness, as described by Richard Layard (2003), is "feeling good – enjoying life and feeling it is wonderful" as opposed to unhappiness, which is "feeling bad and wishing things were different" (p. 4). Many authors (e.g. Duncan, 2014; Haybron, 2008; Smith, 2008) criticise the narrowness of this view, pointing out that there are a huge amount of things that humans value and relish, and not all of them involve feeling good and enjoyment – often quite the reverse.

The notion of subjective wellbeing (SWB) was developed by positive psychologists and economists to broaden out this narrow view of happiness as simply feeling good. It is generally used to describe a composite of 'affective' and 'evaluative' happiness and, as such, usually involves measurements of current mood and emotion as well as satisfaction with life as a whole (e.g. Helliwell & Wang, 2012; Stutzer & Frey, 2010). Others go further and incorporate a lack of negative

feelings or experiences, such as depression, into their definitions of SWB (e.g.

Argyle, 2013). A focus on 'strengths' is a key ingredient of the 'life satisfaction'

element of SWB, with positive psychology being defined by Sheldon and King

(2001) as "nothing more than the scientific study of ordinary human strengths and

virtues" (p. 216). This approach has been criticised for being both reductive and

ethnocentric by uncritically assuming that there are 'positive' and 'negative' traits

and associated emotions (e.g. Ehrenreich, 2009; Held, 2002; 2004; Smith, 2008).

Similarly, Guignon (2002) noted that important human virtues such as

reflection, honesty and critical thinking are neglected by positive psychology.

However, since its inception in the late 1990s, positive psychology has not just

grown rapidly but morphed and developed, often in response to such criticisms

(Held, 2004; Woolfolk & Wasserman, 2005). Guignon's (2002) objection appeared

to be rectified when Peterson and Seligman (2004) unveiled their 24 'Virtues in

Action Strengths', which included integrity/honesty and critical thinking.

Furthermore, Seligman (2002) developed his definition of happiness as

incorporating the 'pleasant life', the 'good life' and the 'meaningful life', possibly in

response to criticisms about the limited nature of his concept of happiness.

Haybron (2008) notes that there are very different philosophical

understandings of the word happiness that are drawn on by positive psychology. He

asserts that there are two broad literatures about happiness, with the first treating it

as a psychological construct that is similar to pleasure; and the second seeing

happiness as roughly synonymous with wellbeing. Eudaimonism (an Ancient Greek

term broadly denoting a life of virtuous activity) and list theories (which situate

happiness outside subjective feeling as coming from a number of truly valuable

things in the 'real world' such as friendship, love or education) are different versions

of the wellbeing account, as to say someone is happy in these theories is to make a

value judgement about them – that their life is going well. Haybron (2008) argues

that to use the word 'happiness' about both wellbeing accounts and pleasure accounts of happiness is like using the word 'bank' to mean both the side of a river and a place to keep money: they are unrelated concepts, and cannot be usefully merged together, as is attempted in SWB research.

In a related body of literature, it has also been argued that positive psychology and popular literature on happiness are culpable of appropriating and oversimplifying Ancient and non-Western philosophies. Christopher & Hickinbottom's (2008) accusation of ethnocentricity argues that the Western ideology of individualism is uncritically assumed in positive psychology, and therefore its attempts to incorporate approaches to happiness from other, collectivist cultures, such as Buddhism (e.g. Haidt, 2006; Seligman, 2002) lead to a fundamental misunderstanding of these ideas and a clash of ideologies.

For example, Seligman's (2002) demarcation of SWB into three strands – the pleasant life, the good life, and the meaningful life conceptualises the good life as a form of eudaimonia that results from using one's signature strengths. This has been critiqued by various authors (e.g. Davies, 2015; Haybron, 2008; Woolfolk & Wasserman, 2005) as fundamentally flawed. Woolfolk and Wasserman argue that Seligman's interpretation of eudaimonia is "highly idiosyncratic" (2005, p. 82) for its attempt to associate it with Csikszentmihályi's idea of 'flow', which describes the feeling of being 'at one' during an activity, such as playing music. Most philosophical understandings of eudaimonia are that it is not a subjective state, like flow, but that it describes the highest possible good for all, involving virtues such as civic involvement, self-examination and moderation (Haybron, 2008; Woolfolk & Wasserman, 2005). So where Seligman separates out the good life from the meaningful, this would make no sense to the Ancient Greeks, for whom the good life is automatically meaningful. Seligman's (2011) subsequent explicit move away from happiness in favour of 'Flourishing' has also been critiqued by Wright (2013) as

strongly linked to a neoliberal agenda. In particular, Seligman's addition of two new dimensions, "relationships with other people" and "achievement", to his previous theory of happiness, where the latter involves traits such as 'resilience' and 'self-determination' and orientates to a strongly normative understanding of value and achievement, which, as Wright (2013) argues, can frequently be a cause of unhappiness, rather than its solution.

Finally, although positive psychology purports to be scientific and merely descriptive in its accounts of what 'causes' happiness (e.g. Layard, 2003; 2005; 2011; Seligman, 2002), many critiques have argued that it is prescriptive, reinforcing Western normative ideals as indicative of the good life (e.g. Ahmed, 2010a; Cromby & Willis, 2014; Held, 2004; Whippman, 2016; Woolfolk & Wasserman, 2005).

Authors such as Stearns (2012) and Ehrenreich (2009) outline potential problems arising from what they see as the increasingly compulsory nature of the state of 'feeling good', especially around narratives of child-rearing and work, which are now strongly linked to norms of happiness: that an inevitable gap between expectation and experience will result in disappointment and distress. Furthermore, the pressure to continually display cheerfulness could result in failure to explore possible reasons for dissatisfaction (Ahmed, 2010a; Held, 2002, 2004). By labelling certain states and statuses as 'happy' and therefore good, happiness research can be used to marginalise those 'othered' by such discourses, such as homosexuals, migrants and women who eschew the traditional roles of homemaker and mother (Ahmed, 2010a; 2010b).

Also worth paying attention to is the usage of the word 'wellbeing'. While it is currently ubiquitous – particularly in positive psychological research, this wasn't always the case as Sointu's (2005) research shows. Her analysis of how the word was used over 18 years in two British newspapers, shows the concept has shifted radically. In the mid-1980s it was mainly used in reference to health and the wealth

of nations, and constructed as being tied to a strong economy and national security. Over the next five time periods she studied, a more individualised notion of wellbeing emerged, which Sointu ties to the commercialisation and mainstreaming of wellbeing practices over this time. By the early 2000s, wellbeing implied proactively seeking what one wants and needs, was associated with self-responsibility, and conceptualised as a valuable commodity in the creation of a desirable identity. This suggests that Crawford's (1980) suggestion that health has become ideologically operationalised with 'healthism' – the drive to improve one's health and take responsibility for it – now extends to emotional health. It is of interest in the current thesis to examine whether and how this idea of healthism has been extended, not just to staving off mental ill health but to actively cultivating happiness or positivity.

The various, shifting meanings of happiness and wellbeing attract different and sometimes contradictory values and associated moralities, and as such, pose a number of problems. The next section moves on to consider some of the main critiques of how happiness or wellbeing is measured – a key objective of the new 'science' of happiness.

3.5 Critiques of attempts to measure and augment happiness

Mainstream empirical positive psychological research generally falls into two camps: attempts to measure happiness in various populations, which is undertaken in psychology, economics, sociology and business; and attempts to *augment* happiness – sometimes described as the holy grail of positive psychology (Ehrenreich, 2009; Whippman, 2016). This section starts by reviewing literature that critiques the idea of measuring happiness, and discusses the Easterlin Paradox – an economic theory that plays a key rhetorical role in outlining the necessity for positive psychological interventions. It then moves on to outline critiques of research

that purports to demonstrate that happiness can be deliberately improved through individual effort.

3.5.1 Problems with the measurement of happiness

The most common tools used to measure happiness or SWB – questionnaires and surveys – have been called into question innumerable times for their inability to measure psychological phenomena. For one thing, there is the problem of demand characteristics, where people give (or resist giving) answers they feel the researcher wants (Cromby, 2011). Furthermore, while research that is intended to influence policy is glossed as neutral and unbiased, Greco and Stenner (2013) remind us there is good evidence that once people know that what they are answering will impact on policy, their answers frequently change.

Angner (2013) argues that positive psychological research lacks agreement on valid methods to measure happiness. As there is no agreed definition, economists, psychologists and sociologists aim to overcome this either by specifying a meaning or letting survey respondents give their own answers, both of which are problematic. The immediate problem is that there is no way of knowing whether citizens responding to surveys conceptualise happiness in the same way as policy makers (White, 2014). Even if a definition were possible, validity is difficult to demonstrate due to the way surveys are designed, which is almost always on a numeric scale. For example, the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (Hills & Argyle, 2002) gives a scale of 1 to 6, where 1 is 'strongly disagree' and 6 is 'strongly agree', with 'moderately' and 'slightly' dis/agree the other options. The modifiers 'slightly', 'moderately' and 'strongly' may be interpreted differently by different people – or by the same person at different times. Also, for statistical analyses to make sense there must be an equal difference between each unit (1, 2, 3, etc.), but as White (2014) points out, there is simply no way to achieve this when translating subjective, transient feelings into numerical measures.

Life satisfaction self-report methods also do not account for the arbitrariness and constantly shifting nature of both attitudes and perspective. Haybron (2008) gives the hypothetical example of a healthy 64-year-old widow: some days she thinks about life in relation to those less well off – an unhealthy friend who is estranged from her children, or people living in war zones – and she feels satisfied with her life. On other days she feels grief, anger and loneliness and contemplates ending her life. As Haybron (2008) points out, both accounts are equally valid and authentic, yet would result in vastly different SWB 'scores' relating to the same life.

Furthermore, ideas about the best or worst possible life, as used by Gallup to measure SWB globally, based on the Cantril Self-Anchoring Striving Scale (Cantril, 1965), will differ hugely depending on context, where some people will have huge aspirations, and others far more modest ones (Sacks, Stevenson & Wolfers, 2012). The question, 'There is a gap between what I would like to do and what I have done' in the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire may not measure happiness at all, but expectation based on context (White, 2014), something that is likely to be far more influenced by social and cultural factors than by individual ones. Indeed, as happiness is not a universal or value-free notion and is conceived of and valued very differently in different countries, there are further difficulties when cross-cultural measurements and comparisons are made, which can end up being deeply flawed (Wright, 2008). Ahuvia (2002) points out a fundamental problem with what is often framed as a 'puzzle' in happiness literature: that people in wealthier countries report higher SWB than those in poorer countries, yet within countries there is no positive correlation between income and SWB. He argues that this is due to the tautology of measuring something that is valued in richer, industrialised nations, whose citizens are encouraged to pursue personal happiness over duty and social obligations.

Harré (2002) goes further in problematizing survey-based methods, arguing that their use is conceptually flawed. He critiques the adoption of the language and

techniques of the natural sciences into psychology by pointing out the difference between instruments and apparatus in physics. Barometers and thermometers are examples of the former, as an instrument is something that is caused to physically alter by a changing property of the environment. Apparatus, on the other hand, act as *models* for real systems, such as a gas discharge tube acting as an analogue for the upper atmosphere, and as such cannot deliver measurements. Surveys and questionnaires are apparatus, but are usually used in psychology as instruments, and interpreted in terms of an unseen property – such as self-esteem – that causes people to answer in different ways. Instead, Harré argues, when people tick a box or provide written or spoken answers, what is being modelled is a conversation. Writing about Argyle's (1987) questionnaire-based study of happiness, Harré (2002) concludes: "What he was getting from analysing them was a mix of semantic rules for the use of the word 'happy' and the conventions for telling autobiographical stories to a stranger – story lines, in short." (p. 174).

It is important to consider the role of the supposedly neutral questions in these story lines. As Cromby (2011) argues, surveys that solicit self-reports of beliefs, attitudes or feelings can end up serving as models of the 'correct' ones, while simultaneously reducing the complexities, ambiguities and dynamism of affective and cognitive states to a static, unitary psychological unit of measurement. When applied to happiness the potential for this to assert certain behaviours and ways of being as desirable and others as lacking is clear (Ahmed, 2010a; Duncan, 2008). As Ahmed points out, self-reports assume both that we are able to say and know how we feel, and that self-reporting is unmotivated and scrupulously honest. She argues that the common-sense notion that happiness is something you want to have means that being asked about it can never be a neutral activity: "… people are being asked to evaluate their life situations through categories that are value laden" (p. 5). Building on these arguments, Pryiomka (2018) discusses the recent

development of the psychological property 'grit' (e.g. Duckworth, 2016; Duckworth & Quinn, 2009) noting that the growing discourses of grit in positive psychological literature and beyond have transformed it into a "must-have" character attribute. She argues that the way it is operationalised through widespread application of questionnaires that 'test' for it, which wrongly assume a fixed meaning across diverse populations, risks grit become another population sorting mechanism to maintain social orders.

A further problem of measuring happiness arises from the different ways of measuring the two factors of SWB: life satisfaction and current emotion. While the former is measured through questionnaires, with all the associated problems outlined above, the latter is generally measured by experience-sampling, as described by Csikszentmihályi and Hunter (2003), whereby participants are asked at random intervals through the day what they are doing and how they are feeling. It is argued by positive psychologists and behavioural economists, as well as notable cognitive psychologist and Nobel Laureate Daniel Kahneman (Kahneman & Krueger, 2006) that such measurements of subjective happiness can, over time and with a large cohort, measure 'objective happiness' in terms of which activities tend to inspire it.

Smith (2008) points out a fundamental flaw in this approach: we don't know what these experiences or activities *mean* to people. He uses the example of a study by Kahneman (cited by Layard, 2003) in which more than 1000 women completed the Texas Happiness index, finding that 'sex' topped the list of experiences that make them happy, scoring 4.7. While Layard (2003) used this as a concrete example of how experiences can be measured and compared in terms of how much happiness they produce, Smith contests this, citing different research by Meston and Buss (2007), which found 237 reasons given by people for having sex, ranging from "burning calories" to "wanting to feel closer to God". Far from being

able to conclude that sex makes you happy, he argues, it is both impossible to say exactly what was causing the participants' reported happiness, and to know what form this took – religious ecstasy, comfort, the satisfaction of incidental exercise, or any number of alternative options, which could only be divined by knowing the narrative of which the sex was part (Smith, 2008).

While it could be concluded that happiness is an inappropriate object of scientific enquiry (e.g. Pérez-Álvarez, 2016; White, 2014), or that progress can only be assessed by using qualitative approaches to listen to subjective evaluations and experiences (e.g. Thin, 2012), numerous authors have argued that claiming a scientific basis performs a very important function for positive psychology. Yen (2010) and Simmons (2012) show that positive psychology texts perform boundary work by using the language of science to legitimise it as a discipline and demarcate it from "non-science", such as humanistic psychology, which has also had a longstanding interest in human flourishing. This is also achieved by using historical narratives, which carry out ideological and rhetorical actions of constructing and making real the kinds of issues for which positive psychology is the best solution (Yen, 2010).

Another way positive psychology has demarcated itself from "traditional" psychology is by casting its work not at the other end of the spectrum of ameliorating mental distress, but on a different spectrum altogether (De La Fabián & Stecher, 2017). As Seligman (2011) asserts, "The skills of enjoying positive emotion... are entirely different from the skills of not being depressed, not being anxious, and not being angry. These dysphorias get in the way of well-being, but they do not make well-being impossible." (p. 182). There is a lot to unpack in this quote – not least the casual way in which not feeling depressed, anxious or angry are recast as 'skills' and therefore become target areas for individual enterprise, rather than focusing attention on what might be causing anxiety, anger or

depression. The fact that the "skills of positive emotion" are worked up as very different doesn't just extend the areas for individual self-work, but also demarcates a distinct space for positive psychologists to operate in. As various authors have argued (e.g. Coyne, 2015; Simmons, 2012; Yen, 2010) establishing their offerings as 'science' is arguably vital to legitimate their expertise.

3.5.2 The Easterlin Paradox

An idea frequently drawn on in positive psychology, economics and social policy to justify the aims of measuring and improving levels of SWB is the Easterlin Paradox, named after the economist whose work, in 1974, demonstrated that income does not correlate with reported levels of happiness. As Frawley (2012) points out, it is noteworthy that nearly twenty years passed before there was any substantial critique or debate about Easterlin's findings. In 1991, the sociologist Ruut Veenhoven was one of the first to challenge Easterlin's conclusion that happiness relies on subjective comparisons rather than objective good, pointing out the ideological implications of this interpretation. Veenhoven (1991) argued this interpretation meant there was no hope for improvement and that it worked to undermine the Enlightenment belief in human rationality, making the case that if humans are "made happy by illusion rather than by quality, one can hardly maintain they are rational and able to make their own choices" (Veenhoven, 1991, p. 8).

Easterlin's findings have since been contested within economics as being based on inadequate data, with later analyses suggesting that, in actuality, measures of SWB *do* rise with absolute income, both across and within countries (Sacks, Stevenson & Wolfers, 2012; Stevenson & Wolfers, 2008). While this can also be used to highlight the inadequacies of SWB research, it has done little to dent the narrative of the Easterlin Paradox – it arguably remains a common-sense "fact" in the public consciousness that wellbeing does not increase with income over a certain level, and may self-help and expert texts reproduce this narrative (e.g.

Whippman, 2016). However, as Johns and Ormerod (2007) point out, if self-reported happiness (SRH) has indeed flat-lined throughout the Western world in the last 50 years, then its use for policy development must be flawed. They conclude that if improvements in GNP, life expectancy and gender equality have made little impact on SRH levels, then either trying to improve wellbeing is pointless or SRH is an unreliable measure of wellbeing, favouring the latter explanation. Because SRH is based on individual conditions and events, and the context they occur in, this makes it difficult to assess the impact of specific factors. They also argue that it is flawed to compare measures of wealth with happiness as the former is theoretically infinite, whereas happiness measures are bounded, both by numbers on a scale and because emotions, although they can be very positive or negative, cannot be unlimited in either direction. Snowdon (2012) also cautions against a convenient narrative based on the "relentless straight line" (p. 98) of happiness rates over the last few decades, pointing out that this could be used to prove *anything* has not made us happier.

Whippman (2016) goes further by arguing for a deliberate political and economic motivation behind the dominant narrative of the Easterlin Paradox and its associated conclusion: that, beyond covering basic needs, money is irrelevant to happiness. She points out that real income has not grown for the majority of workers in many OECD countries, including the UK, in recent years, and the number of people living in poverty has increased. Wages have stagnated, while happiness training in the workplace has increased, fuelled by the 'money can't buy happiness' rhetoric. Being told that your happiness is down to deliberate choices and actions rather than external factors such as income and ability to afford a decent quality of life, directly benefits a politically conservative, austerity-oriented government run along neoliberal economic lines (Binkley, 2011; 2014; Cromby & Willis, 2014; Whippman, 2016).

3.5.2 Problems with attempts to increase happiness

The ideological 'fit' between mainstream approaches to researching happiness and neoliberal governance can also be seen in research designed to investigate the impact of interventions to 'teach' or 'improve' happiness. This strand of research, which usually centres on individual effort such as practising gratitude, mindfulness or learned optimism has also attracted a large amount of critical literature, and again, only a brief overview is possible here. Authors including Held (2004) and Ehrenreich (2009) point to the large amount of conflicting data it produces, and the high rate of generalisations offered without credible evidence, such as correlations being treated as causal and fundamental tautologies in findings – for example, the research concluding that people who are optimistic, resilient and amiable are happiest, when 'happiness' was defined as being optimistic, resilient and amiable. Relatedly, Ecclestone (2012) examined the evidence base of material taught on positive psychology programs, finding they were inconclusive and conceptually flawed and, more damningly, prey to "simple entrepreneurship that competes for publicly funded interventions" (p. 476).

Bolier et al. (2013) conducted a meta-analysis of published research on positive psychological interventions and found that, out of all such studies conducted between 1998 and 2002 (no number is given, although it is reasonable to assume it is in the 100s), only 39 met the basic requirements for a scientific trial in that they involved randomized, controlled trials. Of these, just one was deemed to be high quality, with 18 rated as medium quality and 20 'low'. The overall benefits of the interventions were found to be 'small to moderate', and the higher quality the study, the smaller the effects found. In addition, they also found evidence for publication bias. Despite this the 'findings' of positive psychology are widely circulated, particularly in mainstream media. For example, Frederickson and Losada's (2005) research, which used a mathematical equation to show that the

optimum ratio of positive to negative feelings required for human 'flourishing' was

2.9:1, was notoriously exposed as unfounded and essentially meaningless by

Brown, Sokal and Friedman (2013). Yet this ratio – usually simplified as an

injunction to experience three positive feelings to every negative one – has been

endlessly cited (more than 2700 times in academic books and journals as well as

innumerous times in popular media) and therefore remains influential as a 'scientific'

finding, although critics argue it hardly needs an appeal to science to theorise that it

is probably better to feel good more often than bad (Brown et al., 2013; Pérez-

Álvarez, 2016).

Within academia, particularly the journals dedicated to positive psychology

research, Held (2004) notes that certain findings tend to be championed and

circulated whereas others are side-lined or ignored. She illustrates this by

questioning whether the research by Norem (2001), which argues for 'defensive

pessimism' as an effective coping style, or Hybels, Pieper and Blazer (2002), who

published research showing that mildly depressed older women are more likely to

live longer, would be candidates for the Templeton Positive Psychology Prize, which

was explicitly set up to encourage "scientific investigation of the benefits produced

by optimism, thanksgiving and the power of positive thinking" (Whippman, 2016, p.

222). Far from being an unbiased, neutral science, then, it has been argued that

positive psychology, with its pre-defined parameters for success – and funding – is

value-laden and unscientific (e.g. Binkley, 2011; 2014; Whippman, 2016) and needs

to be considered in a business context, as many positive psychologists stand to

gain financially from their work (Coyne, 2015):

> "Shaping what passes for science are the needs of thousands of positive
>
> psychology coaches competitively marketing their services. These coaches
>
> are themselves a market for positive psychology "science," and they
>
> promote their "science-based" products and services to individual clients and

corporations." (Coyne, 2015, p. 1).

3.6 Problematising the 'self' of positive psychology & self-help

As we have seen, contemporary discourses of happiness and wellbeing draw on scientism, individualism and biologism, and the resultant tendency is to see human actions and values as abstracted from social context (e.g. Cromby 2011; Furedi, 2004, Slife & Richardson, 2008; Yen, 2010). This section outlines the main critiques of how the self is defined in positive psychology, then turns its focus to the critical work that addresses the 'self' of self-help.

3.6.1 Essentialising a culturally and temporally specific self

A notable feature of positive psychology is its tendency to combine economic and psychological vocabulary to construct subjectivities (Ahmed, 2010a; Binkley, 2014; Wright, 2008). Terms such as "mental capital" (e.g., Kidd, 2008, p. 1) and Seligman's "new prosperity" (2011, p. 437), which describes a desirable combination of wellbeing and wealth generation, have emerged in positive psychology literature, along with metaphors of approaching oneself as an "investment" or being more "efficient" (e.g. Gill, 2008; Hochschild, 2012). Davies (2015) traces these ideas back to the influence of economist Gary Becker, a leading member of the Chicago School of Economics – widely held to be the nursery of neoliberal thought. As an 'economic imperialist', meaning he applied neo-classical economics to different territories, such as healthcare and education, Becker (1964) came up with the notion of human capital. He proposed that people rationally weigh up the costs and benefits of their choices and activities and form appropriate habits to "radically alter the way they are" (Becker, 1993, p. 402). As various authors point out (e.g. Binkley, 2014; Davies, 2015), the upshot of this is as much existential as economic – we have now come to understand ourselves as augmentable and therefore able to decide how successful we are, by working on our careers, diets, exercise regimens and health. Now, the rhetoric and techniques of positive

psychology extend the remit of this self-work to working on emotions and habits of the mind. In doing so, they uphold Cartesian dualism, evidenced by commonplace statements such as "Positivity doesn't just change the contents of your mind, trading bad thoughts for good ones; it also changes the scope or boundaries of your mind" (Fredrickson, 2009, p. 9).

Other critiques have more thoroughly investigated this "hidden" ideology of positive psychology: that it splits the subject from their world (Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008; Greco & Stenner, 2013; Slife & Richardson 2008). Christopher and Hickinbottom (2008) argue that positive psychology's definition of the 'good life' as seeking personal fulfilment relies on a culturally and historically specific version of subjectivity. This ethnocentric view of the self is typified by three interrelated factors: First, Cartesian dualism (the split between an internal, subjective world of thoughts, values, beliefs, and an external 'real', objective world); second, the idea that the self is autonomous, fixed and separate from others and the world it lives in, rather than a product of its cultural context; and third, a moralism that assumes that due to the subjective nature of values and meanings, individuals are able to choose their own meaning of the good life and pursue it accordingly. The various strands of individualism in the West (utilitarianism, republicanism, expressive or biblical) thus ascribe moral weight to how we understand what the self is and should be (Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008). However, the authors point out that individualism is, globally and historically, a minority worldview. They draw on research by Triandis (1989) to back this up, whose research led to an estimation that just 30 per cent of the world's population count individualism as the dominant ideology. More recent research by Ford et al. (2015) also suggests that in many parts of the world, a collectivist self, with a markedly different understanding of what happiness is and how it is to be acted on, is common.

Christopher and Hickinbottom (2008) use Taylor's (1985; 1989) idea of one- and two-tiered systems to understand the emergence of the individualist self that underpins happiness research and rhetoric. Taylor proposed that before the 17th century, Westerners, like many societies today, subscribed to a two-tiered view of the world. This constituted an external source, whether a God, natural order or social order, as a broad framework that gave meaning and value to the world, alongside an idea of ordinary, day-to-day life lived within this framework. To define one's identity in such a system, Taylor argued, you have to define what you need to be in contact with in order to function fully as a human and to judge what is truly important and worthwhile in life. However, as a result of political, intellectual and social movements, such as the French and American revolutions, the Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment, this worldview was gradually replaced in Western societies by a secular view of the world focusing on just one tier, and this shift has profound implications for how we understand our selves (Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008; Ehrenberg, 2010; Richardson, 1989; Taylor, 1985; 1989). In a one-tier system, we have a separate sense of self, and value autonomy, freedom and self-expression. There is no need to be in contact with an external source to be fully human – instead, "the horizon of identity is an inner horizon" (Taylor, 1985, p. 258) and the individual becomes solely responsible for determining what constitutes the good life (Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008; Guignon, 2004). Ehrenberg (2010) argues that happiness and reason were the twin drivers of this secularisation process of the Enlightenment and that happiness took on a different dimension, centring on internal feelings of pleasure and displeasure to guide individual behaviours, decisions and goals. Similarly, Stenner (2005) argues that as the good of humanity and social progress have increasingly become the rationale for a society's politics, emotions have come to play a far more important role in social life.

Various authors (e.g. Davies, 2015; Haybron, 2008) have written about the suspicion within this secularized, one-tier system of any attempt to prescribe standards or norms to define happiness. Instead, the happiness conceptualized by positive psychology and behavioural economics, the actions and attitudes that lead to it, and the idea of the 'self' that is to undertake them are outlined in 'scientific' terms, stripped from any moral or philosophical consideration. This scientism has contributed to what Shotter (1984; 1989; 1993) describes as the current Western understanding of the 'self': a scientific concept created for scientific purposes, and observed in the third person. By doing this, he argues, the second person – the 'you' with which we have contact – is effectively ignored. This is also evident in how emotions are understood. Whereas emotions in collectivist cultures are often seen as socially shared and participated in, in the contemporary Western world they are constructed as private, internal properties of the individual (Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008).

The division between the material and mental, or objective versus subjective, found in positive psychological literature has also been called a bifurcation by Greco and Stenner (2013). They draw on the work of Latour (2005), who explains bifurcation as being,

> What happens when we think the world is divided into two sets of things: one which is composed of the fundamental constituents of the universe – invisible to eyes, known to science, real and yet valueless – and the other which is constituted of what the mind has to add to the basic building blocks of the world in order to make sense of them (p. 226-7)

Greco and Stenner (2013) use this idea as a starting point to critique mainstream psychological happiness research, proposing instead the Nietzschean idea of joy as becoming more active in the world as its direct opposite. Nietzsche

claimed it to be a fiction that there was a 'doer' behind an action, arguing that "the deed is everything" (cited in Greco & Stenner, 2013, p. 4). By refusing to separate the subject and object in this way it is possible to reject the idea that feelings are merely subjective and unrelated to the material world. Greco and Stenner argue this is important because, when emotions and desires are seen as purely subjective and internal, this works to disconnect people from one power they do have – to feel and emotionally respond to a lack of power. This pacifying effect of positive psychology rhetoric is also noted by Ehrenreich (2009) who notes its widespread use in initiatives such as the "positivity training" offered to employees being made redundant in US organisations. Similarly, Mentinis (2013) describes how positive psychologists encouraged Greek citizens to see the social problems resulting from the financial crisis as an opportunity to reassess their individual values. As Greco and Stenner (2013, p. 14) conclude: "Techniques ostensibly designed to make negative experiences more tolerable… effectively deprive individuals of an arguably vital organ of perception."

3.6.2 The 'self' of self-help

The sizable body of research on how self-help books create and regulate subjectivities (e.g. Gill, 2007; 2008; Hazleden, 2003; Hochschild, 1994) is also helpful in informing my research. Literature that explores *how* self-help creates certain versions of the world has suggested that there is a notable consistency in the narratives, which tend to draw on a mixture of Eastern religion, neoconservative economics and Western science (Brown, 1999) and, increasingly, neuroscientific discourses of rewiring brains (Rose & Abi Rached, 2013) to create a need for the books' expertise. Rimke (2000) and Cherry (2008) demonstrate that self-help books work by encouraging readers to move from fending for oneself to relying on expert help but that, through their take-up of the project of self-help, they are ultimately tasked with becoming the expert of their own selfhood. At the same time as

promoting this "hyper-individuality" (Rimke, 2000, p. 67), self-help books must also be general and applicable to all, so the elusive inner core readers are exhorted to find is, paradoxically, shared with everyone, meaning "your unique Self is a ready-to-wear standard product" (de Vos, 2015, p. 251).

Illouz (2008) and de Vos (2015) argue that self-help mirrors professional psychology in the way it addresses the 'self' with similar metaphors and narratives. While this 'self' of self-help has autonomy – regimens are always framed as a choice, not a law (Brown, 1999) – it is constructed as fundamentally flawed and in need of expert help. As Illouz (2008) points out, the idea of needing to strive for increased wellbeing and improved self-realisation necessarily depends on narratives of suffering. Or as Brunila and Siivonen (2014) put it, self-help frames the self through a "prism of illness" (p. 61). Riley, Evans and Robson (2018) argue that self-help largely uses therapeutic discourse to frame this understanding of the self. They identify this as involving three related factors – the understanding that past experience affects the current self, sometimes in unconscious ways; the understanding that the self can work on the self to effect changes, under the guidance of experts; and the adoption of psychological concepts and language to make sense of ourselves. Furedi (2004) and Illouz (2008) problematise this therapeutic understanding of the self as having emptied the communal and political content from the self, leaving us without a common-sense way of linking our private selves to the public sphere.

The psychological language that is needed to "look inside" and understand oneself in the terms laid out by self-help texts is also a core requirement of neoliberal subjectivity (Rose, 1996). Cederström (2018) labels the modern-day project of finding, developing and loving one's inner self "compulsory narcissism" and directly links it to neoliberal values in the way people mine their psyches and emotions and turn them into "competitive advantages" (p. 78). Relatedly, Henderson

and Taylor (2018) point out that this neoliberalisation of self-help is characterized by a particular affective economy in which optimism, positivity, boldness, resilience, feeling good and cultivating the right attitude are key currencies.

There are many analyses of self-help texts, most of which take a discursive approach. This overview, however, focuses on work that focuses on the nature of the 'self' conjured by self-help. Hazelden's (2003) analysis of 14 relationship manuals examines how the books worked up certain kinds of identities, emotions and ethical self-work as laudable and others 'unhealthy'. She found that the books framed the problem to be addressed as the reader's identity as an authentic self, rather than them having a relationship problem, creating a narrative of a 'right' and 'wrong' relationship with the self. The self is thus constructed as divided, and the common-sense site of ethical work, which involves various programmes teaching self-love, self-knowledge and self-nurturance. In outlining this work, which was characterised as effortful and difficult, Hazleden (2003) argues that the self-help books worked to encourage a self that is effective, self-sufficient and fulfilled through creating new patterns of behaviour and approved emotional responses. She concludes that self-help works to create a particular type of citizen – one who knows that "technologies of the self such as self-discipline and self-knowledge are the 'right', or ethical, thing to take on, not only for the sake of the self, but for one's partner and for the wider society" (p. 425).

Similarly, Brown's (1999) analysis of 22 self-help books on stress seems to pre-empt the turn to character and contemporary discourses of 'resilience' outlined in Section 2.9.2, with his finding that stress is constructed as an inner state one must battle against. The books construct stress management as a form of technical mental activity in which the self is conceived as a product that can be serviced. In doing so, the message is that it is necessary to engineer a flexible, robust version of oneself to cope with the vagaries and uncertainties of modern life. This is done,

Brown argues, through metaphors of engineering and computation, which work to "induct the reader into the cognitive orthodoxy that dominates much contemporary psychology" (Brown, 1999, p. 34).

Gill and Orgad (2018) locate their analysis of self-help books, smartphone apps and women's magazines in the context of the recent turn to character in contemporary UK life (Bull & Allen, 2018, see Section 2.9.2). They argue that a new female subject is called up through discourses of resilience, characterised by a "bounce-backable" self (Gill & Orgad, 2018, p. 4) who can always recover from challenging experiences, with the idea of 'springiness' implying a fun, lively activity that obfuscates the enormous affective, physical and even aesthetic labour this entails. This self-help material works to create a self who is injured but who can negate these injuries through a lifelong project of reframing negative experiences and approaching resilience as an activity rather than a trait. In taking up this project, the authors argue, we are encouraged to accept without question the neoliberal system that creates the suffering and pain of its subjects (Gill & Orgad, 2018).

Rimke (2000) also notes that self-help books are often particularly addressed to women, as do Riley, Evans, Anderson and Robson (2019) in their review of analyses of self-help literature published in 20 years of *Feminism & Psychology*. They point out that the consistent use of scientism and medical discourses in self-help works to pathologise femininity and reinforce an idea of women as particularly problematic. Gupta and Cacchioni's (2013) analysis of US sex manuals provides a good example of this, identifying the extra mental and physical work that must be done by "less responsive" women in preparation for sex.

Broadening out the debate, Cruikshank (1999) and Ellis (1998) argue that self-esteem – a staple of self-help – is political in that women and poor people are predominantly constructed as lacking it. The psychological interventions prescribed

for low self-esteem work to locate the problem at an individual level and, instead of being empowering are actually techniques of subjugation that further marginalise the already marginalised, such as Maori people (Ellis, 1998) and women (Cruikshank, 1999; Ellis, 1998). Similarly, Fine (1985) accuses self-help texts of "context stripping" – minimising the importance of the social environment that the changes are to take place in, or simply not acknowledging it at all. Schilling and Maitland's (1993) analysis of 28 self-help books that are explicitly targeted at women argues that this can often work through the idea of socialisation as a historical hangover rather than an ongoing backdrop – that women have received particular sex-role training as girls that they can now "de-program" themselves from in order to thrive, rather than addressing the difficulties women still face in a patriarchal society. Schilling and Maitland (1993) also found the books' common narratives of victimisation and survivorhood work implicitly to disempower the reader, imposing a contradictory bind on them in how they view themselves.

The idea that one can live optimally through undertaking increasingly intense and complex self work – something that all self-help texts orient to – works to continually raise the bar on what living 'normally' involves (e.g. de Vos, 2015; Illouz, 2008). This has considerable implications for subjectivity, although this thesis does not propose to investigate people's experiences. Instead, I will look at whether, where and how the discourses and ideas popularised by self-help books on happiness may make accessing a successful identity increasingly difficult – a project that critical discursive psychology is well placed to take on.

3.7 What is missing from the critical work on happiness?

In addition to the discursive analyses of self-help literature outlined above and the recent work on the turn to character, much of which employed a critical discursive approach (e.g. Burman, 2019; Morrin, 2019 – see Section 2.9.2), there has been a

small amount of work that has taken happiness discourses as its specific focus. Frawley's (2012; 2015b) qualitative analysis of how media narratives constructed happiness as a social problem, analysed 306 articles in four UK national newspapers published between 1985 and 2009. She found that definitions of happiness were shifting and vague, which helped to facilitate the working up of happiness as a universal 'good' to aim for regardless of what 'wrongs' the articles were about. She suggests that the language of happiness is therefore very useful to "claimsmakers" (happiness experts, such as Richard Layard) because "almost any issue seems to be reducible to this lowest common denominator" (Frawley, 2012; p. 153). She highlights the top-down nature of these narratives, noting that the language of happiness did not seem to be used at a grassroots level to frame problems and campaigns for social change. Instead it was a framework imposed by authorities that sought to enlist everyday people in the logic and practices of happiness.

Another piece of research that looked at wider socio-cultural discourses of happiness was Duncan's (2014) analysis of the ways happiness is conceptualized and operationalized in political movements. He found a discourse of happiness as "attainable" was dominant, in which happiness could be achieved by choosing to adopt certain behaviours and products, which broadly reflects the rise in popularity and influence of positive psychology. He also identified four contrasting discourses that present an important challenge to this view of happiness and the way it constructs individual-society relationships. The idea that happiness is "lost" is often seen in green political movements, but also in mainstream positive psychology texts, and holds that materialism and consumerism prevent 'true' happiness, and seeks to link material goods to insecurity. A third discourse of happiness as "impossible", which stems from the psychoanalytic literature of Freud, Lacan and Žižek, sees civilized society as a pay-off between "man's" possibilities for happiness

and security. The pleasure principle implies the pursuit of happiness, but the need to survive in a group makes such a goal impossible. In this understanding, only a 'permissible', compromised happiness is possible in civil society, and the emptiness of this is disavowed by individuals by turning it into a moral, self-evident good. Duncan (2007, 2014) argues that this discourse translates happiness from being an individual pursuit to a political and ideological project for government.

A fourth political discourse of happiness is that it is "obligatory" – a possibility that should be available to all, and as such, fundamentally bound up in welfare regimes and their system of rights and corresponding duties. In this way, happiness – understood as security and prosperity – has played an important role in the creation of a modern social contract in the welfare age (Duncan, 2014). There are clear parallels here to Marshall's (1950/1992) theory of social citizenship and Binkley's idea of welfarist happiness in which happiness is conceived as both an individual and collective obligation.

Finally, a feminist discourse of happiness as "inauthentic" springs from the work of de Beauvoir and Friedan, and theorises happiness as an ideological fallacy upheld for the benefits of the ruling status quo. The dominant images of the happy wife and mother hide the tyranny, powerlessness and despair of this situation for many women. Unlike the other political discourses Duncan identifies, happiness and freedom do not go hand in hand, but are in opposition as feminists reject the false promises of happiness in favour of realising authenticity and independence (Ahmed, 2010b; Duncan, 2014).

Duncan's (2014) work is useful in looking at how current understandings of happiness are tied to citizenship, such as how the discourses offer various options for citizens to relate to their community. However, it could go further, by presenting concrete examples of how these discourses are put to work, and what this might

achieve in political and everyday life. For example, despite advances in women's

rights, Ahmed (2010a) argues that happiness is still used as a tool of hegemony,

justifying inequality in work, pay, education and representation in public life by

orienting to certain social values, such as the "happy homemaker" and positioning

them as endangered:

> The image of the happy housewife is repeated and accumulates affective
>
> power in the very narration of her as a minority subject who has to reclaim
>
> something that has been taken from her. This affective power not only
>
> presses against feminist claims that behind the image of the happy
>
> housewife was an unspoken collective unhappiness but also involves a
>
> counterclaim that happiness is not so much what the housewife has but what
>
> she does: her duty is to generate happiness by the very act of embracing
>
> this image.

(Ahmed, 2010a, p. 53).

This quote demonstrates the need for analyses that investigate the function of

contemporary ideas about happiness when taken up in everyday talk and narrative

projects. How might women navigate the duty to create their happiness by taking up

a happy homemaker position? How might they trouble, resist or subvert it? More

broadly, do people – women and men – draw on the idea of happiness as

enterprise, how and to what ends? What subjectivities, positions and dilemmas are

implicated in their accounts of happiness? There has been little qualitative empirical

work that has explored everyday understandings of happiness to see how wider

ideologies of happiness may be reproduced, contested or otherwise used.

One piece of qualitative research that has taken everyday discourses of

happiness as its focus is Hyman's (2011; 2014) sociological project. She

interviewed 26 London residents about happiness, identifying three main

discourses. First, happiness as biological or asocial, occurring or not regardless of

societal changes over time. Second, happiness as normative, meaning that her

participants oriented to culturally specific rules for how 'appropriate' happiness

should be experienced and displayed. Lastly, she found a therapeutic discourse of

happiness was most widely used, with participants talking about happiness in terms

of self-care and responsibility. However, although this research is useful in

examining how a neoliberal understanding of happiness as entrepreneurship of the

self is taken up, it lacks a social psychological understanding of talk as dynamic,

flexible and action-orientated. Although she shows that her participants drew on

multiple and sometimes conflicting discourses to talk about their understandings of

happiness, she does not look at what these different discourses achieve and in what

contexts. Instead, she shifts to looking at what these discourses can tell us about

how happiness is experienced by participants.

As Hyman (2014) also notes, there has been much quantitative, positivist

work on the determinants and measurement of happiness in order to follow through

on the stated aim of the UK government to improve citizens' happiness. A social

constructionist view troubles this view of attitudes and emotions as tangible entities

resulting from an internal cognitive-affective state, which can be measured and

reformed (Potter, 1998; Rose, 1996). However, despite positioning her research as

constructionist, Hyman's (2014) stated aim, to "shed light upon the way in which

happiness is experienced and made sense of in relation to the determinants and

ratings that these other studies have highlighted" (p. 76) seems in danger of reifying

this account. In contrast, the discursive psychological approach I propose shifts the

focus of enquiry from attempting to divine internal mental states to looking at *how*

they are constructed and to what ends. Wiggins (2015) proposes that this could help

us move past the unstated Cartesian dualism (a split between an internal, subjective

world and a material, objective one) that underpins much of psychological research

and theory, to a future of attitudinal research involving "A gradual re-definition of the concept, developing an understanding that focuses more on practices and consequences, than on supposed thought states" (p. 111).

Research that combines a focus on formal, expert discourses of happiness and everyday, mundane ones is helpful in following through on this project. As Cabanas (2016) among others suggests, neoliberal happiness creates a relationship between psychologists and individuals in which the latter "simultaneously consume, produce, and efficiently capitalize their emotional life through the techniques and repertoires provided by the former" (p. 471). This thesis aims to investigate how these repertoires and techniques are outlined in expert literature and if and how they are taken up in everyday meaning-making around happiness. It is of interest to see whether the new "science" of happiness is shaping a new set of affective-discursive repertoires and associated subject positions; how people may use these to negotiate the ideological dilemmas inherent in ideas about happiness; and how they may deal with or potentially challenge views and ideas that are in the process of becoming normative. This approach also allows an investigation of power dynamics because, as Wetherell et al. (2015) point out, affective-discursive subject positions are not available democratically to all, rather they are adopted or attributed in contradictory ways.

3.8 Concluding remarks

In recent years there has been a growing focus on happiness in economics, social policy, mass media, business and academia – most notably in the new discipline of positive psychology. Initiatives to measure and increase happiness have now become commonplace in the UK and other Western societies, and this is often presented as an enlightened approach in comparison to 20th century policies and concerns. There has been a growing body of critical work that problematizes these developments, which I have summarised in four interrelated strands. First,

genealogical approaches that highlight how different iterations of happiness reflect different cultural and historical ideas about personhood and desirable conduct. Second, that there are fundamental problems with the way happiness, or subjective wellbeing is defined. Arguments include that definitions are too reductive; that they are ethnocentric and prescriptive of a Western, individualized version of happiness; or too vague, with various meanings that comprise different and sometimes contradictory values and moralities. The third strand of critiques problematise the measurement of happiness. Various arguments contend that happiness is unsuitable for quantitative research, and that the use of questionnaires and statistical analyses to investigate happiness, even if a universal definition could be decided, is fundamentally flawed (e.g. Davies, 2015; Harré, 2002; White, 2014). There have also been many critiques of positive psychological attempts to augment happiness, based on methodological failings and 'scientism', whereby it dresses up culturally normative advice as scientifically or mathematically 'proven'. This, as various authors (e.g. Binkley, 2011, 2014; Wright, 2013; Yen, 2010) have pointed out, can serve to mask a strongly neoliberal ideology wherein the individual is understood as self-regulating and responsible for its own wellbeing, operating in a 'neutral' social sphere.

