

**Flourishing in the Workplace:**  
**An investigation into the intentional strategies employed by those**  
**experiencing long-term positive affect in the UK public sector**

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of the requirements for the award of PhD

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*'I am normally cheery and have a ready smile, and am interested in people. I also believe I've only got one chance of being here (despite my Catholic upbringing I'm not so sure about an afterlife) and I'm determined it's going to be a bloody marvellous experience if I've got anything to do with it!'*

(Respondent to one of the surveys in this thesis)

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is focused on positive affect in the workplace, with a particular emphasis on the UK public sector. Three samples of data were taken from 433 respondents across nine participating organizations with the aim of identifying those who rate themselves as happy and upbeat and whom others are noticing in this regard. Thus, the thesis goes beyond the analysis of those who are self-nominated as happy, seeking those who are ‘flourishing’ (denoted throughout as ‘Happy Plus’ or ‘H+’) which, for the purposes of this thesis, are categorised as employees whose positive affect is contagious.

The data identified 45 H+ respondents, ascertaining that their happiness has a degree of longevity that is in line with eudaimonic sources and that the state of flourishing is unlikely to be accidental. The flourishing respondents were measured on 16 workplace emotions and compared against a group of 388 non-flourishing work colleagues. The H+ respondents recorded higher scores in all 4 emotions associated with ‘employee engagement’ (enthusiastic, joyful, inspired & excited) and ‘employee satisfaction’ (calm, relaxed, laid back & at ease) while the NonH+ group scored higher in emotions associated with ‘stress’ (nervous, anxious, tense & worried) and depression (dejected, despondent, hopeless & depressed). Independent samples *t*-tests (using the Bonferroni correction) suggest these differences are statistically significant in 13 of the 16 affects measured. This is salient in that the more vigorous sense of employee engagement tends to result in pro-social behaviours that are correlated with bottom-line performance.

The thesis then sought to discover the means by which the H+ respondents achieve and maintain their flourishing status. Following Lyubomirsky’s (2007) contention that if an individual’s genes and circumstances are fixed (in the immediacy of here and now) then it is

the 40% of one's intentional strategies that will differentiate the flourishing from their non-flourishing colleagues. Thus, the H+ and NonH+ groups were compared on a raft of seventeen *within-person* strategies.

The flourishing group rate 'choosing to be positive' as their biggest single strategy, with the corollary that attitudinal choice requires both awareness and effort. It is postulated that engaged employees are attitude 'maximizers' rather than 'satisficers', in that they are less likely to 'make do' with ambivalent attitudes, striving to be as positive as they are able. Flourishing employees are also significantly more likely to set goals, play to their strengths, have positive internal dialogue, reframe negative events and consume less news. They indulge in what is termed 'life-crafting' in which they alter their thoughts and circumstances to maximise their likelihood of remaining happy.

The thesis concludes with a series of recommendations, focusing on 'co-creation', the idea that happiness emerges as a collective and cooperative endeavour that requires both favourable working conditions and individual effort. As such, recommendations are aimed at how organizations can learn from the findings to implement structures and policies that are best placed to facilitate flourishing cultures. There is a further set of recommendations alluding to what individuals can do to raise their own happiness levels.

As such, it is argued that organizational culture change is not simply a matter of instigating top-down or bottom-up remedies, but rather eliciting change that emanates from inside-out.

## **Executive Summary**

This thesis explores the theory and practice of positive affect, focusing on employees in the UK public sector. It reports on those employees who are identified as ‘flourishing’ which, for the purposes of this study, are individuals who rate themselves as happy and whose positive affect is having an uplifting effect on those around them (hereby referred to as ‘Happy Plus’ or ‘H+’). The data was collected during a particularly challenging time of government austerity, so is, in effect, a study of those who remain upbeat and happy and whose positive affect resonates, even in turbulent times.