This individualism was further investigated in the fourth strand of happiness critiques, which pointed out the cultural, geographical and temporal specificity of how the 'self' is constructed in happiness literature. There is an assumption of Cartesian dualism and moral subjectivism (that individuals are able to choose their own meaning of the good life, based on their inner emotions). An outline of literature that considers how the self is constructed in self-help books demonstrates how these ideas are popularised and how the rhetorical strategies of self-help work to imbricate the reader in their own projects of self-improvement. This view of the self has been problematised for having a de-politicising, pacifying affect by locating

sources of unhappiness in the internal, subjective realm (Christopher &
Hickinbottom, 2008; Greco & Stenner, 2013).

The discourses of choice and enterprise around happiness and wellbeing
found in self-help texts and positive psychological research mirror those identified in
welfare policies and documents (see Section 2.7), and broadly reflect the changes
in social citizenship rights in the UK, where there has been a gradual shift away
from welfarism to neoliberalism (e.g. Dean & Melrose, 1999; Dwyer, 2010). As
discussed in the previous chapter, the theories and vocabulary of positive
psychology and behavioural economics have been increasingly drawn on in
institutional discourse to construct particular attitudes, emotions and attributes as
desirable, and even obligatory (Cromby, 2014; Friedli & Stearns, 2015). There is,
therefore, a clear link between social citizenship and the turn to happiness which, as
an increasingly dominant strand of psy discourse, has shaped ideas of the 'effortful'
or responsible citizen, who works to claim that status not just through paid work, but
by cultivating desired attitudes and behaviours (e.g. Binkley, 2011, 2014; Gibson,
2009, 2011; McDonald & O'Callaghan, 2008; Rose, 1996). Here, I have proposed to
build on the critical work on the turn to happiness by investigating what is achieved
at an individual, interpersonal and structural level when people draw on different
repertoires or affective-discursive practices of happiness, what these reveal about
who or what is currently valued, and who or what is marginalised.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This thesis is based on analyses of two types of data: best-selling books on

happiness, and qualitative interviews on the topic of happiness, both of which were

analysed using critical discursive psychology. This chapter provides an overview of

this methodology, including its epistemological and theoretical foundations. It then

details the data collection procedure and stages of analysis for each dataset. This is

followed by a discussion of validity in qualitative work and a reflexive section

considering my role in shaping the research.

4.1.1 Theoretical and epistemological foundations

My research takes the epistemological position of social constructionism, an

approach that challenges the mainstream positivist or empiricist assumption that it is

possible to look for 'truth' or 'reality'. Instead, it sees the world as socially produced,

meaning there is no essential, determinable nature to people or the world;

experience and understanding are thus approached as embedded in socio-historical

context (Burr, 2005). Whereas mainstream psychology translates the complexities

and dynamism of social action and interaction into individualised categories such as

'attitudes' and 'traits' to be measured and considered in terms of how they inform

our actions; social constructionist approaches are interested in the constructions

that are culturally available to people to make sense of and recount their

experiences, thoughts and beliefs (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Silverman, 2016).

Taking a critical approach to taken-for-granted knowledge is a key feature of social

constructionism, and this includes questioning the origins, implications and potential

functions of psychological concepts and methods (Burr, 2015; Yardley, 2000).

A focus on the constructive role of language is key in social constructionism,

and the well-documented 'turn to language' of the late 1980s saw the emergence of

discursive approaches in psychology. Such approaches, broadly speaking, see talk

not as reflective of internal feelings, opinions, attitudes and beliefs, but as a communicative act designed to have particular meanings for, and effects upon, particular listeners (Leudar & Antaki, 1996; Wetherell & Potter, 1987). However, there are a number of different discursive approaches, informed by different theoretical positions and with different kinds of research question, not all of which sit comfortably with each other. Seymour-Smith (2015) helpfully considers discursive approaches as falling into two broad types: micro and macro. Macro approaches foreground the wider cultural context of talk, and include Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) (e.g. Parker, 1992) and Discourse Analysis (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). These approaches often (but not always) use interview and focus group data, looking at power relations and the political implications of how people are positioned and subjectivised by the dominant discourses and social practices available to them.

Micro approaches include Discursive Psychology (Edwards & Potter, 1992) and Conversation Analysis (e.g. Stokoe, Hepburn & Antaki, 2012) both of which take a more fine-grained approach, looking at how talk is sequentially ordered to achieve various ends. The emphasis here is on analysing naturalistic data, such as recorded conversations between doctors and patients or police interviews, which would exist regardless of the researcher. Proponents of this approach privilege the use of such data as it minimises the "interpretative gap" (Edwards, 2012, p. 428) by situating the research in everyday practices, making the focus of investigation the participants' concerns rather than the researcher's agenda, as is the case in interview or focus-group data. However, Wetherell (1998; 2001; 2003b) argues that conversation analysis's focus on the immediate discursive action in turn-taking overlooks the cultural context in which the conversation is taking place. She considers it possible and useful to analyse research interview data beyond the local, interactional level as it is still norm-oriented and draws on shared ideological

resources (see Section 4.4.4.1 for a more detailed discussion of the methodological implications of using interview data).

4.1.2 Critical discursive psychology

Following Margaret Wetherell and Nigel Edley (e.g. Edley, 2001; Edley & Wetherell, 2001; Wetherell, 1996a, 1998; Wetherell & Edley, 1998, 2014), the approach of critical discursive psychology I am using for this analysis does not attempt to 'pick a side' of micro or macro; rather it aims to pay attention to what is going on at both levels. An analysis of language in use and what it accomplishes in the moment (the micro level) is not seen as incompatible with a simultaneous focus on the underlying ideological practices, historical narratives and discourses drawn on to enable such actions. In addition to looking at micro and macro elements of talk and text, I also aim to look at the meso level, which Wetherell (2008; 2012) describes as the routine or habitual ways in which people make sense of and live their lives. This requires attending to patterns of sense-making and how particular objects and understandings are habitually constructed in talk. Wetherell's (2012) concept of affective-discursive practices has been useful here. It is an approach that draws on process-based methodologies to conceptualise affect as a "flowing activity" (p. 12) occurring in social life, and playing out over different durations – for example, a flaring up of self-pity that dies away with the uptake of different interpretative repertoires, or the longer cycle of 'work on the self'. Such affective practices are thus situated in and interconnected with social life, and while they are dynamic and constantly reconfiguring themselves, they can also become sedimented into patterns of performance, relationships, embodiment and narrative, something Wetherell (2012) refers to as "affective ruts" (p.14). Affective-discursive practices also vary in scale, from solitary activities, to collective moods, or what Berlant (1997) calls a national present tense. As such, Wetherell notes the importance of addressing issues of power – how affect is regulated and legitimised, what affective-

discursive practices are currently privileged and who can and can't take up the associated subject positions, and what relations does an affective-discursive practice create, enable or disrupt?

In my analysis of both types of data I use Potter and Wetherell's (1987) concept of interpretative repertoires, a term for the common-sense ideas that people produce in talk, or that are drawn on in texts, and which comprise clichés, familiar storylines, anecdotes and metaphors – they are what 'everybody knows' (Seymour-Smith, 2015). As such, interpretative repertoires often appear in talk and text in partial form, as members of a shared culture don not need a full accounting to recognise the version of the world that is being worked up. Van Djik (2012) uses the metaphor of icebergs to illustrate this idea, in that people often only show or see fragments in talk and text while the majority lies under the surface as implied or assumed knowledge. As Wetherell (1996a) argues, interrogating what is assumed or taken for granted in this way helps to access the functioning of an ideology in social interaction, which she describes as being:

> ... the elimination of the awareness of contradictions in material
> circumstances or perception of exploitation; mainly through the
> presentation of relationships (which seem important only for a particular
> kind of social arrangement) as natural or common sense. In this way
> sectional vested interests become general (Wetherell, 1996a, p.161).

However, as Billig at al. (1988) point out, ideology is fundamentally dilemmatic and dynamic, containing contrary themes without which it would not be possible to think about our social world. Societies argue, think about and puzzle over different things, depending on the historical period and their particular ideologies. For example the traditions of liberal philosophy dating from the Enlightenment, such as individualism, circulate and inform the ideas in modern-day

UK (and many other parts of the West) where they have been transformed into everyday ideas, with dilemmatic natures. Ideology here is not seen as working in a top-down way, but as shaping rather than dictating thought and action, being influenced and contested by popular, everyday discourse in turn (Billig et al., 1988). Another fruitful line of investigation in this thesis, then, is how the interviewees and book authors managed ideological dilemmas around happiness, which are experienced when they "must see things from opposing standpoints, so that there is an awareness of the consequences of one line of action for the other" (Billig at al.,1988, p.91).

A third analytic concept I have drawn on, particularly in my analysis of interview data, is that of subject positions. People draw on interpretative repertoires in various ways to carry out social actions such as positioning themselves and others, blaming, justifying, accounting or managing 'subject-object relations' – that is, how descriptions are worked up as objective or subjective (Edley, 2001; Edwards, 2005; Seymour-Smith, 2015). Such subject positions are dynamic, dependent on the social context and, as outlined above, often conflicting or contradictory, requiring people to be deft, creative and flexible in how they position themselves on a moment-by-moment basis. This marks a notable contrast to the FDA conceptualisation of the subject as bound up in regimes and practices of knowledge, which they reproduce at an unconscious, or at least unaware, level (e.g. Walkerdine, 2003). As Taylor (2015) argues, while a critical discursive psychological approach incorporates a historical consideration of how forms of meaning-making took shape, its dual focus on unfolding social action allows for an investigation of how people draw on interpretative repertoires in novel, unusual or counter-normative ways to achieve particular discursive actions. In doing so, it conceptualises people as inseparable from their social worlds, making it well suited to psychosocial research (Taylor, 2015). This is the discursive subject of my thesis –

one who is produced but not bound by their political, social and cultural contexts, and who has, as McAvoy (2009) writes, "a keen grasp of ideological dilemmas and contextualised argument" (p. 227).

4.2 Sources of data and rationale

This thesis involved two stages of data collection. Firstly, a document analysis of four popular books on happiness, selected on the basis of book sales and number of mentions in the British media. This aimed, broadly, to examine how popular 'expert' texts constructed ideas about happiness and what identities and actions these offered to readers, and therefore adds to a growing body of literature looking at how ideological messages about selfhood, behaviour and successful citizenship are produced and legitimised in happiness rhetoric (see Chapter 3 for a review of this literature). Secondly, I conducted face-to-face interviews with 30 UK residents about their understandings of, and ideas about, happiness. Here, I aimed to help fill a gap in the literature, which lacks empirical research on how current ideological messages and practices around happiness may be drawn on, used or resisted in everyday talk. Looking at two different data sources was informed by the idea that happiness has become a new site of governmentality (Binkley, 2011; 2014). Foucault (1988) argued that humans acquire knowledge about themselves in different ways, naming four types of technologies that work alongside each other to produce this knowledge: Technologies of production; of sign systems; of power (how the subject is objectivised); and of the self – the way people transform themselves by working on their bodies, thoughts and behaviours. Foucault (1988) described governmentality as "This contact between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self" (p. 19). The dual analysis of this thesis aims to map – albeit imperfectly – onto these latter two technologies, with the interviews eliciting data on technologies of the self, and the document analysis looking at technologies

of power – how the subject is constituted by the texts' 'expert' discourses[1]. Another reason for using two different sources is that it allows data triangulation (Silverman, 2013) – looking at the same phenomena in different contexts, which can help demonstrate the validity of qualitative research (See Section 4.5 for a more detailed discussion of validation).

4.2.2 Approach to analysis

The next two sections of this chapter (4.3 and 4.4) will outline my analyses of the two datasets. However, while this is set out in a structured, logical way, with 'coding' followed by 'analysis' for example, this is something of a simplification for the purposes of presentation. In common with much qualitative research, my approach did not straightforwardly follow a formal, step-by-step process. Instead, during the weeks and months of analysing the data, I was informed by my ongoing academic reading, and nascent patterns or ideas sparked by the data also led me to look up research that I may not otherwise have found. For example, reading McKenzie-Mohr and Lafrance's (2011) work on 'tightrope talk' caused me to investigate my interview data to see if and how this was used by participants. Conversely, participants' use of reported speech led me to Myers' (1999) work on the subject, which I ended up incorporating in the final analysis. Some of these unanticipated avenues of inquiry helped to generate some of the findings presented in the following chapters, whereas others either did not lead anywhere fruitful, or have been 'parked' for later. My approach therefore shares some of the characteristics of Billig's (1988) proposal of "traditional scholarship" (p. 199) as an alternative to a prescribed set of procedures, which often characterises social scientific research.

---

[1] While this may seem a lofty claim to make about what can be classed as self-help books; it is worth noting that two of the four authors, Richard Layard and Paul Dolan, have been highly influential in shaping institutional practices around happiness, such as the UK's annual 'measurement' of its population's happiness levels, and social welfare policies around mental health. Furthermore, all the books draw on the scientific discourses propounded by positive and behavioural psychology and thus can be seen as extensions of these more formal technologies of power.

Billig advocates reading as widely and in as many different languages as possible (sadly, I could only comply with the former) to help draw connections between diverse ideas, and suggests this is particularly suited to studying ideology. I certainly felt my approach to the data generated more insights and connections – and was generally more enjoyable – than working through it in a formalised set of procedures, and concur with Billig (1988) in celebrating the role played by "individual quirkiness" (p. 200) in analysing qualitative data. This also mirrors Edley's (2001) suggestion that identifying interpretative repertoires is a "craft skill" (p. 198) that relies on practice and intuition rather than following set principles.

4.3 Document analysis

There has been a well-established capacity of documents, charts and records to create, maintain and negotiate social relationships in economic, political, educational and other organisational life, and they therefore play a crucial role in how we perceive the world around us (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004; Rapley, 2007; Silverman, 2014; 2016). Analysis of documents from a critical discursive psychological perspective does not involve replicating the way documents are usually used – as a passive *resource* to gain further understanding – but instead looks at documents as a *topic*, analysing how they are put together; how they construct a particular aspect of life and what functions their claims and activities might achieve (Silverman, 2014).

My analysis of books about happiness, then, was not about looking at whether their claims were true or false, but to examine how they worked to create a 'reality' around happiness and what understandings, actions and identities may be promoted or impeded by such a reality. Such an approach requires relating the texts to the world they exist in, rather than confining analysis to the texts' internal organisation, asking who was assumed to have the authority to produce particular versions of reality and whose interests this reality might serve (Gubrium, 2005;

Rapley, 2007). To do this, I found it helpful to follow Rapley's (2007) suggestion and turn around the main question posed by the four books: 'How can we create or increase happiness in individuals and society?' and ask instead, 'How is the individual and society created in this happiness literature?' I also tried to attend to what silences there may be in the text.

4.3.1 Rationale for book choice

The choice of books to analyse was based on book sales and 'reach', determined on the basis of how many people are likely to have been exposed to the ideas in the books. In the UK, the top-selling non-academic books specifically about happiness were identified using Nielsen Bookscan data from 1st January 2010 to June 2016, on the simple, but possibly erroneous, premise that higher book sales suggest that more people have read them. Among the top-selling books were: Paul McKenna's *I Can Make You Happy* (71,865 total sales); *Happiness by Design* by Paul Dolan (48,520 total sales); *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science* by Richard Layard (35,608 total sales over two editions); and *The Happiness Project* by Gretchen Rubin (26,716 total sales).[2] Additionally, 'reach' was also informed by how often a book was mentioned in online or print media. An individual might never buy or read a book on happiness, yet still be exposed to the ideas contained in them due to their take-up in newspapers and magazines, which may interview the authors, publish extracts from their book, or reproduce their ideas and 'findings' in articles. With this in mind, I used the Google news search function to see how often various self-help and popular psychology books on happiness were mentioned in the UK press

---

[2] It is worth noting that two other books with the word 'happiness' in their sub-title came higher or as high on the best-selling books list. These were *Rules for Life: A Personal Code for Living a Better, Happier, More Successful Life* by Richard Templar (99,120 copies over two different imprints) and *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness* by Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein (39,526 copies). However, a brief initial read of these books revealed that their main topic was not happiness, and in the case of *Nudge*, it barely mentioned the concept at all. This is interesting in itself, suggesting that 'happiness' carries such cultural cachet that referring to it in a book title may increase sales. However, based on the lack of engagement with happiness as a topic, I chose not to include these books in the final analysis.

between January 1, 2010 and July 7, 2016. The search criteria were that both the book and author were mentioned, and that the subject matter or premise of the book was engaged with, even if only briefly (so a mention along the lines of "Paul McKenna, author of *I Can Make You Happy"* that went on to talk about something other than his book on happiness was not counted, for example). The two most frequently mentioned books on happiness (out of a list of 19 books on happiness published in the last 15 years) were: Paul Dolan's *Happiness by Design* (29 mentions) and Gretchen Rubin's *The Happiness Project* (22 mentions). Richard Layard's *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science* had 9 specific mentions, but the search items 'Layard' and 'Happiness' brought up many more, due to Layard's high-profile role as a policy advisor.[3] Finally, Paul McKenna's book also had 9 mentions, making it the joint-seventh placed book in terms of media mentions. These two measures of reach, taken together, informed the final choice of books to analyse.

4.3.2 Analysis

4.3.2.1 Coding

I started by reading all the books and jotting down initial thoughts in a notebook. I then photocopied the books and used these pages for my coding, which involved using coloured pens to mark out different repertoires, and writing ideas or summaries in the margins. Coding is the process of organising data into meaningful and manageable 'chunks'. However, Potter and Wetherell (1987) caution against seeing coding as merely a way of categorising data, pointing out that it is also necessary for conceptualising it, working out potential relationships and raising questions. As such, coding and analysis does not follow a set recipe, and can involve various different methods and stages that are best learnt through practice –

---

[3] Richard Layard has been described as one of the leading 'claims-makers' around Happiness in the UK (Frawley, 2015b) due to his work as 'Happiness Tsar' in Tony Blair's government, his high-profile championing of the promotion of happiness as a policy goal in the UK; his influence in rolling out the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies initiative; and his role as the co-founder of the Action for Happiness campaign and website (www.actionforhappiness.org).

it is a skill likened to a craft or learning to ride a bike (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; 1994). My approach, following Rapley (2007) and Silverman (2014; 2016) was to structure the process by having a number of questions in mind as I worked through the documents. These were:

- How is 'happiness' constructed?

- What is the 'problem' around happiness that this book seeks to address?

- How is the text organised to act on this and how does it set about persuading readers of its authority?

- How is the 'self' constructed? What assumptions are made in how humans and human behaviour is talked about?

- What different metaphors are used?

As suggested by Silverman (2016), I started with a small piece of the data from which to generate an initial analytic scheme, which can then be used to compare to the rest of the data, looking for similarities and differences and modifying accordingly until the whole dataset – in this case, all four books – were accounted for. For simplicity, I approached this alphabetically according to author surnames, so I generated my initial repertoires from Paul Dolan's *Happiness by Design* (2014). I came up with a list of initial codes, such as "economic metaphors" for references to "banking or investing in happiness" or noting mentions of "the brain" or references to "mindfulness/being in the moment". I then came up with a loose analytic structure that linked codes into overarching repertoires, such as that happiness is located and created internally, that it is natural, and that it is threatened by modern life. Next, I moved on to analyse Layard's *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science* (2nd Ed.) (2011); McKenna's *I Can Make You Happy* (2009); and finally Rubin's *The Happiness Project* (2009), adding and modifying repertoires and looking for common patterns.

In doing this, there was an obvious temptation to 'cherry-pick', and shoehorn the additional data into the repertoires I had already identified. However, I aimed, as far as possible, for "comprehensive data treatment" (Mehan, cited in Silverman, 2013). As Rapley (2007) notes, this involves dealing with a near-constant succession of 'exceptions' or deviant cases that challenged this scheme and led to frequent modifications of it. In this case, Layard's book in particular resulted in a number of new and modified repertoires as it attended far more to the social factors surrounding happiness, so I added repertoires such as Happiness comes from community, and Happiness is threatened by Western culture.

4.3.2.2 Analysis

At the end of this process I had an rough analytic structure that provisionally described the patterns of accounting in the data. The next steps were to look at what functions and consequences these might have, and return to the data to test these ideas out, looking for consistency, variation and contradictions, which Potter and Wetherell (1987) suggest is particularly productive. However, after Tonkiss (2017) I chose to be more selective when returning to the data, by focusing on the segments of the text that seemed to be the best sources of analytic material. In light of my research questions, I paid most attention to the parts of the books that described and operationalised happiness, and that outlined what the reader could or should do in order to benefit from the books' information. This involved careful rereading of the data, paying close attention to phrasing and the organisational features of the books, as well as questioning my own assumptions, both about happiness and about what I was expecting the books to say – and not say (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

4.3.2.3 Writing up

I also had to be selective in choosing what to write up for this thesis. There was a surfeit of data and I was constrained by space. For this reason, I chose not to delve

into how repertoires of happiness were subtly (and sometimes not subtly) gendered and classed, although this is a useful avenue of investigation. Similarly, I decided not to focus too heavily on fact construction around happiness, and removed much of what I had written on this from the final write-up. Instead, I concentrated on how happiness was constructed and how individuals were positioned, which I felt would sit well with the second stage of my research and provide something to compare and contrast my interview data with. As Potter and Wetherell (1987) propose, my analysis was not 'final' at this point, but still ongoing; the process of writing helping to sharpen and inform my analysis.

4.4 Analysis of research interviews

During the document analysis, I was preparing for my second round of data collection: in-depth, semi-structured interviews with people on the topic of happiness. At the end of each interview I also planned to give participants the Personal Well-being Questionnaire (Office for National Statistics, 2011 – see Appendix D) to read and, if they were willing to do so, answer and discuss their responses. The four-question Personal Well-being Questionnaire (PWQ) is used by the Office for National Statistics to measure evaluative, eudemonic and affective experience, and was added to the Annual Population Survey in 2011 to fulfil the coalition government's 2010 pledge to measure "gross national happiness"[4]. As such, I was interested in seeing how participants oriented to this measure and what accounting practices and subject positions they may take in response to it. Once I had received ethical approval from York St John University's Research Ethics Committee to carry out this research, I started seeking participants.

---

[4] It is useful to note that the Personal Well-being Questionnaire was informed by research and publications by two of the authors of the books analysed in stage one of my research, Paul Dolan and Richard Layard (e.g. Dolan, Layard & Metcalfe, 2011; Dolan & Metcalfe, 2012)

4.4.1 Selection criteria and recruitment

My criteria for suitable interviewees were simply that they were UK residents who were willing to take part in an interview. While this seems an uncharacteristically broad population for a qualitative research project it was informed by two considerations. First, that I could not think of a convincing reason to exclude anyone based on, for example, gender, location, occupation, age, religion or relationship status. As this project was informed by a desire to investigate how the ideological messages and practices identified in 'expert' happiness literature may be drawn on, used or resisted in everyday discursive practices, it made sense to me to draw on as wide a selection of people as I could. Second, at the time of starting the thesis no qualitative research had been done on how British people orient to the idea of happiness, so starting out with a broad lens seemed sensible. It was hoped that taking such a wide-angle view might point towards some interesting avenues for future investigation. For example, from a feminist perspective, I thought it likely, or at least possible, that the subject positions adopted and kinds of ideological dilemmas faced may be gendered, but by solely interviewing females I might miss out on seeing whether similar moments of trouble occurred in my interviews with males, or what different accounting practices they may use to navigate similar discursive territory.

One main criteria I had, though, was to interview people I did not know particularly well or, ideally, at all. As Seidman (2013) states, there are potential problems with interviewing friends, such as an assumption of mutual understanding that can undermine the process of qualitative interviewing, which aims to seek clarity and explore interpretations. With someone unknown or known only in passing to the interviewer, there is enough distance to ensure nothing is taken for granted between the interlocutors (see also Bell & Nutt, 2002).

I recruited most participants through asking people I know to approach friends, acquaintances, colleagues and neighbours that they thought might be willing to take part. This generated 24 participants, six of whom I had met once or twice socially but did not know well, and 18 of whom I had never met. I was aware, in seeking participants, of a couple of issues: firstly, that as a white middle-class, middle-aged researcher with, on the whole, middle-class friends and acquaintances, my sample would be likely to come from a similar social group and therefore not tap into as wide a range of ideas and repertoires around happiness. I made some imperfect attempts to overcome this by actively seeking people that would identify as working-class through family, friends and a former research participant who I had since become friends with. Additionally, a couple of participants were recruited through a friend's Narcotics Anonymous group. Needless to say, none of this could guarantee a particular class membership, but they were useful routes to help me cast my net wider than my social or work connections.

Following on from this, the second potential issue was that those who agreed to take part may be more likely to consider themselves, broadly speaking, 'happy', particularly because being able to claim happiness is increasingly associated with successful personhood (Ahmed, 2010a; McAvoy, 2009). Again, this could restrict the potential variation in accounting practices around happiness. For this reason I made an effort to reach out to potential interviewees who might have more difficulty in accessing a 'happy' identity, to see how they might define and work with notions of happiness, something I thought was particularly important as the growing idea that happiness lies mainly under individual control could potentially work to further marginalise certain people such as those with mental health diagnoses (Ehrenreich, 2009). To this end, I asked Dr Nick Rowe, the Director of Converge, a joint initiative been York St John University and the Tees Esk and Wear Valley NHS Trust, which provides free arts courses to people with mental

health difficulties, to see if I could approach Converge Students to be potential interviewees. My own involvement with Converge was useful here – I had devised and taught a course called Understanding Happiness for two years and knew some students either through having taught them, or through Converge social events. My request was allowed and an email was sent to Converge students by the Converge administrator. Nine people expressed an interest, six of whom went on to be interviewed. Three of these people were already known to me as they had attended one of my Converge courses in the previous two years[5]. At the time there were around 150 Converge Students, so this was a low take-up, but this is arguably understandable given the research topic. The inclusion of Converge students raised ethical considerations, which are discussed in the next section, and also the unappealing prospect of creating a false dichotomy within the sample between participants who have mental health diagnoses and those who do not. I was keen to avoid treating participants as ontologically different in this way, and instead took the approach of looking at how people mobilised their own personal experiences during the interview conversation. As it turned out, some participants discussed or mentioned mental health problems, either their own or others', whereas other participants did so infrequently or not at all, and this was the case regardless of whether or not they had been recruited via Converge.

Recruitment, then, was based on a combination of purposive and opportunity sampling, and it cannot be claimed that the participants were representative of the wider UK population. However, a qualitative approach does not aim for a representative sample or statistically generalisable findings as it is not concerned with counting or measuring attitudes or beliefs, but in exploring the different and dynamic ways they can be expressed (Gaskell, 2000; Potter &

---

[5] At the time of the interviews I was not involved with teaching or facilitating any Converge courses – had I been, I would have considered it inappropriate to interview current students.

Wetherell, 1987). The aim of this research is not to make sweeping claims about how all UK citizens understand themselves in relation to ideas about happiness, but to investigate the shared discursive resources available, how participants drew on them, and for what purposes, and how they managed the contradictions inherent in interpretative repertoires around happiness (Billig et al., 1988; Wetherell, 1996b; 1998).

4.4.2 Participant details

In total, 30 people took part in this stage of my research. Nineteen were female; eleven were male and they ranged in age from 20 to 71. Eighteen participants worked either full time, part time or in self-employment; two were full-time mature students; and ten identified as being out of the labour market either due to retirement, home-making duties or an inability to work. Four participants were based in London and the rest came from a range of urban and rural parts of Northern England. Twenty-seven were white and UK-born, the remaining three came from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. Of these, two had become UK citizens, and the third acquired British citizenship shortly after the research interview. A summary of participants is outlined in Table 1 on the next page.

Table 1: Summary of participants

Name	Age	Occupation	Relationship status
Alice	38	Freelance event organizer	Married
Arthur	68	Retired administrator	2nd marriage
Asif	64	Part-time (PT) supermarket cashier	Married
Barbara	20	Sales assistant	Single
Bill	31	Project manager	Married
Bob	48	Self-employed	Co-habiting
Caroline	55	Home-maker	Married
Col	39	Employment Support Allowance (ESA)	Single
Dan	67	Retired manager	Married
Elwood	43	Benefits consultant	Single
Farrah	26	Support worker	Single
Fiona	35	IT technician	2nd marriage
Gertrude	54	Cleaner	Single (divorced)
Gill	55	Home-maker	Married
Ginny	52	Mature student	Single (divorced)
Graham	71	Retired manager	Married
Jane	44	Stay-at-home mum	Married
Jessica	24	Sales assistant	Single
Jodi	23	Concession manager	Co-habiting
John	67	Semi-retired tutor	Single
Kerry	51	Chaplain	Married
Lisa	34	ESA	Single
Lucy	41	Actress & coach	Single
Mandy	59	Administrator (PT)	Single (divorced)
Monica	67	Café manager	Married
Prozac Boy (PB)	43	ESA	Single
Sally	51	Café owner	2nd marriage
Sean	51	Musician & labourer	Single
Seelagavesi (Seela)	38	Mature student	Single (divorced)
Valerie	64	Retired administrator	Single

4.4.3 Ethical considerations

4.4.3.1 Consent

Obtaining informed consent from participants is a vital part of research, and in accordance with the British Psychological Society's (BPS) Code of Human Research Ethics (2014) I gave potential participants information about my research and what their involvement would entail by emailing them an information sheet with full details of the research (see Appendix A). This gave people time to consider whether they would be prepared to take part and, if they indicated their willingness, we set an interview date. Before the interview started I again explained what taking part in my research involved, and invited participants to ask any questions they may have before asking them to sign a consent form (see Appendix B).

4.4.3.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

To maintain confidentiality and anonymity, names and any other identifying details such as workplaces or job titles were changed or deleted in the transcripts. The interview recordings and transcripts were kept securely, in password-locked files on both my laptop computer and university-networked My Documents drive. All participants were also informed that they could withdraw their data from the research for up to six weeks following their interview by emailing me to request this, and, although no one chose to do this, I kept details of participants' real names and contact details alongside their pseudonyms in a separate, securely stored, password-protected document, in case this was necessary.

4.4.3.3 Protection from harm

Another ethical consideration outlined by BPS (2014) guidelines is the need to protect participants from undue harm, whether physical or emotional. As participants were asked about how they understand happiness and what sort of situations might cause happiness or unhappiness; as well as being given an (optional) questionnaire about happiness, there was a clear possibility that this may cause distress above

and beyond what they may experience in everyday life. To guard against any emotional harm being caused by the subject matter, I aimed to ask questions in a non-judgmental manner, keep the tone of the interview friendly and informal, and be alert to whether the interview might be causing distress. I also made it clear before the interview that participants were able to choose not to answer questions, pause or stop the interview at any time. After the interview there was a debrief, where I asked participants how they had found the process and allowed them time for reflection and discussion if they wanted it. I also gave them a post-interview information sheet with contact details for potentially helpful organisations such as the Samaritans and Mind (see Appendix E).

While most participants reported neutral or positive feelings about the interview experience, with the most common reaction being that most people had never thought so much about happiness before, one of the first participants I interviewed, who took the pseudonym 'Jodie' and who was not recruited via Converge, mentioned during the interview that the prospect and process of being interviewed about happiness was making her feel anxious. She also talked about having a history of anxiety issues. While she did not want to stop the interview, I was conscious of her unease, and drew the interview to an earlier conclusion that I otherwise might have done. We also had a longer chat after the interview and I did my best to reassure her that her main concern of not having been any 'use' to me was far from the case and that her time and input had been invaluable. As this experience demonstrated, there is a clear ethical concern in approaching people who identify as having or having had mental health problems to talk about happiness, or possibly any subject that might be perceived to have an associated 'right' or desirable way of being. In subsequent interviews I made sure I stressed the point that there was no right or wrong and that all ideas and attitudes were valid. While I did not know about Jodi's history of anxiety before the interview, I was aware

that Converge students may experience similar difficulties and tried to be alert to this during the interviews without modifying or omitting the questions I asked if possible.

4.4.4 Interview process

The interviews took place in various venues, such as cafes, bars, participants' homes and rooms at York St John University, based on participants' stated preferences. I started pilot interviews in March 2017 and finished interviewing in November 2017. Interviews lasted between 24 minutes to one hour and 34 minutes, with the majority lasting around 50-60 minutes. With participants' permission, all interviews were audio recorded then transcribed. All participants were given pseudonyms which were either self-chosen or assigned by me if no preference was expressed. Both these options presented unexpected difficulties, in that one participant chose to call himself 'Prozac Boy', thus creating an identity that was strongly linked to his experience of mental health difficulties. While I felt it was important to honour his chosen pseudonym, I shortened 'Prozac Boy' to 'PB' in the transcripts and extracts used in this thesis to help maintain focus on what was said, rather than inviting speculation about who was saying it.

Giving participants pseudonyms myself was also not entirely straightforward. Sometimes people couldn't think of or didn't seem to want to make up a name, and so I chose one for them, being aware that names can be indicative of factors such as age, social class and ethnicity as well gender. For this reason, I tried to match participants' original names to their pseudonyms fairly closely (for example, if I were to give myself a pseudonym I might choose 'Sarah' or 'Claire' as a fairly common name given to women born in 1970s Britain and therefore a good match for 'Emma'), though I am aware this will be informed by my own biases about class and age.

Participants had been sent details of the study beforehand by email and before the interview started, I reminded them of their rights to choose not to answer questions, not to participate or withdraw their data. I also reminded them that towards the end of the interview I would give them the Personal Wellbeing Questionnaire (PWQ) (Office for National Statistics, 2011) to read and – if they were happy to do so – fill out and discuss as part of the interview. Participants were also given the opportunity to ask anything they wanted. Although I had previously met nine of the participants, the remaining 21 interviewees and I had never met before the interview, so a period of ice-breaking was built into the allotted time. We sometimes found that whatever we had been talking about during this time – the weather or recent news for example – bled into the interview.

The interviews were semi-structured in that I had a list of introductory and structuring questions and potential prompts (see Appendix C for the interview schedule), but aimed to follow the conventions of informal talk as much as possible, by following up on things participants said that seemed relevant and interesting, or that I felt I wanted to clarify. Each piece of data, then, charts a unique course through the interview schedule as questions were often asked in a different order to facilitate conversational 'flow', or not asked at all if I felt the topic had already been discussed.

I aimed to minimise my contributions to the interview to relevant questions and listening conventions such as nods and smiles, 'mms' 'yeses', and other responses I felt were appropriate at times, such as 'wow', as well as leaving pauses – what Kvale (1996) calls a gentle approach that helps to give participants thinking time. This approach of not rushing to fill silences in the interviews with another question often resulted in participants continuing to speak after a short pause. However, at times I also employed an approach of more active interviewing, using Kvale's (2007) recommendation of using different types of question, such as probing

questions to interrogate inconsistencies or potential conflicts in participants'

accounts. I also asked for specific examples of what they were referring to; follow-

up questions to press for more detail such as "can you tell me what you mean by

that?", or simply repeating a word or phrase that struck me as important or unusual;

indirect questions such as "what do you think other people feel about xx?"; and

interpretative questions such as "do you mean that xx?", which sometimes resulted

in confirmation; other times in a denial or correction.

4.4.5 Addressing the limitations of research interviews

I am, therefore, aware of the important role I played in shaping the interview data,

and consider it a co-constructed text between the participants and myself. As such,

all my contributions to the interview are transcribed and considered in the analysis,

to show how the participants' utterances and subject positionings are a product of

interaction, rather than indicative of a constant, independent 'self' to be discovered. I

also consider my role as interviewer in the analysis, paying attention to the shifting

and complex positions taken by myself and the interviewee over the course of the

interviews. This works to address what Potter and Hepburn (2005, p.285) call the

"contingent problems" of using qualitative interviews in psychology, such as the

erasure of the interviewer and the failure to treat data from interviews as

interactional. However, they also outline "necessary problems" (Potter & Hepburn,

2005, p. 291) that have no straightforward solution, and these merit further

discussion in relation to my research. First, that interviews are "flooded" with the

researcher's agenda and categories. This charge is undeniable – had it not been for

the interviews, I wouldn't have even met most participants, let alone talked to them

for an hour or so about happiness. The idea that the interviews were conversations

is also flawed – the conventions of interviews are that such interactions are very

one-sided with one person asking and another responding. Potter and Hepburn's

(2005) criticism goes beyond pointing out that this creates a non-naturalistic context

for data collection, however. They also argue that the ways questions are asked can also "coach" the participant to answer in a manner that orients to the researcher's social science agenda. They give an example of a question being asked in an informal, multiple-choice format, with an uncompleted listing, arguing that this works both to model potential answers while also demonstrating that there are other possible answers. In my data there are numerous examples of me doing just this – for example in the following question to Barbara, after she had said happiness was difficult for her to talk about as she was "quite complicated"

> Emma: Do you think you're unusual in that way or do you think, um, other people are, or-

> Barbara: Erm (2) no there's definitely other people I'd say that are like that, but, no ((laughs)) I'm just quite complicated

That my follow-up question has shaped Barbara's response is undeniable. Likewise, the flooding of my interviews with my research agenda is inevitable, as is the unbalanced power dynamic between interviewer and interviewee. However, as long as the interactional detail is presented and considered in the analysis, I suggest these are not fatal flaws. Despite the contextual specificity of a research interview, participants still have access to the same range of rhetorical strategies they employ in "naturalistic" conversations and, as the above extract shows, Barbara was able to subtly reject my modelled answers and finish the sequence by reiterating her earlier point.

Another problem Potter and Hepburn (2005) point out is the "footing" (Goffman, 2001/1981) of the participants, that is, whether they are speaking on behalf of themselves or as a member of a category. This can be an issue when participants have been explicitly recruited due to group membership – for example, interviews with single fathers or midwives, in which cases it can be hard to know if

they are answering as themselves or as a category member. However, a focus on when people evoke category membership and for what purposes is often an integral part of a discursive approach and can provide a richer analysis of both interview and naturalistic data. In the present research, although no one was recruited under any category except being a UK resident, instances where participants swapped between using first person and second or third person were still attended to in the analysis to investigate what function this might have.

A third criticism of social science qualitative interviews by Potter and Hepburn (2005) is simply not relevant for my research. They point out that the common focus on what Puchta and Potter (2002) call POBAs – perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes – and the treatment of participants' responses as a way of accessing information about these psychological properties should be treated with caution. However, this argument seems to assume that social constructionist work is not done on interview data, which is inaccurate. It is perfectly possible to look at interview data in terms of how POBAs are mobilised as resources to achieve particular functions (by both participants and interviewers) – this does not require naturalistic data.

While Potter and Hepburn's (2005) suggestion of using naturalistic data is well argued and certainly helpful in avoiding many of the issue they discuss, it may not always be an option. For my purposes it did not seem to be the way forward. First, it was not clear where such naturalistic data of people discussing happiness might be found except on online forums on the subject – The Action for Happiness and Gretchen Rubin's websites have sections where readers can share their views. However, I thought it likely that forums on those websites would be something of an echo chamber rather than a site for discussion and debate, and that they were unlikely to yield a range of accounting practices and discursive resources around happiness. Furthermore, drawing conclusions about how people orient to and 'do'

happiness based on this kind of data would be compromised by the data source – a website that aims to teach people how to act to become happier. In addition, while interviews present problems, they also have benefits. I was able to question, lightly challenge and double check participants' utterances – something clearly not possible with naturalistic data. Doing so arguably led to richer data, with participants making contextualised arguments to solve problems and navigate moments of trouble. I would therefore argue that as long as the interactive context of the research interview is included in any analysis, the use of semi-structured interviews for the purpose of the current thesis is appropriate and useful.

4.4.6 Transcription

As Potter and Hepburn (2005) point out, transcription of qualitative interviews also presents problems – it is not a neutral process as it involves decisions about what to include or leave out. Following Taylor (2001) and McAvoy (2009), I therefore approached transcription as an initial phase of my analysis. As my analytic focus included what people *did* during the interview, I considered pauses, speech errors, broken speech, heavily stressed words and non-verbal sounds such as laughing or throat clearing potentially meaningful and relevant (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). These were included in the transcriptions, with short pauses indicated by a comma, and longer pauses of 2 seconds or more indicated numerically, to the nearest second, in brackets. Conventional approaches to grammar, then, were not followed, which McAvoy (2009) argues can help researchers and readers to pay more attention to the text. Participants also often used physical gestures during the interview, which I attempted to note down in the field notes I made shortly after each interview, although it is very likely that some of these were forgotten. As detailed above, my part in co-constructing the interview data cannot be ignored, and so everything I said, including my pauses, speech errors and gestures were also transcribed as fully as possible. However, in order to maintain the interactional 'flow' of the

interview, I chose to use a reduced version of the Jeffersonian system recommended by Potter and Hepburn (2005), omitting features to do with breathing, speed, pitch, volume, elongation of words and overlapping speech (see Appendix F for a summary of the transcription conventions). I also chose to transcribe certain words as they were spoken, rather than feeling I had to spell them out conventionally, in order to preserve the cadence and tone of the interview. For example, participants sometimes used 'wanna' instead of 'want to' and 'innit' instead of 'isn't it', reflecting a more informal, and sometimes ironic, way of talking.

4.4.7 Analysis
4.4.7.1 Coding

After transcribing the interviews, which in itself served to familiarise me with the data, I moved on to coding. However, the coding process arguably started with the note-taking I did after each interview, where I jotted down anything particularly striking in a notebook that I carried with me. This included my impressions of contradictions between what the participants said during the interview and what they said afterwards or beforehand, and any thoughts or potential themes that popped into my head as something that might be worth following up. For instance, a few participants talked about being able to feel happy or content 'even' at a funeral, and I noted this down after the third instance, wondering if it might lead to a pattern of accounting.

Initially, I used the computer program NVivo to generate codes, and found this a useful way of organising my data in a way that could be easily accessed: for example it allowed me to pull up all references to 'Friendship' or 'Being authentic'. However, in the later states of analysis, I found it easier to progress by hand as this allowed a better overview of the interactional flow of the interviews and what was being said when, and why. At times I revisited my NVivo file as I found it helpful in giving me a different way of looking at the data. For example, its function of

identifying the most commonly used words throughout the interviews helped set me on a few investigatory avenues that I may not have otherwise taken. Throughout the analysis I moved between reading the transcripts and listening to the audio recordings, which helped to elicit further insights as hearing the talk in action could prompt subtle shifts in my understanding of the data.

4.4.7.2 Analysis

Although I eschewed a step-by-step, linear analytic procedure, my approach was structured by the analytic technique developed most extensively in the work of Margaret Wetherell and Nigel Edley (e.g. Edley, 2001; Edley & Wetherell, 2001; Wetherell, 1996a, 1998; Wetherell & Edley, 1998, 2014). As outlined in Section 4.1.2, this involves investigating the interpretative repertoires (Potter & Wetherell, 1987), subject positions (Davies & Harré, 1990; Wetherell, 1998), and ideological dilemmas (Billig et al., 1988) used in a dataset. As Wetherell and Edley demonstrate, this approach allows for a dual investigation of both the interactional and the ideological. For example, when participants draw on interpretative repertoires – common-sense ideas that 'everyone knows' – and form subject positions, or temporary identities, in relation to them, the analysis pays attention to the context of the research interview in which the conversation is situated, and what is achieved at that moment. However, it also extends beyond the temporal brevity of this immediate interaction because such a conversation "…resonates with and carries forward voices, positions and identities from other contexts and conversations" (Wetherell & Edley, 1998, p. 170). That is, the identities and subjectivities that participants accomplish in the moment, while dynamic and plural, are often linked to more enduring contexts or relationships, such as employment status or family relations, and are therefore also located in wider social and moral orders. Relatedly, I also drew on Wetherell's (2012, 2015) work on affective-discursive practices when analysing the interview data. This involved looking for

patterns in how participants drew on accounts of emotions, psy techniques and vocabularies to construct their social worlds and accomplish identities and subjectivities. Davies and Harré (1990) suggest that subject positions confer both rights and duties on those who adopt them. I would argue that this is also the case for affective-discursive practices, and this is something I aimed to pay attention to in my analysis.

During my attempts to identify the interpretative repertoires, subject positions, ideological dilemmas and affective-discursive practices used in the interviews (as well as the books), I aimed to put aside everything I took for granted about the subject area, about personhood and the social world (Gill, 2000). This involved asking myself why I was reading something in a particular way, and what features of the transcript gave rise to that reading. To give an example, instead of accepting at face value or skimming over examples of when participants invoked friends as important to happiness – something that I might think is 'obvious', I asked myself *why* I thought it was obvious and tried to imagine a world in which it wasn't, to help consider what such an account achieved in that particular transactional moment. As such, my analysis involved looking at the functions of what was said (Gill, 2000) as well as looking for patterns and variability in terms of interpretative repertoires, subject positions and ideological dilemmas. As hypothesised by Widdicombe (1993) this was often oriented around solving problems or potential problems – for example, when participants were positioning themselves as 'happy' they sometimes formed accounts of happiness as being considered to be fluffy and superficial to serve as a contrast to the kind of happiness they were talking about. The problem here was happiness's perceived association with frivolity and a lack of seriousness, and the participants' solution was to acknowledge this and differentiate their experience to avoid being seen as superficial – what Potter (1996) calls stake inoculation. This rhetorical strategy must also be understood in the interpretative

context of a research interview, which participants were constantly orienting to in building their accounts. Finally, my analysis also pays attention to what was not said, as silences can often be as informative about social and cultural trends (Silverman, 2014).