This is a mixed methods study, corresponding in type to Cresswell’s (2003) ‘sequential explanatory’ category, characterized by collection and analysis of quantitative data followed by a collection and analysis of qualitative data, the purpose of which is to use qualitative results to assist in explaining and interpreting the findings of a quantitative study. The data was collected in 3 tranches, the first of which sought to identify a group of flourishing employees. Phases 2 and 3 sought more data on these H+ employees with a view to answering 5 research questions:

1. To what extent do flourishing (H+) and non-flourishing (NonH+) employees differ on measures of ‘employee satisfaction’ and ‘employee engagement’?
2. What are the factors underpinning those who flourish at work?
3. What intentional *within-person* strategies differentiate flourishing and non-flourishing employees?
4. Which of these strategies is/are most widely used?
5. Does long term positive affect involve effort or is it effortless?

Chapter 1 introduces the societal, business and personal cases for happiness, arguing that it has been the *'holy grail'* (Boniwell, 2006, p. 60) of philosophers and researchers through the ages. Yet, if happiness has so many benefits, why are we not happier? This chapter examines 'busyness', 'affluenza' and the media as impediments to happiness in the modern era, before introducing the concept of flourishing, or 'contagious positive affect', as the central theme of the thesis.

Chapter 2 reviews happiness from an historical perspective before bringing the subject up to date with a review of some of the central tenets of positive psychology. This umbrella theme is then broken down into sub-sections of inter-related subjects such as happiness, subjective wellbeing, flow, strengths, set-point, hedonic adaptation, broaden and build, social contagion and corporate energy. Chapter 2 introduces a working definition of the central concept of this thesis, flourishing, as; *'Individuals who are happier and more energetic than average and who succeed in engaging their work colleagues in these positive feelings, thereby helping create an uplift in the working environment.'*

Chapter 3 explores the nature versus nurture debate, focusing particularly on Lyubomirsky's (2007) contention that an individual's happiness is 50% genetic, shaped 10% by one's circumstances and 40% by intentional strategies. It follows the line of inquiry that if an individual's genes and circumstances are fixed (in the immediacy of here and now) then it is the 40% of one's intentional strategies that might be the difference between the flourishing and non-flourishing employees. This argument is underscored by the fact that two employees can be sitting side-by-side in the same office, doing identical work, under an identical management regime, earning the same salary, yet one is happy and the other is not. This chapter then examines some of the intentional strategies that have been studied by other

researchers; positive thinking, gratitude, kindness & good deeds, mindfulness, religion, relationships and setting & attaining goals. This section also explores the literature concerning the link between income and happiness.

Chapter 4 explores the concept of flourishing in the workplace. It examines some of the most cited studies of organizational behaviour before focusing on the contemporary debate regarding the difference between ‘worker satisfaction’ and ‘worker engagement’. This chapter reports on measures of employee motivation that have been collected under the generic heading of ‘worker satisfaction’ then, using Warr’s (2007) line of inquiry, it is argued that measures of satisfaction have gone beyond their original remit. If ‘satisfaction’ is connoted with feelings of ‘comfort’, ‘sufficiency’ and ‘adequacy’ then measures that stray into ‘vigour’, ‘dedication’ and ‘absorption’ have inadvertently drifted into the realm of ‘employee engagement’. Chapter 4 introduces the 4 quadrants of employee attitude and behaviour derived from Russell’s (1980) circumplex model of affect, arguing that satisfied and engaged employees inhabit different quadrants and that their differing emotional states will be reflected in contrasting workplace behaviours.

Chapter 5 looks, in more depth, at how researchers have sought to gather data on employee satisfaction. It examines quantitative and qualitative methods and explains the reasoning behind choosing on-line data collection for this particular study.

Chapter 6 discusses the 3 phases of data capture, explaining the rationale behind the choice of a mixed methods approach. Phase 1 was used essentially as a data gathering exercise that would seek to find a group of flourishing employees who would be targeted for more analysis in phases 2 and 3. Phase 2 uses a Reflections on Happiness Survey (RHS) that gathers

qualitative data on happiness longevity, domains, strategies and sources as well as gathering information on workplace emotions via Warr's (1990) IWP Multi-Affect Indicator. This would enable the mapping of flourishing and non-flourishing employees against the 4 quadrants of the circumplex model, allowing the measurement of any significant emotional differences between the two groups. Phase three sought to measure the difference between the flourishing and non-flourishing employees across a series of intentional strategies that arose from the data gathered in parts 1 and 2; gratitude, strengths, religiosity, attitudinal choice, positive self-talk, propensity for rumination, post-traumatic growth, deliberate emotional contagion, upbringing and their degree of news consumption.

Chapter 7 uses statistical techniques to report on the validity and significance of the findings from phase 1, reporting that H+ employees rate significantly higher than their NonH+ counterparts in terms of happiness, energy and their rating of colleagues' happiness. Phase 1 also finds a significant trend of flourishing individuals having a longevity of happiness, both past and future. This, it is argued, points to eudaimonic sources which are sustainable in nature.

Chapter 8 reports on the findings from the second tranche of data, coded using the NVivo software package to capture the 'richness' of the participants' narratives. Flourishing employees are exclusively employed in a 'career' or 'calling' (rather than a 'job') and numerous qualitative statements point towards the fact that flourishing is a conscious choice and that, notably, 'choosing to be positive' requires a degree of effort. The flourishing employees also rate as happy in their home domain but the downward trajectory of emotional contagion is found in that they do have a tendency to have their emotional tone lowered when in the company of negative people.

This chapter also examines the data collected via Warr's (1990) IWP Multi-Affect Indicator, mapping the H+ and NonH+ respondents onto the circumplex diagram. Various statistical tests are completed which herald a significant difference between flourishing and non-flourishing employees in 13 of the 16 workplace affects measured. In particular, flourishing employees rate higher in all affects pertaining to 'engagement' and 'satisfaction', indicating that flourishing employees are not just happier in their day-to-day work, but are also driven by the more vigorous emotions of 'drive' and 'absorption' that are associated by a state of 'positive dissatisfaction'.

Chapter 9 explores the comparison data from the intentional strategies survey. Independent samples *t*-tests are used to highlight significant differences in key areas of within-person strategies between the flourishing and non-flourishing groups. The most significant differences arise in areas of 'choosing to be positive' (and the associated effort of doing so) as well as positive internal self-talk. Other significant differences arise in terms of flourishing employees setting goals, playing to their strengths, being grateful, consuming less news and being cognisant of wanting to have an uplifting effect on those around them. There is no significant difference between the groups in strategies pertaining to upbringing, watching films/TV, listening to happy music or letting adversity influence one's long term happiness.

With regards to this final point, both flourishing and non-flourishing employees report experiencing times of extreme trauma and set-backs. It is worth noting that contrary to other studies, religion is rated as a very low driver of happiness in both groups. However, it was one of the few strategies that rates higher amongst the non-flourishing group.

Chapter 10 enters into a discussion of the results from each phase of data collection. The debate in phase one centres on both flourishing and non-flourishing employees consistently rating their own happiness higher than that of their colleagues. This phenomenon is discussed in relation to Brown's (1988) 'positive illusions' and Sharot's (2011) 'above-average effect', in which individuals are consistently regarding themselves more positively than they regard others.

There is also a discussion of Wrzesniewski & Dutton's (2001) concept of individuals being employed in what they perceive as a job, career or calling and how it has been reported that employees can indulge in 'job crafting'. On a larger scale, this thesis argues that flourishing employees are involved in 'life crafting' (for example, if work is not fulfilling they will leave), and that flourishing is a portable benefit, relying less on the nature of the work and more on the internal strategies of the employee. This section of the thesis also examines comments from respondents that reflect the salience of 'making a difference' in the workplace.

Data from the IWP Multi-Affect Indicator is mapped onto the circumplex model, with the flourishing employees rating significantly higher in all aspects of emotional engagement. The discussion here is that contrary to the findings of traditional studies of organizational behaviour, the fact that employee engagement might be associated with unsatisfied wants seems almost counter-intuitive to job design. Therefore, it may be that organizations should be striving to create a culture of 'healthy dissatisfaction', where employees are both satisfied in the now and stretched/challenged by the future.



The final part of this chapter enters into a discussion about the within-person strategies employed by flourishing employees, arguing that they are ‘happiness maximizers’ rather than ‘happiness satisficers’ and, as such, are less likely to ‘make do’ with mediocre attitudes. This stimulates them to put effort into striving to be more positive. Gratitude appears to play an important subsidiary role in the conscious choice to be positive.