In this analysis stage, I also tried to be careful not to fall into a common trap of qualitative research of creating an analytic category that simply maps on to a question or questions asked in the interview (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I found it useful, therefore, to look at common patterns of accounting that came up unprompted, such as when participants drew on the idea that materialism is antithetical to happiness (see Section 7.2.2) or the idea that overthinking prevents the experience of happiness (Section 7.1.2).

4.4.7.3 Writing up

As with the document analysis, there were many iterations of my write-up of the interview analysis. Sometimes this was a matter of small tweaks or substitutions of excerpts, at others, wholesale deletions and rewrites. For example, an analysis of how participants oriented to the Personal Well-being Questionnaire, which was originally going to form a whole chapter or part of one, ended up being put aside to be worked into a journal article instead. This was due in part to needing to keep the thesis below the maximum word count, but also because it seemed to take the research aims in a different direction, and was less helpful in addressing the research question of how happiness is 'done'. It took me some time to settle on the final structure of the analytic chapters – a previous version divided the extracts and analyses into an 'agentic' chapter and a 'social' one. However, this felt too forced and potentially misleading, as if people 'chose' either one way or the other to talk about happiness, when much of their talk was characterised by drawing on many and often contrasting repertoires, leading to problems and dilemmas to solve.

A further consideration when writing up was how to choose extracts to illustrate each finding presented in the final version. I generally selected an extract because it was the most striking example, but also tried to balance this with including as many of the participants' voices as possible. To this end, on the many occasions where a number of different participants drew on a similar pattern of accounting, I aimed to use an extract from an interview that hadn't been previously represented in the analysis. This is why, of the 20 extracts presented, all are from different interviews.

4.5 Validation

Validation in qualitative research refers to the various ways in which its claims can be held up to scrutiny and shown to be robust, coherent and useful (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). As discourses are situated and can often be inconsistent, reliability and replicability – the gold standard of quantitative research – are seen as inappropriate criteria (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Yardley, 2000). Instead of this horizontal generalisation across research settings, qualitative researchers often aim for vertical generalisation, that is, linking their findings to the theoretical framework the research is grounded in and to the work of others in this field (Yardley, 2000). To that end, my research was informed by governmentality studies (e.g. Binkley, 2011; 2014; 2018; De Fabián & Stecher, 2017; 201; Rose, 1996; 1999), although, as discussed earlier, I did not take the traditional FDA view of the subject as simply reproducing neoliberal discourse, but as a thinking, arguing, ideologically aware social actor. I was also informed by theoretical work critiquing the turn to happiness and positive psychology for their tendency to individualise structural problems (e.g. Ahmed, 2010a; Davies, 2015). I aimed for coherence by linking my work to previous discursive analyses of how people position themselves in relation to ideas about citizenship (e.g. Gibson, 2009; 2011; Gibson, Crossland & Hamilton, 2017); success

(e.g. McAvoy, 2009) and, more generally, rhetorical strategies used in speech (e.g. Myers, 1999; Pomerantz, 1986; Potter, 1996).

Methodological proficiency can be assessed using the key considerations of transparency, coherence, rigour and commitment (Yardley, 2000). I therefore tried to acknowledge contradictions in the data and use them as discussion points when writing up the analysis – for example when contradictory repertoires could be used by participants to serve the same end. As with my analysis of the self-help books, I also aimed for "comprehensive data treatment" (Mehan, cited in Silverman, 2013) by considering all aspects of the data (although not all were written up in the analysis), and analysing the talk at both a micro and macro level. Rigour can also be demonstrated by triangulation of data sources in order to facilitate a more rounded, in-depth understanding of the topic (Yardley, 2000). My analysis of both expert happiness literature as well as everyday understandings of happiness in talk aimed to do this. Transparency has been demonstrated by a detailed description of the collection of data and the steps taken to code and analyse it. Substantial extracts will be presented in the following analysis chapters to allow readers to see for themselves the interactive flow of the talk and my role in the creation of the data. A reflexive consideration of how my own feelings, ideas and assumptions about happiness and its associated 'industry' may have affected this research is also a necessary factor in demonstrating transparency, and follows in the next section.

Being able to show the impact and usefulness of research is another way of demonstrating validity. To this end, Potter and Wetherell (1987) suggest the idea of fruitfulness – findings that contribute to an understanding of new types of discourse or come up with new explanations of problems. This, in turn, often leads to new problems – which Potter and Wetherell (1987) also describe as a way of demonstrating the usefulness of research, explaining "the existence of new problems, and solutions, provides further confirmation that linguistic resources are

being used as hypothesized" (p. 171). An example of such a problem is considered in Section 6.4.3 when a participant's construction of happiness as "freedom from responsibility" created difficulties for her in being able to adopt the culturally valued position of motherhood being a source of happiness.

4.6 Reflexive considerations

Research is considered by many qualitative researchers, myself included, to be fundamentally political in that all talk and action are conducted in a social context and have social effects (Burman & Parker, 1993; Yardley, 2000). Motivations for undertaking the research in the first place are also frequently political. For example, one of my research aims was to investigate the socio-political functions of happiness rhetoric, which I thought might help explain why the idea that it is possible to be happy regardless of your circumstances in life was so pervasive, despite the evidence that socio-economic status has far more impact on health – including mental health – than individual behaviour (Blaxter, 1987; 1990; Lupton, 1993). Any attempt to claim neutrality or objectivity in conducting my research would be self-delusional and inaccurate.

Reflexivity is a foundational part of most qualitative research and is vital to demonstrate the political, theoretical, social and personal influences that have informed the area to be researched and the methods used, allowing the conclusions drawn to be understood in context (Lazard & McAvoy, 2018). In doing so, reflexivity helps to address both the possibilities and limitations of taking a particular approach to an object of enquiry, and critiques the idea that subjectivity is an obstacle to scientific knowledge, reframing it as a way of situating and even enriching research outputs (Finlay & Gough, 2003). However, how to effectively 'do' reflexivity can be challenging due to a wide range of different, and sometimes rather ambiguous practices (Lazard & McAvoy, 2018). Willig's (2013) differentiation between epistemological and personal reflexivity is useful here. The latter would concern how

my motives, interests, values, beliefs, identities and life experiences have informed

my research, as well as how the research process may have affected me in return.

However, the assumption inherent in personal reflexivity that it is possible to access

'truths' about such properties is incompatible with a critical discursive approach.

Just as I can't and don't assume access to my participants' or the book authors'

motivations, thoughts and feelings it seems naïve and hypocritical to uncritically

assume I can access and proffer my own. From this perspective, an account of

myself as a white, middle-class, middle-aged feminist motivated by concerns about

the role of positive psychology and happiness rhetoric in individualising structural

problems, should also be understood as another construction that draws on the

psychological constructs of emotions and attitudes to achieve a particular goal – in

this case of presenting myself as a self-aware, engaged researcher.

As a discursive psychologist, then, it is more helpful to draw on

epistemological reflexivity to look at how the research design and methods have

constructed the knowledge created, and how a different approach to, and

understanding of, happiness would have led to very different results (Willig, 2013).

For example, a phenomenological investigation of how people experience

happiness, and how practices of happiness may be embodied would have allowed

the question of how and when people experience happiness to be answered. As

Willig (2013) points out, Fairclough's (1992) concept of critical language awareness

is therefore a key part of reflexivity, to consider the way research questions are

framed and how this works to construct the knowledge created. For example, even

though I aimed to keep the interview questions as broad as possible – for example,

"Can you tell me about a time in your life when you felt happy?" or "What makes for

a good life?" – assumptions are still built into these questions demonstrating a

habitual, culturally specific way of making sense of happiness. The first orients to

happiness as something that is consciously 'felt' and that varies over time, and in

asking this, an alternative way of understanding happiness is rendered very difficult – even if a participant contests these ideas, they are still orienting to happiness as a feeling and positioning themselves in relation to it (Willig, 2013).

My decisions of what to follow up on in the moment-to-moment flow of the interviews, and the way I framed these follow-up questions, will also have shaped the end result. For example, when I asked a participant, Mandy, when she had felt happiest, she responded with a commonplace answer – that she was at her happiest 'now', then cited her family and prayer as the main reasons for this. While another researcher might have investigated both of these avenues, or focused on family, I was interested by the invocation of prayer as it was quite different to many of the other interviewees' responses and, as a discursive psychologist, variation is of analytic interest to me. So this is what I asked her about at my next conversational turn, and her answer, along with other participants' similar accounts has been written up in the analysis as a technique of happiness (see Section 7.3.3). To help demonstrate epistemological reflexivity, then, the analysis of the interview data in Chapters 6 and 7 is threaded through with a critical consideration of the role I played in generating the data.

4.7 Concluding remarks

This chapter has outlined the methodological approach taken in this research, starting with a discussion of the underpinning theoretical and epistemological foundations. I then detailed the critical discursive psychological approach I took, which attends to both the micro- and macro functions and implications of discourse. This was followed by a comprehensive account of how I collected and analysed the two datasets, a discussion of validity in qualitative research, and some reflexive considerations. The following three chapters present my research findings, starting with the analysis of the four best-selling books on happiness.

Chapter 5: Document analysis of 'expert' happiness texts

5.1. Introduction

This chapter addresses the research questions: how is happiness constructed in contemporary popular books about happiness? How is the self constructed? What subject positions do the books offer their readers? How is the relationship between individuals and society constructed, and what actions and understandings do these constructions permit, encourage or obscure?

Documents are created and used in culturally organised ways, and use particular conventions to construct social realities (Rapley, 2007; Silverman, 2013; 2014). My analysis is not concerned with whether the documents' claims are true or false, but to examine how they work to construct 'truth', and how they may act on their readers. Documents are used to *do* things, not just say things (Potter & Wetherell, 1987), and as Prior (2016) observes, "documents can serve to objectify us (as humans) every bit as much as we objectify things" (p. 180). As noted by various authors (e.g. Binkley, 2011; 2014; Yen, 2010) positive psychology positions itself as neutral, scientific and research-based, which works to distinguish it from philosophical or religious approaches to happiness and the 'good life'. Many books about happiness aimed at a mainstream audience are based, at least partly, on findings from positive psychology and cognate disciplines. It is therefore useful to look at how the books' statements are worked up as facts or common sense through scientific repertoires; and how the authors work to convince us of their authority.

5.2 Brief overview of the documents

All the books address happiness as their central subject but, unsurprisingly, each takes a different approach to it. Dolan's book *Happiness by Design* (2014) is structured around two ideas based on his research on happiness and behaviour. First, that happiness is best judged on the "Pleasure Purpose Principle (PPP)",

which involves striving for the right balance of experiences of pleasure and purpose over time; and second, that you can "decide, design and do" happiness by changing your automatic behaviours, such as what you pay attention to.

Richard Layard's book *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science* (2011) is an "effort at a new evidence-based vision of how we can live better" (p. xi). It takes a different, state-of-the-nation tone and a broad-brush approach to happiness, looking at it from a policy point of view as something that should override economics as a main focus for governments to base decisions on. While the other three authors largely write about individual causes of, and solutions to happiness, Layard also looks at societal contributions, writing: "Some factors come from outside us, from our society: some societies really are happier. Other factors work from inside us, from our inner life" (2011, p. 6). He cites the "Big Seven factors affecting happiness" (p. 63) as: family relationships, financial situation, work, community and friends, health, personal freedom and personal values. His book is organised into looking at these problems, then considering some potential solutions. I analysed the second edition (2011), which added a further section to the 2005 original, to address nine critiques of the first edition and to outline "Hopeful signs" that the world was moving towards the vision of a happier society he set out, such as the launch of the Action for Happiness movement. Dolan and Layard, then, both aim to ground their insights about happiness in research; they both frequently invoke scientific studies; and their claims and advice are not (usually) framed as their own views, but as being derived from 'science' and research.

In contrast, McKenna's (2011) book *I Can Make You Happy* is presented as a happiness 'make-over'; and the frequent mentions of "my system" position his advice as explicitly coming from him. The back cover claims: "Happiness is not a matter of luck or belief, it is created by particular ways of thinking and acting". The book comes with a hypnosis CD designed to "install positive programs" (2011, back

cover) in your mind. This book, then, is unambiguous in its purpose: it is a tool to be used to increase happiness.

Rubin's (2009) book takes the form of a personal journal of her year-long project to increase her own happiness. She takes inspiration from an eclectic range of authorities on happiness, and although she cites psychological research, she also references sources as disparate as Friedrich Nietszche and Oprah Winfrey. Although this book is ostensibly biography, and could be read for interest or pleasure, Rubin is still explicit about its role as self-help, saying in the opening "Note to the reader" (p. xiv): "I hope that reading the account of my happiness project will encourage you to start your own." Her websites *happiness-project.com* and *gretchenrubin.com* also have regular blog updates on happiness and interactive features such as quizzes and 21-day projects designed to boost happiness. She is inviting you to follow where she has led, and this book is one of the tools that can help you do it.

After briefly examining how each author positioned their account of happiness as factual, authoritative and important, this analysis moves on to discuss five interpretative repertoires. First, that happiness is a natural object or ability that can be increased and transmitted between people. Second, that this happiness is threatened by our modern lives – a repertoire that works to create a problem for the books to solve. Intertwined with this is a third repertoire of the "fallible brain" – that due to our genes and hard-wiring all humans are vulnerable to making mistakes that "cost" us happiness. By framing the problem as an unfortunate mismatch between our brains and our environment, the books work to make the brain the sensible and obvious site of modification, casting the social world as largely unchangeable. To do this a fourth repertoire is drawn on: that of the "supervisory-self", a metaphorical construction of ourselves as split into a rational, observing 'I' that must oversee a mistake-prone experiencing 'me'. The fifth repertoire I outline is happiness as a

practice – a group of desirable behaviours that are worked up as 'proven' to increase happiness levels.

Following this, I examine the two main subject positions offered to readers in relation to happiness: first, to be a happiness project manager who takes responsibility for their own emotions. Second, the unstated position of *not* taking on this role, which the books work to frame as undesirable and irresponsible. I then suggest that readers are faced with an implicit ideological dilemma – they are both encouraged to understand themselves as infinitely improvable neoliberal subjects, often through the use of economic metaphors, while also being encouraged to reject the idea that modern-day consumerism is a route to happiness. I conclude by suggesting that the books' construction of biological or scientific 'facts' about happiness works to defend the books against a common accusation aimed at happiness literature and positive psychology: that they simply require people to change their attitudes. However, the effects of such repertoires are largely the same: happiness is constructed as happening at an individual level, which works to obscure structural factors. I also consider the idea that the books create a public health discourse around happiness where to fail to work on your happiness is potentially damaging to wider society as well as yourself.

5.3 'Expert' positioning

All authors must strive for a credible voice, but the ways the authors worked to convince readers of their authority varied based on the tone and direction of their book. For example, both Dolan and Layard position themselves as experts on happiness by mentioning their advisory work for the government. Dolan writes:

Extract 1

1   Before writing an entire book on happiness, I was asked
2   to devise the questions that are now being used in large

```
3       surveys of happiness in the UK and also to advise the UK

4       government on how to design better behaviour change

5       interventions. I am now increasingly being asked to

6       advise charities, multinational companies and other

7       governments about how they can improve happiness and

8       influence behaviour.
```
(Dolan, 2014, p. ix)

This statement works to do a number of things. Dolan (2014) references his expertise, but in a passive way: he "was asked to" (lines 1-2) undertake work for the government and charities. He therefore is able to adopt the position of an influential expert without having to explicitly lay claim to this identity, making it harder to argue with, as to do so would involve taking issue not just with him, but with a number of nameless, faceless decision-makers in politics, business and the third sector. His use of a three-part list: "charities, multinational companies and other governments" (lines 6-7), also works to emphasise the reliability and generality of his expertise (Potter, 1996). These are very different types of institution, so his work must be widely accepted and applicable.

Dolan's use of the phrase "large surveys" (lines 2-3) works as an extreme-case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986; Potter, 1996), with the "large" strengthening his expertise and maximising the surveys' value. Finally, the phrasing "Before writing an entire book on happiness…" (line 1) leads us to the conclusion that this book is a product of all his work and expertise on the subject – we can, therefore, trust it. The use of the word "entire" is also interesting: the sentence would have worked perfectly well without it, but the inclusion works to make the writing of the book more notable and worthy: "an entire xx" suggests comprehensiveness and diligence.

Layard (2011) also references his experience as a policy advisor, but takes a slightly different approach to claiming authority on the subject of happiness:

Extract 2

```
1        I am an economist – I love the subject and it has served
2        me well. But economics equates the happiness of a
3        society with changes in its purchasing power – or
4        roughly so. I have never accepted that view, and the
5        history of the last fifty years has disproved it.
6        Instead, the new psychology of happiness makes it
7        possible to construct an alternative view, based on
8        evidence rather than assertion.
```
(Layard, 2011, p. xi)

Here, the author positions himself as an expert – in economics – but then moves on to critique his own discipline, suggesting its methods and assumptions are mistaken. By positioning himself as something of a rebel in economics who has stuck to his guns ("I have never accepted that view" (line 4)) he establishes himself as credible and unpartisan, and by invoking "history" (line 5) as an objective record that has ultimately "disproved" (line 5) the traditional view of economics that he was suspicious of, he establishes his stance as a categorical fact, rather than a matter of ongoing debate.

Layard (2011) moves on to talk about the "new psychology of happiness" (line 6), which positions his work at the cutting edge of a dynamic science, which is continually producing new evidence for him, as an economist, to make use of. By setting himself up as an expert in this way – the neutral conduit of evidence-based 'facts' about happiness – he paves the way to a position where he is able to make pronouncements such as "This conclusion is wrong" (2011, p. 118) about John Stuart Mill's idea of 'higher' and 'lower' forms of happiness, as well as to offer suggestions for individual behaviour change, although in a less overt manner than the other three books.

Rubin (2009) takes a different approach by aligning herself with us, the readers, in being a non-expert, and therefore as not being constrained by the dry methods of science:

Extract 3

```
1      I often learn more from one person's highly
2      idiosyncratic experiences than I do from sources that
3      detail universal principles or cite up-to-date studies.
4      I find greater value in what specific individuals tell
5      me worked for them than in any other kind of argument.
```

(Rubin, 2009, p. xiii)

Rubin makes no professional claims to expertise, but her account makes it clear she has done informal research of her own. This has not just entailed reading "sources that detail universal principles or cite up-to-date studies" (lines 2-3) but also learning from "one person's highly idiosyncratic experiences" (lines 1-2) or "what specific individuals tell me worked for them" (lines 4-5). In doing so, she expands the sources of wisdom her book can draw on – not just scientific findings but also personalised stories and advice from people singled out as having particular expertise by experience. Rubin's advice therefore seems to come from a friendlier place of equal footing with the reader (there are possibly even shades of the "we've had enough of experts" rhetoric seen in recent political debates here, too). Her account is evaluative as well as descriptive – she finds "greater value" in personalised accounts – but she makes it clear that it is her own personal evaluation. Rubin is not telling us what *should* work, but what could, and she goes on to draw on a common-sense idea of individual differences by writing "Your project would look different from mine, but it's the rare person who can't benefit from a happiness project" (p. xiii). The ideas that your happiness is augmentable and

under your conscious control are presented as givens – the point of reading her book is to be inspired and to find *which* techniques will work, not whether they will. This shift to the second person ('your') also works to "impose the obligations of reader agency" (Cherry, 2008, p. 343) – the reader is given the capacity for action and assured that they have always had it. By mentioning the "rare person who can't benefit" Rubin makes it clear that there is a possibility of discounting the book's advice, but this too renders the reader accountable – they are unlikely to be that rare person, and therefore they should engage with the idea of a happiness project, which is a good and desirable aim. Arguably, then, to not do so – an unspoken option – is implicitly positioned as bad and irresponsible. This idea is examined in further detail in Section 5.7.1.

Finally, McKenna's (2011) positioning as an authority seems to be mainly achieved through repetition – fittingly perhaps, given his renown as a hypnotist. After almost every one of the 33 happiness-boosting techniques outlined in his book is a variation on the theme of: *this exercise is easy and powerful, it works, and the more you practise it, the stronger the effect*. Although he refers to scientific research, he does so only in general terms, for e.g: "My techniques draw on the most recent scientific and psychological advances and I have tested every technique in this system personally over and over again" (McKenna, 2011, p. 10). The phrase "most recent… advances" positions his book as based on new, cutting-edge information, and we can also intimate from his guarantee of personally testing them that his techniques must therefore be effective – something emphasised by his use of the extreme-case formulation "over and over again". The present-tense phrasing and lack of references and qualifications, such as 'could' or 'aim to', also works to make the claims more fact-like (Latour, 1987; Smyth, 2001).

McKenna also hands over the baton of agency to the reader: "This is a factual, practical book. I suggest you test everything to see how it works. Please

don't just take it on trust. Make sure that everything you do works for you." (2011, p. 10). By moving from the first person 'I' to 'you', he encourages his readers to engage with his 'proven' system and make it work for them, though how to do this is not specified. By doing so, he manages to allow for the possibility of his system not working without compromising its factuality or efficacy or his potential culpability – his system is effective, but its success lies in its application by the reader. In this way, the readers' thoughts and feelings become resources to be used and the "specific problems of the reader become candidates of the general narrative of the self-help book" (Cherry, 2008, p. 343).

Although written from different perspectives and with somewhat different aims, the books all share the idea that to engender help from within, you need help from outside – the expertise of a knowledgeable authority (de Vos, 2015; Riley, Evans, Anderson & Robson, 2019). From this position of authority, the books could work to construct happiness and selfhood in particular ways, describe a problem or problems of happiness to solve, and suggest solutions to their readers. I now move on to examine the interpretative repertoires they used to do this and the subject positions these offered readers, starting with the repertoire of happiness as 'natural'.

5.4 Happiness as a natural object

Happiness was constructed in the books as a natural phenomenon, with a tangible, biological nature, common to all humans. This was achieved in a number of ways. First, by plainly stating this as a fact; second, by using spatial metaphors to suggest that happiness has some sort of physicality; third, by suggesting happiness and unhappiness are "contagious", with the latter operating like a disease; and lastly, by using evolutionary narratives to explain common problems of happiness.

5.4.1 Happiness as a natural state

All the books use the idea of nature or naturalness to refer to happiness. For example, McKenna writes:

Extract 4

```
1       Happiness is a natural human state, like hunger, anger,

2       excitement, boredom, neutrality and alertness… We are

3       all born with the ability to be happy.
```
(McKenna, 2011, p. 12)

Here, happiness as a "natural human state" (line 1) takes on a fundamental, timeless quality and is likened to strong emotions or drives like hunger and anger. It is also glossed as innate and universal – something "we are all born with" (lines 2-3). Invoking a common sense understanding of happiness as natural works to imply proper functioning – "nature" is as things should be, and so the unnatural – in this case not being happy – is therefore implicitly wrong. However, as Williams (1980) points out, anything can be said to have an inner character or nature; it is how such a nature is defined and described that is of interest as it usually suits the author's purpose. In this telling, the natural state of happiness that we are all born with is framed as an "ability" (line 3) – a potential that may or may not be realised. This works to set up a problem of happiness for the book to address, and introduces an element of risk for readers, in that we may not be using our ability to be happy – or know how to.

Similarly, at the start of her book, Rubin (2009) draws on this repertoire to describe happiness:

Extract 5

```
1       The laws of happiness are as fixed as the laws of

2       chemistry. But even though I wasn't making up these

3       laws, I needed to grapple with them for myself.
```

(Rubin, 2009, p. 7)

Rubin assigns happiness the same status as chemistry: a natural science with laws that are understood as being outside the bounds of human design. We cannot write them, we can only follow or allow ourselves to be subjected to them – or not. However, Rubin (2009) still works to counter the possibility that readers might think she is, in fact, "making up these laws" (lines 2-3), suggesting that the idea of happiness as a science with universal laws may not (yet) have achieved the status of common sense or fact for all readers. In her final sentence, Rubin achieves what de Vos (2015) calls a defining feature of self-help: the translation of the general to the individual: the laws of happiness are "fixed" (line 1), so all she can do is "grapple with them" (line 3) to make them relevant to her life and needs. The italicised "*myself*" (line 3) signifies this to be a unique and personalised enterprise, and one denoting responsibility – no one else can or will do it for her.

5.4.2 Happiness as augmentable

Another idea about happiness presented as common sense was that it has an unlimited nature, something achieved through using spatial metaphors:

Extract 6

```
1      I've worked with people who thought they were happy
2      enough but were amazed to discover there is no upper
3      limit to happiness. (McKenna, 2011, p. 12).
```

Happiness here assumes a voluminous quantity – it can carry on growing without ever reaching an "upper limit" (lines 2-3). This is presented as surprising, new information – it has "amazed" (line 2) people McKenna has worked with – and is therefore worth paying attention to. He also works to assert his superior knowledge about happiness here (as well as expand his potential client base) by referring to "people who thought they were happy enough" (lines 1-2). They were, it seems,

mistaken: it is possible even for happy people to be happier, making his book

relevant for everyone, not just those who actively *do* want to be happier. The

implication of this is that there is no end point to the pursuit of happiness – it is

something that can be worked on and improved indefinitely.

The books also frequently used the word "deep" to refer to happiness. This

often had the function of qualifying the *type* of happiness, with the suggestion that

deep happiness is more desirable as it is more authentic or natural, as well as being

firmly rooted and harder to dispel (although how it may differ from regular

happiness, or indeed if it is qualitatively different, was not explained or engaged

with). However, the idea of depth also worked to locate happiness as originating in

the body or mind:

Extract 7

1   In most of us there is a deep positive force, which can

2   be liberated if we can overcome our negative thoughts.

(Layard, 2011, p. 230)

Here, Layard uses the phrase "deep positive force" (line 1) instead of the word

happiness, although the implication is that this is what he means. This force is

positioned as inside us already, reinforcing its natural quality, although he uses the

hedge of "most of us" (line 1) to allow for a potential biological explanation of

extreme unhappiness.

The word "force" can suggest power and mysticism, but it is also a scientific

term drawing on the language of physics, and this ambiguity may be key – a

"positive force" could be understood in scientific terms, conveying factuality, or in

spiritual terms as something otherworldly or personal to the reader. However,

although this positive force may be able to grow indefinitely, the human container for

it is implied to be finite – to "liberate" it, "negative thoughts" (line 2) must be

"overcome" – there is not room for both. This reflects observations (e.g. Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Wilce & Price, 2008) that bodies are often talked of as containers of emotions. These emotions carry different properties; some, such as stress, are toxic and must be siphoned off, whereas others – in this case happiness – are beneficial and must be made room for. The taken-for-granted proposition is that "negative thoughts" are bad and unhelpful and thus must be eliminated as they cannot co-exist with the "positive force" without compromising its potency.

5.4.3 Metaphors of contagion

The naturalness of happiness is further underlined with the use of metaphors that suggest happiness, or unhappiness, can be transmitted like diseases. For example, Dolan writes:

> Extract 8
>
> 1   Moreover, we know that happiness causes a range of other
> 2   good outcomes and that it's also contagious. The pursuit
> 3   of happiness is therefore a noble and very serious
> 4   objective for us all. (Dolan, 2014, p. 189)

Using a metaphor of contagion (line 2) in relation to happiness works to objectify it as something that is best approached and understood from a scientific perspective, like a virus or bacteria. The idea of it acting like a disease also serves to distinguish happiness from other things that can be distributed between people, such as goods. There is no sense of it being limited or needing to be traded for something else – it is something that can be infinitely generated and circulated. While this has the potential to pathologise happiness, it escapes any negative connotations due to its common-sense link to "other good outcomes" (lines 1-2) and the evaluative description of making happiness a priority as "noble and very serious" (line 3). As something that can be understood at the level of an infectious disease, individual

happiness becomes a public matter – something that Dolan highlights by saying it is and "objective for us all" (line 4). This implies a sense of civic duty and invokes a communitarian idea of effort for the common good – if happiness results in good things and is spreadable, making it an explicit aim becomes the 'right' thing to do.

The books also worked to position unhappiness – or negative feelings – as communicable too. McKenna (2011) talked about feelings as tangible things that can be "dumped" on you and which you may need to "free yourself" from (e.g. p. 138), and Rubin similarly writes:

Extract 9

1   People who are stuck in an unhappy state are pitiable;

2   surely they feel trapped, with no sense of having a

3   choice in how they feel. Although their unhappiness is a

4   drag on those around them – emotional contagion

5   unfortunately, operates more powerfully for negative

6   emotions than for positive emotions – they suffer too.

(Rubin, 2009, p. 218)

Unhappiness is characterised here as a form of stasis – people are "stuck in an unhappy state" (line 1) and "feel trapped" (line 2). Unhappy people seem to function like dead weights or anchors by impeding others' freedom and forward momentum – "their unhappiness is a drag" (lines 3-4). The "is" works to position this idea as a fact – it is not something that "can" or "may be" the case. This creation of a discursive fact is reinforced by the concept of "emotional contagion" (line 4), an example of what Latour (1987) calls a nominalisation – a way of making something fact-like by transforming processes into objects that can then act on the world. "Emotional contagion" is worked up as operating "more powerfully for negative emotions than for positive emotions" (lines 5-6), which works both to abstract such emotions from

the social world in which they have meaning, and to associate unhappiness with the idea of increased risk or threat. Again, Rubin offers no evidence for this discursive fact, just the gloss that it is "unfortunate" (line 5).

Rubin's sentence construction works to avoid a moralising tone by presenting this information as an aside – the main point of the sentence is seemingly to invite sympathy for unhappy people because they are "pitiable" (line 1) and "suffer too" (line 6). Notably, their "stuck" position is explained as resulting from an internal misperception: "with no sense of having a choice in how they feel" (lines 2-3), not unhappy circumstances or a difficult environment. This works to frame ethical behaviour in terms of a simple binary choice. To avoid being a "drag" and making the people around them "suffer", unhappy people simply need to accept that happiness can be chosen.

This deployment of 'choice' as a rhetoric device is interesting, as readers' choices are channeled in a narrow direction – towards self-governance. Choosing to become happier seems to be an extension of "healthism" (Crawford, 1980) – the intense and ongoing focus on health in the Western world, accompanied by the increasingly common construction of citizens as having an ethical duty to act on health advice to manage their own wellbeing by working to combat disease and become healthier. As Tischner and Malson (2012) point out, 'being healthy' is often associated with a particular state – such as being slim or losing weight – which becomes reinforced as discursive 'truth' that pathologises other ways of being (e.g. overweight or fat), which come to be seen as signs of failure. Undertaking a "happiness project" like Rubin has by no means reached the level of normative healthism that going on a diet or taking up exercise have, and it is wise to be cautious about making predictions. However, it is not hard to see how, over time, unhappiness may come to be pathologised or associated with a deficit identity as a result of not having made an effort to manage and augment one's happiness. As

various authors (e.g. Gill & Orgad, 2018; Illouz, 2007; Taylor, 2018) have demonstrated, successfully displaying emotions that are currently regarded as desirable, such as positivity and resilience demonstrates emotional competence and works to resist categorisations of failing or pathological. In this way a social hierarchy is created, in which happiness and its regulation serves to indicate social and moral standing.

5.4.4 Evolutionary storylines

Finally, another way in which the books constructed happiness as natural was by drawing on lay ideas about genes or the more vernacular "wiring" to paint an evolutionary understanding of happiness. In Layard's and Dolan's books in particular, evolutionary repertoires also occasionally served as stand-ins for what might once have been written about in moral or religious terms:

Extract 10

```
1      It is generally to your evolutionary advantage to help
2      other people on the assumption that, if roles were
3      reversed, they would help you too. (Dolan, 2014, p. 182)
```

Helping other people is explained as something that is '"to your evolutionary advantage" (line 1), suggesting that biological processes are the superior way to understand complex human behaviour. I suggest that evolution is drawn on in Layard's and Dolan's books as a 'black box' – a term used by Latour (1987) to describe how a theory can be used as a factual, unarguable basis for another proposition in scientific discourse. This happens when a theory reaches such a level of acceptance that it is treated as simply true rather than as a contested idea – it becomes a black box and is rendered invisible. Evolutionary explanations for human behaviour have reached this stage of autonomous fact in these books as well as elsewhere – they are treated as obvious and have what Latour calls a "*vis inertia* of

their own" (1987, p. 133; italics in original) – it appears that they move freely, without human interference or influence and that they would have existed even without people. Once depopulated in this way, evolutionary ideas can form the basis for other ideas, as seen particularly in Dolan's and Layard's books, where they are used to make common-sense unarguable points about what contributes to happiness. For example, Layard writes:

<u>Extract 11</u>

1	`We all want status – or at least respect. It is wired`
2	`into our genes, and it is a major source of satisfaction`
3	`if we get it.` (Layard, 2011, p. 149)

Again, the invocation of genes serves as a way of universalising statements about happiness or "satisfaction" (line 2). Here "status" (line 1) is framed as something biologically driven that "we all want" (line 1). The implication is that we have no choice or potentially even consciousness of this desire – it is "wired into our genes" (lines 1-2) and therefore informs our behaviour and feelings.

In 1999, Brown wrote of his analysis of self-help books that stress is uniquely carved out as a scientific area, again often through evolutionary narratives. This analysis suggests that this position is no longer unique – happiness also occupies this space as an object of scientific enquiry and explication. However, whereas stress literature is about the eradication of a 'negative', the literature in the present analysis is, by and large, about the accumulation of a 'positive', leading to the suggestion that, 20 years on, the remit of neoliberal self-work has expanded.

Using scientific accounts of genes and evolution seems to have an unassailable status to explain and legitimise certain behaviours, whereas religion or philosophy do not – and this is particularly noteworthy on the subject of happiness, which has been a core focus of philosophical and religious enquiry for millennia. As

Yen (2010) among others argue, taking a scientific approach to a subject implies neutrality, universality and objectivity, and so the scientific language, metaphors and lay understandings of evolution used in these books work to present a culturally and temporally specific understanding of the self as common sense or fact, allowing the authors to perform ideological work. This is of particular significance when it comes to constructing a problem of happiness, as it allows the authors to distance themselves from any accusations of moralising and instead position themselves as helpful disseminators of scientific truths about happiness, not the creators or interpreters of them.

5.5 Happiness as threatened

Self-help books must outline a problem that they can solve (Cherry, 2008), and one of the most common ways evolutionary accounts were used was to position happiness as "threatened". In a very similar way to Brown's (1999) identification of a narrative of stress being caused by an inability to cope with the modern world, the books I analysed tended to frame happiness as threatened by an unfortunate mismatch between our caveperson heritage and our modern environment. For example, following on from his earlier statement seen in Extract 11, Layard reinforces it a few pages later with a longer explanation:

Extract 12

1   In the wild, the people who survived were those who were
2   not content unless they gave their all. To keep
3   themselves up to the mark, these people used social
4   comparisons and past achievements as norms against which
5   to evaluate their current achievements… These are the
6   genes we have inherited. This means that we are set up
7   to be dissatisfied. (Layard, 2011, p. 162)

People's desires to "give their all" and "keep themselves up to the mark" (lines 2-3) are here glossed as biological drives, necessary for survival – everyone experiences them as they have been inherited from the forebears who "survived" (line 1) to pass them on. This evolutionary narrative serves to bypass any need to characterise particular behaviours or attitudes as right or wrong – a stance that would put Layard in the tricky and less easily defensible position of moralising. Instead, he is able to account for "dissatisfaction" (line 7), a cognitive state that is implied to cause or be synonymous with unhappiness, in biological terms as the universal and inevitable consequence of the "genes we have inherited" (line 6). This works to position people as being neutral, unintentional sites of simple cause-and-effect processes, rather than meaning-making social beings who experience appropriate feelings in response to circumstances or environments (Boyle, 2011).

A biological account allows Layard to attend to the idea that certain social environments may be problematic for happiness while still situating the problem at the site of the individual. Such social environments are hazily sketched – they are ones in which "current achievements" (line 5) fail to match up to "past achievements" – a construction that suggests the idea of life as a linear progression of cumulative achievements – or "social comparisons" (lines 3-4), with its implications of clear hierarchies that people can position themselves and others on. As Frawley (2015b) points out, the way problems are framed informs what the proffered solutions are. As the problem occurs at a genetic level and therefore is common to everyone – we are all equally "set up to be dissatisfied" (lines 6-7), it follows that making changes at a structural level will presumably have little impact. This repertoire thus serves to frame the solutions to the problem of happiness at the level of individual awareness and action.

McKenna (2011) also proposes the idea that unhappiness can be caused by the challenges of modern life:

<u>Extract 13</u>

1   `The consumer society has brought many benefits but the`

2   `cost has been the promotion of buying on the basis of`

3   `desire rather than need. This has upset the natural`

4   `balance of human feeling.` (McKenna, 2011, p. 12)

Here, again, we see the idea that elements of modern, everyday life – in this instance "consumer society" (line 1) – impacts on happiness. McKenna draws on an ecological understanding of human emotions with the idea that their "natural balance" (lines 3-4) is fragile and at risk, and has been "upset" (line 3) by forces beyond our control. This seems to set up a dichotomy between the naturalness of certain traits or feelings such as "needing", versus the unnatural, polluting nature of others – "desiring". Again, invoking nature helps to create a certain viewpoint of the world (buying things out of desire not need is bad) as a neutral, objective fact. McKenna's identification of "consumer society" as a major contributor to happiness's threatened status was also echoed by the other authors. Layard (2011) focused on people's habits of comparison, which he argued were stoked by increased exposure to advertising, writing, "When someone buys a Lexus, he sets a new standard for the street. When a firm advertises a Barbie doll, it creates a want that was not there before" (p. 137). Rubin's (2009) invoked notions of choice, advising that "People at every level of income can choose to direct their spending in ways that take them closer to happiness – or not" (p. 171) and stated her aims were to spend money on ways to stay in contact with friends and family, stay healthy, "work more efficiently" (p. 171) and "have experiences that would enlarge me" (p. 171). This broadly corresponds with Frawley's (2015b) analysis of newspaper articles about happiness, of which 56% problematised prosperity in relation to happiness – the most common formulation of a 'misapprehension' of what would bring happiness.

5.6 The "fallible brain"

As we have seen, the books drew frequently on the repertoire of happiness being threatened, and the authors – particularly Dolan (2014), Layard (2011) and McKenna (2011) – focused on the brain as the specific site of this vulnerability to unhappiness, leading to another repertoire, which I am calling the "fallible brain". This is a storyline found in all the books wherein the brain is constructed as unavoidably prone to mistakes that endanger happiness. For example, McKenna writes "Almost all human problems are caused by negative programs running in the unconscious mind" (2011, back cover); Layard discusses cognitive and behavioural "failures"; and Dolan lists and explains many cognitive "mistakes" such as "*focusing effects*", "*projection bias*" and "*peak-end effect*". He presents these concepts in italics, highlighting their special status as technical terms and the scientific nature of his information. As he explains:

Extract 14

1	Our brain tries to help us out in a complex world, but
2	its efforts to simplify things can sometimes be silly
3	strategies so far as making decisions that make us
4	happier are concerned. The brain is of course truly
5	wondrous but it's much more interesting, to me at least,
6	to look at where it makes mistakes. (Dolan, 2014, p. 71)

Again, this presents as fact the idea that "our brain" (line 1) "makes mistakes" (line 6) that affect happiness – we don't need to look at *whether* this is true, but at "where" (line 6) these mistakes happen. Our social environment is again referenced and this time it is its complexity that is problematised. However, the issue is not in any particular quality of this "complex world" (line 1), but in the interaction between it and our brain. As Cherry (2008) points out, this works to effect a separation between us and the social world, with the site for modification positioned at the

individual, cognitive level, and the world constituted in a fixed way – the site at which any such modifications can be judged.

Another separation is also in evidence – between "us" and "our brain", which is constructed as a discrete object with universalised tendencies. Dolan characterises the brain as well-meaning – it "tries to help us out" (line 1) – but fallible in that its "efforts to simplify things can sometimes be silly strategies" (lines 2-3). In foregrounding genetic or biological factors as explanations for human behaviour, this repertoire works to construct solutions in terms of damage-limitation, as something that cannot be eradicated, only ameliorated. In the first instance, this involves an inwardly focused activity: to "look at where [a brain] makes mistakes" (line 6).

5.7 The supervisory-self

As we have seen, the books worked to position happiness as a natural state, yet also framed the mistakes we make around happiness as being the results of 'hard-wiring' in the human brain. As such, an apparent ideological dilemma (Billig et al., 1988) emerges in that what is framed as 'natural' or at least biological and genetic in our brains, is what prevents us from attaining the 'natural' state of happiness. The challenges of modern society are cited as the cause of this clash of 'natures' but the solutions are to be undertaken at an individual, cognitive level.

The repertoire that enables this is what I am calling the supervisory-self, which echoes what Hazleden (2003) identifies as a key feature of self-help texts – a self framed as "*ontologically separate* from itself" (p. 416, italics in original). Here, a rational, responsible, observing, but perhaps less 'natural' self is called upon to undertake the project of gaining mastery over the fallible brain as the way to monitor and improve happiness. This idea of two selves: the experiencing 'me' and the

rational observer 'I' is clearly evoked in many of the books' pronouncements about happiness:

Extract 15

1   `Just as naturalists watch animals in their native`

2   `environments, you must spend more time watching yourself`

3   `and other human animals in your natural environments.`

(Dolan, 2014, p. 144)

Dolan's reference to other people as "human animals" (line 3) again invokes an evolutionary understanding of behaviour and creates an inferior-superior division between your 'animal' and rational self. By being advised to "spend more time watching yourself" (line 2) the reader is explicitly encouraged to act as an amateur scientist, with themselves as the object of study. The implication is that you are, or can be, the expert on yourself. This reflects Rose's (1990; 1996) observation that the psy-complex is influential not just in creating a particular 'self' but also the separate vantage point from which to observe it. Interrogated in more detail, though, the observed and observer facets of the supervisory-self can cease to make sense, leading to an endless line of 'selves' looking back to observe their own observing as if in a hall of mirrors. It also raises the unanswered question of which 'self' Dolan envisages as benefitting from his advice: the supervised self in its 'natural environment', or the self supervising it.

Hazleden (2003) argues that the main focus of ethical work in self-help texts is the relationship one has to one's self. She concluded that the relationship advice books she analysed worked up an idea of a 'lost' emotional self that needs to be rediscovered or remembered, and that the technologies of the self required to conduct this ethical work were to monitor thoughts, interrupt wrong thinking and engage in dialogue with oneself to work towards right thinking. While there are

similarities with Hazelden's findings, I would argue that the nature of the relationship evoked by the supervisory-self relationship is different in subtle but important ways. Whereas Illouz (2008) notes that therapeutic discourse takes the family as its root metaphor through ideas of self-care and nurturance, a more dispassionate, clinical and 'scientific' relationship is outlined here, as one characterised by the actions of "watching" (line 2), "monitoring" (e.g. Layard, p.; Dolan, 2014, p. 114) or "priming" (e.g. Dolan, 2014, p.128). The supervisory-self seems similar to the "serviceable self" of self-help literature on stress identified by Brown (1999). This is characterized by a self as a car-like product that can be serviced and re-engineered, with common metaphors including "acceleration", "overdrive", "blown fuse" and "recharged batteries" (p. 35). To perform at its best the serviceable self needs regular maintenance and must be robust and flexible. However, I suggest the supervisory-self of happiness literature differs in important ways. Instead of a root metaphor of a machine which, although it can go wrong, has been engineered to function effectively, the metaphors of watching, monitoring, priming and disciplining attached to the supervisory-self seem to characterise it as inherently chaotic and prone to going awry. Instead of a machine, then, the 'self' that must be supervised seems more akin to a pet. Dolan (2014) makes this pet-owner relationship between the two selves of the supervisory-self explicit in his suggestion to "consciously select the environments that your unconscious attention can roam in", explaining "Although you can't consciously dictate how your dog runs around a field, you can choose which park you take it to" (p. 52).

This metaphor sets up a strong power relationship, with one aspect of the self – the owner, or supervisor – charged with the care of the unruly 'pet' self, intimated to be the manifestation of the fallible brain. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given this power dynamic, another commonly invoked idea in the books was the necessity of self-discipline. For example, Rubin (2009) writes:

Extract 16

```
1        Bogged down in petty complaints and passing crises,

2        weary of struggling with my own nature, I too often

3        failed to comprehend the splendor of what I had… How

4        could I discipline myself to feel grateful for my

5        ordinary day?
```
(Rubin, 2009, p. 2)

In the phrase "struggling with my own nature" (line 2) Rubin casts the relationship between the two facets of the supervisory-self as combative, rather than the more neutral relationship implied by "observing". "Struggling" implies that more effort and energy is required. This split in the supervisory-self seems to be between the 'self' as an object and as a subject. An object has no control over its actions – it is caused to behave in a certain way, evoked in this instance by the idea of "my own nature" (line 2); whereas a subject – the 'I' that is called upon to discipline this nature – does have agency and choices, and these can be judged as good or bad; responsible or irresponsible (Malik, 2000). The idea that it might be desirable and/or possible to change her circumstances or environment is not oriented to – Rubin casts her responses to her life as "petty" and "passing" (line 1) – the thing worked up as needing amendment is her failure (line 3) to appreciate what she has. This has echoes of the fallible brain repertoire and Rubin's solution – to "discipline" (line 4) herself to change her reactions to her environment – is presented as obvious, with the main question being "how" to do this.