Playing to one’s strengths and setting goals both rate as significant strategies among the flourishing group. Cameron’s (2013) concept of ‘Everest Goals’ is introduced as analogous to the state of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). On the evidence of data gathered it is difficult to draw conclusions as to strengths in the workplace. The flourishing group rate significantly higher with regards to the statement ‘I play to my strengths’ but it is not known whether they have engineered careers that have allowed them to do so, if they are merely more aware of where their strengths lie.

There are no significant differences in consumptions of TV and music amongst the flourishing and non-flourishing groups. However, the flourishing group rate as consuming significantly less news which, it is argued, is a further example of ‘life crafting’.

Flourishing individuals are more likely to suggest they learned to be happy in their early years and that parenting has a nebulous impact on happiness. Some cite positive parenting as a key factor in their happiness while others have used their experiences of negative parenting as an example of how ‘not to be’. However, when alluding to one’s own impact as a parent, comments such as *‘Having children has caused me to re-evaluate my impact (i.e., I strive to be a positive role model)’*, appear to demonstrate a heightened awareness of impact among the flourishing group, as well as an effort involved in setting a positive example.

In line with Tedeschi and Calhoun's (2004) concept of post-traumatic growth, there is evidence that the H+ respondents have experienced significant personal traumas and have bounced back from these episodes.

Chapter 11 introduces a series of recommendations that arise directly from the findings. These are set in a context of societal wellbeing that can be largely influenced by the levers of central government (for example, wellbeing is amplified by good education, health, transport, etc.) However, the recommendations for this thesis focus on what organizations can do to foster a culture in which employees feel inclined to flourish as well as intentional strategies that can be deployed at the level of the individual. At an organizational level the recommendations include creating high quality connections within a business by placing flourishing employees in key information nodes. This maximizes their hyper-dyadic emotional ripple effect and is therefore more likely to create an 'outbreak of happiness'. The thesis highlights the importance of leaders who can provide a 'heliotropic effect', thus multiplying the likelihood of a positive ripple effect. Indeed, the centrality of leadership as a propagator of flourishing is also reflected in recommendations centring on developing a persuasive vision of the work (and why it matters), goal setting, positive communication, recruitment and selection and using a strengths-based approach. Sinek's (2011) 'golden circle' is discussed alongside recommendations aligned with seeking purpose in the workplace. At an individual level, recommendations focus on the salience of attitudinal choice and what organizations can do to create an awareness and move their training/coaching towards a more 'enlightened' approach that focuses on the whole person.

Chapter 12 looks at the flaws in the study, arguing that, despite its imperfections, the research manages to give a well-rounded and unique perspective on flourishing and adds to the body of knowledge of happiness in the British workplace.

Chapter 13 draws the various strands together summarising the findings and narrative under the headings of the 5 research questions. The conclusion is that organizations have worked hard to design structures and systems that are conducive to employee engagement. Yet, despite their best efforts, some employees refuse to flourish. Therefore, a different approach is required; a form of organizational design that is less top down or bottom up, and more ‘inside-out’, starting and ending with the whole-hearted recognition that flourishing organizations are made up of flourishing people. Leadership is the focal point, providing a multiplier effect that can generate upward spirals of emotion. Since the process of habituation works to return people to their perceived ‘normal’ levels of affect, this process of invigoration must become a continuous focus for organizational leaders and designers.

With regards to the research questions, the conclusions are very clear. Flourishing employees are both more satisfied *and* engaged at work. This vigorous sense of engagement is essentially a portable within-person strategy and flourishing employees deploy a wider range of happiness strategies as well as working their strategies harder. Thus, there is effort involved in remaining upbeat and factors such as positive self-talk, gratitude, strengths and goal-setting stand out as important happiness strategies. However, the biggest factors that differentiate flourishing from non-flourishing employees is their cognisance of the ability to choose a positive attitude and their willingness to exert effort in doing so.

The organizational implications are profound. In an era where organizations are essentially demanding ‘more for less’ from their employees, a recognition that engagement is less about structure and more about environment is crucial. If flourishing is an internal strategy the focus needs to shift towards recruiting those who are already happy or creating training interventions that draw individuals to the realisation that happiness involves choice and effort.

## **My Interest in the Subject Matter**

After gaining a Degree and Masters, there was a significant gap in my formal education.