Rubin's relation of this emotional episode in these terms functions as a meta affective-discursive practice (Wetherell, 2012; 2015) in that she is orienting to her material and social conditions and finding her emotional response insufficient. This allows her to perform strategic identity work by implicitly positioning herself as successful ("the splendor of what I had", line 3) but as still needing to carve out new areas for growth and success. In doing so she invokes the neoliberal idea of

happiness as involving ongoing work and the self as incomplete (Cabanas, 2016).
The idea of not feeling what she should feel also highlights the prescriptiveness of
contemporary happiness proposed by Ahmed (2010a) and Ehrenreich (2009).

The construction of the mind as a distinct, unruly object in need of
supervision and discipline is also reinforced in the Index of Layard's book, which
offers a re-direction: "Spiritual practices, *see* mental disciplines" (2011, p. 361). This
reflects Christopher & Hickinbottom's (2008) contention that positive psychology
morphs and colonises ancient wisdom and Eastern philosophy to fit its ethnocentric
definition. The use of an index to categorise something as culturally diverse as
"spiritual practices" as "mental" and taking place at an individual, interior location,
works to render invisible or irrelevant other possible readings of "spiritual practices".
That the individual mind is the site at which spirituality takes place is an unstated
assumption. The use of the word "disciplines" also works to reinforce the idea of
happiness as an ongoing project – discipline requires vigilance and hard work – and
this leads to another repertoire of happiness as being a practice.

5.8 Happiness as a desirable practice

The books positioned humans as essentially flawed and in need of self-observation,
evaluation, feedback and adjustment to improve how happy they feel. The idea that
being happy involves ongoing activity was evident in all books and formed the
narrative structure to Rubin's as she set herself various themed tasks each month:

Extract 17

```
1    Research had taught me that the most important element
2    to happiness is social bonds, so I resolved to tackle
3    "Marriage", "Parenthood" and "Friends". I'd also learned
4    that my happiness depended a great deal on my
5    perspective, so I added "Eternity" and "Attitude" to my
```

```
6      list. Work was crucial to my happiness, and also

7      leisure, so I included the topics, "Work," "Play" and

8      "Passion". What else did I want to cover? "Energy"

9      seemed like a basic ingredient for the success of the

10     entire project. "Money" was a subject I knew I wanted to

11     address  (Rubin, 2009, p. 9)
```

Here we can see the idea that many different areas of modern Western life feed into the accomplishment of happiness. There is also the suggestion that achieving it may not be easy: Rubin "resolves to tackle" (line 2) various elements and makes a "list" (line 5-6) – effort will be needed over a number of different stages. Rubin orients to this ideas of effort by including "energy" (line 8) as a prerequisite for "the success of the entire project" (line 10), with the "entire" working to highlight that this is a comprehensive task. Even though she draws on the idea of individual differences by stating her goals are tailored to her own needs, Rubin grounds her to-do list in what she has "learned" (line 3) and mentions that "research has taught me" (line 1). This works as stake inoculation (Potter, 1996) against any charge of non-expertise or chicanery – she is not making assumptions or being led by guesswork, but has individualised 'factual' information about happiness.

The idea of individual self-work is also drawn on in Layard's (2011) book, notably in a discussion of how social policy can be harnessed to improve happiness at a structural level:

Extract 18

```
1      So how can public policy help? As we have seen, our

2      happiness depends profoundly on our attitudes, and these

3      can be learned and practised. Unless you acquire good

4      attitudes early, you get into situations where it is

5      ever more difficult to learn them. Poverty of spirit is
```

| 6 | `contagious. That is why education of the spirit is a` |
| 7 | `public good.` (Layard, 2011, p. 199-200) |

Here again, we have the idea that "attitudes" (line 2) are fundamental to determining and creating happiness, and that, through learning and practising them (line 3), the individual is able to make a deliberate choice to adopt them. The desirability of this choice is also implied with the use of an economic metaphor of "poverty of spirit" (line 5), thereby implying that the vague but implicitly valued notion of "spirit" is something that can be assessed in terms of sufficiency, excess or deficit. This "poverty" seems to carry with it a risk, accentuated by the word "contagious" (line 6), with its strong association with disease. No direct explanation of what "poverty of spirit" might entail is given, although it is clearly associated with not having "good attitudes" (lines 3-4) a state that is positioned as a social as well as individual ill. It places you in a perilous situation where positive attitudes become "ever more difficult to learn" (lines 4-5). This is framed in passive terms – the poor of spirit struggle to pull themselves out of their predicament, unlike those people who have learned and actively practise "good attitudes". Layard's solution to this is just as vague as his description of the problem: "education of the spirit" (line 6). Again we can infer that this is how public policy can be best used – to educate people about how to "practise" happiness (indeed, Layard states this as an explicit goal elsewhere in his book).

A notable element of this account is Layard's subtle orientation to the idea that people may find themselves in environments that can impact on their happiness, with his phrase "situations where it is ever more difficult to learn [good attitudes]" (lines 4-5). However, finding yourself in such a situation is here framed as a *result* of not practising the attitudes that our happiness depends on, rather than a potential *cause* of unhappiness. Layard thus performs what Boyle (2011) identifies as a common technique in the language of mental health: translating causes into

consequences. This allows Layard to discuss, or at least refer to, adverse

experiences and environments, without framing these as a sensible area to work on.

Instead, they are cast as the likely results of irresponsible attitudes and behaviours.

5.9 Subject positions: happiness project management vs irresponsibility

The interpretative repertoire of happiness as a desirable practice offers readers two

main subject positions. First, the implicit position of not acting on the books' advice

and carrying on as before, which readers can infer is irresponsible as it results in

unnecessary unhappiness that can negatively affect not just them but those around

them. Second, readers can take up the project of becoming happier by tailoring the

books' advice to their own situation and practising the strategies they offer, a

position framed as responsible and from which it is possible to claim a 'successful'

identity.

McKenna (2011) even incorporates this dichotomy of successful versus

failing into the structure of his book, which divides readers into two groups: those

who are ready to undertake his happiness system and those who are not. This latter

group are directed to chapter two of the book, "The Instant Pick-me-up" (p. 24-25),

whose pages are coloured blue on the edges. As McKenna (2011) writes, "Chapter

two is crafted to pick you up right now so that you are fully prepared to benefit from

the rest of the system" (p. 23). The reader is instructed to start here if they score

themselves between 1 and 3 (out of 10) in answer to the question "How happy do

you feel about your life overall?" In doing so, McKenna works to categorise readers

as either deficient or normal, and this is visibly reinforced with blue pages, a colour

that is conceptually linked to depression, with phrases such as "having the blues" or

"feeling blue" common in the English-speaking world. In staking out its remit in this

way, McKenna's book reflects what De La Fabián and Stecher (2018) identify as a

main message of positive psychology – that it does not seek to work on what

Seligman calls the "dysphorias" of depression, anxiety and anger. It is a new and

different set of skills that will be much easier to put into practice when such dysphorias are eradicated, rendering a person "empty" (Seligman, 2011, p. 54) and ready to begin the work of "enjoying positive emotions" (Seligman, 2011, p. 182).

We can see how this works to place the responsibility for happiness squarely on the reader's shoulders. There is a "system" both to produce more happiness, and to get you "ready" to attempt such a project – if it doesn't work, you aren't engaging with it properly. This is reinforced by a list of 14 statements on pages 24-25, such as "I don't know how to be happy"; "I feel so low I don't think anything can help" and "This book won't work either" – if you agree with any of them, you are directed to the blue section. Merely entertaining the thought that McKenna's book might not be the answer to happiness is enough to deem you not ready to engage with the project of being happier and, in this way, pessimism or scepticism are pathologised.

The idea that happiness can be increased and worked on also offers an opportunity for identity work. This is exemplified by Rubin's positioning of herself as working on her happiness on an ongoing basis, with the implicit suggestion that this is a marker of responsible, enlightened and successful personhood.

Extract 19

```
1    My own happiness project started in January and lasted a
2    year – and, I hope, will last the rest of my life – but
3    your happiness project can start any time and last as
4    long as you choose. (Rubin, 2009, p. 296)
```

By hoping that her project will last "the rest of my life" (line 2), Rubin suggests that work on happiness is never done – there is always room for improvement. She leaves this possibility open for her readers, whose project can "last as long as you choose" (lines 3-4). This idea of happiness being an ongoing, active process was also referred to in the other books – for example, McKenna's (2011) suggestion that

readers use his techniques "over and over again" (p. 19), and various suggestions

from Dolan (2014) along the lines of "Keep your eye on the happiness prize by

tuning into the feedback from your experiences" (p. 105). Here, the idea that the

"happiness prize" can be viewed rather than attained is suggestive of a constant

futurity and, along with Rubin's unending project, renders working on your

happiness a project with no end, and the self as fundamentally incomplete, as

theorised by Cabanas (2016). The idea that there is always more you could do, in

more areas, to feel happy chimes with another popular claim made by positive

psychologists and suggested in these books (e.g. Layard, 2011 – see Extract 18) –

the idea that happier people are more successful. As Cabanas notes, to access the

identity of a "flourishing", happy self, people must engage in finding new areas and

new ways to do this. The happiness industry is able to supply as well as inspire this

"incessant personal betterment" (Cabanas, 2016, p. 476) through innumerable

commodities, such as courses, products, services and techniques, advice and apps

(Cabanas, 2016) including, of course, the books that are the focus of this analysis.

The repertoires identified in the books work to outline a space for this

ongoing self-work of happiness project management, and this space is

characterised by rhetorical devices such as analogies, metaphors and common

storylines (Brown, 1999). These offer a particular way of understanding ourselves

and our relationship to our social world, and are therefore worth paying attention to.

Metaphors are linguistic devices that allow a concept or situation to be understood

and experienced in terms of another and by doing so, the meaning and behaviour of

the original concept (the source domain) is transferred to the target domain, helping

create social realities (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Metaphors are rarely neutral – they

perform ideological work by privileging one way of understanding our social world

over another (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Wilce & Price, 2013).

The most notable rhetorical device across all the books was the frequent use of economic and industrial metaphors. For example, all the authors describe common mistakes in terms of them "costing" the reader happiness; and Dolan (2014) uses a variation on the phrase "the production processes of happiness" more than 20 times. Rubin uses an interesting device in her book of including comments that she had elicited from her *happiness-project* blog. One such enquiry revolved around whether aiming to be happy was crass and offensive to people going through difficult times. Of the replies she received, which took up three pages in her book, was this idea, from an anonymous contributor:

Extract 20

```
1    I think you can "bank" happiness – that is to say, learn
2    about yourself and what makes you happy while the
3    sailing is smooth. (Rubin, 2009, p. 139)
```

The idea of happiness as something you can "bank" (line 1) likens it to money: you can accrue it to use now or at a later date. This helps to normalise the idea of working on your happiness even when you might feel you don't need to – something reinforced by the nautical metaphor of "smooth sailing" (line 3), which we can contrast with the unstated opposite of choppy seas, or difficult times. The inference here is that, if you've done your 'work' you might have enough happiness in the bank to see you through without getting too distressed, much as people who have saved up money have a buffer against financial difficulty. Again, this positions practising happiness as the responsible thing to do, as well as abstracting people's feelings and ability to cope from their social environment and locating them firmly at an individual level. Talking about happiness in economic terms also reflects what Illouz (2007) calls emotional capitalism, an intertwining of how we talk about ourselves with business repertoires, with the result that "emotions have become

entities to be evaluated, inspected, discussed, bargained, quantified and commodified" (p. 109).

The use of economic metaphors is particularly interesting given that all the books problematised consumerism and the pursuit of more money as routes to happiness. Indeed, as evidenced by the "happiness as threatened" repertoire outlined in Section 5.5, consumerism and, by association, the continual economic growth required by early 21st century capitalism, were often positioned as contributing to *un*happiness. Duncan (2014) identified a similar political discourse of happiness being lost, often seen in green movements, and he argues that using this discourse places people in an unresolvable bind – to orient to happiness as possible, but not in the unsustainable capitalist structures we live in. I propose that these books work to amplify this dilemma by exhorting the reader to work on their happiness in similar ways and for similar reasons as Western governments currently encourage people to work – to achieve self-sufficiency, amass savings, stave off risk, and take responsibility for choosing the best way to do this. Readers are thus invited to understand themselves as neoliberal subjects with the capacity for continual growth, while simultaneously rejecting the logic of the root of this metaphor – the neoliberal economic system we are a part of.

5.10 Concluding remarks

Although the four best-selling happiness books take different approaches to their subject matter, there were several common repertoires used to construct happiness, to create a problem to solve, and to offer readers advice on how to feel happier. Happiness was written about as a natural, augmentable object that can be contagious, and which is best understood scientifically. Unhappiness was framed as a growing problem through a repertoire of happiness as threatened by various facets of the modern world, and a repertoire of the "fallible brain", whose pleistocene heritage predisposes it to cause unhappiness and which must therefore be

monitored and worked on. By foregrounding the brain or mind as the site where happiness 'happens', people's circumstances and environment are reduced to a set of abstracted triggers that can either promote or upset this process. Self-monitoring was therefore worked up as necessary, a process requiring the common-sense understanding of ourselves as fundamentally split and the repertoire of the "supervisory-self" was used to outline the nature of the ethical work needed to take up this project of becoming happier. These repertoires, along with the idea of happiness as a desirable practice, offer readers two main subject positions: to carry on as before, which is strongly implied to be irresponsible on both a personal and social level; or to use the books' advice and project manage their own happiness on an ongoing basis. This is similar to the narratives identified in self-help books on stress by Brown (1999), who found that stress was constructed as a 20th century disease or epidemic, exacerbated by the fast pace of modern life, and that humans have a primitive response that can't cope with it. However, the explicit focus on the fallibility of the brain in the present analysis seems to offer a particularly cognitive understanding of happiness, and the subtle but important differences between the "serviceable self" (Brown, 1999, p. 35) of stress literature and the "supervisory-self" of the more recent happiness literature suggest a new way of acting on the self, of regular and ongoing monitoring of one's self, one's environment and feeding back on these insights to inform new habits. Without this work, it is implied, experiencing unhappiness is inevitable due to the brain's hardwired self-defeating tendencies.

The present analysis seems to confirm much of the previous critical theoretical and empirical work on happiness, which suggests it is a new and important site of social regulation as it influences the way people make sense of themselves and their relationships, aligning them to a neoliberal ethos (e.g. Binkley, 2011; 2014; Davies, 2015). It does, however, suggest a move away from one previous criticism of happiness rhetoric: that it simply exhorts people to adopt

different attitudes (for e.g. Cromby, Diamond, Kelly, Moloney & Smail, 2007). While this idea is certainly present, the books also consider the outside world, which is framed as affecting happiness in various ways, including (depending on the book) inequality, technology, consumerism and lack of community. Likewise, it is not just our perception of the world that is problematised, though this idea is also in evidence. Instead, these books offer a more biological understanding of unhappiness through the "happiness is a natural object" and "fallible brain" repertoires – that it is inevitable due to the clash between the modern world and our hardwired human 'nature'. This serves to democratise the potential for distress by describing it in universal, biological and genetic terms – we all have faulty brains so therefore we all have the same potential to be unhappy – the difference is in how we respond to our environments by acting on ourselves. The world is positioned not as 'social' but as natural, fixed and unchangeable, and the method of modification is located at an individual level, in metacognition: the ability to be aware of our thoughts and feelings, and to change them to create better habits. If anything, this scientific understanding of happiness arguably increases the burden on the reader, who must observe themselves in their immediate environment (in terms of friends, family and work – the idea of considering the effects of distal power is a notable absence in the texts, except for a discussion of the negative effects of advertising); monitor their thoughts and feelings, and actively work towards improving all of these.

Despite the disavowal of consumerism as a means of pursuing happiness, many of the books' pronouncements were couched in economic and industrial metaphors and commonplaces that suggest the ideal relationship between individual and society is that of productive worker and corporation. Happiness thus becomes an entrepreneurial project aligning us to neoliberal values, where society is understood as operating along competitive market lines and citizens are

enterprising, self-reliant sources of human capital rather than benefactors of a benevolent state (Binkley, 2014). It is important to remember that two of the books' authors, Paul Dolan and Richard Layard, advise the UK government on wellbeing and their constructions of happiness and how it is to be done are therefore very influential. It has been argued that this idea of self-generated happiness is politically expedient because, as Greco and Stenner (2013) have pointed out, passive, internally focused citizens who must 'work' on themselves are cut off from a vital ability: to feel, respond to and communicate psychic pain.

The increasing emphasis on happiness in government policy does not just serve to shape how we understand ourselves as citizens; it also works to frame unhappiness as a social problem (Frawley, 2015b). The present analysis suggests some mechanisms by which policies and interventions that target people's emotions and behaviours are positioned as sensible and necessary thing. All the books constructed a repertoire of happiness being threatened by the perils of modern-day life; and Layard's book explicitly works to position unhappiness as a public health problem, calling it, for example, "the new frontier and new challenge" (2011, p. 9) for the West. In this way, everyday life is framed as potentially risky to our emotional health, something that Furedi (2004) suggests has been normalised, and which can work to cultivate a permanent sense of vulnerability and powerlessness. Also, as we have seen, all authors worked up happiness and unhappiness as "contagious" objects that can be picked up, spread or avoided. However, while such metaphors of contagion suggest communicable diseases, which have traditionally been tackled at a structural level (for example, improving sanitation to combat cholera), the solutions prescribed by the authors are framed in the language of chronic disease – lifestyle choices and behaviour modifications – and therefore something to be undertaken at an individual level. This apparent mixing of metaphors orients to the idea that 'unhappiness' may be more common in certain environments or situations,

in a similar way to how a cholera outbreak may cluster around an infected water pump; yet with the exception of Layard, the authors do not address this issue of inequality.

Furthermore, by talking about happiness as both something that can be achieved through individual effort – similarly to how exercise and a healthy diet are advised to improve cardiovascular health – but also spread around social networks like cholera, a moral burden is placed on readers: it is something you *should* do, not just for your own sake but for the good of society. It is not too big a leap to infer that *not* acting as a project manager of your own happiness, something the books suggest will lead to unhappiness, which is similarly communicable, is not just a private concern but a public one.

Chapter 6: Constructing happiness: luck, social connectedness and enterprising individualism

Having looked at the main ways the expert books constructed a problem of happiness they could solve, and the prescribed subjectivities and activities involved in undertaking happiness work, it is useful to investigate if and how these cultural and social resources may be drawn on in everyday talk. In Chapter 7 I will explore the participants' accounts of 'doing' of happiness, and what kinds of activities, attitudes, choices and techniques they worked up as relevant, desirable and effective. First, in the present chapter, I will look at how participants constructed happiness, presenting the interpretative repertoires they drew on in three broad accounts of happiness. I also explore how participants adopted various subject positions and what this allowed them to achieve, as well as considering four ideological dilemmas that arose during the interviews.

In responding to the interview questions, each of the 30 participants built up their own unique perspectives on happiness, drawing on personal stories, experiences and opinions. However, despite such inevitable variation, there were often striking similarities in participants' accounts as they drew on culturally available ideas and storylines about happiness. Some of the main common-sense ideas, or interpretative repertoires, were that happiness is ineffable and difficult to describe; biologically or genetically determined; a transient emotion or mood; a deep, enduring state; that it comes from relationships with family and friends; that it can be 'chosen' or 'learnt'; or that it is a product of one's circumstances. Already, then, some of these common-sense ideas sit in tension with each other, creating the dilemmatic texture that Billig et al. (1988) argue is fundamental to thought and talk.

Participants drew on these interpretative repertoires of happiness in patterned ways to talk about themselves and others, and this chapter outlines three broad accounts of happiness. First, a fatalistic account of happiness as mostly

determined by biological or natural factors and/or favourable circumstances.

Second, a social account of happiness as coming from connections to others –

close relationships with family and friends, local communities and wider society.

Lastly, participants also formed agentic accounts of happiness by constructing it as

a personal, augmentable resource that could be worked on. These accounts of

happiness were drawn on in complex, overlapping and sometimes contradictory

ways by participants, and this chapter moves on to consider some of the main

ideological dilemmas that participants faced when talking about happiness, and how

they worked to resolve them. The subject positions adopted by participants –

temporary, dynamic identities that enable various social actions – are also

examined. In some cases, participants took up subject positions to deal with the

discursive demands of the research interview, and these interactional features are

attended to in the analysis. However, as discussed in Chapter 4, following Edley

(2001), Potter and Wetherell (1987), and Wetherell and Edley (2014), I would argue

that these patterns of accounting and the subject positions they afforded also have

a generality that extends beyond the immediate context of the interviews. Therefore,

the main focus of the following analysis is to trace the ways in which participants'

accounts may cast light on contemporary "practical ideologies" (Wetherell, Stiven &

Potter, 1987, p. 59) and new affective-discursive practices (Wetherell, 2012) that

may be forming around happiness. In chapter 7 I build on this by looking at how

these ideas may be patterned into specific practices or technologies of happiness.

6.1 Fatalistic accounts

Some participants worked up an account of happiness as determined by factors

beyond individual control when describing themselves or others, drawing on a

variety of interpretative repertoires to do so. For example, retired factory manager

Graham, 71, used a repertoire of happiness being an either-or binary tendency,

saying "you're either a positive-minded person, or you're a negative-minded person"

and speculated about this being down to "upbringing" or "something in your genes". Similarly, a few other participants formed a biological understanding, referencing "brain chemicals" to explain differences in happiness (Alice, Lisa, Monica). Others used repertoires of luck or fortunate circumstances dictating how happy one could or would be. In this section, I discuss these repertoires in turn, beginning with the idea of happiness as pre-set.

6.1.1 Happiness is pre-set

A few participants drew on an interpretative repertoire of happiness as an in-built character or personality trait. For example, Sean, 55, a part-time labourer and musician, said:

Extract 21

```
1    Emma:    Cool, so if people ask if you're happy what do
2             you tend to tell them?

3    Sean:    I'm OK I say yeah, yes, I mean you know there's
4             a term 'happy-go-lucky'

5    Emma:    Mmm

6    Sean:    I've realised, I'm that kind of per- that's my,
7             I think my preset as a character you know from
8             childhood, if I look back

9    Emma:    Yeah

10   Sean:    I've kind of you know just stuff and I've- you
11            know my mum died and (3) there was stuff go-
12            anyway the relationship wasn't- it's not the
```

13	best fate- but I kind of you know- things
14	happen and I process them grief and stuff […] I
15	grieve you know, and I was thinking jeez
16	there's something wrong with me that I'm not
17	having this, you know I'm- I seem to have a
18	kind of, happy plod-along go-lucky spirit,
19	sounds a bit cheap way of saying it, but I seem
20	to be quite contented

Sean's use of "that kind of per-" (line 6) – which we can assume he was going to complete as "person" – draws on the idea that people come in a number of recognisably different types, and he classifies his type as "happy-go-lucky" (line 4). He uses the idea of "character" (line 7) to construct this as a fixed or enduring state, backing this up through his use of the present tense "I'm" (line 6) to attribute it to himself now, as well as "from childhood" (lines 7-8) – it is the way he is and has always been. His use of, and emphasis on the word "preset" (line 7) also works to suggest that this trait precedes and informs his thoughts and feelings; it is his default setting. Saying "I've realised" (line 6) and "if I look back" (line 8) works to confirm this account of himself – it is an evaluation he has made over time and with deliberation. He moves on to validate this account with a specific example – his way of grieving when his mum died when he was a child (lines 10-14). He hints at this being one of a number of difficult things he has encountered ("you know just stuff… there was stuff" (lines 10 and 11)), but glosses this as "things happen" that he "processes" (lines 13-14). This metaphor invokes an idea of emotions – "grief and stuff" (line 14) – as being raw materials that can be worked on and changed through effort, and hints at the common-sense contrast between supposedly irrational emotions and rational thought (Edwards, 1997; 1999). Sean compares his way of processing the grief to a normative example (in the full extract he references other

people "crying" and "bawling"), and through his account of questioning himself as to whether his style of grieving was "wrong" (line 15-16) he concludes that this is due to his "happy plod-along go-lucky spirit" (line 18), something he "seems to have" (line 17) rather than choosing or willing this response. In this way, Sean doesn't take credit for his positioning as "happy" (line 18) and "contented" (line 20) – it is his "spirit" (line 18), which again draws on the idea of an essence or something that transcends conscious control. "Happy" here is something that he *is*, rather than something that he *does*; happiness as ontology rather than activity. Finally, by saying this "sounds a bit of a cheap way of saying it" (lines 18-19), he is possibly orienting to the idea that this could be a less than desirable way to position oneself.

6.1.2 Happiness is good luck

It is also useful to look at *when* participants adopted a fatalistic account of happiness. One of the interview questions I asked, "Do you think it's possible to boost levels of happiness?', can be seen as a leading, or culturally loaded one, in that there is an implied 'right' answer of *yes*. It also reproduces the idea of happiness as quantity as discussed in Section 5.4.2. Indeed, the majority of participants (25 out of 30) answered this question in the affirmative. Taking up a fatalistic position on happiness, however, allowed three participants to reject the idea (Graham, Monica, Caroline) and two to give an ambivalent answer (Bob, PB). In the following extract, Caroline, 55, a home-maker, drew on repertoires of happiness as good relationships with family and as coming from fortunate circumstances to position herself as lucky:

Extract 22

```
1    Emma:      Do you think it's possible to boost levels of
2               happiness how happy you feel? (2) it doesn't
3               sound like you have any need to at all, but-
```

```
4        Caroline:   ((laughs)) Mmm, no, I don't, I just-, I just

5                    kind of- it is what it is, I do feel lucky,

6                    you know I've-, I've had a couple of friends

7                    that have buried their husbands and you know,

8                    it- you know, went to a funeral not very long

9                    ago a friend of Deb [mutual acquaintance] and

10                   I's, whose husband just-, just retired two

11                   months ago came home dropped dead on the

12                   doorstep after a bike ride, and, so I do feel

13                   lucky that, that hasn't happened.
```

In this section of dialogue, I follow up the question "do you think it's possible to boost levels of happiness" (line 1-2) with the comment "it doesn't sound like you have any need to at all" (lines 2-3) – a confusing way of framing the question in that it leads her in the opposite direction to the initial enquiry. This demonstrates how interviewers' questions are embedded in the interactional flow of a conversation and as such may be phrased quite differently. In this case, as Caroline had been talking about feeling happy in her life, my phrasing was attending to the potential oddness of this question. She acknowledges this comment with a laugh, then signals a brief period of consideration with her "mmm" before answering the question – "no, I don't" (line 4). She follows this up with a half-formed explanation "I just kind of- it is what it is" (lines 4-5) which suggests happiness is something objective and unamenable to enhancement. However, while she positions herself as not able or needing to boost her happiness, she draws on the idea of luck to suggest that her happiness could be affected by outside forces, "I do feel lucky" (lines 5 & 12-13). Here luck is oriented to as something she feels rather than an objective assessment of her situation, and therefore potentially works as a demonstration of gratitude – she recognises her circumstances as fortunate *and* feels them to be too, with the "do" working to

emphasise this or perhaps warding off a possible accusation of being blasé about her situation in life. As McAvoy (2009) has argued, positioning oneself as lucky is a rhetorical device rather than evidence of a particular cognitive attribution style. By describing herself as lucky, Caroline marks the circumstances she is relating as positive and valued (having a husband, children and a secure home) and, in doing so, reproduces heteronormative values.

She goes on to explain why she feels lucky by contrasting her situation with that of friends who have "buried their husbands" (lines 6-7), then goes into more detail about a particular friend – she was at the funeral "not very long ago" (lines 8-9) of someone both she and Deb, a mutual friend, know whose husband "dropped dead on the doorstep after a bike ride" (lines 11-12). As Potter (1996) notes, offering specific but not directly relevant details can work to make an account believable, and also creates a particular narrative structure. In this case, the order of events that Caroline outlines – her friend's husband dying immediately after a bike ride, having "just retired two months ago" (lines 10-11) works up this situation as particularly unexpected and unfortunate – retirement is traditionally looked forward to as a relaxing and rewarding time of life, and exercise is supposed to keep you fit and healthy – and to suggest that effort and doing things the 'right' way are trumped by luck or outside forces.

6.2 Social / interpersonal accounts

In the extract above Caroline adopted a fatalistic position around happiness as something one has little or no control over, but also drew on a social account of happiness as something that comes from relationships with others. All participants talked about relationships – with friends, partners, children, parents and, less frequently, colleagues – as contributing to or necessary for happiness. Some others (Arthur, Barbara, Dan, John, Sean, Farrah, Lisa, Lucy, Bob, Monica) also drew on a

repertoire of happiness coming from "connection", belonging to a community or doing things for the greater good. Again, this section examines these in turn.

6.2.1 Happiness comes from close relationships

The idea that happiness comes from relationships to others was commonplace. For example, when I asked Sally, 51, a café owner, the question "What would you say makes for a good life?", she replied:

<u>Extract 23</u>

```
1      Sally:   Oh I think er, um (3) to have good friends, to
2               be in contact with your family, to have a va-
3               varied interests, erm, to-, I feel very
4               fortunate that the person I'm married to now,
5               that we're just, we're-, we're like two
6               soulmates, and that, that certainly brings with
7               it some happiness and contentedness.
```

Sally starts off by listing good friends and family as being important components of a good life. Following the generalised nature of the question, her answer takes the generalised 'you' voice, and it is framed in a somewhat passive way – "to have good friends, to be in contact with your family, to have varied interests" (lines 1-3). It is interesting that Sally doesn't work up an account of 'good' or 'close' relationships with family; merely being in contact is enough for a good life, which suggests a moral undertone of being dutiful – one should be in touch with one's family, possibly regardless of what they may be like. She then switches to the first-person voice to talk about her and her second husband as being "two soulmates" (lines 5-6), a phrase that suggests a particularly loving and harmonious relationship. In a similar way to Caroline she prefaces this by saying she feels "very fortunate" (lines 3-4) about it, which has the rhetorical function of marking the *calibre* of this relationship

as valued, not just the fact of having a husband. By saying "that certainly brings with it some happiness and contentedness" (line 7) she works up a before-and-after account of feeling happier because of her relationship, and again, this is phrased in a rather passive way of happiness ensuing from a relationship, rather than being actively sought or worked on.

Many participants referenced family, particularly children if they had them, when talking about happiness, for example by answering the question "Could you tell me about a time when you would say you were happy?" by referring to the birth of their children or the period of early parenthood (Bill, Mandy, Gill, Sally, Dan, Jane). Others drew on accounts of enjoying their relationship with their children in the present – for example Ginny, 52, a mature student, said of her daughters who were also both at university:

Extract 24

```
1     Ginny:     What I'm seeing is-, is-, is real it's- it's
2                not superficial it's-, it's them, growing and
3                developing as adults and um, contributing, to
4                the-, the- the-, the world in which we live and
5                I mean- I don't mean world as in the whole wide
6                world I mean their little, community that
7                they're living in at- at- at- at- at the moment
```

Here, Ginny uses an interpretative repertoire of there being differentiated types of happiness when talking about her relationship with her daughters, characterising hers as "real" (line 1) as opposed to "superficial" (line 2). Her construction of "superficial" happiness can be contextualised by comments she had previously made when she told me that a couple of years ago her husband had left her and asked for a divorce, which had blindsided her. She explained that he "felt other

people were having a lot more fun than what we were" and added that he now had "very little involvement" with his daughters, commenting that "I feel he is missing so much". This pursuit of "fun" over family relationships is contrasted with her "real" happiness of spending time with her daughters, an experience she describes as "seeing… them growing and developing as adults" (lines 1-3). That this is again phrased in a passive way is interesting as it contrasts with many participants' accounts of happiness, which tended to be phrased in active, 'doing' language. Adding that she sees her daughters "contributing to… the world in which we live" (lines 3-4), which she goes on to qualify as "their little community" (line 6), invokes another, more macro layer of the social – society is something you actively contribute to – and in doing so, Ginny draws on a moral repertoire of happiness as tied up in reciprocity and mutuality.

Finally, it is worth noting that participants also spoke about family bonds, or a lack thereof, to talk about unhappiness as well as happiness. Unlike Sean (Extract 21), who spoke about his "preset" character as compensating for a difficult childhood, some people worked up accounts of childhood loss or a difficult upbringing as having an enduring negative impact on their happiness (Barbara, Elwood, John, Lisa, PB). For example, John, 67, a part-time tutor replied to my question "what sort of situations or experiences can contribute to unhappiness?" by talking about isolation and bad weather, then said there were "different levels of unhappiness", with the "worst kind" for him being when he was "tearful and very emotional". He explained, "that can be caused by relationship problems you know and-, because of my past, because of my difficult childhood, relationships can be difficult for me". Here, he was referring to what he'd told me earlier in the interview about being orphaned at the age of five and he makes a common-sense link between this and his current relationship difficulties, demonstrating what Illouz (2007; 2008) refers to as therapeutic discourse, which draws on the idea that past

events cause psychological reverberations in present-day life that must be identified and examined for an individual to 'heal' and be able to function effectively and successfully.

6.2.2 Happiness comes from community

As well as talking about close interpersonal relationships as necessary for happiness, or "real" happiness, many participants also drew on the idea of "community" and "connectedness" as important. Mirroring a common repertoire used by the book authors, a few participants gave this a biological or evolutionary gloss, such as by calling humans "social animals" (John, Arthur, Lisa) and by framing happiness as threatened due to a perceived "loss" of community (see Section 5.5). For example, when I asked Bob, 48, a business owner, what he thought about the government measuring happiness, he avoided answering the question and instead commented on how happiness was defined, saying "we should go back to basic-, family friends, having loved ones, community will make you happier", with the "back to basic-" seeming to invoke a romanticised idea of the past where people were happier due to a more collective mentality. This repertoire was couched in overtly political terms by Monica, 67, a café-manager, towards the end of our interview when she noted that "Scandinavia and Canada" had topped the recently released 2017 World Happiness Report rankings, and I asked her why she thought that was:

<u>Extract 25</u>

```
1    Monica:   I think, I think they ha- those countries have
2              a, bigger social conscience than, people living
3              in Britain do and I, I do have to say I put
4              that down to Margaret Thatcher, um, and her,
5              you know, number one is the most important,
```

```
 6                well I don't think number one- I don't think I

 7                am the most important, I think we should have a

 8                greater, er, sense of, community and um,

 9                looking out for others less fortunate from-,

10                than ourselves
```

Here, Monica proposes that the factor contributing to higher levels of happiness in some countries is "a bigger social conscience" (line 2). She describes this as a "sense of community" and "looking out for others less fortunate from- than ourselves" (lines 8-10), which again works to link happiness with living by a moral code and ideas of mutual obligation. While the narrative of a diminishing sense of community was not uncommon in the interviews, Monica's account is notable in that she explicitly blames Margaret Thatcher (and implicitly, Thatcher's program of neoliberal reforms) for this, contrasting the Thatcherite ideology of "number one is the most important" (line 5) with her own beliefs – "I don't think I am the most important" (lines 6-7). Acting in the interest of oneself or in the interests of a community as a whole are positioned as incompatible attitudes and behaviours that are in competition with each other, with the former intimated to be selfish and counterproductive to happiness – at least in a general sense. Monica did not refer to the perceived lack of "social conscience" or "community" as affecting her own happiness, but implied that it affected other people, such as "others less fortunate… than ourselves" (lines 9-10); and elsewhere in the interview she described herself as being "generally a happy person" and "totally satisfied". This was a common feature of people's accounts of societal contributions to *un*happiness – for example, of the 10 participants who drew on the repertoire of happiness not being possible without the basic needs of a home and/or enough money to live on, all did so in a way that framed it as a problem in general rather than one that affected them. This had the

rhetorical function of maintaining a culturally valued position of 'being happy', while acknowledging potential structural causes of unhappiness.

6.3 Agentic accounts

As well as talking about happiness as coming from interpersonal relationships and connections to people and communities outside themselves, participants also used a broadly individualised or agentic account of happiness. Again, there were a number of common interpretative repertoires that participants drew on to do this, such as happiness being an internal property, and something that could be cultivated through self-knowledge and acting in one's own interests. These repertoires in turn facilitated the adoption of various subject positions. This section starts with an examination of one of the most common repertoires in the interview data – of happiness as subjective or different for everyone.

6.3.1 Happiness is different for everyone

In seeming contrast to the idea that 'everybody' feels happier with secure relationships and connection to a community, 12 of the 30 participants drew on the repertoire that happiness is "very personal" and/or that we're all unique individuals and therefore different things will make us happy. An example of this came towards the end of my interview with Col, 39, who claims Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), when I asked him whether he had any other ideas or thoughts about happiness before I switched off the recording device:

Extract 26

```
1       Col:      I'm wondering what makes you happy?

2       Emma:     Me?

3       Col:      Mmm
```

4	Emma:	I don't know, the more I get into this the more
5		I kind of go 'what is happiness?' Similar to
6		you I think, like friends, doing things that
7		you feel like, you're helping people and it's
8		worthwhile
9	Col:	Mmm, mm
10	Emma:	And that feeling of connection, feeling that
11		you're part of something
12	Col:	Yeah, it's a very subjective thing you know,
13		sort of, if somebody likes listening to rap
14		music, my God, but my- if it makes them happy
15		listen to it, sort of thing
16	Emma:	Yeah
17	Col:	Personal choice
18	Emma:	And do you think the things that make us happy
19		are all different or there are-?
20	Col:	Oh yeah, yeah it's all different
21	Emma:	Mm-hmm
22	Col:	It's like, Larry's [[mutual friend]] football
23		team, if Everton win he's happy
24	Emma:	Yep
25	Col:	He could know someone who's a Liverpool fan and
26		they'd be not so happy

27   Emma: True ((both laugh))

28   Col: Yeah. It's a very personal thing

Col's assertion that happiness is a "very subjective thing' (line 12) is presented in generalised, normative terms through the follow-up "you know", which marks it as common knowledge (Edwards & Mercer, 1987) and invites implicit consensus from me. He illustrates this idea with an example of someone who "likes listening to rap music" (lines 13-14), saying that they should "if it makes them happy" (line 14). Happiness, it is implied, is something that can be created or increased through one's actions, and is presented as a valid reason for choosing a particular activity or behaviour. This is lent more rhetorical force by Col's exclamation of "my God" (line 14), suggesting that not only does he *not* like rap music, but struggles to understand how anyone could. This reflects McAvoy's (2009) finding that claiming choices and actions are undertaken to increase or maintain happiness is a pattern of accounting that often needs no more defending, as being happy is understood as being a justification in itself.

The idea that happiness is based on individual agency is again reproduced in line 17 with the standalone statement "personal choice", and subsequently by saying "it's a very personal thing" (line 28), with the extreme-case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986) "very" helping to underline this idea of individual variation. However, the example that Col uses between these two statements draws on a different scenario – the outcome of a football match, and therefore something that is beyond individual choice and agency. "Larry", Col's neighbour and a friend of mine was invoked to demonstrate this, with Col stating that "if Everton win he's happy" (line 23) in contrast with a hypothetical Liverpool fan who would "be not so happy" (line 26). Here, then, the repertoire of happiness as a fluctuating feeling in response to outside events is drawn on to make his point. This shift is possibly occasioned by

the passive phrasing of my preceding question, "do you think the things that make us happy are all different or there are-" (lines 18-19), where Col cut me off to restate his point "yeah yeah it's all different" (line 20).

I have included the dialogue immediately before Col worked up happiness as based on individual choices to point out some interesting interactional features of the interview (lines 1-11). As noted in Chapter 4, there is – with good reason – criticism of interview data for being 'flooded' with the interviewer's concerns rather than those of the participant, and of analysis of participants' responses as being decontextualized from the sequence of conversation in which they were embedded (Potter & Hepburn, 2005; Speer, 2002; Wooffitt & Widdicombe, 2006). This has led to a distinction between the 'contrived' data from research interviews, compared to the 'naturalistic' data preferred by conversation analysts (see Section 4.4.4 for a more thorough discussion). A consideration of my role as interviewer is, therefore, a vital part of the analysis. However, I would argue that analysis of interview data should not just be about compensating for its methodological shortcomings. Following Wetherell (1998), interview data can also be celebrated for facilitating a greater range of accounting practices. With active interviewing, interviewers can question participants' responses, assumptions and contradictions, and in turn participants can problematize or challenge the questions, change topic, ask questions of the interviewer or otherwise blur the boundaries between researcher and participant (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Speer, 2002; Wooffitt & Widdicombe, 2006).

This section of dialogue between Col and me is a good example of him "turning the tables" (Speer, 2002, p. 512) by asking me a question: what makes me happy (line 1). I position my answer as "similar to you, I think" (lines 5-6) and list a few things Col had touched on earlier in the interview as being important to his

happiness – friends, feeling you're helping people, doing worthwhile things, connection (lines 6-11). Col's "yeah" (line 12) suggests agreement with me but is immediately followed by a contradiction of my attempt to draw a similarity between us – "it's a very subjective thing" (line 12). This serves as an example of how 'doing similarity' in interviews can inadvertently highlight differences between the interviewer and interviewee and lead participants to emphasise difference (Abell, Locke, Condor, Gibson & Stevenson, 2006). It is also a variation of the 'yes, but' strategy (Pomerantz, 1984), in which an initial token agreement is used to preface a refusal or disagreement, and demonstrates how, just as in naturalistic conversation, interview participants draw on a wide range of discursive practices and resources to carry out actions. Col did not seem to work up his account of happiness as being "very personal" to agree with me or as a result of being 'led' to a certain kind of answer through a line of questioning, but set up a question-answer sequence to make his point – something he would have been able to do regardless of what I replied. Instead of seeing participants as passive respondents who simply display their cognitions on demand, then, it is clear they actively engage in the moment-by-moment meaning making, drawing on available repertoires to reinforce, challenge and negotiate the flow of the conversation.

6.3.2 Happiness can be chosen

Repertoires of happiness being associated with freedom were also frequently generated throughout the interviews. This could sometimes lead participants to talk about happiness as a "choice". For example, towards the beginning of our interview, Lucy, 41, an actress and coach, said:

Extract 27

```
1      Emma:     So how do you think you would define happiness,
2                if you had to?
```

3   Lucy: (loud exhale)) Um, gosh, difficult to define

4   isn't it er (13) maybe, um, I ((laughs)) maybe

5   that sort of (6) I think it's that sort of

6   inner feeling of like <u>cal</u>m, and peace, um (3)

7   feeling that everything's good, and, perhaps

8   mostly, that you're, the creator of your

9   happiness (3) um, or to remind yourself that

10   you can be

11   Emma: Mm-hmm

12   Lucy: Um, so you can actually choose to be happy at

13   any time, but obviously it's like you know um,

14   obviously you live in the world and you're

15   affected by things all the time, but, you <u>can</u>

16   still choose, to be happy, you can find it, and

17   it is- sometimes I think it, you know it takes-

18   , it takes work but, I think it's always worth

19   the effort

20   Emma: Mm-hmm

21   Lucy: Um (3)

22   Emma: And can you say a bit about what-

23   Lucy: Freedom I think the free- yeah freedom- the

24   word freedom comes up a lot I think

25   Emma: Right

```
26        Lucy:     That I-, yeah I think free to be you as well, I

27                  think that's very important, that you're not-

28                  you're not-, you're not living someone else's

29                  life
```

The exhalation, "gosh", laughter and long pauses (lines 3-5) are fairly typical of a response to my question "how would you define happiness?" This is at least partly due to the difficultly in defining any abstract concept in a research interview, but the idea of happiness as ineffable, difficult to define and talk about was a common interpretative repertoire mobilised by participants. As such, Lucy's account is marked by qualifiers like "sort of" (line 5) and "perhaps" (line 7) indicating hesitancy and a lack of certainty. She locates happiness as an interior property at the start of her definition – an "inner feeling of like <u>calm</u> and peace" (line 6), and while the invocation of these low-intensity feelings was a common way of describing happiness, it is a notable contrast to another commonly used repertoire of happiness as a high or something heightened and elevated. Unlike this latter idea of happiness, Lucy's description of happiness is suggestive of something that can be sustained over a long period and that is therefore highly desirable.

Lucy frames another idea about happiness as particularly important – "perhaps mostly that you're the creator of your happiness" (lines 7-9), constructing happiness as dependent on individual enterprise and – crucially – the knowledge that this is the case ("or to remind yourself that you can be" (lines 9-10)). This suggests that another feature of happiness that Lucy lists – "feeling that everything's good" (line 7) does not refer to a fortunate alignment of circumstances, but an ability to *feel* that way by tailoring one's mind and moods. She reiterates this by saying "obviously you live in the world and you're affected by things all the time" (lines14-15), which is used rhetorically as an aside, to acknowledge that she is not constructing an idealised account, but one rooted in the realities of life.

These things happening all the time are implicitly negative – there is no suggestion that they could contribute to happiness, which is to be "found" through "work" (line 18) and "effort" (line 19). By mobilising the discursive resource of effortfulness, identified by Gibson (2009; 2011) in talk about welfare rights as a way of negotiating who is and is not deserving of benefits, Lucy positions herself as someone proactive whose happiness is earnt. Merely invoking the abstract ideas of "work" and "effort" seems to be enough – Lucy does not specify the manner of this labour, or how or where happiness is to be "found" (although she mentions various techniques she uses to feel happier at other points in the interview) – it is a choice in and of itself. "You can actually" (line 12) works this up as new or lesser-known information. The suggestion is that happiness is there all along and merely awaits discovery, although this is not an easy task as Lucy's use of "work" and "effort" attest. In this way, her account of happiness closely resembles the book authors' contention that happiness is already available to us if we could just stop being distracted by the modern world (see Rubin's (2009) similar affective-discursive practice in Section 5.9). As Binkley (2018) puts it, this is "the ambivalence that positive psychology seeks to negotiate":

> the subject is both already happy, more happy than they realise, but also in some crucial way failing to properly realise how happy they are, and thus desiring greater happiness and willing to undergo a regime of self-modification to achieve it (2018, p. 4).

Lucy cuts off my follow-up question in line 22 to list another feature of happiness for her – "the word freedom comes up a lot I think" (lines 23-24). She was one of 10 participants to draw on a "happiness as freedom" repertoire, which has strong underpinnings of Enlightenment liberal philosophy. She then invokes the idea of authenticity, saying "free to be you as well, I think that's very important" (lines 26-27), explaining that this involves "not living someone else's life" (lines 28-29). This

linking of the valued state of happiness with the idea of being free to be yourself, as well as situating happiness at an 'inner' individual level, is also a good example of what Rose (1996, 1999) calls the "obligated freedom" of the neoliberal citizen, which is facilitated by psychological discourse. In using this repertoire and taking up the ethical work of the neoliberal citizen to be autonomous, 'choosing' and enterprising we end up living out a paradox: to be successful we must freely decide our actions, but also work on understanding and improving ourselves, leading to a liberated self that is "obliged to live its life tied to the project of its own identity" (Rose, 1999, p. 258). This is further explored in the discussion of the "living your own life" repertoire outlined in Section 7.2.3, while the following section considers some of the implications and moments of trouble that such 'obligated freedom' can lead to in talk about happiness.

6.4 Negotiating social and agentic accounts of happiness

While I have presented participants' constructions of happiness as determined by forces outside one's control (fatalistic accounts), as social interconnectedness (social accounts), and as individual enterprise (agentic accounts) in separate sections, it was a common feature of the interviews for the participants to draw on these accounts and the various interpretative repertoires that feed into them in overlapping, nuanced and sometimes contradictory ways. These are not fixed narratives or discourses that participants positioned themselves in, but flexible and dynamic discursive resources that are drawn on to carry out interactional business.

Billig et al. (1988) describe ideological dilemmas as arising when people become aware of opposing ways of looking at the same issue, and the different actions and understandings that these entail necessitate rhetorical work to resolve or disable the dilemma. This idea informs the following section, which focuses on how participants negotiated the contrasting repertoires and subject positions associated with the two most commonly used accounts of happiness – social and

agentic. First, I consider how participants articulated the relationship between 'inner' resources of happiness and 'outer' environmental influences. Second, I explore the trouble encountered by one participant when building an account of happiness as deriving from close relationships. Third, I outline how the ideological dilemma of happiness stemming from both individual freedom and from relationships (and therefore obligations to others) was dealt with; and finally I consider the difficulty encountered when a participant mobilised both 'subjective' and 'objective' definitions of happiness.

6.4.1 Inner control vs outer influences

The idea of happiness being an 'effort' or taking 'hard work' espoused by Lucy in Extract 27 was also produced by a number of other participants. While Lucy's account of happiness as something you could choose to feel regardless of the outside world was framed in generalised, third-person terms, when participants adopted the first-person voice to talk about individual agency it could lead to troubled positioning. For example, consider the following extract from Valerie, 64, who is retired:

Extract 28

```
1    Emma:     How do you think you'd describe, what happiness
2              is?

3    Valerie:  Happiness is being- having positive thoughts,
4              being a positive-, yeah happiness is being of a
5              positive thought (2) and not letting-, cos I
6              have-, do- and I do do this even though I have
7              this knowledge I do this, where I let something
8              external, intrude upon me which I have no
9              control about, and then I get upset by it
```

```
10        Emma:    Mm-hmm

11        Valerie: And I can't do anything about it, but I get I

12                 upset about it so the person that I'm poisoning

13                 is myself by having, horrible thoughts

14                 ((laughs)) about, [[high 'stressed' voice:]]

15                 "Waaa why is this happening to me?" when I

16                 can't actually do anything about it […] I, see

17                 that I, have these triggers from my past of,

18                 when something happens or goes wrong I can

19                 suddenly be brought down to earth and then feel

20                 very sad or depressed or, I can't deal with it,

21                 even though I, I do have the tools at my

22                 disposal and when I say tools, it's thinking

23                 about what I can do to solve the issue
```

Valerie vacillates between the idea of "being" and "having" to answer my question of she'd describe happiness: "happiness is being- having positive thoughts- being a positive-" (lines 3-4), which hints at the contrasting repertoires of happiness as a stable state – something you can be, and a more temporary mood – thoughts you can have. She settles on "being of a positive thought" (lines 4-5), and in doing so lays the groundwork for constructing happiness as happening at a mental level, and herself as being responsible for it, in common with Lucy. She continues this idea by saying happiness is "not letting… something external intrude upon me" (lines 5-8), a construction that also orients to the idea of happiness as socially produced or influenced. This "something external" is worked up as out of Valerie's hands – "I have no control about" (lines 8-9) and "I can't do anything about it" (line 11), yet like Lucy she seems to construct an account of happiness that involves not the absence or minimisation of such undesirable externals, but the capacity to resist or overcome

them. She positions herself as having the ability to do this, saying "I have this knowledge" (lines 6-7) and mentioning "the tools at my disposal" (lines 21-22), which she explicitly characterises as mental – "thinking about what I can do to solve the issue" (lines 22-23).

It is the specific nature of this self-work that is of interest here. Valerie's invocation of "triggers from my past" (line 17) as something that makes her struggle seems to draw on the therapeutic self (Illouz, 2007; 2008) – the understanding of ourselves as carrying scars from childhood or our past that need identifying and healing. However, also folded into Valerie's account is what Binkley (2014; 2018) and De La Fabián and Stecher (2017) identify as positive psychology's characterisation of happiness as a cognitive, rather than therapeutic undertaking, involving working on overcoming habits of negativity and pessimism to realise one's happiness in the present. This is evidenced by Valerie's framing of both her problems ("when something happens or goes wrong" (line 18)) and proposed solutions ("what I can do to solve the issue") as present or future-oriented concerns.

As Rimke (2000) notes, the use of psychological discourse to talk about bettering oneself, as found in self-help books and reproduced here by Valerie, works to situate any failure to be or feel 'better' within the individual. While taking up an agentic subject position allows Valerie the opportunity to claim responsibility and credit for her actions, she also risks taking the blame for *not* feeling happy, and in outlining this idea in the first-person voice and illustrating it with her own experiences, her agentic position becomes a precarious one. She refers to instances of perceived failures to mentally resist, such as when she lets "something external intrude upon me" (lines 7-8) or says "I can't deal with it" (line 20), and in doing so seems to be adopting a subject position of trying but sometimes failing to be happy, where it is the effort that is the deciding factor in maintaining her agency. This has similarities to Anderson and Gibson's (2017) finding that when talking

about health, people living in economic precarity struggle to lay claim to the desirable attributes of self-determination and responsibility when they locate the reasons for poor health outside themselves in structural disadvantage. To rectify this a repertoire of 'motivation' was mobilised, which works to acknowledge material difficulties but position them as secondary in importance to attitudinal factors. In this extract, Valerie works to achieve something similar with her invocation of "positive thought" and mental "tools".

In forming this account, Valerie draws on the supervisory-self repertoire identified in the previous chapter, with her rational 'I' positioned as having the ability to make choices and determine actions that her 'self' that exists in the world must deal with the consequences of. This idea of the self as split in two (Hazleden, 2003 Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) was also frequently used by many other participants in their talk about happiness. In Valerie's account, however, the relationship between the two selves takes on a destructive tone with her striking phrase "the person that I'm poisoning is myself by having, horrible thoughts" (lines 12-13). In locating happiness at an interior, cognitive level, and constructing her role as a gatekeeper between external triggers and her inner feelings, Valerie's account works in a similar way to the self-help books to locate the 'problem' of happiness at an individual level. There is no sense that her feelings and thoughts may be valid or useful responses – they are characterised as "horrible" (line 13) and, it is implied, must be eradicated. It therefore becomes Valerie's imperfect gatekeeping skills rather than actual events or experiences that are constructed as diminishing her happiness or preventing her from feeling it – an individual failing she describes with the powerful metaphor of "poisoning myself".

6.4.2 Living by a moral code vs pleasing oneself

Looking at how participants' positioning becomes disturbed or precarious during the flow of interaction and how this is dealt with, is a useful focus for discourse analysts

(Wetherell, 1998). As with Valerie, this often happened when participants talked about the specifics of their lives and experiences in conjunction with more generalised accounts of happiness. For example, in the following extract Farrah, 26, a care-worker, produced a complex, troubled account of how family ties contribute to happiness. The context to this conversation is that I had asked her what might impede happiness and, when she replied "myself" by "holding onto things", I asked for an example:

Extract 29

```
1    Farrah:   I suppose I hold on to (2) negative
2              relationships (4) like my dad is pretty, toxic,
3              but I still meet up with him because he hasn't
4              got anybody else […] But probably in the long
5              run if I was to just cut it off, it- you'd feel
6              a lot lighter and happier, but, the- the guilt,
7              I couldn't do that cos that'd make me more
8              unhappy I think
```

However, after continuing this line of thought for a bit she seemed to revert to the 'script' of family contributing to happiness:

```
9    Farrah:   I think it's attachments to people make you
10             happy, like your children or, partner or,
11             parents or (2) like just, awesome friends

12   Emma:     Yeah

13   Farrah:   Is-, I really do believe that, you should have
14             attachments to people because, we'd be very
15             very lonely
```

```
16      Emma:      Yeah, definitely

17      Farrah:    A lot of people think, like my dad included,

18                 you should be on this planet, to sort of, find

19                 a reason to be here, and the, more spiritual

20                 and more (2) godly, when actually, we're just

21                 here, and just, you shouldn't, you should just

22                 try and be the best person you can be, live

23                 with good morals and live with good intentions,

24                 and love the people that are around you (3) and

25                 not think that you're better than that

26      Emma:      Yeah

27      Farrah:    And that there is more than that cos that's my

28                 dad constantly, just, 'oh I've been on a yoga

29                 retreat for two months, I'm going to be

30                 enlightened', well he's still an arsehole
```

Farrah's account is marked by tension and contradiction and she seems caught in a literal as well as ideological dilemma between maintaining a "negative" relationship with her "pretty toxic" (line 2) dad or cutting it off, in which case "you'd feel a lot lighter and happier" (lines 5-6). These competing ideas seem to map on to Binkley's (2014) identification of a social or 'welfarist' happiness based on interdependence and traditional societal bonds, and a neoliberal one of freeing oneself from obligations and engaging in relationships in a strategic way to maximise individual happiness. In Farrah's telling, though, neither option seems to work – maintaining ties with her dad precludes feeling "lighter and happier", and exposes her to his

toxicity, with its implied threat of contamination; but cutting ties would mean a moral failing – "the guilt… that'd make me more unhappy I think" (lines 6-7), leading her to conclude "I couldn't do that" (line 7).

In the second extract Farrah produces a more generalised account of happiness, which seems to partially contradict her characterisation of her relationship with her dad as dutiful but damaging: "It's attachments to people make you happy, like your children or, partner or, parents" (lines 9-11). This is not a personalised narrative, then, as on top of her difficult relationship with her dad, Farrah was single and had no children at the time of the interview. Also, despite speaking about the importance of her friends at other points, she puts them at the end of this list – "or like, just awesome friends" (line 11), with the "just" marking them as less valued, and the "awesome" suggesting that to qualify as a significant attachment a friend must be particularly special. The exalted place of children, partner and family in contributing to happiness seems to be a cultural commonplace in that it can be mobilised as a discursive resource, regardless of one's own circumstances.

To underline the idea that one "should" (line 13) have attachments, Farrah constructs an account in which to "live with good morals and live with good intentions, and love the people that are around you" (lines 22-24) is contrasted with the approach of "a lot of people… my dad included" (line 17), who strive to "find a reason to be here" (lines 18-19) invoking an idea of the "spiritual" or "godly" as something self- rather than other-focused, and ultimately selfish and arrogant as it involves thinking "you're better than that" (line 25) and "that there is more than that" (line 27). In doing so, she broadly compares social and agentic approaches to happiness, with the former associated with family bonds, reciprocity, equality and habit, and the latter, self-focus and striving. She uses reported speech to

characterise her dad as having a misguided approach to happiness – "I'm going to be enlightened" (lines 29-30), concluding "well he's still an arsehole" (line 30). The implication here is that if you aren't able to maintain relationships or behave decently to others, then you cannot, or perhaps should not, be happy. Likewise, another suggestion is that choosing to improve yourself is not in and of itself a route to happiness – a notable rejection of the neoliberal idea of happiness as enterprise. Farrah seems to work to overcome her earlier ideological dilemma by forming an account that glosses her relationship with her dad as being characterised by a clash of different ideas or beliefs about happiness, comparing her own, moral approach to her father's selfish one.

6.4.3 Freedom vs responsibility

In the following extract Jane, 44, a stay-at-home mum, faced a similar ideological dilemma of familial bonds clashing with personal desires, although one that was occasioned not by the qualities of a person or people around her, but by her changing work status. She had constructed happiness as a "lack of responsibility" and "freedom" at various times throughout our interview, yet a question from me worked to disrupt this account. Here, she had been talking about her husband being happier in his job because he had moved away from some of his office-based duties, back into working outside, which he enjoyed more. She moved on to explaining his reasons for feeling happier in generalised, second-person terms:

Extract 30

```
1     Jane:    You've got no, responsibilities and you're in a
2              place that makes you happy

3     Emma:    Yeah, and do you think if you had no
4              responsibilities ever that you would be,
5              happier?
```

6	Jane:	Funny isn't it cos when you kind of put it like
7		that I think-, no I don't think I would I don't
8		think I'd necessarily be, completely happy
9		with, zero responsibility, and in fact, I've
10		now just found myself-, six years of being a
11		full-time mum, littlest one is now at school
12		full-time so, I'm in that transition period now
13		going 'oh, what-, what-, what actually am I
14		going to do now'
15	Emma:	Mmm
16	Jane:	And you know and trying to, get a sense of
17		myself again and what I want to do, rather than
18		it- and the last six years have been, all about
19		the children ((clears throat)), and it's not-,
20		it's not a great place to be, you know I'm- I'm
21		happy, but I am a bit lost with knowing what
22		career to go back to et cetera
23	Emma:	Yeah
24	Jane:	So actually that lack of responsibility from
25		when I drop the kids off to, picking the kids
26		up, has kind of lost me a little bit I'm like
27		that 'oh, I do need a purpose'
28	Emma:	Mmm

29   Jane: Freedom's great but I do actually need a

30   purpose, do- you do need a sense of, something

31   going on- a sense of achievement I guess it is

32   Emma: Yeah

33   Jane: So yes so if I talk about, my happiness as a

34   sense of lightness, it is but I do still need

35   to feel like I am actually achieving something,

36   but that could be you know- if I felt that it

37   was a legitimate-, you know if I could earn

38   money from doing it I would love to earn money

39   from, doing something I <u>love</u> doing so being

40   creative whether it's photography or art or-,

41   that would be my ideal, but I have to prove I

42   can earn money from it cos we do- I need to

43   bring money in

44   Emma: Mm-hmm

45   Jane: So yeah that would- and that again because I'm

46   doing something I love that would give me that

47   sense of freedom so hopefully that would-, so I

48   would be happy doing that, if somebody turned

49   round and said to me, you need to go and get a

50   job and it just needs to be-, you know it needs

51   to be now so I've got to go out and work on, a

52   till or in a, coffee shop or-, something like

53   th- I would find that really hard

```
54        Emma:      Mmm

55        Jane:      Cos that would be, me kind of, being a bit

56                   caged in an environment that I wouldn't want to

57                   be in so I wouldn't-, that wouldn't give me any

58                   happiness that's for sure ((laughs))
```

Having "no responsibilities" (line 1) was framed by Jane as contributing to happiness, but when I challenged her on this by asking if she thought having no responsibilities ever would make her happier (lines 3-5) she changed tack. Her response of "funny isn't it cos when you kind of put it like that" (lines 6-7) signposted a shift in position and offered a reason for this – she's considering it from a new viewpoint. As Davies and Harré (1990) point out, for people to maintain a position of rationality, they must work to acknowledge, repair or transcend contradictions in their accounts. At first Jane downplayed the impending contradiction by using extreme-case formulations (Pomerantz, 1986) – she wouldn't "necessarily" be "completely" happy with "zero responsibility" (lines 8-9). She then drew on recent life events to illustrate her point – after "six years of being a full-time mum" (lines 10-11) her children were both at school leaving her in a "transition period" (line 12). The "lack of responsibility" (line 24) she experienced when her children were at school was now framed as a potential source of *un*happiness, with Jane saying "it's not a great place to be" (line 20), although she resisted the culturally undesirable position of being unhappy by immediately following this up with the declaration "you know I'm happy but I am a bit lost with knowing what career to go back to" (lines 20-21). The metaphor of being "lost" (lines 21 & 26) invokes the idea of life as a linear journey in which one moves towards self-realisation, something Rose (1996) suggests is the blueprint for successful neoliberal subjectivity. It also works to frame her apparent dissatisfaction with her life as temporary and something she can and must find a solution to.

In this extract, Jane constructs her desire for "freedom" and the associated feeling of "lightness" (line 34) as oppositional to her need for a "purpose" (lines 27 and 30) and a "sense of something going on- a sense of achievement" (lines 30-31), yet described both states as necessary to feel happy. In doing so she faced an ideological dilemma – to claim the neoliberal ideals of being free and self-determining, as well as the subject position of being a responsible and productive citizen, Jane needed to negotiate contradictory demands, and to do this, she conjured an idealised future where she could maintain a sense of freedom and agency by "doing something I love doing so being creative …" (lines 39-40), while also achieving legitimacy (line 37) by earning money from it (line 37) and "proving" her ability to do this (line 41). Again, this reflects what Binkley (2014) and De La Fabián and Stecher (2017) identify as a technology of the self prescribed by positive psychology – the imperative to find work enjoyable in itself. However, for Jane, this is conditional on the *type* of work, which is framed as having the potential both to provide her with the "purpose" she needs to feel happier but also to make her feel "a bit caged" (lines 55-56) if she had to work "on a till or in a coffee shop" (line 52), which "wouldn't give me any happiness that's for sure" (lines 57-58). In describing service-industry jobs as unable to make her happy, and professing a desire for a creative career Jane produces a classed account of work and happiness wherein one's job should be able to deliver opportunities for self-development. This reflects what various authors (e.g. Ahmed, 2010a; Hyman, 2014) have pointed out about the rhetoric of positive psychology: that despite its professed universalism, the practices and resources are not equally available to all – working just to bring in money does not enable people to take up the specific technology of the self imparted by positive psychology – of engaging with work as a means of self-expression and improvement. Happiness, in these terms, equates to privilege (Ahmed, 2010a; 201b).

Finally, Jane's account also seems to contain another, related ideological dilemma, with her stated desire to achieve the therapeutic ideal of a good, nurturing relationship with herself, something she outlines with the supervisory-self repertoire: "trying to get a sense of myself again and what I want to do" (lines 16-17) conflicting with another element of lived ideology around happiness – deriving satisfaction from interpersonal relationships and being a 'good' mum – "the last six years have been, all about the children" (lines 18-19). This draws on what Rose (1996) identifies as an established route to happiness for modern parents – working to maximise the physical and mental wellbeing of their children as the way of fulfilling their social obligations. In experiencing this dilemma of happiness coming from individual freedom, as well as from relationships to her family that necessitate the curtailment of this freedom, Jane is living out an opposition. The neoliberal autonomous subject must work to achieve economic success, career progression and personal development on the "path to self-realisation" (Rose, 1996, p. 161) but for Jane this seems impossible – success in one area seemingly entails the abandonment of another. As Binkley (2018) suggests, positive psychology is produced and enabled through contradictory discourses, and engaging with happiness rhetoric and the common-sense ideas it espouses may be to risk living in an ongoing, unresolvable problem. This problem, however, is arguably not shared by those who are not the primary caretakers of children, or who are not expected to be, and prompts the question of whether women, who still overwhelmingly take up this role, may be disadvantaged by happiness rhetoric. While I am not specifically looking at gendered accounts of happiness in this thesis, this is a fruitful area for future investigation.

6.4.4 Socially sanctioned vs individually defined happiness

The idea that there are certain circumstances or 'right' ways to be happy that hold true for all or most people sits in tension with the repertoire of happiness being

subjective, where individual preferences are the main compass to guide action. This ideological clash was directly referred to by Lisa, 34, an ESA recipient, towards the end of the interview after she had answered the Personal Wellbeing Questionnaire (PWQ) (Office for National Statistics, 2011). This had led her to wonder whether you could say there was a "good" happiness and a "bad or false" kind, citing drug taking as an example of the latter, and catching up with friends as the former. She continued:

Extract 31

1	Lisa:	But yeah I think, that's something to look into
2		like, what-, I think people have different
3		views of happiness
4	Emma:	Mm-hmm
5	Lisa:	And I think the way you're brought up as well
6		like (3) I used- I used to have an eating
7		disorder so I got really really really skinny
8	Emma:	Mmm
9	Lisa:	And that made me happy
10	Emma:	Being really skinny?
11	Lisa:	Yeah, and, when I was walking and you- you know
12		you're nigh on passing out, that made me happy
13	Emma:	Wow, yeah
14	Lisa:	So it's hard
15	Emma:	What kind of happiness-, if you could say-

```
16        Lisa:      Well that- I would have to say it is a, bad or

17                   false happiness because, it weren't doing my

18                   body any good and my heart could have given up

19                   at any time and, you know your body needs fuel

20                   whether you look-, whether you like it or not

21                   your body needs, food and, so as much as I

22                   justify "yeah but it makes me feel good and

23                   der-der-der-der-der",  well I had to go into

24                   hospital so it proves that like, it was a bad

25                   thing

26        Emma:      Mm-hmm

27        Lisa:      But I could argue and say "yeah but it makes me

28                   happy and if we're supposed to be happy"

29        Emma:      Yeah

30        Lisa:      So it's quite interesting actually
```

Here, Lisa works up a contrast between her own experience of feeling happy due to having got "really really really skinny" (line 7) as a result of an eating disorder, and an implied normative idea of what 'should' and 'shouldn't' make you happy. She draws on the repertoire of happiness as subjective – "people have different views of happiness" (lines 2-3) – to problematise the PWQ, something also achieved with her statements "that's something to look into" (line 1) (referring to happiness researchers) and "so it's hard" (line 14). By critiquing the idea of measuring happiness Lisa is able to acknowledge the ideological dilemma without having to work to solve it. However, her positioning is still somewhat troubled and in flux. As Martinussen and Wetherell (2019) argue, negotiations regarding what is appropriate

to feel, and by whom is often worked out in social exchanges. Here, my responses: "Being really skinny?" (line 10); "Wow" (line 13); and "What kind of happiness- if you could say-?" (line 15) somewhat awkwardly attend to the counter-normative example of happiness she has related, and, while I was referring to her earlier distinction between 'good' and 'bad' happiness, my latter question also arguably works as an implicit invitation to align with a normative, socially acceptable idea of happiness by classifying being really skinny due to an eating disorder as 'bad'. Her response seems to suggest this is the case – "I would have to say it is a, bad or false happiness" (lines 16-17), with the "would have to" suggesting possible reluctance or that she is being somehow compelled to conclude this. She goes on to give medical reasons for this evaluation, saying "it weren't doing my body any good and my heart could have given up at any time" (lines 17-19), suggesting the common-sense idea of 'true' or 'good' happiness being linked to good health.

In a useful example of what Billig (1991; Billig et al., 1988) calls the argumentative texture of everyday talk, she moves on to rhetorically defend this evaluation from her own counter argument – "so as much as I justify "yeah but it makes me feel good and der der der der der", well I had to go into hospital" (lines 21-24). As Myers (1999) argues, using direct represented speech in this way orients to a challenge or need to justify a position – with the "der ders" suggesting a *way* of responding without having to outline the specific content. This formulation also allows Lisa to position herself as sincere by displaying the contradictory elements of her experiences and thoughts rather than seeking to hide or minimise them (Myers, 1999). This is a particularly telling example of how first-person narratives of happiness often involve dealing with ambiguous and contradictory ideas and arguments – in this instance, talking about happiness as both feeling good and being healthy sit in tension with each other, as what made her feel good caused her to be hospitalised. Her deliberation seems to end with a firm evaluation – "it proves

that like, it was a bad thing" (lines 224-25). However, she continues "I <u>could</u> argue" (line 27) with the emphasis on the word "could" working this up as a hypothetical situation, and therefore helping to distance her from the argument she goes on to produce: "it makes me happy and if we're supposed to be happy" (lines 27-28). This draws on another taken-for-granted idea, or repertoire of happiness – that it's a normative expectation of us to do things that make us happy.

As Greco (2009) points out, the contemporary understanding of health as a personal project that aligns with cultural norms (Crawford, 1980; Tischner & Malson, 2012) mirrors the paradox of obligated freedom identified by Rose (1999), in that only some choices are deemed legitimate. Those health choices deemed 'wrong' or illegitimate are framed as such through discourses of personalised risk, both moral, physical and social, reinforced by what Fortier (2016) calls the political economy of feelings – "legitimate feelings for and within the community [that] delineate the codes of conduct of the good affective citizen" (p. 1041). It is in this arena that Lisa's discussion takes place, with her delineation of "good" and "bad" happiness broadly reflecting socially sanctioned "feeling rules" (Hochschild, 2012) and disruptive, unruly feelings. However, while her account of her past experiences seems keenly attuned to 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' feelings, her equivocation about casting her own 'unruly feelings' as illegitimate and the argumentative texture of her talk seems to mark a resistance to this neoliberal ideal.

Adding to the discursive complexity is the gendered subtext to this conversation – being "really skinny" refers to an idealised female body type, the achievement of which Lisa constructs as making her happy. In forming this account, Lisa performs tricky discursive work that plays off the neoliberal obligation to be responsible for one's good health against the cultural ideal of looking a certain way, to make a critical point about happiness. The individualised imperative to "do what makes you happy" can be used to guide and justify directly opposing actions and

understandings of oneself – a confusing situation that Lisa finds no answer to. Instead, she comments on the dilemma itself saying "so it's quite interesting actually" (line 30).

6.5 Chapter summary

In making sense of happiness and constructing subject positions around it, participants drew on three broad patterns of accounting. A fatalistic account of happiness as determined by biology or luck, and therefore outside one's control was occasionally mobilised, serving various purposes such as enabling participants to discount the idea that happiness could be 'worked on'. In contrast to this, agentic accounts drew on repertoires of happiness as freedom, or as an interior, augmentable resource. The discursive resource of 'choice' was frequently used to position happiness as something under individual control, and enabled subject positions of being responsible for one's own happiness and the implied inverse – accountability for unhappiness.

Social accounts of happiness were mobilised through the use of repertoires of happiness coming from close relationships, membership of communities, and finding purpose in contributing to wider society. These were also often drawn on to talk about *un*happiness in general terms, with issues such as living in poverty and a loss of community or 'social conscience' positioned as being detrimental to other people's happiness. Participants themselves, however, rarely implicated themselves in such accounts and instead worked to position themselves as 'lucky' or possessing the knowledge and attitudes necessary to overcome such issues or render them irrelevant. In this way, participants' talk frequently reflected the way happiness was constructed in the popular happiness literature analysed in the previous chapter, which proposed that while many barriers to happiness could be found at a structural or societal level, they were best tackled at an individual level.

As suggested by Billig (1991; et al., 1988) the participants' accounts reflected various socially shared cultural ideas about happiness that are associated with contrasting, and sometimes opposing moral, philosophical and rhetorical qualities, and as such, participants' talk was dilemmatic, argumentative and occasionally troubled as they took up a range of complex and shifting subject positions. Ideological dilemmas and moments of trouble seemed to be particularly in evidence when participants drew on taken-for-granted, culturally dominant ideas about happiness in personal narratives rather than generalised accounts, and could be exacerbated by gendered notions of desirable ways of being for women. Here, the relation of their own experiences, opinions and interpretations required complex discursive work to maintain or negotiate various culturally valued positions, such as when "being happy" sat in opposition to being healthy (Lisa), having a purpose (Jane) or maintaining family relations (Farrah).

Of particular interest is the ideological tension that arose between happiness as acting in one's own interests (and the self-knowledge involved in determining what such interests are) and as stemming from relationships and the mutual obligations these bring. As McAvoy (2009) points out, discourses of choice and responsibility each contain the rhetorical resources for challenging the other, and as such this dilemma seems to be continuous and potentially unresolvable. The next chapter develops these considerations by looking at how participants' *do* happiness in their accounts of their habits, patterns of behaviour, and narrative projects. As Wetherell (2012) argues, such affective-discursive practices are simultaneously personal and social and as such are useful to demonstrate, either explicitly or implicitly, people's understanding of their social world.

Chapter 7: *Doing* happiness: attitudes, choices and techniques

It has been argued that there has been a cultural shift from understanding happiness in terms of something that one is (or isn't) to something that one *does* (Jugureanu, Hughes & Hughes, 2014). The emergence and intensification of happiness as a technology of the self has various repercussions for how we conceptualise ourselves and act on the world, as discussed in the critical literature review in Chapter 3. Therefore the specifics of how people may take up the project of working on their happiness, and what this can tell us about the relationship between self and society is another useful area of investigation. This chapter builds on the previous chapter's consideration of how happiness is variously constructed as the result of forces beyond one's control; as something that comes from interpersonal connections and social membership; and as a fungible object of individual effort, to look at how participants spoke about practising happiness. That is, the various behaviours, activities and techniques they worked up as contributing to their own happiness and that of others. As we have seen, agentic and social accounts of happiness were often drawn on in conjunction with each other, and it is useful to look at how participants navigated the contrasting practical ideologies and associated ways of being that each account implies.

Some of the interview questions addressed the idea of actively doing things to feel happier ("Do you think there are common mistakes people might make around happiness?"; "Do you think it's possible to boost levels of happiness?"; and "Is there anything you, specifically, do to make yourself feel happier?"). However, this was also an idea that many of the participants spontaneously brought up throughout the interviews, offering examples of things they had purposefully done or continued to do, and decisions they have made that have contributed to their happiness. Indeed, this happened so much that it was usually not necessary to ask the third question, and I did so in just five out of 30 interviews. The following

analysis is therefore based both on answers to these researcher-led interview questions and on participants' own orientations to the idea in other parts of the interviews.

I have organised the affective-discursive practices mobilised in the interviews into three broad types of activity, which this chapter considers in turn. First, that happiness is acted on at a cognitive level and derives from cultivating particular attitudes or changing patterns or habits of thinking. Second, that happiness ensues from knowing oneself and using this knowledge to make choices that will increase happiness, both in terms of day-to-day activities (often glossed as the imperative to do things you enjoy) and larger lifestyle decisions. This was often underpinned by a repertoire of some choices being 'better' than others. Finally, some participants also built accounts of specific activities or techniques that helped them feel happier, such as meditation, practising gratitude and praying. However, it should be noted that there was also some resistance to the idea that you can actively work on happiness, most notably from the oldest participant Graham, 71, a retired factory manager. For example, when I asked him, at the end of the interview, "What do you think about that idea that you can deliberately set out to do things to increase how happy you feel?" he answered "Truthfully? Waste of time".

7.1 Manipulating thought patterns

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, many participants spoke about the way people think or react to events as informing their happiness. This was evident in Sean's fatalistic positioning of himself as having a "preset" character that lets him "process" things effectively (Extract 21), and was suggested by Lucy's contention that happiness can be "chosen" and "found" through "effort" (Extract 27). Similarly, in Extract 28, Valerie constructed happiness as attitudinal, saying it is "being of a positive thought". It is useful, therefore, to look at accounts of *how* participants took on this cognitive work, and this section focuses on emotional and cognitive self-

management techniques worked up by participants as productive of happiness. It starts with the affective-discursive practice of being appreciative and satisfied with one's lot, and moves on to the idea of "overthinking" being detrimental to happiness.

7.1.1 Cultivating appreciation

Throughout the interviews, many participants worked up certain attitudes and thought patterns as both contributing to happiness and amenable to manipulation. Commonly cited repertoires were of deliberately having low expectations (Alice, Arthur, Bob, Monica) and actively appreciating the "simple things in life" (Bob, Fiona, Lisa, Lucy, Sally). Sometimes, such an ability to manage one's thoughts played a part in identity work, such as with Asif, 64, a part-time supermarket cashier, who spoke about his ability to be appreciative as part of his personality. The following extract is taken from an early part of our interview after I had asked him about times in his life when he had felt happy, and he mentioned his daughters' graduations, his wife getting a PhD and the birth of his grandson, before continuing:

Extract 32

```
1      Asif:     So that was-, so, so I-, I am generally very

2                happy I'm not-, I've- because I always- I

3                don't, complain if I don't ((clears throat))

4                have a shoe I look at people who have no feet


5      Emma:     I see, yeah, so you say you're generally, very

6                happy is that something you feel comes

7                naturally to you or is it something that you,

8                you, work on?


9      Asif:     No I've conditioned myself
```

In line 1, Asif changes direction from talking about specific events in the past when he felt happy to make a more general statement in the present tense: "I am generally very happy" (lines 1-2). His use of two modifiers lends weight to this positioning as happy, with the "very" suggesting a heightened state of happiness – more than most people, perhaps – and the "generally" serving to render this self-attribution more realistic. He is not *always* happy, a claim that might rhetorically invite questioning or disbelief. He then reworks a platitude to illustrate the kind of attitude that helps him achieve this happy identity: "I don't complain if I don't have a shoe I look at people who have no feet" (lines 2-4). We can understand from this that in difficult or penurious times – glossed here as not having a shoe – his response is to look at people whose circumstances are even more difficult. This account lets Asif lay claim to the moral qualities of gratitude and social awareness; and he constructs this as typical of him through his use of "I always-" (line 2). I follow up on this in my next question by offering him a couple of culturally available ways of thinking about happiness – that it "comes naturally" or that it is "something… you work on" (lines 6-8). Unlike Sean in Extract 21 in the previous chapter, Asif explicitly rejects the idea that his happiness may be naturally occurring, and instead works to take credit for it by saying "No I've conditioned myself" (line 9). This metaphor echoes the idea of the supervisory-self by drawing on a lay behaviourist understanding of psychology in which a knowledgeable expert dictates the behaviour of an unsuspecting target. It is also notable for its suggestion of prolonged effort – typically, conditioning takes place over a sustained period of time. In invoking effort and self-discipline in this way, Asif is able to adopt the subject position of a responsible individual who can manage his emotions in a socially desirable way.

Asif's discursive practice of comparing his situation favourably to others when discussing happiness was common in other interviews too. For example,

Gertrude, 52, a cleaner, mentioned the importance of "gratitude" at the end of her interview when asked if she had any other thoughts about happiness, saying, "I'm so lucky in a lot of ways, got so much more than-, yeah like material things and stuff". That she didn't complete her sentence "got so much more than-" suggests this type of affective-discursive practice is a commonplace – it seems to be taken for granted that listeners can fill in the blanks for themselves without a speaker having to specify *who* they have more than. Like Asif, Gertrude also works to avoid an outright claim to material superiority, and in doing so manages to navigate what McAvoy (2009) and Hyman (2014) identify as the tricky discursive terrain of talking favourably about one's material or economic circumstances while maintaining a position of modesty. When Asif, Gertrude and other participants made reference, obliquely or directly, to "material things" as informing their happiness, they worked to construct this happiness as something achieved rather than ascribed, through an affective-discursive practice of managing emotions and cognitions to be be consciously and deliberately appreciative.

While Asif painted his self-conditioning as a fait accompli, other participants spoke about working on their ability to be appreciative on an ongoing basis. Here, Alice, a 37-year-old events organiser, had worked up a differentiation between the ideas of "satisfaction" and "happiness", saying once you were satisfied with your life "happiness will come and follow". I followed up on this in my next question:

Extract 33

```
1     Emma:      Yeah, so, what kind of things are necessary to
2                feel, that-, being satisfied in life?

3     Alice:     Um (6) being ((sighs)) hmm, being happy with
4                the basics, so, having, a roof, over your head,
5                good food on the table, being warm
```

6	Emma:	Mmm

7	Alice:	You know I think that's, being satisfied with
8		your life, I think it's learning to be
9		satisfied with it, as well because I think
10		we're- we're- we live in a society where people
11		are always wanting, more and more

Here, despite her earlier differentiation between being happy and satisfied, Alice seems to conflate them in her answer, defining being satisfied in life as "being happy with the basics" (lines 3-4), which she defines with the three-part list "having a roof over your head, good food on the table, being warm" (lines 4-5). Unlike Asif, she doesn't directly compare her material situation to people who are less well off – though this is perhaps implied with the modifier "good" before food. Instead, the comparison she makes is attitudinal – she talks not just about "being satisfied with your life" (lines 7-8) but "learning" (line 8) to do so, drawing on an idea of consciously creating new thought patterns. She achieves this through a moral account that contrasts her implied effort to be satisfied with generalised others, using an extreme case formulation: "we live in a society where people are always wanting, more and more" (lines 10-11). Alice seems to imply that this state of ongoing dissatisfaction is widespread and could also affect her, were it not for her awareness of the false temptations of consumerism and her ongoing self-management to be appreciative of what she has. Alice therefore adopts a complex subject position around happiness and material goods, wherein she casts a certain standard of living as being necessary for happiness, but the idea of "wanting more" (line 11) as potentially counterproductive to it. She navigates this by attributing different moralities to "being satisfied" versus "wanting", with the latter implied to be commonplace but undesirable compared to the former, which should be consciously "learned". Again, while structural and material factors are acknowledged, happiness

is constructed as something to be achieved through a practice of manipulating thought patterns.

The arena in which Alice situates this cognitive self-management – her daily life and material circumstances – is also of interest. Binkley (2014, p. 130) argues that positive psychology's focus on such "everyday thoughts, surface cognitions, mundane anxieties, moods" represents an intensification of power that operates through dividing thinking habits into 'positive' and 'negative'. In common with many other participants, Alice demonstrates this here through her affective-discursive practice of striving to break down the negative habitual thoughts of "wanting more" through the positive individual effort of being satisfied. The repertoire of materialist attitudes impeding happiness is further examined in Section 7.2.2.

7.1.2 Conquering 'overthinking'

As well as forming accounts of deliberately cultivating specific attitudes and thought patterns to feel happier, many participants also conjured a contrasting repertoire of unhappiness as being caused by their minds or thoughts. This could be tricky conceptual terrain to navigate, as demonstrated in Extract 28 where Valerie talked about happiness as being contingent on her "mental tools" that could be deployed against her "poisonous" thoughts. A common way for participants to deal with the ideas that both happiness and unhappiness operate at a cognitive level was by invoking the idea of "overthinking" or "ruminating" to explain their own experiences of unhappiness (Jodi, Ellwood, Farrah, John, Sean, Gertrude), or those of people they knew (Monica, Jane). Sometimes participants also gave details of the techniques they used to counteract their tendencies to overthink, including the one described in the following extract. In this exchange, Ellwood, 43, a benefits consultant, had given himself a score of 5 out of 10 for the PWQ question "How anxious did you feel yesterday?" and I'd asked him to explain his reasoning behind this:

Extract 34

```
1    Elwood:   I'm probably more prone to anxiety than say the

2              next person I would say, just because I

3              overthink things, er (2) I remember my friend

4              Lauren saying she lived her life in a constant

5              state of anxiety, I don't do that but, I would

6              say that I, if I allow it I- I can allow things

7              to take on a certain prominence that they

8              shouldn't do


9    Emma:     Yeah


10   Elwood:   And then I have to remind myself-, it's almost

11             like I've had a life coach or something but it

12             was myself- to remind myself it's just not

13             real, but


14   Emma:     And when you say it's not real?


15   Elwood:   I think it'll blow over


16   Emma:     Right


17   Elwood:   It's not life-defining, you know I mean it's-,

18             I think if I- if I was to allow it I'm probably

19             one of those people who, could allow things to,

20             become, bigger than they are
```

Elwood positions himself as "more prone to anxiety than say the next person" (lines 1-2), which works to construct this tendency as something enduring and fixed. He moves on to offer an explanation for this tendency as being "just because I overthink things" (lines 2-3), with the "just" suggesting a simple cause-effect

scenario, and the cause being the overthinking rather than the things which, we can infer, are the kinds of things that might happen to anyone. The idea of overthinking is treated as a common-sense one by both Elwood and me – I do not question what he means by it and he shows no need to further explain it. The idea of excess connoted by the "over" part of the word works to suggest that while *some* thinking is fine or even beneficial, *too much* is problematic. Elwood's description of himself in comparison to the generalised "next person" can be seen as identity work (Davies & Harré, 2000; Taylor, 2009) – overthinking and feeling anxious are constructed as part of his personality and as such, this account could be seen as a way of resisting responsibility for feeling anxious.

However, he then uses another comparison – this time to a specific person, his friend Lauren, who he positions as living "in a constant state of anxiety" (lines 4-5), an extreme-case formulation that marks her experience as excessive and undesirable. In contrast, Elwood says he does not "do that" (line 5), with the use of "do" rather than "feel like" suggesting action and therefore an element of agency and choice. He is not as bad as his friend Lauren, he suggests, because he has the capacity to resist his tendency to overthink – things will only "take on a certain prominence that they shouldn't do" (line 7) if he "allows" it (lines 6, 18 & 19). By drawing on a common-sense idea of there being a correct or socially acceptable way of responding to "things", Elwood tasks himself with moderating his thoughts and emotions accordingly. This is amplified by his use of the conditional "if" (line 6), which attends to the possibility that he might not always respond appropriately, suggesting this is a task he must engage in on an ongoing basis. After a minimal token of agreement from me ("yeah") he moves on to explain what this involves: "to remind myself that it's just not real" (lines 12-13) – something he likens to almost having his own life coach (line 11). Here again is a supervisory-self construction, with a rational, skilled 'I' that acts on the emotionally affected 'me'. It is perhaps

telling that he personifies this supervising part of his self as a life coach, rather than a therapist or counsellor. As Binkley (2014) points out, the industry of coaching is future-oriented, focusing on the maximisation of individual performance, and has taken over much of the territory traditionally occupied by psychotherapy, which tends to engage with personal history and the dynamics of a patient's relationships.

I orient to Elwood's solution to feeling better – a reminder that "it's just not real" – as unusual, by picking up on it and asking him to explain more: "and when you say it's not real?" (line 14). Elwood responds that something is "not real" because "it'll blow over" (line 15) and "it isn't life-defining" (line 17), which suggest that the unreality refers not to an actual event or events but to Elwood's anxious response to it. Throughout this exchange, the "things" Elwood refers to remain unspecified and hypothetical, which facilitates his positioning of himself as self-aware, effortful and responsible – he has a certain personality and must work to curb its anxiety-inducing tendencies. The idea that some "things" might warrant anxiety or be considered "real", and what might demarcate them from those that are not is not attended to, and external situations or events are, again, abstracted to become generalised triggers of disproportionate emotions.

7.2 Making good choices

The discursive resource of "making choices" was mobilised frequently throughout the interviews when talking about happiness. As various authors have argued (e.g. Bauman, 2000; 2007; Beck, 2000; Rose, 1999) it has now become a moral imperative to be an autonomous, choosing self – as well as to bear the responsibility for one's choices. As seen in the previous section, the idea of choice was often drawn on in reference to psychological phenomena, talking about consciously deciding to adopt particular attitudes, or drawing on the repertoire "happiness can be chosen". Participants also talked about making choices that affect their lives materially, particularly in terms of work, relationships and leisure.

This was evident in some of the common affirmative responses to my question "Do you think it's possible to boost levels of happiness?" which included the repertoire that it was about doing things you enjoy (Alice, Asif, Bill, Col, Bob, Gill); the related idea of identifying what makes you happy (or unhappy), then acting accordingly (Elwood, Jessica, John); repertoires of setting goals to achieve (Col, Farrah); "trying different things" (Alice, Bill, Lisa, Lucy); or "looking after yourself" in terms of diet and/or exercise (Fiona, Lucy, Jane, Barbara, Sally) – notably an account used by female participants.

A circularity thus seemed to emerge in talk about happiness and choice, with happiness framed as dependent on making 'good' choices, and 'good' choices being those that made you happy (although – as seen with Lisa in Extract 31 – this was not always a straightforward undertaking). However, further discursive work was often done to work up choices as 'good', and this section will examine three main repertoires that emerged. First, that one should undertake active, achievement-oriented goals and activities; second, that one should resist consumerism as a means to happiness – something that was generally achieved by rhetorically contrasting 'mistaken' materialist choices with 'wise', relationship-oriented ones; and third, that it was necessary to be able to defy societal pressures and "live your own life".