My interest was awakened in 2005 when I discovered the work of Professor Martin Seligman. The subject of positive psychology resonated with some of the personal development books I'd been reading, and re-focusing psychology towards strengths, happiness and flourishing was, for me, a refreshing change. The fact that positivity had emerged as a 'science' ran counter-intuitively to everything that 'traditional' strands of psychology had taught me.

Crucially, positive psychology resonated because of some personal changes that I'd experienced. Having dug myself out of life's metaphorical rut I had discovered, on a personal level, that it was perfectly possible to learn new strategies that enabled me to flourish. In my own mind, I'd become happier by will and design.

Thus, this research was born out of my personal interest in the wider subject area of wellbeing and positive psychology. It started out a result of enthusiasm for the subject rather than a deep background knowledge. Moreover, I was curious to discover the extent to which other people might be deploying the same strategies as me. In terms of that cliched 'personal journey', I was interested in learning more so that I could continue to flourish.

Meantime, if the findings were presented in a thesis, there might be learning that could be applied to the wider population.

## **Chapter 1**

### **The Happiness Agenda**

## **Chapter 1: The Happiness Agenda**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This opening chapter gives an overview of the rising political profile of the happiness agenda, examining the debate as to whether wealth proxies such as GDP and/or the FTSE Index are, in fact, appropriate measures of wellbeing (Layard, 2005). In examining the wider happiness agenda this chapter also examines the downside of happiness and includes a brief discussion of international comparisons before exploring the health benefits of happiness, postulating that, if happiness is so good for us (Lyubomirsky 2007, Fredrickson 2009), why are we not happier?

This section notes the importance of happiness to the business world, pointing to various contemporary studies that suggest happy people outperform their colleagues on a number of measures (Wrzesniewski, 2014). Therefore, although the evidence indicates that happiness is beneficial to health and business, this chapter also points to the difficulties of remaining happy and upbeat in the ‘busyness’ (Holden, 2005) of the modern world, citing ‘affluenza’ (James, 2007) and the media (Gitomer, 1995) as major impediments. Chapter one also introduces the concept of negativity bias (Haidt, 2006) as well as a discussion of hedonic adaptation (Seligman, 2003), phenomena that, it is argued, combine to nullify any attempt at raising long-term positive affect. ‘Flourishing’ is introduced as the central tenet of the research - arguing that this goes beyond individual happiness into the realms of creating an emotional uplift in one’s work colleagues. This transferability of positive emotion is a recurring theme that is explored in detail in subsequent chapters

This chapter concludes by introducing 10 research objectives.

## 1.2 International Happiness

Lyubomirsky, Sheldon & Schkade (2005) consider whether the pursuit of happiness might merely be a bourgeois concern, a symptom of Western comfort and self-centeredness, a factor that has no real impact on psychological adjustment and adaptation. However, Ekman & Friesen (1975) suggest that happiness appears to be a universal emotion that is recognized in facial expression all over the world and for which words exist in all languages. Diener & Tov (2007) undertook research in 67 countries, interviewing parents from diverse cultures and incomes. One question asked what they most wished for their children, with the number one answer, reported from across cultures, being 'happiness'.

Happiness has been linked to an array of intrinsic and extrinsic factors with the general conclusion of researchers such as Fredrickson (2009) and Diener & Seligman (2002) that happiness, wellbeing and associated feelings of positivity and esteem are good things, impacting not only on the individual concerned but also resonating with their family, work colleagues and wider society.

According to Diener & Biswas-Diener (2008), *'Psychological wealth is the experience of wellbeing and a high quality of life. It is more than simple fleeting joy and more than an absence of depression or anxiety. Psychological wealth is the experience that our life is excellent - that we are living in a rewarding, engaged, meaningful and enjoyable way.'* (p. 6). Referring specifically to happiness, Diener & Biswas-Diener (2008) argue that happiness is *'... the pot of gold at the end of the emotional rainbow,'* (p. 20) and, building on this analogy, they suggest, *'People have assumed that happiness is an emotional end goal, a pleasant state that comes from obtaining favourable life circumstances such as health, a good marriage and a large pay check [sic]'*, the logic being that if one can achieve these things then one will be



happy. Diener (2010) counters that *'Happiness is an on-going process that requires a way of experiencing life...being 'rich' is as much about attitudes as the circumstances surrounding us.'* (p. 20).