7.2.1 Pursuing active and creative hobbies

Although many participants formed accounts in which leisure activities that increased happiness were automatically good in and of themselves, they also worked up certain types of activity as better or preferable, specifically ones that involved sociability, proactivity and productivity. For example, Bill, 32, a project manager, formed a social account of happiness by talking about it in terms of relationships and being with other people. When I asked him if he felt it was possible to be happy on your own he said yes but qualified this by saying it "comes

down to following interests and pursuing something that will make you feel happy".

The following extract is his response to me asking if he had any examples of this:

Extract 35

```
1      Bill:    Yeah so I mean generally I'll er, my- my wife
2               er used to work nights quite a lot or weekends,
3               so she was a nurse and er, there'd definitely
4               be times where, you think oh I've got all this
5               time to do anything I want, god what do I do I
6               don't know what to do now cos I can do any- I
7               can do anything I want ((laughs))

8      Emma:    Yeah ((laughs))

9      Bill:    And-, and yeah sometimes you know so then-,
10              then that's where you have to- you know I'd-
11              I'd go out with my camera, and I'd- or give
12              myself a project with the camera or I'd, you
13              know I'd-, you know and actually create
14              something and that creative process made-, made
15              me happy and having something to show for it at
16              the end

17     Emma:    Mm-hmm […]

18     Bill:    But er, I think it's er, it- it is that, you
19              know you're almost (2) you're-, cos you didn't-
20              you didn't- you chose to do that you didn't
21              have to you could have stayed at home and,
22              binged on box-sets and um done nothing
```

23	Emma:	Mm-hmm

24	Bill:	But because- you know if you've-, you're
25		mentally, motivated yourself to go achieve
26		something and you've done it then it's quite a,
27		I guess a (2) it's maybe not a beaming outward
28		smile, look how proud I am

29	Emma:	Yeah

30	Bill:	Like but it's more just an int- er I guess like
31		an internal

32	Emma:	Yeah

33	Bill:	Happi- just a- yeah you're just happy and proud
34		of yourself really

Bill starts off his example of an activity that makes him happy by describing a situation in which he blamelessly found himself with "all this time to do anything I want" (line 4-5) – his wife (who at the time of the interview was on maternity leave) was working nights or weekends. This works to counter any potential accusations of being selfish or frivolous – if his wife were around or it was a weekday, it is implied, he would not have the opportunity to do "anything I want" (lines 5 & 7). Framing this as somewhat unusual and a dilemma – "god, what do I do I don't know what to do now" (lines 5-6) lends weight to this positioning, and also sets the backdrop for "choice" to be deployed as the factor that will determine happiness. In lines 10-11 he switches from a generalised, normative second-person pattern of accounting to a personal one – "that's where you have to- you know I'd- I'd go out with my camera". He then corrects himself to say "or give myself a project with the camera" (lines 11-

12), with the supervisory-self metaphor of delegating a project to himself framing this as a more deliberate, goal-oriented activity, and invoking the idea of effort and accountability. Bill uses the ideas of creativity and productivity to explain why his choice of activity was a good one for him: "that creative process made-, made me happy and having something to show for it" (lines 14-15).

Bill then switches back to the generalised second-person to suggest that it is the choice itself of the preferred, more effortful activity that can account for happiness in anyone, not just himself: "you chose to do that you didn't have to" (lines 20-21), comparing it to activities that are intimated to be less productive of happiness – staying at home, bingeing on box-sets and doing nothing (lines 21-22). In this way, Bill works up a moral account of happiness, without having to explicitly frame it as such, or position his choices as better than other people's. He drives this point home in his next statement "because- you know if you've-, you're mentally motivated yourself to go achieve something and you've done it then…" (lines 24-26). Bill's if-then formulation works up an account of happiness as being dependent on two associated actions, one mental, one physical – motivating yourself to achieve something and doing it. This leaves us with the suggestion that merely doing something without having first made it a conscious and explicit goal may not result in the same degree of happiness. It is the deliberate act of charging yourself with a socially valued goal – something you "achieve" *and* of following through on this that forms Bill's affective-discursive practice and which lets "you", and by implication him, feel "proud of yourself" (line 33-34).

The idea of happiness being generated through creative or active pursuits was echoed by other participants (Alice, Arthur, Asif, Col, Farrah, Gill, Jane, Lisa, Sean). Some also emphasised the importance of variety and novelty in their life through a repertoire of "trying new things". For example, Elwood, 43, said "my

happiness is defined by, doing different things and, not doing the same thing over and over again, I get bored quite easily". Similarly, Lucy, 41, talked about "changing small daily habits" as helping to build happiness, giving the example: "like changing the toothbrush to your left hand so that you're not on autopilot… it makes you like present". Binkley (2014) argues that positive psychology tasks people with the emotional enterprise of turning everyday habits and routines into opportunities for innovation and growth. Lucy's account of tooth-brushing, Elwood's quest for novelty and Bill's creative projects are examples of how people take up this project of ongoing work on the self, with its associated idea of happiness that can be increased without external limitations (Cabanas, 2016; De La Fabián & Stecher, 2018).

7.2.2 Making anti-materialist choices

One of the most notable ways in which the interview data echoed that of the 'expert' books was by drawing on the repertoire of "happiness is threatened" – with consumerism being pitched as the main culprit. Every participant expressed at least once the idea that coveting luxury goods or more money was antithetical to happiness. This was usually achieved by positioning themselves as not taken in by the false promise of "buying happiness" through a rhetorical contrast with others who they assumed were. For example, Arthur, 68, a retired administrative worker, said:

Extract 36

```
1    Emma:    Cool, and do you think people might make, some
2             mistakes in, looking to be- trying- trying to
3             be happy and then not quite managing it

4    Arthur:  I think so I- I think the- the classic thing is
5             people- I don't know, chasing material things I
```

227

```
6                mean I like having nice things I mean I treated

7                myself to a Mac, cos I thought oh these are

8                great you know and I- I-, it- it weren't the

9                cheapest thing I'd ever bought but I thought I

10               want one of them and, I-, I use it a lot cos I-

11               I do family history […] so I treated myself to

12               a Mac and er-, so I do like things but I'm not

13               driven, by it I think some people can feel you

14               know that, 'I have to have this I have to have

15               that' you know, 'that car's eight years old,

16               why aren't you buying a-, a new one?'
```

Like many other participants, Arthur answered my question of what mistakes people might make around happiness by referring to "people chasing material things" (line 5). The idea of "chasing" insinuates ongoing, insatiable desiring, and the idea that this is a "mistake" is worked up as something commonly known or obvious with his meta-discursive comment "the classic thing" (line 4). However, in common with many other participants, Arthur immediately followed this assertion up with an appraisal of himself as liking "having nice things" (line 6), saying "I mean I treated myself to a Mac cos I thought oh these are great you know" (lines 6-8). This functions as stake inoculation (Potter, 1996) – he is not coming from a position that might be construed as partial or judgemental of never buying things or not being able to – and also works up his account as more factual by presenting me with what could be seen as contradictory evidence. He goes on to give reasons for buying a Mac – he uses it a lot and it helps him research his family history (lines 10-11) – then rhetorically works up a meaningful difference between his consumption of goods and the mistaken kind he was referring to: "I do like things but I'm not driven, by it I think some people can feel you know that 'I have to have this I have to have

that'" (lines 12-15). Arthur's repetition of "treated myself" (lines 6-7 & 11) works to mark this as an unusual and noteworthy purchase for him.

This positioning of himself as self-aware and as having agency over his choices and actions ("I'm not driven by it") is lent rhetorical force by his comparison to "some people" who lack this self-mastery, whom he characterises by putting words in their mouths: "I have to have this I have to have that". This "hypothetical represented discourse" (Myers, 1999, p. 571) functions as a thought experiment in which a rhetorical scenario is played out – in this case Arthur conjures a different motivation for consumption. This allows him to form an account in which it is not necessarily consumption itself that is problematic, but the reasons and cognitions behind it – whether it is freely and purposefully chosen rather than indiscriminate and the result of compulsion by outside forces. Arthur demonstrates this distinction with a reference to his car, again using reported hypothetical speech to voice the kind of attitude that represents a mistaken approach to pursuing happiness through consumption: "that car's eight years old why aren't you buying a- a new one?" (lines 15-16). In doing so, he suggests that he does not succumb to pressures to buy an unnecessary new car, thus positioning himself as rational, reasonable and undemanding without having to claim these qualities outright. This was a notable rhetorical device across many interviews, with participants working up accounts wherein they compared what they drove to a fancier car (Bob, Caroline, Asif, Dan, Fiona, Ginny, Monica, Sean, Alice), or the kind of holidays they chose to go on compared to the lavish or expensive trips preferred by other people (Arthur, Asif, Bob, Caroline, Ginny, Jodi). Sometimes participants achieved this through a comparison with their younger selves, such as when Bob, 48, drew on a repertoire of "the simple thing" making him happy. To evidence this he compared the kinds of holiday he used to take to his current choices: "going to, a two-day trip to, Scotland I'm more happy and more content with that than I was, spending a week in Dubai I

had more fun in two days in, Scotland". Here, Bob's contemporary choice of holiday is framed as more modest both in length and expense, yet it delivered what is implicitly constructed as the most important thing: "fun".

This kind of rhetorical work demonstrates the complexity and delicacy involved in forming anti-consumerist affective-discursive practices of happiness, and reflects McAvoy's (2009) analysis of women's talk about success, in which they had to tread a careful line between claiming modesty and demonstrating an ability to afford their lifestyles. A similar dynamic can be seen with Bob and Arthur talking about enjoying the things they had bought, yet demonstrating that they did not consider such purchases as important for their happiness. Similar accounts of not needing or wanting "a Bentley" (Asif) or "ten designer handbags" (Monica) therefore seemed most effective coming from people who had a choice about how to spend their money.

The idea of consumerism being a 'wrong' route to happiness was also drawn on by participants who didn't position themselves as comfortably off, however. For example, Valerie, 67, while answering my question about what situations or experiences helped people feel happy said "Um what else would give happiness? Money, I, see that I'm-, er, I think of money an awful lot because I don't have a lot of it". This seems to directly contradict the idea that money doesn't buy happiness, but Valerie immediately works to disassociate herself from what could be seen as an undesirable position ("I think of money an awful lot") by continuing "Er, however I think that's just a mindset". In doing so, Valerie transforms the substance of her problem from the material (not having a lot of money) to the mental (it's a mindset), with her use of "just" also working to downgrade its seriousness, or position it as something easier to solve. As seen in the expert books, by situating the problems at

a cognitive level, Valerie frames the solution, or the 'work' she must do as cognitive – a case of attitudinal readjustment.

7.2.3 Living your own life

Another way in which participants framed social factors as potentially detrimental to happiness was through the idea of pressures to conform to societal norms. These were most commonly portrayed as the pressure to get or stay married, have children or be 'too' career-driven. Affective-discursive practices of being able to identify and resist these pressures and "live your own life" were adopted by some participants, allowing them to access subject positions that suggested virtue and character by framing the abilities to analyse one's life and happiness, and act on this knowledge as difficult and brave. For example, Ellwood, 43, talked about a "bad relationship" or "bad job" as reasons for unhappiness, adding "but you've got to have the balls to change something". Similarly, Jessica, 24, a shop assistant, talked about being "brave enough and strong enough" to make changes such as leave a relationship or move if you're feeling unhappy.

Such practices, whether generalised or biographical, were inevitably bound up with participants' own histories and the material realities of their lives, and certain statuses (being single, divorced, not having children or a job) were commonly oriented to as needing explanation in comparison to others (being married, being a parent, having a career) which were not. In the following extract, Fiona, 35, an NHS manager, had answered my question about a time in life when she'd felt happy, replying that it was the last two years, mentioning changes in her life circumstances during that time – a new partner, another child, a promotion at work. She continued:

Extract 37

```
1       Fiona:      I think as I've got older I've definitely
2                   become, happier, you know
```

3	Emma:	And why do you think that is?
4	Fiona:	I- I- I honestly don't know I think um, I've
5		spent, a lot of <u>time</u> especially in personal
6		relationship you know acc- accepting the
7		status quo and you know this 'I'm <u>meant</u> to be
8		happy', 'I'm <u>meant</u>- this is how it's <u>meant</u> to
9		be I'm <u>meant</u> to get married and I'm meant to
10		buy this house'
11	Emma:	Mmm
12	Fiona:	I'm meant to have a child and-, and kind of
13		then realising when you're not happy and you
14		break away from that and you break away from
15		the norm actually, what's happened to you is-
16		is completely different you know, I- it's not
17		everyone's ideal having been divorced at,
18		thirty-two thirty-three and I- you know
19		moving on being a single mum but actually it
20		made me really happy because I was out of
21		that, relationship but, not in a- not in a
22		really vindictive sense because me and my ex-
23		husband and me we're good friends still
24		[…]And I think once you get rid of that-
25		other people's expectations or society's
26		expectations on you then, I haven't- I
27		haven't experienced any negative er,
28		repercussions from you know, breaking away

29		from that and, you know being by myself and
30		carving out time for myself and yeah

Fiona begins her answer to my question of why she feels happier as she's grown older by saying "I honestly don't know" (line 4), something that Wooffitt (2005) suggests can work to distance a speaker from subsequent statements that could be sensitive or implicate them in a negative way. Having laid the groundwork for a potentially contentious claim, Fiona presents an account of herself as having changed from a passive state of "accepting the status quo" (lines 6-7) to a more active, self-aware state of "realising when you're not happy and you break away from that and you break away from the norm" (lines 13-15). The notable shift from first-person to second-person works to distance herself from inhabiting the state of "not being happy" and the associated action of breaking away. In lines 7 to 12 Fiona characterises this acceptance of the status quo as a series of injunctions, to get married, be happy, buy a house and have a child, using a rhythmic repetition of the words "meant" six times, with four of these heavily emphasised, which conveys a sense of the pervasive ubiquity of these norms – they are difficult to escape.

Fiona's "breaking away from the norm" refers to her divorce at a relatively young age of "thirty two thirty three" (line 18) and "moving on being a single mum" (line 19), something she orients to as a potential deficit identity with the preceding statement "It's not everyone's ideal" (lines 16-17), and which she works to remedy with the follow-up "but actually it made me really happy" (lines 19-20). Fiona's account achieves its rhetorical force through a then-and-now format that implies a revelation in how to live – "once you get rid of that- other people's expectations or society's expectations on you" (lines 24-26). This reflects Beck's (2000) contention that the ideal of living your own life is one of the most powerful in contemporary times, leading to the ethical imperative to pursue self-fulfilment on your own terms. Indeed, Fiona's affective-discursive practice of living her own life by defying

expectations also serves as a common-sense explanation for her current happiness. This was also the case with other participants who drew on this practice to produce similar narratives of their lives and decisions (Alice, Elwood, Jessica, Barbara, Col, Farrah, Lucy, PB). Slightly later in the interview, Fiona employed a comparison to reiterate this point: "a lot of my friends stay in relationships that maybe- they're not really right for them but they're-, in their head that's what they should do". This insinuation that it is a commonplace mistake and an 'easy' choice to be driven by internalised ("in their head") normative ideals about "what they should do" reinforces the idea that happiness must involve agency and self-awareness to be authentic.

However, as Beck (2000) cautions, such "do-it-yourself biographies" (p. 166) hold the constant threat of becoming risky or "broken-down biographies" with the individual taking sole responsibility for any slippage. Indeed, Fiona's account of making choices that "break away from the norm" needs careful discursive treatment. While the culturally valorised idea of thinking for one's self is treated as a common-sense good, the ideal of committed marriage as a source of happiness also exerts a strong hold, and Fiona navigates this tension using a repertoire of enlightened choice as a way of claiming a responsibilised position. This can be contextualised in terms of wider cultural discourses around self-care, as well as patterns of gendered expectations and accountability. This is highlighted by the ideas of "being by myself and carving out time for myself" (lines 29-30) which she later elaborated on as involving regular time in the gym or having massages. She orients to being by herself and having her own time as both desirable but potentially problematic, through her concluding statement that there have been no "negative repercussions" (lines 27-28), which suggests it might be reasonable to assume there would be. This is further underlined with her emphasised correction "I haven't- I haven't experienced..." (lines 26-27) that works to guard against her experience being

generalisable or prescriptive. It is notable that, while Fiona's affective-discursive practice centres around the idea of "breaking free from the norm", she credits her current happiness as coming from the self-same norms her account cautioned against – to have remarried and had another child. In a similar way to Arthur and Bob's treatment of money and happiness, it is not the situation itself but the narrative of enlightened choice as the means to achieving it that lends Fiona's construction of her happiness its rhetorical force.

7.3 Techniques of happiness – mindfulness, gratitude, prayer

Some participants' accounts of acting to increase happiness went beyond descriptions of making informed choices or manipulating everyday thought patterns, to outline specific techniques, or formalised patterns of behaviour that they explicitly engaged in to be happier. Some were unique to the participant, such as Gertrude who practised "chanting" "morning and evening". Others were more frequently reported, with three main techniques mentioned by some, but by no means all of the participants. These included two of the mainstays advocated by positive psychology literature – being mindful and practising gratitude – as well as a third practice of prayer. This section looks at each of these in turn.

7.3.1 Being mindful

The most commonly cited technique of happiness was meditation or mindfulness, with nine participants saying they currently used this practice, or had done so in the recent past (Bill, Jodi, Lucy, PB, Mandy, Gertrude, Sean, Seela, Valerie). In addition, the importance of "being present" or "in the moment" was also invoked (Jodi, Ginny, Lucy, Mandy, Sean, John, PB). Although participants spoke about mindfulness or meditation as useful for increasing happiness, it was often brought up in conjunction with accounts of stress or anxiety. For example, Bill called mindfulness "a useful tool" for when he was stressed, and John spoke about how being "in the moment" helps him avoid "ruminating thoughts". Similarly, Jodi, 23, a

sales assistant, talked about practising mindfulness and meditation when working up a description of herself as "anxious" early on in our interview:

Extract 38

```
1     Emma:    Can you tell me how you'd describe happiness?

2     Jodi:    Erm, it's very difficult especially as an
3              anxious person I'm always thinking about (2)
4              the things, er, not the present moment all the
5              time […] I put a downer on myself a lot of the
6              time, so I guess the question about happiness,
7              I try and put into practice you know,
8              mindfulness and I do a lot of meditation, that
9              helps, so I'm trying to, currently, erm (2)
10             make myself a happier person
```

Likewise, a bit later in the interview, Jodi was talking about feeling stressed at work and said, "that's when mindfulness is good". I followed up on this:

```
11    Emma:    Yeah, and do you think it- does that help you
12             feel happier?

13    Jodi:    Yeah I- I think (2) it makes me feel more
14             present in the here and now and, in- in that
15             sense it does make me feel happier because you
16             can very much get stressed about all the things
17             you need to do and that then makes you feel
18             unhappy as a person because you feel like none
19             of these things are achievable and- erm, yeah
```

In response to my first question of how she'd describe happiness, Jodi avoids giving a direct answer, remarking instead that "it's very difficult" (line 2) because she's an "anxious person" (line 3). As with Ellwood in Extract 34, this functions as identity work, and also obliquely as a reason for her inability or reluctance to define happiness – "I put a downer on myself a lot of the time" (lines 5-6). She follows this with an orientation to the conventions of a research interview – she has not answered the question, and attends to this by saying "so I guess the question about happiness" (line 6), then giving an example of a technique she uses to lessen her anxiety – "I try and put into practice you know, mindfulness and I do a lot of meditation, that helps" (lines 7-9). While this still doesn't directly answer the question, it is an interesting interactional moment in that Jodi seems to be 'cutting to the chase' by offering not a description of happiness but of how it is done or attempted. In doing so she adopts a subject position of being active and responsible, perhaps to counterbalance her earlier self-assessment of being anxious, which is implicitly positioned as undesirable and in need of amelioration.

The common-sense linkage between happiness, mindfulness and being in "the present moment" (line 4) is made explicit by Jodi's next statement "so I'm trying to, currently, make myself a happier person" (lines 9-10). There is a sense here of this being the 'right' thing for Jodi to say both in terms of her immediate 'usefulness' to me (she went on to express concerns about this, saying it had made her feel anxious before the interview) and in a wider cultural sense, by drawing on what has become a widely advocated technique to improve wellbeing that has achieved significant cultural capital. Cabanas (2018) suggests that the popularity and promotion of mindfulness by many different organisations and institutions, including health bodies, schools and corporations, works to normalise its inherent neoliberal values of individualism. By encouraging people to turn their focus inwards to manage their emotions and cultivate flexibility and productivity the message is that

mindfulness is the best way for individuals to cope with the competitive and precarious nature of the modern-day world.

Indeed, when Jodi brought up mindfulness again a few minutes later, she spoke of it as helpful to combat work stress. When I asked if it made her feel happier (lines 11-12), she hesitated and gave a conditional reply: "it makes me feel more present in the here and now and, in- in that sense it does" (lines 13-15). This commonly invoked idea of being in "the here and now" as important to happiness is worth unpacking. Participants often contrasted it either with thinking about the past or, as Jodi does here, the immediate future – "all the things you need to do" (lines 16-17), which she frames as a source of stress because "none of these things are achievable" (lines 18-19). Mindfulness here seems to be a retreat from her social world to avoid feeling "unhappy as a person" (line 18), and in forming this affective-discursive practice Jodi constructs happiness as an inner property or state of mind, and positions herself as an individual, bounded person in possession of it. Although it may not be possible to vanquish her stress, Jodi frames the practice itself as ameliorative. It is the doing rather than a subsequent result that is key – an idea echoed by Sean's explanation of how "meditation" helps him deal with anxious thoughts about the future: "it's in the practising, even though I don't always achieve it it's in the practising, comes the contentment". Like Jodi, then, Sean's account of mindfulness is one of an ongoing and potentially never-ending pursuit.

7.3.2 Practising gratitude

While many participants spoke about appreciating what they had, or learning to do so, as productive of happiness (e.g. Asif and Alice, Extracts 32 & 33), in a few participants' accounts this was formalised into a specific activity of "practising gratitude" – a technique often advocated in positive psychology research and happiness literature (for e.g. Rubin, 2009). In the following extract, Kerry, 51, a

chaplain, had been talking about what she called "a deep state of being" and finding the word "happy" inadequate to describe it:

Extract 39

1	Emma:	So thinking about-, happ- if we call it
2		happiness this-, this kind of, this state of
3		being, are you- do you think there are things
4		that you can, specifically do to feel, more of
5		it more of the time, to get to that state?
6	Kerry:	Yes, I think, um, one of the key things um and
7		it comes up a lot um, in Christianity, um but I
8		think also it's something which I, began to
9		practise and then noticed that it was really-,
10		it was true that it did something for me, um
11		which is the practice of gratefulness of,
12		thankfulness
13	Emma:	Mm-hmm
14	Kerry:	Um er so I began to write, um probably four
15		years ago or so, I began to er keep a little
16		notebook on me, er in my jeans pocket as it
17		were and I would, er-, I did it for probably
18		two years or so I would keep a list of things
19		that I noticed during the day that I wanted to
20		give thanks for, and the lists were endless,
21		endless endless lists of things like, um, oh
22		stupid things like um, er I remember one was

23		er, hot buttered toast with um, the first
24		raspberries, of the season
25	Emma:	Oooh, yeah […]
26	Kerry:	And it began to change my, thinking because
27		when you realised how <u>much</u>, oh waves of things
28		we've- I had been given that day, that were a
29		gift to me, the one thing that'd happened that
30		was bad that day or that I didn't like, stood
31		out in stark contrast, then, and er it began to
32		be ridiculous to say I had a crap wor- day at
33		work

Kerry promptly responds to my awkwardly worded enquiry about whether there are specific things she might do to feel this "state of being", which I gloss as "happiness" (lines 1-5), with a firm "yes" (line 6). However, she doesn't outline how until she has done some discursive groundwork. First, she mentions that it "comes up a lot in Christianity" (line 7), which attends to her religious beliefs and job as a chaplain and grants it the status of being recommended by theological doctrine. She then says it's something she "noticed that it was- it was true that it did something for me" (lines 9-10), before naming "it" as "the practice of gratefulness" (line 11). Marking this practice as both religious and as having an effect that was "true" and noticeable works to lend it both spiritual and objective, fact-based credentials. Her subsequent use of a detailed narrative – "probably four years ago or so, I began to keep a little notebook on me, in my jeans pocket" (lines 15-16) also works to make her account more credible (Potter, 1996). She outlines what this practice entailed – keeping a "list of things that I noticed during the day that I wanted to give thanks for" (lines 18-20) and offers specific examples that demonstrate this – not just toast but "hot buttered toast" (line 23) and "the first raspberries of the season" (lines 23-24).

This detailed account works to strengthen Kerry's subsequent claim that her practice "began to change my, thinking" (line 26), which she evidences with an implied before-and-after account. Before, the "one thing that'd happened that was bad that day" (lines 29-30) would loom large and colour her thinking, it can be inferred. However through her practice she "realised how much, oh waves of things we've- I had been given" (lines 27-28) leading her to change what would have been her previous evaluation: "it began to be ridiculous to say I had a crap day at work" (lines 31-33). Three things are worth noting here. First, Kerry draws on a common-sense idea that "bad" or negative things psychologically outweigh positive ones, through her contrastive account of "waves of things" (line 27) and "endless endless endless lists" (lines 20-21) being necessary to counter "the one thing" (line 29). Second, unlike Jodi's practice of mindfulness which she engaged in to combat stress, Kerry does not situate her practice as necessary or stemming from wanting to feel less anxious, but as a desirable 'extra' - something that could make her feel even happier. This draws on the neoliberal view of happiness proposed by positive psychology as something infinitely augmentable and as involving approaching life with an "enterprising optimism, in which environments, objects, and circumstances are read as opportunities" (Binkley, 2018, p. 3). Third, although Kerry's practice of gratitude is similar to those described in positive psychology books, it is couched explicitly and implicitly in religious language – the idea of things being a "gift" (line 29) involves thinking about who or what they were from, implying an idea of a bountiful God or universe. In this way, Kerry is making her own sense of "being grateful" and aligning it with her Christian beliefs. However, in addition to these spiritual overtones, her account constructs happiness as a cognitive, evaluative and rational process of "noticing", "realising" and "thinking".

A formalised practice of monitoring thoughts and feelings was also outlined by John, 67, a part-time tutor who talked about keeping a journal in answer to my

question of what mistakes people might make in trying to be happier: "I think it's being aware of your feelings it's very important to ask yourself how do you feel and this is where keeping a journal is a good thing and that is one thing I do now". Like Kerry, John refers to this as a daily practice and he credits it with letting him "keep tabs on my mood" and "be aware of what other things are making you happy". Here we have an example of the kind of self-observation recommended in the happiness books analysed in Chapter 5, which enables Kerry and John to feed back about what they see, do, experience and feel, and amend their actions and reactions accordingly. This affective-discursive practice is interesting in that the desired affect comes, at least in part, from challenging their own perceptions of reality, and replacing them with new ones that are framed as more rational, realistic or better.

7.3.4 Praying – ceding responsibility to a higher power

Another practice of happiness detailed by a few participants (Dan, Kerry, Mandy, Sean) was praying or connecting to a "higher power" or God. Both Dan and Mandy answered my question "Do you think it's possible to boost levels of happiness?" by referencing prayer. For example, Dan, 67, a retiree, replied "Yeah (3) reading a Bible and praying every day". What was notable about this practice is that it allowed all four participants to trouble or resist the neoliberal imperative for individuals to make choices and conduct their life in ways that maximise happiness (although they all also drew on this idea at other points in the interviews). Instead, they spoke of the importance of *ceding* responsibility. In the following extract, Mandy, 59, a part-time administrator, had answered the question above by saying the 12-step program she had been attending for a year had helped her feel happier, adding that "prayer always makes me feel better", which I followed up on:

242

Extract 40

1	Emma:	Yeah, and what do you feel it is about the
2		praying that, always makes you feel better, if
3		you could explain it?
4	Mandy:	It's taking me out of self, erm (8) it just
5		makes life a lot easier when I'm not running
6		the show, if I feel that's- you know-, well I
7		do feel that, erm, I put my hands, and my life,
8		erm, in God's hands now, and, it takes the
9		pressure off ((laughs)) I've clung on for so
10		long, clung on and clung on you know, tried to
11		do things my way
12	Emma:	Mm-hmm
13	Mandy:	So, you know the pres-, now that pressure's
14		off, and that's a great relief and it yeah-, it
15		takes a lot of stress out of life

Mandy characterises praying as "taking me out of self" (line 4), a metaphor that suggests broaching some kind of bodily or spiritual confines, and which could refer to a way of being less selfish or self-focused. The suggestion here is that the self is a place that may be detrimental to happiness. Mandy gives this answer straight away, in an almost 'pat', learned way, which contrasts with the eight-second pause that follows as she tries to elaborate on the idea. She does this by constructing a before-and-after narrative, explaining that in the past she "tried to do things my way" (lines 10-11) and believed she was "running the show" (lines 5-6). She works up this approach as difficult to let go of: "I've clung on for so long now, clung on and clung

on" (lines 9-10) – her repeated metaphor of clinging evoking a sense of desperation or dependency. This is contrasted with the way her new approach of putting her life "in God's hands now" (line 8) makes her feel – as though "the pressure's off" (lines 8-9 and 13-14). This idea is reiterated in different ways throughout this short exchange: it "makes life a lot easier" (line 5); "a great relief" (line 14); and "takes a lot of stress out of life" (line 15). That happiness is associated with ease and a lack of pressure is taken as a given, and she explicitly credits a particular belief or attitude with facilitating this – that she doesn't have to take full responsibility for her life as she has put it "in God's hands" and isn't "running the show".

Arguably, in taking up this affective-discursive practice of happiness, participants are still drawing on notions of active individual effort in terms of having a particular belief – and one that, in Mandy's telling – did not come easily. There is also something else at play, though. Prayer involves being in touch with a higher order of meaning making, and as such draws on the idea of a two-tier social system outlined by Taylor (1985; 1989) in which everyday life takes place within a wider framework of a God or other external authority. It is through communing with this external source of power and authority that allows for moral decisions and identity. This is reflected in 67-year-old retiree Dan's statement, "I believe I have a heavenly father who I can pray, to I can leave it with him, he's in control I don't need to be". Affective-discursive practices of praying and ceding responsibility for one's life, then, represent a very different way of being than that invoked by the "supervisory-self", and the positions adopted by the participants when they spoke of prayer seems to run counter to the neoliberal idea that we are all responsible for ourselves and our lives. Indeed, Mandy's account suggests this belief is a *cause* of unhappiness.

Drawing on the idea of ceding responsibility is perhaps to be expected in Mandy and Sean's accounts as they are both members of a 12-step program in which belief in a higher power is an explicit component. However, they both directly

link this belief and associated patterns of thinking, feeling and acting with being

happy or content, not just as helping them overcome addiction. While both Mandy

and Sean generated contrastive accounts of their lives before and after taking up

their belief in a higher power, the other two participants who formed affective-

discursive practices around praying and happiness tended to do so in narratives of

negotiating difficult times. Chaplain Kerry mentioned praying as particularly helpful

when dealing with work stress; and Dan talked about the death of his dad and

organising the funeral, commenting: "I don't boast it's me it's because of God that,

I'm not unhappy in those sit- those situations, ultimately".

7.4 Chapter summary

While there were many differences between participants, and they drew on some

idiosyncratic ideas and affective-discursive practices, there was also a striking

patterning across their accounts, particularly in terms of the importance of self-

observation and self-awareness, working to change their thoughts and habits, and

resisting the lure of consumerism. Participants' practices around happiness fell into

three related camps: cognitive work to cultivate or improve habitual thoughts and

reactions; making 'good' choices to be proactive and do things that meshed with

their own desires, and which enabled them to "live their own life"; and regularly

undertaking formalised happiness-boosting techniques such as mindfulness,

gratitude or prayer. This corresponds strongly with Cabanas' (2016) suggestion that

neoliberal discourses of happiness are working to produce "psytizens". These are

subjects who are characterised by the ability to control and take responsibility for

their feelings, to live authentically through making strategic choices, and to do so

continuously and expansively, looking for new areas to improve. That these patterns

of accounting were mobilised by the majority of participants, who were diverse in

terms of age and background, reflects Binkley (2014) and Rose's (1996; 1999)

argument that the emphasis on individual agency and choice in late neoliberal

societies demands of its citizens a project of self-work that is actually "increasingly contained, mapped and scripted" (Binkley, 2014, p.36).

Many of the affective-discursive practices identified in this chapter chimed with dominant ideas in positive psychology generally, as well as the books analysed in Chapter 5. For example, 11 out of 30 participants talked about practising mindfulness or 'being in the moment', most often positioning it as an antidote to anxiety, which worked both to signal the undesirability or inappropriateness of anxiety and to demonstrate 'responsible' self-management of this response. This was also worked up as something to be engaged in on an ongoing basis, reflecting Cabanas and Illouz (2017) and Cabanas' (2018) arguments that the inward-turning work of mindfulness is framed not as a defeat or retreat from stress and uncertainty, but the best way to work towards continual self-improvement and emotional self-management. They also point to the cultural capital of mindfulness, which has become a huge focus of academic work, as well as business and medical initiatives. In mobilising affective-discursive resources of managing anxiety and working towards greater happiness through mindfulness, participants are invoking discourses of choice and deliberate consumption of culturally valorised practices. In doing so, however, their inward focus renders them responsible for dealing with the growing precarity and uncertainty of the workplace, rather than turning outwards and questioning the neoliberal order that instigated these conditions (Cabanas 2016; 2018; Cabanas & Illouz, 2017).

The discursive resource of choice was also frequently drawn on in participants' accounts of how to 'do' happiness, and while the idea of doing what makes you happy was mostly invoked as a common-sense 'good', some choices were worked up as having particular cultural capital and ethical clout. For example, many participants formed affective-discursive practices around the ability to distinguish between societal norms or what's 'expected' of them and what would or

does actually make them happy. Drawing on this practice in the interviews allowed participants to claim subject positions of clear-thinking, authentic individuals who were not duped by the prevailing culture like others, who were by inference doomed to fail in their quests to achieve happiness through not thinking or acting for themselves. Here, we can see evidence of what Beck (2000) among others identifies as one of the most powerful drives in contemporary Western life – individual achievement and self-realisation against a backdrop in which the traditional social order of nation state, institutions and family are of declining importance. Similarly, all participants positioned themselves as not believing that money or consumer goods would bring happiness, using a similar narrative to that of the books by working this up as a common mistake made by others.

Finally, there was some resistance to the responsiblised, entrepreneurial subject of neoliberal happiness among participants. While the books analysed in Chapter 5 were silent on the subject of religion or spirituality (except for a brief mention of "spiritual practices" in the index of Layard (2011), which redirected readers to pages discussing "mental discipline"), a small number of participants adopted affective-discursive practices of prayer being fundamental to their happiness. While this functioned as identity-work – of being religious and/or a member of a Narcotics Anonymous group – it also allowed participants to reject the idea that they were responsible for their lives and happiness in a way that did not risk a deficit identity.

Chapter 8: Discussion & concluding remarks

The aim of this thesis was to investigate contemporary constructions of happiness and selfhood used in popular books on happiness and by UK citizens. Specifically, it aimed to contribute an empirical investigation of the proposal that happiness has become a new site of governmentality, shaping new and particular ways of understanding and working on the body, mind and self. In doing so, it also aimed to make an original contribution to scholarship on citizenship, and social citizenship in particular, which concerns people's rights to a basic standard of living, and corresponding responsibilities. In the past 40 years in the UK and beyond, welfare provision has been rolled back and criticised as ineffective, patronising and patriarchal (Clarke, 2005). Simultaneously, institutional discourses have used the vocabulary of individual enterprise, personal choice and self-fulfilment to re-frame the roles of the state along market lines, characterising the relationship between citizens and their communities as active and individual, not passive and dependent (Rose, 1996). This shift in discourses around social citizenship has also been found in everyday talk, with a growing emphasis on the ideal of the 'responsible' or 'effortful' individual, who is able to work to support themselves (e.g. Dwyer, 2000; Gibson, 2009, 2011). Increasingly it is not just economic work that marks an individual as successful and entitled to social citizenship rights, but also 'work' on one's attitudes and emotions (e.g. Bull & Allen, 2018; Cromby & Willis, 2014; Friedli & Stearn, 2015). To date, however, there has been little work that investigates how, and to what ends, people may adopt, resist and negotiate these neoliberal imperatives in everyday contexts.

The aims and main topic of the thesis were informed by the turn to happiness (e.g. Ahmed, 2010a) seen in political, social and cultural life in the UK and beyond in the past 20 years. Binkley (2014) argues that this focus on citizens' happiness works to engender not just new policy directions but also novel

subjectivities that are inscribed in patterns of thinking and routine activities to create a "new emotional and cognitive disposition" (p.43). While much excellent theoretical work has considered the new subjectivities prescribed by positive psychology and happiness rhetoric, very little empirical work has been done to examine what this might actually look like in practice at an everyday level.

This thesis has been underpinned by an understanding of language as social action through which people construct the 'truths' of their social worlds. My use of two data sources – four best-selling texts on happiness, and interviews with 30 UK residents – was designed to investigate both how institutional or expert discourses subjectify the citizen ("technologies of power" in Foucauldian terms) and how people may take up, subvert, adapt or resist such invocations ("technologies of the self", Foucault, 1988). To do this, I have used an approach of critical discursive psychology (e.g. Wetherell, 2009; 2015; Wetherell & Edley, 1999), to identify the interpretative repertoires participants draw on and the subject positions they adopt – an approach that attends to both moment-by-moment interaction as well as broader ideological and cultural resources. My analysis is also informed by the dilemmatic nature of discourse outlined by Billig et al. (1988) and has paid attention to ideological dilemmas in the book and interview data, as well as moments where participants encountered troubles or difficulty in their constructions of happiness and the subject positions they adopted around it. As my topic is happiness, which is frequently talked about in terms of emotions, I have also been informed by Wetherell's (2012; 2015) idea of affective-discursive practices – patterned ways in which affect is organised and socially consequential. This does not seek to explore people's feelings, which remain ineffable, but what they *do* with talk about feelings.

In this concluding chapter, I will draw together the various strands of the thesis, and consider what the findings contribute to our understanding of the turn to happiness and contemporary ideas about social citizenship. In Section 8.1, I outline

the original contributions to knowledge this thesis has made, starting with summaries of my analysis chapters. I then move on to discuss some of the main similarities and differences between the findings from each dataset, specifically in terms of what the 'expert' understandings and techniques of happiness may look like in practice. I concur with Binkley (2014) in his assertion that positive psychology is characterised by contradictory discourses, ideas and activities, and in Section 8.2 I expand on this to discuss some of the main findings in greater depth. First, I consider the ideological dilemma inherent in the books' and interviewees' ostensible rejection of capitalism and simultaneous remaking of the self as a product. Second, I address the suggestion that positive psychology is working to affect a shift from a therapeutic to a more cognitive-behavioural understanding of the self (e.g. Binkley, 2014; 2018) and discuss the contradictory subjectivities that creates. In Section 8.3, I consider the implications of these findings for our understanding of social citizenship. I then move on to discuss some limitations and reflections on the research process in Section 8.4, ending with some suggestions for further work in Section 8.5.

8.1 Summary of findings

This thesis contributes a useful and original addition to both critical happiness literature and scholarship on citizenship through empirical analyses of how happiness and idealised selfhood are constructed in popular texts and in everyday discourse. In doing so, it illustrates the ideological and discursive complexity of notions of happiness, which are drawn on in shifting and contradictory ways to perform various social actions. This attention to discursive practices enables a focus both on the kinds of claims, subject positions and 'truths' the book authors and interview participants formed around happiness, and also *how* they did this – either through working up their expertise, or by foregrounding ideas of individual effort, informed choice or luck in their discussions of happiness.

In Chapter 5 I presented the main findings of my document analysis of the four best-selling books on happiness in the past nine years in the UK. I argued that they worked to create a public health-style narrative around happiness, positioning it as "threatened" due to a mismatch between humans' "fallible" brains and the challenges of the modern world such as consumerism. To counter this universalised danger, which was worked up as particularly threatening through the use of a metaphor of unhappiness as contagious, individualised solutions of working on one's habits, thoughts and immediate environment were proposed. Happiness was thus constructed as an ongoing practice, and the "supervisory-self" repertoire described the nature of the subject that was to undertake this – one who is aware of their brain's tendency to make mistakes that 'cost' them happiness and who is able to monitor and discipline themselves to avoid these inevitable pitfalls. The books offered two broad subject positions to readers: to take up this ongoing project of self-work and its associated set of affective-discursive practices; or, implicitly, to risk not being able to access the status of successful, responsible personhood by not following the books' advice.

My analysis did not support some critiques of positive psychology and self-help literature, which propose that they frame happiness as simply a pursuit of pleasure or 'feeling good' (e.g. Duncan, 2014; Smith, 2008). This idea of happiness as a 'natural', positive, pleasurable feeling was in evidence in the books, but they also worked to construct happiness as coming from purposeful and engaging activities, and linked it to finding meaning and fulfilment, setting and achieving goals, forming worthwhile connections to other people and to self-knowledge. Ideas from evolutionary psychology were frequently drawn on to position these values and motivations as universalised outcomes of natural selection, reflecting the 'scientism' for which positive psychology has often been criticised (e.g. Cabanas, 2018; Yen, 2010). Evolutionary narratives also allowed the authors to problematise certain

societal factors such as inequality, consumerism or loss of community, while still framing the individual or family as the site of any potential improvement in happiness, flourishing or purpose.

This idea of the subject as infinitely augmentable through self-knowledge and self-work sat in marked contrast to another idea that all the books framed as 'fact' – that the acquisition of money and material goods is a misguided and counterproductive means of achieving happiness. This led to an implicit ideological dilemma for readers who were invited to understand themselves as neoliberal subjects capable of constant growth, while simultaneously cautioning them to problematise the economic system that informs this logic.

Chapter 6 considered the different interpretative repertoires the participants drew on to construct happiness, which I clustered into three broader 'accounts': First, a fatalistic idea of happiness as something ordained by biology or luck and which one has little or no control over. Second, a social account of happiness as deriving from relationships with family and friends, ties to 'community' and the reciprocal relations that this involves. Third, an agentic account of happiness as stemming from self-knowledge and deliberate choices and actions to do things that will result in happiness, as well as affective-discursive practices of ongoing management of moods and cognitions. Many of these seemed, at times, 'pat' or familiar, reflecting Wetherell's (2008) suggestion that affective-discursive practices are repeated and become sedimented and personalised with time and use. However, there were also occasions where participants' accounts were hesitant, contradictory or troubled, particularly when it came to translating generalised ideas about happiness into first-person narratives. I outlined four examples of ideological dilemmas faced by participants, which served to provide empirical evidence of Binkley's (2018) contention that positive psychology is produced and enabled through contradictory discourses, and that to engage with happiness rhetoric may

be to risk living in an ongoing, unresolvable problem. Such problems are exemplified by Jane's precarious balancing of her desires for freedom and "lack of responsibility" with her need for 'achievement' and the status of being a good, loving mother; by Farrah's weighing-up of the conflicting merits of maintaining links with her father against the idea of being happier through avoiding contact with "toxic" people; and by Lisa's problematisation of the individualised directive to "do what makes you happy" because, for her, that ran up against the normative assumption that happiness equates to good health.

In chapter 7, I outlined how people talked about doing happiness, which roughly broke down into three types of activity – manipulating everyday thought patterns; making self-aware choices both in terms of everyday decisions and wider life decisions; and more formal 'techniques' of happiness, including mindfulness, gratitude and praying. Many of these practices mapped onto the books' recommendations – namely, monitoring and managing one's moods, not overthinking things, practising 'being in the moment', making informed choices based on self-knowledge and cultivating a grateful or appreciative mindset. The individual was thus framed as the common-sense site of happiness work and, in a similar way to the books, while these self-focused, internalised techniques were constructed by participants as active and often effortful, they can also be seen as passive in that they attempt to 'deal with' the outside world rather than affect change on it.

As with Chapter 6, my analysis paid attention to the interactional context of the research interview, but I have also argued that the identities and subjectivities constructed in these affective-discursive practices can be seen as longer-term and informed by wider cultural discourses (Martinussen & Wetherell, 2019; Wetherell, 2012). This understanding allowed me to investigate the ideological functions of the popularisation of happiness rhetoric as a common-sense way of meaning-making in

neoliberal times (Binkley, 2014; 2018). For example, McAvoy's (2009) research on constructions of success in women found that claiming the psychological achievement of happiness was necessary to be able to position oneself as successful, and she argued that happiness functions as a form of discursive capital that rhetorically outranks other types of success. My research builds on this to suggest that taking up affective-discursive practices of actively and knowledgably working to increase happiness allows the adoption of a position of successful, responsible citizen, in a way that simply just 'being happy', which was often accompanied by repertoires of luck, may not achieve. The idea that this work is, or should be, ongoing was also invoked by participants, evidencing Cabanas' (2016) idea of the "psytizen" who works to manage moods, make authentic, self-aware choices and do so continually in an ever-expanding range of ways.

As in Chapter 6, some participants troubled or resisted the responsibilised, individualised ideal of neoliberal happiness, notably by foregrounding the importance of their spiritual or religious beliefs. Mobilising an affective-discursive practice of praying and ceding responsibility for their lives to a higher power effectively rejected the idea of the neoliberal subject as a responsibilised decision-maker without risking a 'failed' deficit identity. It is also arguable that the participants who formed fatalistic positions around happiness as a by-product of genes or luck (see Section 6.1), were also effectively resisting the neoliberal imperative to adopt a responsible, enterprising position by working on their happiness. Notably, though, all participants who used repertoires of luck did so to position themselves as happy, and it is probable that it would be difficult to adopt a position of being inherently *un*happy due to genes in such a discursively untroubled way.

8.2 Comparison of book and interview data findings
The purpose of the dual analysis of this thesis was to compare the findings from the two data sources and investigate if and how everyday understandings may be

informed by expert discourses of happiness. While some similarities and differences have been noted throughout the analyses and in the summaries above, I want to draw out two broad findings for further discussion. First, the ubiquity of the repertoire of consumerism as a threat to happiness and the implicit ideological dilemma this involves, and second, the possibility that happiness rhetoric is shifting the therapeutic self to a more cognitive-behavioural version and what the implications of this might be.

8.2.1 The paradox of the anti-consumerist neoliberal citizen

One of the main similarities in my findings from the two datasets was the way the relationship between happiness and money was constructed. The books either directly referenced, or outlined lay versions of, the Easterlin Paradox – that, over a certain basic amount, having more money won't make you any happier (for more details and a critique of this, see Section 3.5.2), and cautioned against the accumulation of material goods as a mistaken and possibly counterproductive route to happiness. Likewise, every participant worked to adopt subject positions that involved 'seeing through' the consumerist agenda of modern society and avoiding the mistake of thinking that material goods like expensive cars would make them happy, unlike other people. That both experts and laypeople alike conjured the idea of an abstract, generalised mass of people mistakenly chasing money and consumer goods is interesting, and it seemed to serve different, but related purposes. For the book authors it allowed them to describe a problem of happiness to be addressed, and to frame the solution as a matter of individual awareness and informed decision making. For interviewees, it gave them a problematic 'other' to discursively differentiate themselves from to perform the ethical work of producing acceptable, successful identities.

It has been argued that capitalism encourages people to associate the accumulation of wealth with virtue (e.g. Smail, 2005), but my research adds to

arguments that a more complex set of demands are made on people when discursively orienting to money and material goods to talk about themselves (e.g. Hyman 2011; McAvoy, 2009). To straightforwardly link virtue to wealth accumulation beyond that needed for security would be to risk positioning oneself as greedy, unethical or shallow, and participants worked up accounts that directly contradicted this idea. When talking about their own attitudes to money, they drew on ideas of appreciating the "simple things" and making conscious, purposeful purchases rather than unconstrained and wanton ones. For example, Arthur's interest in researching his family tree (Section 7.2.2) is a discursively untroubled position, allowing him to justify the purchase of a new and expensive computer. Other projects of the self that were mentioned, such as Bill's photography, Jane's desire to do something "creative whether it's photography or art", Bob's holiday with friends in Scotland, or Fiona's "carving out me-time" in the gym also implicitly involve money but 'pass' discursively due to their focus on the self-improvement they are assumed to engender. This reflects the notable silence in the books that the reader who is called on to undertake happiness work is implicitly privileged and must have at least *some* disposable income to undertake the things that were framed as leading to happiness.

However, as outlined in Chapter 5, the main underlying ideological dilemma implicit in both the book and interview data is that positive psychological discourse works to align people's happiness with their ability to capitalise the world they live in, but also to reject consumerism. The books relied heavily on economic and industrial metaphors such as 'banking', 'producing' or 'costing' to outline the self-project of happiness (see Section 5.9), although there were very few uses of similar phrases in participants' accounts. The majority of participants did, however, position themselves as able to consciously work on their thoughts, habits, behaviours and choices to maximise happiness. This suggests that discourses of happiness are a

culturally acceptable, and potentially even praiseworthy, way in which the ethos of neoliberalism, in which the market is organised around a continual extension of individual desires, comes to colonise bodies and subjectivities at an everyday level. We are living out a fundamental contradiction in aiming for continual augmentation in terms of our moods, experiences and abilities while also problematising the unfettered consumption that feeds neoliberal economics, yet this contradiction is obscured. Indeed, cultivating this culturally preferred attitude of rejecting consumerism is framed, both in the books and interviews, as part of the self-work of happiness. As Frawley (2015b) argues, this focus on the body and mind as the site of modification can happen when the economic order has been framed as beyond political critique.

8.2.2 Shifting of the therapeutic self?

Another useful way of interrogating the two datasets was in looking at how they each constructed the "self" of happiness work. It has been theorised that therapeutic culture is now the dominant cultural idiom in the West, exemplified by people understanding and talking about themselves, their relationships and problems in individualised, psychologised language (e.g. Furedi, 2014; Illouz, 2007; 2008), and this was certainly evident in my analyses. Pupavac (2001), who coined the term "therapeutic governance", argues that initiatives that foreground individualised, psychologised interventions redraw the relationship between the citizen and the state, and erode the social contract as the citizen is no longer conceptualised as autonomous and rational. Therapeutic discourse, exemplified by self-help literature, is characterised by the idea that it is possible to fix the traumas, problems and unhelpful habits and thoughts caused by past experiences through working on the self, under expert guidance (Riley, Evans & Robson, 2018). The 'therapy' informing this discourse is in the psychoanalytic tradition, which focuses on upbringing and other past events as the source of trauma and difficulties. In her analysis of how

people understand happiness, Hyman (2011, 2014) found that her participants most often positioned themselves in 'therapeutic discourse' when talking about happiness. However, my research suggests a more complex picture of how people draw on therapeutic language to talk about happiness, and I would argue that such discourses are not something one positions oneself 'in', with the ensuing rigidity this suggests, but instead are flexible resources that can be drawn on to achieve interactional business. Just as participants did not position themselves neatly within either agentic, social or fatalistic accounts of happiness, they also drew on different versions of therapeutic discourse in messy, overlapping ways.

It has been suggested that the influence of positive psychology is changing the temporality of the therapeutic turn, orienting it to the present and future only (Binkley, 2011; 2014; De La Fabián & Stecher, 2018). This is borne out by my analysis of the book data, in which the books formed an account of subjectivity wherein people respond to triggers and stimuli in the outside world in patterned ways that can be purposefully overwritten, using the repertoire of the supervisory-self to outline how this is to be done. This reflects the central tenets of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), which aims to enable the client to change 'unhelpful' thoughts and behaviours with structured exercises (Moloney & Kelly, 2004), and which is the most frequently prescribed therapy under the UK government's Increasing Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) initiative (Walker, Speed & Taggart, 2018).

Unsurprisingly, the interview data was more complex, with both CBT and psychoanalytic versions of therapeutic discourse being drawn on to build identities and subjectivities. Asif's account of "conditioning" himself, Alice's cultivation of an appreciative mindset and Elwood's mental battle against "overthinking" (Sections 7.1.1 and 7.1.2) point to a CBT orientation in which happiness can be worked on in the here and now through retraining thoughts. In comparison, Sean (Section 6.1.1),

John (6.2.1) and Valerie (6.4.1) all formed accounts in which their happiness or unhappiness was explained by reference to their childhoods or past. Valerie's account, however, also involved a CBT version of therapeutic discourse with her reference to "mental tools" that she could use to change her thoughts, and her dilemma may usefully be seen as a clash between the different temporalities of these two versions of therapeutic discourse.

There are important distinctions in these versions of therapeutic discourse and what actions and understandings they facilitate or limit. Whereas traditional, or psychoanalytically informed therapeutic discourse emphasises relationships, particularly those of the family, and involves understanding the self as informed by the past, CBT has a focus on the present and immediate future. In this, it functions in a similar way to positive psychology, which as De La Fabián and Stecher (2017) point out, does not "seek to 'fight against' negative past experiences, but to fight against the idea that there is something we have to fight against" (p. 613). As Riley, Evans, Anderson and Robson (2019) argue, giving up this 'fight against' and denying the effects of past experience is profoundly apolitical in that it works to obscure social context and minimise inequalities structured around class, gender, race and sexuality, and silences the possibility of collective action against such inequalities.

An analytic attention to metaphor in both datasets is useful in investigating how the two versions of therapeutic discourse may be working to facilitate new subjectivities. The power of metaphor to create meaning lies in the conceptual connection between the source of the metaphor and the topic (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), and Illouz (2003) suggests that therapeutic discourse takes the family as its root metaphor. However, in the books there was little evidence of family-based metaphors to undertake the project of happiness self-work, such as loving or nurturing oneself. Instead, the books constructed the idea of the supervisory-self,

split into an unruly but biddable self and a self tasked with its training and supervision (see Section 5.7). The way participants talked about themselves in relation to happiness was, again, more complex and dynamic. Ideas of nurturance and support were evident in participants' accounts of "taking care of" or "looking after themselves" (e.g. Fiona, Section 7.2.3). However, they also drew on metaphors that implied a more supervisory relationship between the two selves, with accounts of "forcing" or "reminding" themselves (Ellwood, Section 7.1.2) or "giving themselves a project" (Bill, Section 7.2.1). This use of the supervisory-self was common – and notable for being used even when more 'normal' phrasing was available. I have discussed the possibility that this discursive device may work to demonstrate responsibility and the kind of 'self-care' advocated by self-help and happiness literature. Wetherell (2008) argues that the types of identity practices participants engage in work to create, or recreate, particular socio-political orders. In this case, a common-sense idea of the relationship between the aspects of the self as managerial in nature foregrounds the quest for efficiency, productivity and optimisation that have been argued to characterise neoliberal capitalist societies (e.g. McGuigan, 2016; Peck, Brenner & Theodore, 2018). However, as noted in Chapter 5, the books also imply that the 'self' to be supervised is pet-like, especially when the supervisory-self is considered in conjunction with the repertoire of the "fallible brain". The interviewees did not draw on this idea of a brain that is hard-wired to make mistakes that 'cost' happiness (the few times that biological narratives were used was when a couple of participants framed a tendency to be either happy or sad as 'hard-wired' or 'genetic'). However some of the participants' formulations implied this type of relationship between the selves – for example, Asif's "conditioning" of himself (Section 7.1.1) and Jodi's "making herself" do things (Section 7.3.1). Additionally, a few people spoke of "taking myself out for a walk" (Alice, Lucy, Bill) instead of what might be considered the more standard phrasing of "going for a walk". It is arguable that these subtly different conceptualisations of

the relationship between the selves – one akin to pet and pet-owner, one more managerial, reflect the two theories that inform CBT – behaviourism and cognitivism. As Smail (2005) points out, these are fundamentally incompatible, the former an anti-mentalist position founded on over-simplified explanations of human learning as based on positive and negative reinforcement; the latter based on the idea that action follows thought and deliberation, or mentalism. While there are valid critiques of both these theoretical positions (for an overview, see Moloney & Kelly, 2004), the purpose of this discussion is not to assess a 'correct' approach but to consider the potential implications of drawing on a supervisory-self construction of subjectivity. In inviting readers to take up this understanding, the books are again implicating us in living out a contradiction – of simultaneously being both capable and incapable of the introspection needed to identify what causes our beliefs, feelings and actions, and the self-mastery involved in taking action to amend them.

8.3 Implications for our understanding of social citizenship

It has been argued that psy technologies of the self are a highly political project and can be seen as technologies of citizenship (e.g. Cruikshank, 1999; Hazleden, 2003; Rimke, 2000). Aligning personal desires and goals to the stability of the social order allows the demonstration of politically and socially able selves (Foucault, 1982). Cruikshank (1999) argued that self-esteem is a technology for "evaluating and acting on our selves so that the police, the guards and the doctors do not have to" (p. 91). and this thesis has investigated similar claims about the happiness industry (e.g. Binkley, 2014; Davies, 2015). While my aim was to consider how participants constructed and formed identities around happiness and how these may be related to 'good' citizenship, the word "citizenship" did not come up once during the interviews. This is not in itself surprising – Dean and Melrose (1999) and Dwyer (2000) noted the same of the participants in their research on British people's ideas around welfare. This was also a deliberate choice in terms of the interview schedule

– if I had made enquiries along the lines of "Do you think citizens have a duty to improve their happiness?" it might have got more directly at what I was investigating, but the data yielded from such leading questions would have been of dubious value. As such, I found it preferable to look for instances where certain emotions, techniques and mindsets were marked as desired and preferable over others, following Fortier's (2016) approach of looking at how and when such affective acts may be connected to citizenship. Participants' regular and patterned affective discursive practices of happiness coming from being productive, creative, self-aware, mindful, deliberative and appreciative indicate that such emotions and attitudes are seen as appropriate or possibly even necessary, and back up assertions about neoliberal happiness (e.g. Binkley, 2011; 2014; 2018; Cabanas, 2016; 2018). Working themselves up as active and responsible for their own happiness seemed to work in a similar way to the repertoires of "effortfulness" around rights to welfare identified by Gibson (2009, 2011) in that participants were demonstrating a culturally desirable affective politics.

It has been argued that happiness rhetoric also works to disallow emotions such as anger, despair and negativity for women (e.g. Ahmed, 2010b; Ehrenreich, 2009; Gill, 2016), and my research bears this out. Valerie's working up of some of her negative emotional responses as "poisonous" (Section 6.4.1) is a stark example. Her account, in which she frames an ongoing inability to control such feelings and reactions as a source of frustration, works to construct a world in which not feeling negative emotions is both desirable and possible, and in which individual ability is the crucial factor in achieving this. Other participants also had to work discursively to position themselves as "happy" or actively working on their happiness when talking about their anxiety (e.g. Jodi, Section 7.3.1) or feeling 'lost' without a purposeful role (Jane, Section 6.4.2). However, taking up the project of becoming happier through changing habits, thoughts and behaviours was not limited to female

participants, with men also producing accounts of internally focused self-work to manage their emotions (e.g. Asif, Section 7.1.1; Elwood, Section 7.1.2) and taking up desirable projects of the self (e.g. Bill, Section 7.2.1). That much of this discursive work centred around the management of insecure and/or unpleasant work environments, or discussions about money, is telling – particularly as neither of these topics were introduced by me as the researcher. Echoing critiques of the welfare policies implemented by successive UK governments to 'activate' and responsibilise citizens (see Clarke, 2005; Wiggan, 2012, and other work outlined in Section 2.7), I suggest that some of the affective-discursive practices identified in this research, especially those of practising mindfulness and of cultivating appreciation, help to normalise the ongoing transference of public responsibilities, such as providing well-regulated employment, onto private individuals' shoulders. As such, they do not work to empower citizens as political subjects – indeed, quite the reverse.

In terms of informing and advancing scholarship on social citizenship, my research suggests that drawing on the resources of the self to police emotions and take responsibility for making choices that will contribute to wellbeing is now a commonplace that people mobilise unproblematically to make sense of their own and other's lives. It is therefore possible that any attempt to redraw people's rights to certain levels of welfare may now be seen very differently. Social citizenship rights to a basic standard of living – once seen as something to be approached structurally through rebalancing the inequities of capitalism through redistributive taxation, rights to housing and a safety net for when there is no work – might not be a popular, welcome or even familiar prospect. After all, if we are all predisposed to the same problems of unhappiness conferred on us by our 'fallible' brains – a logic constructed as common sense in the books, though there is little evidence of it in my interview data – then it does not make sense to intervene at a structural level. It

is implied that this would merely create a new set of social conditions to acclimatise to, at which point our fallible brains would kick in and make us unhappy all over again. Instead, the state's role is defined in terms of promoting happiness 'education', fitting in with the neoliberal call for ongoing productivity and performativity (Binkley, 2014). Participants' framing of happiness as a choice, their accounts of choosing creative and novel activities, affective-discursive practices of mindfulness, gratitude and ongoing mood management, and choosing to live their own 'authentic' life suggest that people are working with this new set of psycho-discursive resources in ways that make sense to them and their lives. There are similarities here to Andersen's (2013) identification of the new management semantics of love, play and pedagogisation. He argues these work to inform employees' ideas of themselves as continual works in progress, and to change conceptualisations of organisational membership, from formal and automatic membership to self-enrolled membership. In a similar way, people may come to approach social citizenship's idea of a basic standard of living not as a formal and automatic entitlement conferred upon them, but as something to be opted into, based on the uptake of a particular set of knowledges and practices.

Of course, this is not a smooth, linear or uncontested process, and there were resistances to the idea of happiness as individual enterprise, with a couple of participants outlining the role of politics and policies (e.g. Monica, Section 6.2.2) and framing happiness as luck (e.g. Sean, Section 6.1.1) or the result of ceding responsibility (e.g. Mandy, Section 7.4.3). Additionally, many participants who did form agentic accounts of happiness and who drew on the culturally valorised affective-discursive practices of rejecting consumerism, being mindful and managing their moods could run into discursive difficulties as they tried to navigate the ideological clashes, such as those outlined in the previous section. Some, such as Lisa in Section 6.4.4, made meta-discursive comments about this, which worked

to highlight the inherent contradictions and in doing so, they problematised some of the commonplaces of positive psychological rhetoric. Others, however, did not and seemed to have difficulty in working with the resources available to them in enabling ways (e.g. Valerie in Section 6.4.1). Additionally, both the books and many of the participants' accounting practices framed the 'work' of happiness as ongoing – techniques to be threaded into daily routines, thoughts to constantly monitor and filter, and choices to second-guess for their ability to deliver "real" happiness. The books' construction of happiness as limitless – an ever-expanding horizon – was also seen in some participants' accounts (e.g Lucy, Bill, Jane), reflecting the neoliberal ideal of unlimited self-improvement. As such, I would argue that the expert constructions of happiness and many of the ways in which they are taken up in everyday talk function as what Lauren Berlant (2011) calls 'cruel optimism' – the desiring of that which will actually work against flourishing or wellbeing. She argues that upward mobility and social equality are now unachievable fantasies in neoliberal capitalist societies, which cannot provide these opportunities in the same way as the post-war welfarist capitalist societies. In being encouraged to aspire to a 'good life' that is unobtainable to most, we are prevented from finding alternative ways to live: "In a relation of cruel optimism our activity is revealed as a vehicle for attaining a kind of passivity" (Berlant, 2011, p. 43).

Writing about the IAPT "revolution" (p. 3), Walker, Speed and Taggart (2018) suggest that there is a potential for this policy to have unintended, detrimental effects on those it was meant to help. They argue that by bringing people into treatment in order to meet policy-based targets, a need is being created in people that may then not be met, drawing on evidence that disproportionate numbers of people from deprived areas do not recover after IAPT-approved CBT interventions (NHS Digital, 2016). A similar phenomena may be encouraged by positive psychology and the popularisation of the idea that happiness is unendingly

augmentable and under individual control – that this creates a desire in those wishing to be happier, which then cannot be fulfilled. While my research cannot address whether or not this is the case, it has shed light on the mechanisms through which this hope is discursively legitimated.

8.4 Reflexive thoughts

Three issues have been of particular concern while writing up this research. First, that my analyses – particularly of the book data – are partial and have not addressed many interesting avenues of investigation. It is necessary to make decisions on what to leave in and what to omit, even in an 80,000-word thesis, and I have had to leave out data and analysis that, while useful, did not 'fit' in the final write-up. I am aware that readers who are familiar with one (or all) of the four books I analysed may wonder why I did not pick up on various elements in them – Layard's (2011) problematision of the loss of the nuclear family with a female home-maker at its helm, for example, or Rubin's discussions of how to maximise relationships with friends and family. A different researcher would no doubt have focused on different aspects of the data, but as outlined in Section 4.6, as a qualitative researcher I have done my best to be transparent about what I have chosen to analyse.

Second, and relatedly, another issue is that foregrounding the idea of happiness as a practice or technology of self in my interview questions has coloured my subsequent analysis and findings. My line of questioning has without doubt influenced my findings (see Section 4.4.4 for a fuller discussion), but assessing the degree to which the subject positions, repertoires and affective-discursive practices identified in this research are artefacts of my questions is difficult. I would argue that even though I directed the flow of the interviews towards discussing potential practices of happiness, the frequency of certain patterns of meaning-making still constitute an interesting and important finding. There was considerable similarity in

how people took up positions of responsibility for managing their moods and cognitions, in the take-up of the repertoires of choice and agency, and of certain choices being 'better' than others.

Third, my social constructionist approach to analysing interview data has felt problematic at times – as though I am querying participants' accounts, treating them as inauthentic or even untrue. It is worth explicitly stating here that this is not the case. I am not disagreeing with anyone's accounts of themselves as happy, lucky, anxious, responsible etc, or suggesting they are being deceitful or self-interested. Rather, by attending to the action orientation of how participants talked about happiness, I am approaching my participants as active and competent meaning-makers. In common with Martinussen and Wetherell (2019) in their analysis of how women talk about female friendships, I am also hesitant to pronounce people's use of "big discourse" (p. 110) or neoliberal ideology, such as the individualising, responsibilising idea of choosing to be happy, as automatically oppressive or undesirable. While some of the participants seemed to tie themselves in discursive knots, and necessarily lacked control over the lineage and formation of the discursive resources they drew on, they were still able to use them for constructive ends in novel, productive and enabling ways. As my topic was happiness, which involved participants talking about affect, attending to the different ways they talk about it was vital – to do otherwise would be to deprive them of agency (Martinussen & Wetherell, 2019).

While my thesis is explicitly positioned under the umbrella of critical psychology, it is not my intention to assume that the messages from positive psychology and self-help are solely negative or damaging – something that is unlikely to be the case. As Barker (2013) argues, some people find benefits in self-help in terms of learning reflexive skills and this need not be incompatible with developing a critical understanding of wider structural issues. Neither is it helpful to

assume that critical scholarship is necessarily beneficial or empowering. As

McMullen (2019) points out, when providing critiques of mainstream research or

accepted dogma, it is important for critical scholars to consider who these critiques

might affect and how. For example, while the widespread promotion of mindfulness

as a way of combatting workplace stress can be problematised for its

individualisation of wider structural issues, a worker who finds mindfulness helpful in

alleviating anxiety is not 'wrong', misguided or deluded and it is not my intention to

frame them as such through this critical discursive analysis.

8.5 Potential uses of this analysis & future research

It is not unusual to suggest that one's research could help inform policy, especially

given the pressures accompanying the Research Excellence Framework which task

researchers to demonstrate their research 'impact'. Considering my focus on UK

government policy and that I have analysed works by two prominent policy advisors,

this seems even more appropriate. My findings could be useful in cautioning against

too heavy an emphasis on educational programs that teach happiness, mindfulness

or resilience, and proposing different, less individualised narratives of happiness.

However, I suggest that making a case for the potential of my research to affect

policy is likely naïve. As Walker, Speed and Taggart (2018) argue, policy is made

along ideological lines, and in cases where psychological research and theory have

directly informed recent UK policy – notably in the form of Increasing Access to

Psychological Therapies (IAPT) – this is largely to do with an aligning of political

interests with available psychological evidence. Cairney (2019) describes this as

policy-based evidence instead of evidence-based policy, pointing to the selective

use of research by policymakers, who have been shown to use it in ways that

support their views while overlooking other perspectives or interpretations.

Economic utilitarianism still underpins decisions about whether or not a policy may

be adopted, but it must also be demonstrated to be politically expedient, and like

much critical research, my thesis is hard to interpret in a way that endorses the prevailing tendency to psychologise and individualise complex problems. However, Walker, Speed and Taggart (2018) suggest an alternative approach of working alongside common-interest groups and communities affected by the social problems being studied. In this way, research works as a kind of social activism, to give voice to and legitimise lobbying, calls for reforms, or new initiatives.

One potential approach is to use my findings to conduct 'consciousness raising'-style workshops or further research interviews, along Freirean (Freire, 1972) lines to form a more activist-based piece of scholarship. Such an approach was used by Calder-Dawe and Gavey (2017) in their research with young girls on experiences of sexism. This was a blend of feminist, Foucauldian and Freirean perspectives that used activities and provocations – what Freire (1972) calls a problem-posing method – to facilitate the participants to talk about, reflect on, and understand their experiences in different and potentially more critical ways. Given that one of the motivations to undertake this research was to critically engage with the potential of contemporary happiness rhetoric to "personalise the political" and lead to internalised narratives of self-blame for any perceived lack of appropriate happiness, I would suggest this is a useful way of building on the current research. My findings suggest that certain groups might find it particularly challenging to negotiate the contradictory discourses embedded in affective-discursive practices of happiness – for example, those living in straitened circumstances or working mothers. Research that is more change-oriented in this way would go some way towards what Prilleltensky (2003; 2006) calls psychopolitical validity – the ability of research to make visible people's experiences of oppression, the power dynamics that allow oppression to flourish and the consequences of this oppression at a personal and societal level – and to work towards challenging this.

Similarly, following Barker (2013; Barker & Hancock, 2017) who has combined activism, critical scholarship and self-help in their books on sex and relationships aimed at mass-market audiences, this analysis could help to inform very different popular texts about happiness with alternative narratives. A recent example of this is Lynne Segal's book Radical Happiness (2017), which suggests foregrounding joy, Arendt's idea of public happiness and communal activism as antidotes to the individualised techniques of happiness that cut people off from their social worlds. The focus on language as social action in my research could facilitate such an undertaking by challenging 'expert' claims and generating alternative metaphors or narratives, as suggested by Brown (1999) of his analysis of self-help books on stress. Instead of treating stress management as a 'battle', which reinforces individualism, he suggested approaching it in terms of building community, which brings in mutual support and continuity. Two decades on, I would make a similar argument for the results of this research – to point out the inconsistencies of treating the self as a product, which reinforces the neoliberal ideals of acceleration and productivity as well as individualism. An alternative, relational approach could approach the self as part of a network that includes not just friends, family and communities but wider structural and political organisations. Similarly, as Segal (2017) and Greco and Stenner (2013) suggest, framing narratives around 'joy' rather than happiness may help to move away from the idea of internally focused work, which is currently seen as a common-sense route to happiness to highlight the outwardly focused work of responding and acting on the world.

8.6 Concluding remarks

This thesis has investigated how bestselling books and UK residents construct happiness and form identities around it. It was informed by the idea that happiness has become a new site of governmentality, working through discourses that

foreground the individual as the site of both problems and solutions of happiness. I have argued that this is accomplished by the book authors through the creation of a narrative of happiness as threatened but natural and augmentable, which serves to create a space and desire for readers to embark on a transformation. The 'supervisory-self' is created as the specific ethical substance on which this process of transformation is to take place – a self that must monitor and train itself to avoid the baser instincts of the fallible brain, but also align itself with desirable modes of conduct, such as rejecting consumerism, choosing fulfilling, self-realising activities and taking up certain technologies of the self, such as practising gratitude and mindfulness. This project was intimated to be ongoing, or lifelong – the pursuit of happiness being something that is never-ending. Some of these ideas were in evidence in my findings from the interview data, yet here a more complex picture emerged, with participants drawing flexibly on contrasting accounts of happiness to various ends, such as positioning themselves as responsible and effortful, politically aware, as not in need of psychological amendment and so forth.

Approaching talk of happiness as an ethical identity project in action allowed me to understand the technologies of happiness drawn on by participants, such as practising mindfulness or living one's own life, as technologies of citizenship (Rimke, 2000). This research makes an original contribution in building on theoretical work, which has proposed that the subjectivities conjured by happiness rhetoric are characterised by a neoliberal focus on ongoing optimisation and efficiency. However, new cultural trends and ideas do not replace older ones, but coexist in complex and subtle ways, even in the same moment (Gill, 2008), and my analysis has paid analytic attention to the ways that multiple and contradictory ideas of happiness and selfhood are drawn on, and what this achieves. While participants invoked and recreated versions of the neoliberal subject in their accounts of happiness, this was not always without contest and there were also resistances to

the idea of being responsible for one's happiness and to the habit of individualisation. This resistance shows that, despite the apparent dominance of neoliberal models of selfhood, alternatives are possible, and the tensions inherent in the simultaneous embracing and rejection of neoliberal ideas of self-management and consumption are readily apparent, waiting to be exposed and deconstructed.

References

Abell, J., Locke, A., Condor, S., Gibson, S., & Stevenson, C. (2006). Trying similarity, doing difference: the role of interviewer self-disclosure in interview talk with young people. *Qualitative Research*, *6*(2), 221-244. Doi: 10.1177/1468794106062711

Action for Happiness. (2019). *About us.* Retrieved 12 August 2019 from https://www.actionforhappiness.org/

Ahmed, S. (2010a). *The promise of happiness.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Ahmed, S. (2010b). Killing joy: Feminism and the history of happiness. *Signs, 35*, 571-594. doi: 10.1086/648513

Ahuvia, A. C. (2002). Individualism/collectivism and cultures of happiness: A theoretical conjecture on the relationship between consumption, culture and subjective well-being at the national level. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *3*(1), 23-36. doi: 10.1023/A:1015682121103

Andersen, N. A. (2013). *Managing intensity and play at work: Transient relationships.* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar

Anderson, E., & Gibson, S. (2017). "Hammered down on every side" versus "just being positive": A critical discursive approach to health inequality. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, *27*(4), 324-335. doi: 10.1002/casp.2315

Andrade, D. P. (2014). Governing 'emotional' life: Passions, moral sentiments and emotions. *International Review of Sociology, 24*(1), 110-129. doi:10.1080/03906701.2014.894334

Andreouli, E. (2019). Social psychology and citizenship: A critical perspective.

Social & Personality Psychology Compass 13(2). 1-11. doi:

10.1111/spc3.12432

Andreouli, E., & Dashtipour, P. (2014). British citizenship and the 'other': An analysis

of the earned citizenship discourse. *Journal of Community & Applied Social

Psychology, 24,* 100-110. doi: 10.1002/casp.2154.

Angner, E. (2013). Is it possible to measure happiness?. *European Journal for

Philosophy of Science*, *3*(2), 221-240.

Argyle, M. (1987). *The psychology of happiness* (1st ed). New York: Methuen.

Argyle, M. (2013). *The psychology of happiness* (6th ed). London: Routledge.

Atkinson, P., & Coffey, A. (2004). Analysing documentary realities, In. D. Silverman

(Ed.) *Qualitative research* (3rd ed.) (pp.77-92). London: Sage.

Barker, M. J. (2013). *Rewriting the rules: An integrative guide to love, sex and

relationships.* London: Routledge.

Barker, M. J., & Hancock, J. (2017). *Enjoy sex (How, when and if you want to): A

practical and inclusive guide.* London: Icon Books.

Bartlett, R. (2016). Scanning the conceptual horizons of citizenship. *Dementia,15*(3),

453–461. doi: 10.1177/1471301216644114

Bartlett, R., & O'Connor, D. (2010). *Broadening the dementia debate: Towards

social citizenship.* Bristol, UK: The Policy Press.

Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid modernity.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bauman, Z. (2007). *Liquid times: Living in an age of uncertainty.* Cambridge: Polity

Press.

Beck, U. (2000). Living your own life in a runaway world. In W. Hutton, & A. Giddens (Eds.), *On the edge: Living with global capitalism* (pp. 164-174). London: Vintage.

Becker, G. S. (1964). *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Becker, G. S. (1993). Nobel lecture: The economic way of looking at behavior. *Journal of Political Economy*, 385-409. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org.yorksj.idm.oclc.org/stable/2138769

Becker, D., & Marecek, J. (2008a). Positive psychology: History in the remaking? *Theory & Psychology 18*(5), 591-604. doi: 10.1177/0959354308093397

Becker, D., & Marecek, J. (2008b). Dreaming the American dream: Individualism and positive psychology. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 2*(5), 1767-1780. doi:10.1111/j.1751-9004.2008.00139.x

Bell, L., & Nutt, L. (2002). Divided loyalties, divided expectations: Research ethics, professional and occupational responsibilities. In M. Mauthner, M. Birch, J. Jessop & T. Miller (Eds.), *Ethics in Qualitative Research* (pp.70-90). London: Sage.

Berlant, L. G. (1997). *The queen of America goes to Washington City: Essays on sex and citizenship*. Duke University Press.

Berlant, L. (2011). *Cruel optimism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Billig, M. (1987). *Arguing and thinking.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Billig, M. (1988). Methodology and scholarship in understanding ideological explanation. In C. Antaki (ed.), *Analysing everyday explanation: A casebook of methods* (pp. 199-215). London: Sage.

Billig, N. (1991). *Ideology and opinions: Studies in rhetorical psychology*. London: Sage.

Billig, M. (2005). *Laughter and ridicule: Towards a social critique of humour*. London: Sage.

Billig, M., Condor, S., Edwards, D., Gane, M., Middleton, D., & Radley, A. (1988). *Ideological dilemmas: A social psychology of everyday thinking.* London: Sage.

Binkley, S. (2011). Happiness, positive psychology and the program of neoliberal governmentality. *Subjectivity, 4,* 371-394. doi: 10.1057/sub.2011.16

Binkley, S. (2014). *Happiness as enterprise: An essay of neoliberal life.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Binkley, S. (2018). The work of happiness: A response to De La Fabián and Stecher (2017). *Theory & Psychology*, *28*(3), 405-410. Doi: 10.1177/0959354318761210

Blaxter, M. (1987). Evidence on inequality in health from a national survey. *The Lancet*, *330* (8549), 30-33.

Blaxter, M. (1990). *Health and lifestyles*. London: Routledge.

Bloom, A. (2019). Exclusive: Eton pupils given lessons in gratitude. Published 10 May 2019 in *TES.* Retrieved 13 May, 2019 from: https://www.tes.com/news/exclusive-eton-pupils-given-lessons-gratitude

Bode, I. (2008). Social citizenship in post-liberal Britain and post-corporatist Germany - curtailed, fragmented, streamlined, but still on the agenda. In T. Maltby, P. Kennett, & K. Rummery (Eds.) *Social Policy Review 20: Analysis and debate in social policy* (pp.191-215). Bristol: Policy Press.

Bolier, L., Haverman, M., Gerben J Westerhof, G. J., Riper, H., Smit, F., & Bohlmeijer, E. (2013), Positive psychology interventions: a meta-analysis of randomized controlled studies. *BMC Public Health, 3,* 119-128. doi: 10.1186/1471-2458-13-119

Boyle, M. (2011). Making the world go away. In M. Rapley, J. Moncrieff & J. Dillon (Eds.), *De-medicalising misery: Psychiatry, psychology and the human condition* (pp. 27-43). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101. doi: 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Breeze, R. (2019). Emotion in politics: Affective-discursive practices in UKIP and Labour. *Discourse & Society, 30*(1), 24-43. doi: 10.1177/0957926518801074

British Psychological Society. (2014). *Code of human research ethics*. (2nd ed.) Leicester: BPS. Accessed from https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/beta.bps.org.uk/files/Policy%20-%20File/Code%20of%20Human%20Research%20Ethics%20(2014).pdf

Brown, K. (2017). Global 'vulnerabilities': new configurations of competition in the era of conditionality? In D Horsfall & J. Hudson (Eds), *Social policy in an era of competition: From global to local perspectives* (pp. 149-164). London: Polity Press.

Brown, N. J. L., Sokal, A. D., & Friedman, H. L. (2013). The complex dynamics of wishful thinking: The critical positivity ratio. *American Psychologist, 68*, 801-813. doi: 10.1037/a0032850

Brown, S. D. (1999). Stress as regimen: Critical readings of self-help literature. In C. Willig (Ed.) *Applied discourse analysis: Social and psychological interventions.* Buckinghamshire: Open University Press.

Brown, W. (2015). *Undoing the demos: Neoliberalism's stealth revolution*. New York: Zone.

Brunila, K., & Siivonen, P. (2016). Preoccupied with the self: towards self-responsible, enterprising, flexible and self-centred subjectivity in education. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, *37*(1), 56-69.

Bull, A., & Allen, K. (2018). Introduction: Sociological interrogations of the Turn to Character. *Sociological Research Online, 23*(2), 392-398. doi: 10.1177/136080418769672

Bulmer, M., & Rees, A. M. (1996). *Citizenship today: The contemporary relevance of T.H. Marshall.* London: UCL Press.

Burke, P. (2007). Disadvantage and stigma: A theoretical framework for associated conditions. In J. Parker and P. Burke (Eds.), *Social work and disadvantage: Addressing the roots of stigma through association* (pp. 11-26). London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Burchell, G., Gordon, C., & Miller, P. (1991). *The Foucault effect: Studies in governmentality.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Burman, E. (2018). (Re)sourcing the Character and Resilience Manifesto: Suppressions and slippages of (Re)presentation and selective affectivities. *Sociological Research Online 23*(2), 416-437. doi: 10.1177/1360780418769671

Burman, E. and Parker, I. (1993). Introduction – discourse analysis: the turn to the text. In: E. Burman and I. Parker (Eds.), *Discourse analytic research: Repertoires and readings of texts in action* (pp. 1-13). London: Routledge.

Burr, V. (2015). *Social constructionism*. (3rd ed.). Hove: Routledge.

Cabanas, E. (2016). Rekindling individualism, consuming emotions: Constructing "Psytizens" in the age of happiness. *Culture & Psychology, 22*(3), 467-480. doi: 10.1177/1354067X16655459

Cabanas, E. (2018). Positive psychology and the legitimation of individualism. *Theory & Psychology 28*(1), 3-19. doi: 10.1177/0959354317747988

Cabanas, E., & Illouz, E. (2017). The making of a "happy worker": Positive psychology in neoliberal organisations. In A. Pugh (Ed*.), Beyond the cubicle: Insecurity culture and the flexible self* (pp.25-50). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cairney, P. (2019). The UK government's imaginative use of evidence to make policy. *British Politics, 14*(1), 1-22. doi: 10.1057/s41293-017-0068-2

Calder-Dawe, O., & Gavey, N. (2017). Feminism, Foucault, and Freire: A dynamic approach to sociocultural research. *Qualitative Psychology*. doi: 10.1037/qup0000106

Cameron, D. (2011). 'Speech on Welfare Reform Bill'. Retrieved from http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130109092234/http://number1 0.gov.uk/news/pms-speech-on-welfare-reform-bill/

Cantril, H. (1965). *The pattern of human concern.* New Brunswich: Rutgers University Press.

Cederström, C. (2018). *The happiness fantasy*. Medford, MA: Polity Press.

Cerny, P. G. (1990). *The changing architecture of politics: Structure, agency and the future of the state*. London: Sage.

Cherry, S. (2008). The ontology of a self-help book: a paradox of its own existence. *Social Sciences, 18* (3), 337-348. doi: 10/1080/10350330802217113.

Christopher, J. C., & Hickinbottom, S. (2008). Positive psychology, ethnocentrism, and the disguised ideology of individualism. *Theory & Psychology, 18,* 563-589. doi: 10.1177/0959354308093396

Clarke, J. (2005). New Labour's citizens: Activated, empowered, responsibilized, abandoned? *Critical Social Policy, 25*(4), 447-463. doi: 10.1177/0261018305057024.

Condor, S. (2011). Towards a social psychology of citizenship? Introduction to the special issue. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 21*(3), 193-201. doi: 10.1002/casp.1089

Condor, S., & Gibson, S. (2007). 'Everybody's entitled to their own opinion': ideological dilemmas of liberal individualism and active citizenship. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, *17*(2), 115-140. doi: 10.1002/casp.885

Coyne, J. (2015). More sciency than the rest? The competitive edge of positive psychology coaching. *PLOS Blogs*. Retrieved from http://blogs.plos.org/mindthebrain/ 2015/08/11/more-sciencey-than-the-rest-the-competitive-edge-of-positive-psychology-coaching/

Crawford, R. (1980). Healthism and the medicalization of everyday life. *International journal of health services*, *10*(3), 365-388. doi: 10.2190/3H2H-3XJN-3KAY-G9NY

Cromby, J. (2011). The greatest gift? Happiness, governance and psychology. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 5*(11), 840-852. doi:10.1111/j.1751-9004.2011.00398.x

Cromby, J., Diamond, B., Kelly, P., Moloney, P. and Smail, D. (2007). Questioning the science and politics of happiness. *The Psychologist 20*(7), 422-425.

Cromby, J., & Willis, M. E. H. (2014). Nudging into subjectification: Governmentality and psychometrics. *Critical Social Policy, 34*(2), 241-259. doi: 10.1177/0261018313500868

Cruikshank, B. (1999). The will to empower: Democratic citizens and other subjects. New York: Cornell university press.

Csikszentmihályi, M., & Hunter, J. (2003). Happiness in everyday life: The uses of experience sampling. *Journal of Happiness studies*, *4*(2), 185-199. doi: 10.1023/A:1024409732742

Dahrendorf, R. (1988). *The modern social conflict: An essay on the politics of liberty*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

Davies, W. (2015). *The happiness industry: How the government and big business sold us well-being*. London: Verso Books.

Davies, B., & Harré, R. (1990). Positioning: The discursive production of selves. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, *20*(1), 43-63. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-5914.1990.tb00174.x

Deacon, A. (1994). Justifying 'workfare': The historical context of the 'workfare' debate. In M. White (Ed.), *Unemployment, public policy and the changing labour market* (pp.53-63). London: Policy Studies Institute.

Deacon, A. (2002). *Perspectives on welfare: Ideas, ideologies and policy debates*.

Buckingham: Open University. Press.

Dean, H. (2000). Managing risk by controlling behaviour: Social security administration and the erosion of welfare citizenship. In P. Taylor-Gooby (Ed.), *Risk, trust and welfare* (pp. 51-70). Basingstoke: St. Martin's Press.

Dean, H. (2004). Popular discourse and the ethical deficiency of 'third way' conceptions of citizenship. *Citizenship Studies, 8*(1), 65-82.

Dean, H., & Melrose, M. (1999). *Poverty, riches and social citizenship*. London: Macmillan.

Dean, H. (2014). A post-Marshallian conception of global social citizenship. In E. F. Isin & P. Nyers (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of global citizenship studies* (pp. 128-38). Abingdon: Routledge.

Dean, H., & Taylor-Gooby, P. (1992). *Dependency culture: The explosion of a myth*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

De Vos, J. (2015) Self-help and pop psychology. In I. Parker (Ed.), *Handbook of critical psychology* (pp. 250-259). Hove: Routledge.

De La Fabián, R., & Stecher, A. (2017). Positive psychology's promise of happiness: A new form of human capital in contemporary neoliberal governmentality. *Theory & Psychology*, *27*(5), 600-621. doi: 10.1177/0959354317718970

De La Fabián, R., & Stecher, A. (2018). Positive psychology and the enhancement of happiness: A reply to Binkley (2018). *Theory & Psychology*, *28*(3), 411-417. doi: 10.1177/0959354318772098

Department for Education. (2016). *Education excellence everywhere.* Retrieved

    from https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/educational-excellence-

    everywhere

Dolan, P. (2014). *Happiness by design: Finding pleasure and purpose in everyday*

    life. London: Penguin.

Dolan, P., Layard, R., & Metcalfe, R. (2011). *Measuring subjective well-being for*

    public policy. London: Office for National Statistics.

Dolan, P., & Metcalfe, R. (2012). Measuring Subjective Wellbeing:

    Recommendations on Measures for use by National Government. *Journal*

    of Social Policy 41(2), 409-427. doi:10.1017/S0047279411000833

Duckworth, A. L. (2016). *Grit: The power of passion and perseverance.* New York:

    Scribner.

Duckworth, A. L., & Quinn, P. D. (2009). Development and validation of the Short

    Grit Scale (GRIT–S). *Journal of personality assessment*, *91*(2), 166-174.

    Doi: 10.1080/00223890802634290

Duncan, G. (2007). After happiness. *Journal of Political Happiness, 12*, 85-108. doi:

    10.1080/13569310601095630

Duncan, G. (2014). Politics, paradoxes and pragmatics of happiness. *Culture,*

    Theory and Critique, 55, 79-95. doi: 10.1080/14735784.2013.782676

Dunn, B. (2017). Against neoliberalism as a concept, *Capital & Class, 41*(3), 435-

    454. doi: 10.1177/0309816816678583

Dwyer, P. (2000). *Welfare rights and responsibilities: Contesting social citizenship*.

    Bristol: Policy Press.

Dwyer, P. (2010). *Understanding social citizenship: Themes and perspectives for*

policy and practice (2nd ed.). Bristol: Policy Press.

Dwyer, P. (2017). Rewriting the contract? Conditionality, welfare reform and the rights and responsibilities of disabled people. In D Horsfall & J. Hudson (Eds), *Social policy in an era of competition: From global to local perspectives* (pp. 135-148). London: Polity Press.

Ecclestone, K. (2012). From emotional and psychological well-being to character education: challenging policy discourses of behavioural science and 'vulnerability'. *Research Papers in Education*, *27*(4), 463-480.

Edley, N. (2001). Analysing masculinity: Interpretative repertoires, ideological dilemmas and subject positions. In M. Wetherell, S. Taylor, & S. Yates (Eds.), *Discourse as data: A guide to analysis* (pp. 189-228). Milton Keynes: Open University.

Edley, N., & Wetherell, M. (2001). Jekyll and Hyde: Men's constructions of feminism and feminists. *Feminism & Psychology*, *11*(4), 439-457. doi: 10.1177/0959353501011004002

Edwards, D. (1997). *Discourse and cognition*. London: Sage.