There is recent interest concerning international comparisons of happiness. Veenhoven (2009) has rated countries to produce a global ranking of happiness, with the UK ranking 41st and Costa Rica, Iceland and Denmark at the top of the ratings. One of the most widely cited papers published on wellbeing and income is Easterlin's (1974) report, in which it was claimed that there was little evidence that economic growth had improved societal wellbeing. The so-called 'Easterlin Paradox' postulates that social comparison has a significant impact on wellbeing. Thus, an individual's relative position influences happiness, but as people in a society achieve higher average income there is no net increase in subjective wellbeing because the comparison standard rises. In essence, an individual's comparative income weighs more heavily on happiness than their actual income.

Diener & Biswas-Diener (2008) disagree. Commentating on Gallup's 2006 wellbeing survey, they suggest *'Rich nations are, on average, satisfied, and very poor nations tend not to be.'* (p. 95). Gallup surveyed 155 nations, constructing a 'Ladder of Life' league table of wellbeing that placed the comparatively wealthy Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands at the top of the happiness league and the much poorer Niger, Burkina Faso and Ethiopia at the bottom. The 2017 World Happiness Report (Helliwell, Layard & Sachs, 2017) has similar rankings, with Norway, Denmark and Iceland occupying the top three places with sub-Saharan countries nations at the bottom.

### 1.3 The Politics of Happiness

According to Diener & Biswas-Diener (2008), happiness appears in every typology of basic human emotions, feeling happy is fundamental to human experience and most people are at least mildly happy much of the time. Bentham's (1789) concept of 'utilitarianism' argued that the moral quality of action should be judged by its consequences on human happiness and that society should aim for the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. When applied to public policy, Bentham's 'political utilitarianism' holds that institutions, laws and social policy should aim to maximize happiness.

Bentham's philosophy runs counter to what Ahuvia *et al.* (2015) describe as an 'externalist approach' in which the proposition is of a relatively straightforward transmission of external conditions to internal happiness. These external conditions cover a broad range of non-mental factors such as other people, life events and material objects. They argue that externalism has hitherto operated in most cultures as the default mode for governments, businesses, and many social organizations that see their main role as that of raising living standards. This 'default externalism' (p.4) is preoccupied with enhanced materialism and social conditions and is routed in mainstream economics, which identifies wellbeing purely as the satisfaction of one's preferences. Since economic theory assumes perfect knowledge and complete rationality, individual preferences are fully revealed in consumer's buying choices (Glaeser, 2011; Hausman & McPherson, 2006). Hence, proponents of externalism have long favoured attention to indicators of external living conditions such as GDP and household income.

Ahuvia *et al.* (2015) agree that throughout most of human history it has been perfectly understandable for people to try and improve their own lives by rearranging living conditions rather than through mental self-discipline, pointing out that, '*Until recently, most humans*

*suffered from unmet basic needs and their poor health and vulnerability to violence and premature death were the main threats to their happiness. Where food, safe living conditions, and other basic material conditions are in short supply it obviously makes sense to give them priority. It is reasonable to assume that reductions in illbeing will result from economic growth and from enhanced provision of medical services, infrastructure, schooling, and the rule of law.*' (p.4).

Some researchers have begun to question whether 'default externalism' fits contemporary society. Stiglitz's (2009) words, '*What you measure affects what you do. If you don't measure the right thing, you don't do the right thing*' are an attempt to signify discontent toward the way most governments define and measure progress, namely, by emphasizing economic indicators such as Gross Domestic Product (e.g., Abramovitz, Scitovsky, & Inkeles, 1973; Layard, 2005; Zencey, 2009). In the USA, the history of national accounts shows that the wellbeing of citizens was considered to be the end goal of government (Perlman & Marietta, 2005). Kuznets (1933) argued that the goal of collecting economic information was to examine how those indicators influence the welfare of the nation but that economic indicators were only one piece of the totality of citizens' wellbeing and that the welfare of a nation '*can scarcely be inferred from a measurement of national income.*' (p. 7).