Edwards, D. (1999). Emotion discourse. *Culture & psychology*, *5*(3), 271-291. doi: 10.1177/1354067X9953001

Edwards, D. (2005). Discursive psychology. In K. Fitch & R. Sanders (Eds.), *Handbook of language and social interaction* (pp. 257-273). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Edwards, D. (2012). Discursive and scientific psychology. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 51*, 425-435. doi: 10.1111/j.2044-8309.2012.02103.x

Edwards, D., & Mercer, N. (2013). *Common knowledge: The development of*

understanding in the classroom. London: Routledge.

Edwards, D. & Potter, J. (1992). *Discursive psychology* (Vol. 8). London: Sage.

Ellis, S. J. (1998). Is self-esteem political? Feminism & Psychology, 8, 251–256.

Ehrenberg, A. (2010). *The weariness of the self: Diagnosing the history of depression in the contemporary age.* Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press.

Ehrenreich, B. (2009). *Smile or die: How positive thinking fooled America and the world.* London: Granta.

Etzioni, A. (1995). *The spirit of community: Rights, responsibilities and the communitarian agenda*. London: Fontana.

Etzioni, A. (2011). Citizenship in a communitarian perspective. *Ethnicities, 11*(3), 336-349. doi:10.1177/1468796811407850

Fairclough, N. (1992). *Critical language awareness.* Harlow: Longman.

Farnsworth, K., & Irving, Z. (2015). *Austerity: More than the sum of its parts* (pp. 9-41). Bristol: Policy Press.

Finlay, L. & Gough, B. (2003). *Reflexivity: A practical guide for researchers in health and social sciences*. London: Blackwel..

Ford, B. Q., Dmitrieva, J. O., Heller, D., Chentsova-Dutton, Y., Grossmann, I., Tamir, M., & Bokhan, T. (2015). Culture shapes whether the pursuit of happiness predicts higher or lower well-being. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, *144*(6), 1053-1062. doi; 10.1037/xge0000108

Fortier, A. (2016). Afterword: Acts of affective citizenship? Possibilities and limitations. *Citizenship Studies, 20*(8), 1038-1044. doi: 10.1080/13621025.2016.1229190

Foucault, M. (1972). *The archaeology of knowledge*. New York NY: Harper

Colophon.

Foucault, M. (1973). *The birth of the clinic: An archaeology of medical perception*

(Translated by Alan Sheridan). London: Tavistock.

Foucault, M. (1975). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (Translated by

Alan Sheridan). London: Penguin Books.

Foucault, M. (1976). *The history of sexuality volume 1: The will to knowledge*

(Translated by Robert Hurley). London: Penguin Books.

Foucault, M. (1984). *The history of sexuality volume 2: The use of pleasure*

(Translated by Robert Hurley). London: Penguin Books.

Foucault, M. (1988). Technologies of the self. In L. Martin, H. Gutman, & P. Hutton,

(Eds.), *Technologies of the self: A seminar with Michel Foucault*. pp. 16-49.

Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press.

Foucault, M. 2001. *Power: Michel Foucault, the essential works 1954–1984, 3*,

London: Allen Lane.

Foucault, M. (1991). "Governmentality". In G. Burchell, C. Gordon, & P. Miller (Eds)

The Foucault effect: Studies in governmentality (pp. 87–104). Hemel

Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Foucault, M. (2007). *Security, territory, population. Lectures at the College de*

France, 1975-78. Trans. G. Burchell. New York: Palgrave.

Frawley, A. (2012).'Unhappy News': The Construction of Happiness as a Social

Problem in UK Newspapers. Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of

Kent.

Frawley, A. (2015a). Happiness research: a review of critiques. *Sociology Compass, 9*, 62-77. doi: 10.1111/soc4.12236

Frawley, A. (2015b). *The semiotics of happiness: rhetorical beginnings of a public problem.* London: Bloomsbury.

Fredrickson, B. L., & Losada, M. F. (2005). Positive affect and the complex dynamics of human flourishing. *American Psychologist, 60,* 678-686. doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.60.7.678

Friedli, L., & Stearn, R. (2015). Positive affect as coercive strategy: Conditionality, activation and the role of psychology in UK government workfare programmes. *Medical Humanities, 41*(1), 40-47. doi:10.1136/medhum-2014-010622.

Furedi, F. (2004). *Therapy culture: Creating vulnerability in an uncertain age.* London: Routledge.

Furedi, F. (2006). Why the politics of happiness makes me mad. *Spiked Online.* Retrieved from http://www.frankfuredi.com/articles/happiness-spiked-20060523.shtml

Gaskell, G. (2000). Individual and group interviewing, In M. W. Bauer & G. Gaskell (Eds.). *Qualitative researching with text, image and sound: A practical handbook (*pp. 38-56). London: Sage.

Gibson, S. (2009). The effortful citizen: discursive social psychology and welfare reform. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology, 9 (6)*, 393-410. doi: 10.1002/casp.1003

Gibson, S. (2011). Dilemmas of citizenship: Young people's conceptions of un/employment rights and responsibilities. *British Journal of Social*

Psychology, 50(3), 450-468. doi: 10.1348/014466610X520113

Gibson, S., Crossland, M., & Hamilton, J. (2017). Social citizenship and immigration: employment, welfare and effortfulness in online discourse concerning migration to the United Kingdom. *Qualitative Psychology, 5*(1), 99-116. doi: 10/1037/qup0000078

Giddens, A. (1999). *The third way: The renewal of social democracy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gill, R. (2000). Discourse analysis, In M. W. Bauer & G. Gaskell (Eds.). *Qualitative researching with text, image and sound: A practical handbook* (pp. 172-190). London: Sage.

Gill, R. (2007). *Gender and the media.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gill, R. (2008). Culture and subjectivity in neoliberal and postfeminist times. *Subjectivity, 25,* 432-445.

Gill, R., & Orgad, S. (2018). The amazing bounce-backable woman: Resilience and the psychological turn in neoliberalism. *Sociological Research Online, 23*(2), 477-495. doi:10.1177/1360780418769673

Gill, R., & Scharff, C. (Eds.). (2013). *New femininities: Postfeminism, neoliberalism and subjectivity*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ginn, J. (2013). Austerity and Inequality. Exploring the Impact of Cuts in the UK by Gender and Age. *Research on Ageing and Social Policy, 1*(1), 28-53. doi: 10.4471/rasp.2013.02

Goffman, E. (2001[1981]) 'Footing.' In M. Wetherell, S. Taylor and S.J. Yates (Eds.) *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*. London: Sage/The Open University.

Goodman, S., & Carr, P. (2017). The just world hypothesis as an argumentative resource in debates about unemployment benefits. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, *27*(4), 312-323. doi: 10.1002/casp.2314

Greco, M., & Stenner, P. (2013). Happiness and the art of life: Diagnosing the psychopolitics of wellbeing. *Health, Culture and Society, 5*(1), 1-19. doi:10.5195/hcs.2013.147

Greco. M., & Stenner, P. (2017). From paradox to pattern shift: Conceptualising liminal hotspots and their affective dynamics. *Theory & Psychology*, *27*(2), 147-166. doi: 10.1177/0959354317693120.

Gubrium, J. F. (2005). Introduction: Narrative environments and social problems. *Social Problems, 52* (4), 525–528. doi:10.1525/sp.2005.52.4.525

Guignon, C. (2002). Hermeneutics, authenticity and the aims of psychology. *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology, 22(2),* 83-102. doi: 10.1037/h0091216

Guignon, C. (2004). *On being authentic.* New York: Routledge.

Gunnell, B. (2006). I'm reading happiness at Harvard, *New Statesman.* Retrieved from: http://www.newstatesman.com/node/164035

Haidt, J. (2006). *The happiness hypothesis: Finding modern truth in ancient wisdom.* London: Arrow.

Hall, S., & Held, D. (1989). Citizens and citizenship. In S. Hall, & M. Jacques (Eds), *New Times: The Changing Face of Politics in the 1990s* (pp. 173-188). London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Hampsher-Monk, I. (Ed.). (2005). *The Impact of the French Revolution: texts from Britain in the 1790s* (Vol. 2). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Handler, J. F. (2004). *Social citizenship and workfare in the United States and Western Europe: The paradox of inclusion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Harré, R. (2002). *Cognitive science: A philosophical introduction*. London: Sage.

Harrison, M., L. (1995). *Housing, "race", social policy and empowerment*. Aldershot: Avebury.

Haybron, D. (2008). The pursuit of unhappiness. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hazleden, R. (2003). Love yourself: The relationship of the self with itself in popular self-help texts. *Journal of Sociology*, *39*(4), 413-428. Doi: 10.1177/0004869003394006

Held, B. S. (2002). The tyranny of the positive attitude in America: Observation and speculation. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 58*, 965-991. doi: 10.1002/jclp.10093

Held, B. S. (2004). The negative side of positive psychology. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 44*, 9-46. doi: 10.1177/0022167803259645

Held, B. S. (2005). The 'virtues' of positive psychology. *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology, 25*(1), 1-34. doi:10.1037/h0091249

Helliwell, J. F., & Wang, S. (2012). The state of world happiness. *World Happiness Report*, 10-57.

Henderson, M., & Taylor, A. (2018). *Postfeminism in context: The Australian postfeminist imaginary*. New York: Routledge.

Hills, P., & Argyle, M. (2002). The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire: A compact scale for the measurement of psychological well-being. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *33*(7), 1073-1082. doi:10.1016/S0191-

8869(01)00213-6

Hochschild, A. R. (2012). *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling*. Berkeley, CA; London: University of California Press.

Hochschild, A. (1994). The commercial spirit of intimate life and the abduction of feminism: Signs from women's advice books. *Theory, Culture & Society 11*(2), 1-24

Horsfall, D. & Hudson, J. (2017). *Social policy in an era of competition: From global to local perspectives.* London: Polity Press.

Hooghe, M., & Oser, J. (2018). Social and Political Citizenship in European Public Opinion: An Empirical Analysis of T.H. Marshall's Concept of Social Rights. *Government & Opposition*, *53*(4), 595–620. doi: 10.1017/gov.2017.11

Huber, E. and Stephens, J. D. (2001). *Development and Crisis of the Welfare State: Parties and Policies in Global Markets*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Humpage, L. (2014). *Policy change, public attitudes and social citizenship: Does neoliberalism matter*? Bristol: Policy Press.

Humpage, L. (2015). The moral repertoires behind social citizenship. *Comparative Sociology, 14*(3), 328-352. doi: 10.1163/15691330-12341348.

Hyman, L. (2011). *Happy and you know it? A cultural exploration of people's experiences and perceptions of happiness*. PhD thesis, University of Surrey.

Hyman, L. (2014). *Happiness: Understandings, narratives and discourses*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hybels, C. F., Pieper, C. F., & Blazer, D. G. (2002). Sex differences in the

relationship between subthreshold depression and mortality in a community sample of older adults. *The American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, *10*(3), 283-291. doi:10.1097/00019442-200205000-00007

Illouz, E. (2007). *Cold intimacies: The making of emotional capitalism*. Oxford: Polity Press.

Illouz, E. (2008). *Saving the modern soul: Therapy, emotions, and the culture of self-help.* Berkley: University of California Press.

Isin, E. F., & Wood, P. K. (1999). *Citizenship and identity*. London: Sage.

Isin, E. (2014). Acts, affects, calls. *OpenDemocracy.* Retrieved June 3, 2019 from https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/acts-affects-calls/

Jensen, T., & Tyler, I. (2015). 'Benefits broods': The cultural and political crafting of anti-welfare commonsense. *Critical Social Policy, 35*(4), 470-491. doi:10.1177/0261018315600835

Johns, H. & Ormerod, P. (2007). *Happiness, Economics and Public Policy.* London: Institute of Economic Affairs.

Jones, R., Whitehead, M., & Pykett, J. (2011). Governing irrationality, or a more than rational government? Reflections on the rescientisation of decision making in British public policy. *Environment and Planning, 43*(12), 2819-2837. doi:10.1068/a43575.

Jugureanu, A., Hughes, J., & Hughes, K. (2014). Towards a developmental understanding of happiness. *Sociological Research Online, 19*(2),1-13. doi:10.5153/sro.3240

Kahneman, D., & Krueger, A. B. (2006). Developments in the measurement of subjective well-being. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, *20*(1), 3-24. doi: 10.1257/089533006776526030

Kessler-Harris, A. (2003). In pursuit of economic citizenship. *Social Politics, 10*, 157-175. doi:10.1093/sp/jxg008

Kidd, J. M. (2008). *Mental capital and well-being: Making the most of ourselves in the 21st century.* Government Office for Science. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-capital-and-wellbeing-making-the-most-of-ourselves-in-the-21st-century

Kuhn, T. S. (1962). The structure of scientific revolutions. *Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press.*

Kvale S. (1996). *InterViews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. London: Sage.

Kvale, S. (2007). *Doing interviews*. London: Sage.

Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lambert, M. (2016). In pursuit of "the welfare trait": recycling deprivation and reproducing depravation in historical context. *People, Place and Policy 10*(3), 225-238. doi:10.3351/ppp.0010.0003.0004

Latour, B. (1987). *Science in action*. Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press

Latour, B. (2005). What is Given in Experience? A Review of Isabelle Stengers' Penser avec Whitehead'. *Boundary 2*, *32*(1), 222-237. Retrieved from http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/93-STENGERS-GB.pdf

Layard, R. (2003). *Has social science a clue?: What is happiness? Are we getting happier?* Conference Presentation at Lionel Robbins memorial lecture series , 03-05 Mar 2003, London, UK. Retrieved from: http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.453.2533&rep=rep1&type=pdf

Layard, R. (2005). *Happiness: Lessons from a new science.* London: Penguin Books.

Layard, R. (2011). *Happiness: Lessons from a new science.* (2nd ed.) London: Penguin Books.

Lazard, L. & McAvoy, J. (2018). Doing reflexivity in psychological research – What's the point? What's the practice? *Qualitative Research in Psychology,* 1-19. doi: 0.1080/14780887.2017.1400144

Leudar, I., & Antaki, C. (1996). Discourse participation, reported speech and research practices in social psychology. *Theory & Psychology*, *6*(1), 5-29.

Lister, R. (1998). Citizenship and difference: Towards a differentiated universalism. *European Journal of Social Theory, 1*(1), 71-90. doi:10.1177/136843198001001006

Lister, R. (2002). Towards a new welfare settlement? In C. Hay (Ed.), *British politics today* (pp. 127-156). Cambridge: Polity

Lupton, D. (1993). Risk as moral danger: the social and political functions of risk discourse in public health. *International Journal of Health Services, 23*, 425-435.

McAvoy, J. (2009). *Negotiating constructions of success and failure: women in mid-life and formations of subject, subjectivity and identity*. PhD thesis, The

Open University.

McDonald, M., & O'Callaghan, J. (2008). Positive psychology: A Foucauldian critique. *The Humanistic Psychologist, 36*, 127-142. doi: 10.1080/08873260802111119

McGuigan, J. (2016). *Neoliberal culture*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

McKenna, P. (2011). *I can make you happy*. London: Bantam Press.

McMahon, D. M. (2006). *Happiness: A history.* New York: Atlantic Monthly Press.

McMullen, L. (2019). When critique becomes commonplace: The case of depression and antidepressants. Paper presented at the International Society of Critical Health Psychology Conference, Bratislava, July 17, 2019.

Malik, K. (2000). *Man, beast and zombie*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson.

Martinussen, M., & Wetherell, M. (2019). Affect, practice and contingency: critical discursive psychology and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. *Subjectivity*, *12*(2), 101-116. doi: 10.1057/s41286-019-00071-y

Marshall, T. H., & Bottomore, T. (1992). *Citizenship and social class*. London: Pluto Press.

Marshall, T.H. (1964). *Class, citizenship, and social development.* Garden City, NJ: Doubleday

Marwick, A. E. (2013). *Status update: Celebrity, publicity, and branding in the social media age*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Matthews, G., & Zeidner, M. (2003). Negative appraisals of positive psychology: A mixed-valence endorsement of Lazarus. *Psychological Inquiry*, *14*(2), 137-143.

Mentinis, M. (2013). The entrepreneurial ethic and the spirit of psychotheraphy: Depoliticisation, atomisation and social selection in the therapeutic culture of the 'crisis'. *European Journal of Psychotherapy and Counselling, 15,* 361-374. doi: 10.1080/13642537.2013.855248

Meston, C. M., & Buss, D. M. (2007). Why humans have sex. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, *36*(4), 477-507. doi: 10.1007/s10508-007-9175-2

Miller, P. (1986). Psychotherapy of work and unemployment. In P. Miller, & N. Rose (Eds.), *The power of psychiatry* (pp. 143-176). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Miller, P. & Rose, N. (1990). Governing economic life. *Economy and Society, 19*(1), 1-31. Doi: 10.1080/03085149000000001

Miller, P., & Rose, N. (2001). The Tavistock programme: The government of subjectivity and social life. In M. Wetherell, S. Taylor & S. J. Yates (Eds.), *Discourse theory and practice: A reader* (pp. 364-379). London: Sage.

Minister K. (1991) A feminist frame for the oral history interview. In S. B. Gluck & D. Patai (Eds.). *Women's words: The feminist practice of oral history*. pp. 27-43. New York: Routledge.

Moloney, P., & Kelly, P. (2004). Beck never lived in Birmingham: Why CBT may be a less useful treatment for psychological distress than is often supposed. *Clinical Psychology Leicester*, 4-10.

Morrin, K. (2018). Tensions in teaching character: How the 'entrepreneurial character' is reproduced, 'refused' and negotiated in an English academy

school. *Sociological Research Online, 23*(2), 459-476. doi: 10.1177/136080418769670

Mulheirn, I. (2013). *Beveridge rebooted: Social security for a networked age*. Social Market Foundation. Accessed from http://smf.jynk.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/ Publication-Beveridge-Rebooted-Social-security-for-a-networked-age.pdf

Myers, G. (1999). Unspoken speech: Hypothetical reported discourse and the rhetoric of everyday talk. *Text-Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of Discourse*, *19*(4), 571-590. doi: 10.1515/text.1.1999.19.4.571

Neveu, C. (2014). Practising citizenship from the ordinary to the activist. In E. F Isin & P. Nyers (Eds) *Routledge handbook of global citizenship studies* (pp. 108-117). London: Routledge.

Neveu, C. (2015). Of ordinariness and citizenship processes. *Citizenship Studies*, *19*(2), 141-154. doi: 10.1080/13621025.2015.1005944

Norem, J. K. (2001). Defensive pessimism, optimism, and pessimism. In E. C. Chang (Ed) *Optimism and pessimism: Implications for theory, research, and practice*, (pp. 77-100). Washington: American Psychological Association.

Office for National Statisitcs. (2011). Personal well-being questionnaire. Retrieved from https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/methodologies/personalwellbeingsurveyuserguide

Oliver, D., & Heater, D. (1994). *The foundations of citizenship*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Oliver, M., & Barnes, C. (2012). *The new politics of disablement*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Parker, I. (1992). *Discourse dynamics: Critical analysis for individual and social psychology.* London: Routledge.

Peck, J., & Tickell, A. (2002). Neoliberalizing space. *Antipode, 34*(3), 380-404. doi:10.1111/1467-8330.00247

Peck, J., Brenner, N., & Theodore, N. (2018). Actually existing neoliberalism. In D. Cahill, M. Cooper, M. Konings, & D. Primrose (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of neoliberalism* (pp. 3-15). London: Sage.

Pérez-Álvarez, M. (2016). The science of happiness: As felicitous as it is fallacious. *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology, 36,* 1-19. doi: 10.1037/teo0000030

Perkins, A. (2015). *The welfare trait: How state benefits affect personality*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.

Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. (2004). *Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Peterson, C., Park, N., & Seligman, M. E. (2005). Assessment of character strengths. *Psychologists' Desk Reference, 2*, 93-98.

Phinney, A., Kelson, E., Baumbusch, J., O'Connor, D., & Purves, B. (2016). Walking in the neighbourhood: Performing social citizenship in dementia. *Dementia: The International Journal of Social Research and Practice*, *15*(3), 381–394. doi: 10.1177/1471301216638180

Pomerantz, A. (1984). Agreeing and disagreeing with assessments: Some features of preferred/dispreferred turn shaped. In J. M. Atkinson & J. Heritage (Eds.)

Structures of social action (pp. 57-101). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pomerantz, A. (1986). Extreme case formulations: A way of legitimizing claims. *Human Studies*, *9*(2), 219-229.

Potter, J. (1996). *Representing reality: Discourse, rhetoric and social construction*. London: Sage.

Potter, J. (1997). Discourse analysis as a way of analyzing naturally occurring talk. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative research: Theory, method and practice* (pp.144-160). London: Sage.

Potter, J. (1998). Discursive social psychology: From attitudes to evaluative practices. *European Review of Social Psychology, 9*(1), 233-266. doi: 10.1080/14792779843000090

Potter, J., & Hepburn, A. (2005). Qualitative interviews in psychology: Problems and possibilities. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *2*(4), 281-307. doi: 10.1191/1478088705qp045oa

Potter, J., & Wetherell, M. (1987). *Discourse and social psychology*. London: Sage.

Potter, J., & Wetherell, M. (1994). Analyzing discourse, In. A. Bryman & R. G. Burgess (Eds.) *Analyzing qualitative data*, (pp.47-66). London: Routledge.

Powell, M. A. (1999). *New Labour, new welfare state?: The "Third Way" in British social policy.* Bristol: Policy Press.

Prilleltensky, I. (2003) Understanding, resisting, and overcoming oppression: Toward psychopolitical validity. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 31*, 195-201.

Prilleltensky, I. (2008). The role of power in wellness, oppression, and liberation:

The promise of psychopolitical validity. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *36*(2), 116-136.

Prior, L. (2016). Using documents in social research. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative research* (4th ed), (pp. 171-186). London: Sage.

Pryiomka, K. (2018). Quantitative dogmatism in character assessment and its implications for education: a case study of grit. *Social & Personality Psychology Compass, 12*. doi: 10.11111/spc3.12388

Puchta, C., & Potter, J. (2002). Manufacturing individual opinions: Market research focus groups and the discursive psychology of evaluation. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *41*(3), 345-363.

Pupavac, V. (2001). Therapeutic governance: P*sycho-social Intervention and Trauma Risk Management. Disasters, 25 (4), 358–372.* doi:10.1111/1467-7717.00184

Rapley, T. (2007). *Doing conversation, discourse and document analysis*. London: Sage.

Revi, B. (2014). T.H. Marshall and his critics: Reappraising 'social citizenship' in the twenty-first century. *Citizenship Studies, 18*(3), 452-464. doi:10.1080/13621025.2014.9 05285

Richardson, F. C. (1989). Freedom and commitment in modern psychotherapy. *Journal of Integrative and Eclectic Psycotherapy, 8*, 303-319.

Riley, S., Evans, A., & Robson, M. (2018). *Postfeminism and health*. London: Routledge.

Riley, S., Evans, A., Anderson, E., & Robson, M. (2019). The gendered nature of self-help. *Feminsim & Psychology, 29*(1), 3-18. doi:

10.1177/0959353519826162

Rimke, H. M. (2000). Governing citizens through self-help literature. *Cultural Studies*, *14*(1), 61-78. doi: 10.1080/095023800334986

Rose, N. (1990). *Governing the soul: The shaping of the private self* (2nd ed.). London: Free Association.

Rose, N. (1996). *Inventing our selves: Psychology, power, and personhood*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rose, N. (1999). *Powers of freedom: Reframing political thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rose, N. (2000). Community, citizenship, and the Third Way. *American Behavioral Scientist, 43*(9), 1395-1411. doi: 10.1177/00027640021955955

Rose, N., & Abi Rached, J. M. (2013). *Neuro: The new brain science and the management of the mind.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Rose, N., & Miller, P. (1992). Political power beyond the State: Problematics of government. *British Journal of Sociology, 43*(2), 173-205.

Rose, N., & Novas, C. (2005). Biological citizenship. In A. Ong, & S. J. Collier (Eds) Global Assemblages: T*echnology, politics, and ethics as anthropological problems*, (pp. 439-463). London: Blackwell

Rubin, G. (2009). *The happiness project*. New York: HarperCollins.

Sacks, D. W., Stevenson, B., & Wolfers, J. (2012). The new stylized facts about income and subjective well-being. *Emotion*, *12*(6), 1181. doi: 10.1037/a0029873

Sayce, L. (2000). *From psychiatric patient to citizen: Overcoming discrimination and*

social exclusion. Basingstoke: MacMillan.

Schilling, K., & Fuehrer, A. (1993). The politics of women's self-help books. *Feminism & Psychology, 3*(3), 418–422.

Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences.* Teachers College Press.

Segal, L. (2017). *Radical happiness*: *Moments of collective joy*. London: Verso.

Selbourne, D. (1994). *The principle of duty: An essay on the foundations of civil order.* London: Sinclair-Stevenson.

Seligman, M. (2002). *Authentic happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfilment*. New York: Free Press.

Seligman, M. (2011). *Flourish: A New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being - and how to Achieve Them.* London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Seligman, M. E., & Csikszentmihályi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist, 55*(1), 5-14. doi:10.1037//0003-066X.55.1.5

Seymour-Smith, S. (2015). Applying discursive approaches to health psychology. *Health Psychology*, *34*(4), 371-380. doi: 10.1037/hea0000165

Sheldon, K. M., & King, L. (2001). Why positive psychology is necessary. *American Psychologist, 56* (3), 216. doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.56.3.216

Shotter, J. (1984) Social accountability and selfhood. Oxford: Blackwell.

Shotter, J. (1989). Social accountability and the social construction of 'you'. in J. Shotter & K. J. Gergen (Eds.) *Texts of identity* (pp.133-150). London: Sage.

Shotter, J. (1993). Psychology and citizenship: Identity and belonging. In B. S.

Turner (Ed.), *Citizenship and social theory* (pp. 115-138). London: Sage.

Silverman, D. (2013). *Doing Qualitative Research* (4th ed.). London: Sage

Silverman, D. (2014). *Interpreting Qualitative Data* (5th ed.). London: Sage.

Silverman, D. (2016). Using documents in social research, in L. Prior (Ed.)
  Qualitative research. (4th Ed.) London: Sage.

Silverman, M. (2019). 'We have different routes for different reasons': Exploring the
  purpose of walks for carers of people with dementia. *Dementia: The
  International Journal of Social Research and Practice*, *18*(2), 630–643. doi:
  10.1177/1471301217699677

Simmons, J. (2012). Positive psychology as a scientific movement. *The
  International Journal of Science in Society, 4*, 43-52. Retrieved from
  http://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/36887919/Int-Journal-
  of-Science-in-Society-June-2013-Vol-4-Issue-
  1.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAJ56TQJRTWSMTNPEA&Expires=14708438
  01&Signature=x%2F3%2Fxi0X1gUpzN1MCxQAW2ntxug%3D&response-
  contentdisposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DPositive_psychology_as_a_
  scientific_move.pdf

Slife, B. D., & Richardson, F. C. (2008). Problematic ontological underpinnings of
  positive psychology. *Theory & Psychology, 18,* 699-723. doi:
  10.1177/0959354308093403

Smail, D. (2005). Power interest and psychology: Elements of a social materialist
  understanding of distress. Ross-on-Wye: PCCS Books.

Smith, R. (2008). The long slide to happiness. *Journal of Philosophy of Education,
  42,* 559-573. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9752.2008.00650.x

Smith, R., M. (2002). Modern citizenship. In E. Isin, & B. Turner (Eds.), *Handbook of citizenship studies* (pp. 105-115). London: Sage.

Smyth, M. M. (2001). Fact making in psychology: The voice of the introductory textbook. *Theory and Psychology, 11*(5), 609-636. doi: 10.1177/0959354301115002.

Snowdon, C. (2012). Are more equal countries happier? In P. Booth (ed) … *And the pursuit of happiness: Wellbeing and the role of government* (pp. 98-127). London: Institute of Economic Affairs.

Sointu, E. (2005). The rise of an ideal: Tracing changing discourses of wellbeing. *The Sociological Review, 53*, 255-274. doi: 0.1111/j.1467-954X.2005.00513.x

Speer, S. A. (2002). 'Natural' and 'contrived' data: a sustainable distinction?. *Discourse Studies*, *4*(4), 511-525. doi: 10.1177/14614456020040040601

Stearns, P. N. (2012). The history of happiness: How the pursuit of contentment has shaped the West's culture and economy. *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved from http://n.ereserve.fiu.edu/010039593-1.pdf

Stenner, P. (2005). Rights and emotions, or: The importance of having the right emotions. *History & Philosophy of Psychology, 7*(1), 1-11.

Stenner, P., & Taylor, D. (2008). Psychosocial welfare: Reflections on an emerging field. *Critical Social Policy, 28*(4), 415-437. doi: 10.1177/0261018308095278

Stevenson, B., & Wolfers, J. (2008). *Economic growth and subjective well-being: reassessing the Easterlin paradox* (No. w14282). National Bureau of Economic Research.

Stevenson, C., Dixon, J., Hopkins, N., & Luyt, R. (2015). The social psychology of citizenship, participation and social exclusion: Introduction to the special thematic section. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology, 3*(2), 1-19. doi: 10.5964/jspp.v3i2.579.

Stokoe, E., Hepburn, A., & Antaki, C. (2012). Beware the 'Loughborough School' of Social Psychology? Interaction and the politics of intervention. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *51*(3), 486-496. doi: 10.1111/j.2044-8309.2011.02088.x

Stutzer, A., & Frey, B. S. (2010). Recent advances in the economics of individual subjective well-being. *Social Research*, *77*(2), 679-714. Retrieved from: https://muse.jhu.edu/article/528044

Taylor, C. (1985). *Philosophical papers: Volume 2, philosophy and the human sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Taylor, C. (1989). *Sources of the self: The making of the modern identity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Taylor, N. (2018). The return of character: Parallels between late-Victorian and twenty-first century discourses. *Sociological Research Online 23*(2), 399-415. doi: 10.1177/1360780418769679

Taylor, S. (2009). *Narratives of identity and place*. London: Routledge.

Taylor, S. (2015). Discursive and psychosocial? Theorising a complex contemporary subject. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *12*(1), 8-21. Doi: 10.1080/14780887.2014.958340

Taylor-Gooby, P. (2000). *Risk, trust and welfare*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Taylor-Gooby, P. (2009). *Reframing social citizenship*. Oxford: Oxford University

Press.

Taylor-Gooby, P. (2015). Making the case for the welfare state. *Policy & Politics, 43*(4), 597-614. doi:10.1332/147084414X14081190124376

The Centre for Economic Performance's Mental Health Policy Group. (2006). *The Depression Report: A New Deal for Depression and Anxiety Disorders.* The London School of Economic and Political Science. Retrieved from http://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/special/depressionreport.pdf

Widdicombe, S. (1993). Autobiography and change: rhetoric and authenticity of 'Gothic' style. In E. Burman & I. Parker (Eds.), *Discourse analytic research: Repertoires and readings of texts in action* (pp. 94-113). London: Routledge.

The Trussell Trust. (2018). *The next state of Universal Credit: Moving onto the new benefit system and foodbank use.* Retrieved from https://www.trusselltrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/10/The-next-stage-of-Universal-Credit-Report-Final.pdf

Thin, N. (2012). *Social happiness: Theory into policy and practice.* Bristol: Policy Press.

Tileagă, C. (2013). *Political psychology: Critical perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tischner, I., & Malson, H. (2012). Deconstructing health and un/healthy fat woman. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 22*, 50-62. doi: 10.1002/casp.1096

Tonkiss, F. (2017). Discourse analysis. In C. Searle (Ed.) *Researching society and culture* (4th Edn.). London: Sage.

Triandis, H. C. (1989). The self and social behavior in differing cultural contexts. *Psychological Review, 96*, 506-520. doi: 10.1037/0033-295X.96.3.506

Tuffin, K., Morgan, M., Frewin, K., & Jardine, A. (2000). Economic rationalism in action. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology, 29*, 30-36.

Turner, B. S. (1993). *Citizenship and social theory*. London: Sage.

Turner, B. S. (2009). **T.H. Marshall, social rights and English national identity.** *Citizenship Studies, 13(*1**). 65-73. doi:** 10.1080/13621020802586750

Van Dijk, T. A. (2012). A note on epistemics and discourse analysis. *British journal of social Psychology*, *51*(3), 478-485. doi: 10.1111/j.2044-8309.2011.02044.x

Van Steenbergen, B. (1994). Global modelling in the 1990s: A critical evaluation of a new wave. *Futures, 26*(1), 44-56. doi: 10.1016/0016-3287(94)90089-2

Veenhoven, R. (1991). Is happiness relative?. *Social indicators research*, *24*(1), 1-34.

Walker, C., Speed, E., & Taggart, D. (2018). Turning psychology into policy: A case of square pegs and round holes? *Nature: International Journal of Science*, *4*(108) 1-18, doi: 10.1057/s41599-018-0159-8

Walkerdine, V. (2003). Reclassifying upward mobility: Femininity and the neo-liberal subject. *Gender and Education, 15*(3), 237-248. doi:10.1080/09540250303864.

Wetherell, M. (1996a). Linguistic repertoires and literary criticism: New directions for a social psychology of gender. In M. M. Gergen & S. N. Davis (Eds.) *Toward a new psychology of gender: A reader*, pp.149-170. New York: Routledge.

Wetherell, M. (1996b). Constructing social identities: the individual/social binary in Henri Tajfel's social psychology. In W. P. Robinson (Ed.) *Social groups and identities: Festschrift for Henri Tajfel.* London: Butterworth-Heinernann.

Wetherell, M. (1998). Positioning and interpretative repertoires. Conversation analysis and post-structuralism in dialogue. *Discourse and Society, 9*, 387-412. doi:10.1177/0957926598009003005

Wetherell, M. (2001). Themes in discourse research: The case of Diana. In M. Wetherell, S. Taylor & S. J. Yates (Eds.) *Discourse theory and practice: A reader* (pp.14-28). London: Sage/The Open University.

Wetherell, M. (2003a). Paranoia, ambivalence and discursive practices: Concepts of position and positioning in psychoanalysis and discursive psychology. In R. Harré & F. Moghaddam (Eds.) *The self and others: Positioning individuals and groups in personal, political and cultural contexts*. New York: Praeger/Greenwood Publishers.

Wetherell, M. (2003b). Racism and the analysis of cultural resources in interviews. In H. van den Berg, M. Wetherell, & H. Houtkoop-Steenstra (Eds.), *Analyzing Race Talk: Multidisciplinary Approaches to the Interview* (pp. 11–30). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wetherell, M. (2008). Methods for studying multiple identities: Intersectionality, practice and roubled and untroubled subject positions. Paper presented at the ESRC Seminar Series, Methods in Dialogue, Cambridge, May, 2005. In P. S. Ruppel, M. Dege, M. Andrews, & C. Squire (2008). Conference Essay: Tackling Problems of Qualitative Social Research: A Conversation. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research Sozialforschung, 9*(1). Downloaded from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/47529159_Conference_Essay_T

ackling_Problems_of_Qualitative_Social_Research_A_Conversation

Wetherell, M. (2012). *Affect and emotion: A new social science understanding*. London: Sage.

Wetherell, M. (2015). Trends in the turn to affect: A social psychological critique. *Body & Society 21*(2), 139-166

Wetherell, M., & Edley, N. (1998). Gender practices: Steps in the analysis of men and masculinities. In K. Henwood, C. Griffin, & A. Phoenix (Eds.), *Gender and psychology. Standpoints and differences: Essays in the practice of feminist psychology* (pp. 156-173). London: Sage.

Wetherell, M., & Edley, N. (2014). A discursive psychological framework for analyzing men and masculinities. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity, 15,* 355-364. doi: 10.1037/a0037148

Wetherell, M., Stiven, H., & Potter, J. (1987). Unequal egalitarianism: A preliminary study of discourses concerning gender and employment opportunities. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 26*(1), 59-71. doi: 10.1111/j.2044-8309.1987.tb00761.x

White, M. D. (2014). *The illusion of well-being: Economic policy based on respect and responsiveness.* London: Palgrave.

Whippman, R. (2016). *The pursuit of happiness: And why it's making us anxious.* London: Random House.

Wiggan, J. (2012). Telling stories of 21st century welfare: The UK coalition government and the neo-liberal discourse of worklessness and dependency. *Critical Social Policy, 32*(3), 383-405. doi:10.1177/0261018312444413

Wiggan, J. (2017). Contesting the austerity and "welfare reform" narrative of the UK

    Government: Forging a social democratic imaginary in Scotland.

    International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy, *37*(11-12), 639-654.

    doi: 10.1108/IJSSP-04-2016-0050

Wiggins, S. (2015). From Loughborough with love: how discursive psychology

    rocked the heart of social psychology's love affair with attitudes. In C.

    Tileagă and E. Stokoe (Eds) *Discursive psychology: Class and*

    contemporary issues (pp. 101-113). London: Routledge.

Wilce Jr, J. M., & Price, L. J. (2008). Metaphors our bodyminds live by. In M. Greco

    & P. Stenner (Eds.), *Emotions: A social science reader* (pp. 226-239).

    London: Routledge.

Williams, R. (1980). *Problems in materialism and culture*. London: Verso.

Willig, C. (2013). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology* (3rd Ed).

    Maidenhead, Berkshire: Open University Press.

Wooffitt, R. (2005). *Conversation analysis and discourse analysis: A comparative*

    and critical introduction. London: Sage.

Wooffitt, R., & Widdicombe, S. (2006). Interaction in interviews. *Talk and interaction*

    in social research methods, 28-49. Doi: 10.4135/9781849209991.n3

Woolcock, N. (2019). University to give students crash course in happiness. *The*

    Times, May 11, 2019.

Woolfolk, R. L., & Wasserman, R. H. (2005). Count no one happy: Eudaimonia and

    positive psychology. *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology,*

    25, 81-90. doi: 10.1037/h0091252

Wright, C. (2013). Against flourishing: Wellbeing as biopolitics, and the

    psychoanalytic alternative. *Health, Culture and Society, 5*, 20-35. doi:

    10.5195/hcs.2013.151

Xenitidou, M., & Sapountzis, A. (2018). Qualitative methodologies in the study of

    citizenship and migration. *Qualitative Psychology*, *5*(1), 77-84. doi:

    10.1037/qup0000084

Yardley, L. (2000). Dilemmas in qualitative health research. *Psychology and*

    Health, *15*(2), 215-228. doi: 10.1080/08870440008400302

Yen, J. (2010). Authorising happiness: Rhetorical demarcation of science and

    society in historical narratives of positive psychology. *Journal of Theoretical*

    and Philosophical Psychology, 30, 67-78. doi: 10.1037/a0019103

Young, I. M. (1989). Polity and group difference: A critique of the ideal of

    universal citizenship. *Ethics, 99*(2), 250-274. doi:10.1086/293065

Appendices

Appendix A: Information sheet for participants

Information Sheet: Research by Emma Anderson, PhD student

Purpose of the study: As part of my PhD research at York St John University I am undertaking research on how people understand happiness. My study is supervised by Dr Stephen Gibson and Dr Zahra Tizro.

What will the study involve? If you agree to take part, you will be interviewed by me at a time and location that is convenient for you. The interview will be recorded using a digital voice recorder and will take around 30-60 minutes (though please allow 90 minutes as we may also talk a bit beforehand and have a debrief afterwards). During the interview, I will ask questions about how you think and feel about happiness and what you might do to feel happy. I may also give you a short questionnaire about happiness during the interview which you can choose to complete and discuss if you wish – or equally, choose not to.

Do you have to take part? No. Participation is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate you'll sign a consent form, and you'll get to keep a copy of this information sheet and the consent form. You can withdraw at any time even if you have agreed to participate at first. You can withdraw your permission to use your interview within six weeks of the interview, in which case the interview will be permanently deleted.

Will your participation in the study be kept confidential? Yes. I will ensure that no clues to your identity appear in the research report. Any extracts from what you say that are quoted will be entirely anonymous.

What will happen to the information you give? The recording of your interview will be kept confidential for the duration of the study on a password-locked file on my computer. The only other people who may have access to this file are my tutors and examiners at York St John University. I will prepare a transcript of your interview which will be anonymized and used for analysis, along with transcripts of other people's interviews.

What will happen to the results? The results will be presented in my thesis. They will be seen by my supervisors and examiners. The study may also be published in

an academic journal and/or presented at conferences. In any such use of your data, you will remain anonymous.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part? I don't expect there to be any negative consequences for you in taking part. However, it is possible that talking about your experiences in this way may cause some distress. If you think that this is particularly likely to be the case, then you may wish to consider whether you would rather not take part.

What if there is a problem? At the end of the interview, there will be an opportunity to discuss how you found it. In the unlikely event that it may have caused distressing feelings, I will provide contact details for the Samaritans and other organisations that may be of use.

Who has reviewed this study? Approval must be given before studies like this can take place, and approval for this study has been granted by the Ethics Committee of the School of Psychological and Social Sciences at York St John University.

Any further queries? If you want any further information on taking part in this research, you can contact me on e.anderson1@yorksj.ac.uk.

Appendix B: Consent form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Please fill this out if you are happy to take part in the study

Research: A qualitative study of people's understandings of happiness

Name of Researcher: Emma Anderson, York St John University

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet about the current research

2. I understand that my participation in the study will involve being interviewed for around an hour, and that the interview will be audio recorded. I have had the opportunity to ask questions

3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw for up to six weeks after this interview, without giving any reason and that no rights of mine will be affected at all

4. I understand that any data or information used in any publications that arise from this study will be anonymous

5. I understand that all my data is confidential and will be stored securely

6. I understand that I have the right to withdraw my data for up to six weeks, and that no explanation for this is necessary

7. I agree to take part in this study

Name of participant …………………………………………………………………..

Date ……………………….   Signature …………………………………………

This project has been approved by the Psychology Research Ethics Committee

Appendix C: Interview schedule

- To start off, could you give me a brief description of yourself?
  - You mention that you're xxx – could you tell me a bit more about that?
- Could you tell me about a time in your life when you would say you were (or are) happy? Why do you think that was?

- How would you describe happiness?

- What does happiness feel like?

- What do you see as situations or experiences that can promote happiness?

- And what about the opposite – some things you think that can impede happiness?

- If people ask you if you're happy, what do you tend to tell them?

- Do you think it's possible to boost levels of happiness and if so, how might people go about it?

- Is there anything you, specifically, do to make yourself feel happier?

- Have your ideas about happiness changed over the years?

- What are some mistakes you think that people might make in seeking happiness?

- What makes for a good life? (Is this the same as happiness?)

Part 2

After ascertaining that participants would be willing to fill out and discuss a quick survey on happiness before the interview started, I handed them a copy of the Personal Wellbeing Questionnaire (PWQ, see Appendix D) after asking the questions above. After they'd read the PWQ, I asked again if it was something they were willing to answer and discuss, and if so, asked them the following questions:

- How did you find filling out the questionnaire?

  - pick up anything said here – for eg, What did you find difficult & why (if they mention they found it hard)

- You've put a '7' here – what led you to that score?

- What might be the difference between a 7 and a 9 (for example)?

  - Is a 10 possible?

- What are your thoughts about the government measuring people's happiness?

General follow-up questions / prompts

- Can you tell me a bit more about (what you mean by) xxx

- Do you think other people feel a similar way?

- Have you got any examples of that?

- You mention (e.g.) contentment – do you see that as different to happiness?

Appendix D: Personal Wellbeing Questionnaire

PERSONAL WELLBEING QUESTIONNAIRE (Office for National Statistics, 2011)

I would like to ask you four questions about your feelings on aspects of your life. There are no right or wrong answers. For each of these questions I'd like you to give an answer on a scale of nought to 10, where nought is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely'

1. Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?

2. Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile?

3. Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?

4. Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?

Appendix E: Debrief information

Post-interview information sheet

Thank you for taking part in my research. This document provides some further information – please retain it in case you need to refer to it.

If you change your mind about your participation in the study, you can withdraw your data by contacting me on e.anderson1@yorksj.ac.uk for up to six weeks (date: __ /__ /2017). You do not need to give any reasons for this.

If your participation in the study has raised any issues for you that you feel you would like to discuss, you may wish to contact the Samaritans on 116 123 or by email at jo@samaritans.org. You can also access help and information through Mind at 0300 123 3393 (mind.org.uk); or the Citizen's Advice Bureau (03444 111 444; citizensadvice.org.uk).

Thank you for your time,

Emma Anderson

Appendix F: Transcription conventions

Transcription conventions (adapted from Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998, pp. vi-vii).

These were used in place of traditional punctuation to facilitate a more deliberate analysis of the transcript, rather than a conventional reading of it.

,	A comma indicates a pause of up to 2 seconds.
(2)	The number in parentheses indicates a longer time gap to the nearest second.
((laughs))	Text in double brackets denotes meaningful non-verbal sounds such as laughter or sighing.
[[gestures]]	Text in double square brackets is a researcher's note of what was happening in the interview that could not be heard, such as meaningful gestures or face pulling.
-	A dash indicates the cut-off of the prior word or sound.
<u>Yes</u>	An underlined fragment indicates speaker emphasis.