Despite this fact, and as pointed out by Dasgupta (2001), '*GNP per capita continues to be regarded as the quintessential indicator of a country's living standard.*' (p. 53). However, there has been renewed interest in the notion that money and economic growth are both insufficient and inadequate indicators of progress, especially in developed countries. For example, Diener & Seligman (2004) suggest that wealth has become an increasingly inadequate indicator of how a society is doing and there are now '*distressingly large,*

*measurable slippages between economic indicators and wellbeing* ' (p. 1), citing the example that the tripling of GDP in the United States has left ratings of life satisfaction unchanged while rates of depression and anxiety have increased dramatically (Klerman *et al.*, 1985; Robins *et al.*, 1984; Twenge, 2000). The notion that the abundance of goods and services available in developed nations fails to reflect the subjective wellbeing of their citizens, is described by Easterbrook (2003) as the progress paradox.

Diener & Seligman (2004) suggest that the manner in which GDP is calculated makes it an inappropriate measure of wellbeing purporting that GDP is inflated by 'regrettables', which they describe as economic transactions that create wealth but decrease wellbeing. Forgeard *et al.* (2011) suggest that the '*GDP of a nation increases with each sale of antidepressant medication, with each divorce pronounced, and with each prison built.*' (p. 80).

The social indicators movement of the 1960s and '70s emerged as a reaction against the widespread use of economic indicators as measures of '*the goodness of life*' (Andrews & Withey, 1976, p. 401) with Campbell *et al.* (1976) suggesting that economic measures were easy to count hence their popularity as measures of wellbeing, adding: '*None of us doubts that economic data have admirable qualities; the question is, how well do they represent the quality of national life? How valid are they as measures of the goodness of life in this country?*' (p. 117). Campbell *et al.* recommend that '*the nation must change from its fixation on goals which are basically economic to goals which are essentially psychological, from a concentration on being well-off to a concern with a sense of wellbeing.*' (p. 1).

Narrowing down from a world view to a contemporary UK perspective, Layard (2009) challenged the 'blunt instrument' nature of GDP as an indicator of true national wellbeing and

encouraged policy-makers to think about what ‘progress’ really is and how it can best be measured. Material standards of living have risen since the Second World War but, according to Layard (2003) ‘...*GDP is a hopeless measure of welfare. For since the War that measure has shot up by leaps and bounds, while the happiness of the population has stagnated.*’ (p. 3). This thesis will point to a recent surge of interest in UK happiness and wellbeing sparked by the 2010 launch of the coalition government’s intention to measure happiness in the UK. The result of what the media dubbed David Cameron’s ‘Happiness Index’ (Bentley, 2012) was published in July 2012. The Office for National Statistics (2013) announced that the UK’s ‘life satisfaction level’ - as measured by the question ‘*how happy were you yesterday?*’ - was 7.3 out of 10, this figure derived from the first Integrated Household Survey of 200,000 people aged 16 and over between April 2011 and March 2012. Using this single question and the average of 7.3 as the ‘blunt instrument’ to report on UK happiness is, in itself, a massive simplification of the intricacies of societal wellbeing but it did serve as a focal point of discussion. Cameron’s point echoed that of Kennedy in 1968, namely that traditional measures of success were entirely based on economic growth. News media routinely report on the state of the economy, the Dow and FTSE while the philosophy of measuring ‘Gross Domestic Happiness’ is, famously and singularly, reserved for Bhutan (Kelly, 2012).

#### **1.4 Happiness: Health Benefits**

There is a plethora of evidence suggesting that happiness can influence health in positive ways. Deeg & Zonneveld (1989) studied people aged 65 or over and, controlling for a range of demographic variables, found that happier individuals lived longer. Indeed, seventy year olds lived 20 months longer if they were one standard deviation above the happiness mean. Evans & Egerton (1992) found that negative moods led to more colds. The explanation for these findings may be through the effect of mood on the immune system with Stone *et al.*

(1987) suggesting that negative moods produced lower immune system scores, whereas good moods elevate them.

Evidence suggests that the happiness/health causation runs both ways. Willits & Crider (1988) conclude that health is one of the strongest predictors of happiness, especially in the old. Michalos (1985) found that the perceived discrepancy between present health and desired health was the strongest of a list of goal-discrepancy gaps which predicted life satisfaction. Frequent smiling is reported to have many therapeutic and health benefits (Abel & Hester, 2002) particularly when the smile is a Duchenne smile (Surakka & Hietanen, 1998). According to Stibich (2010) smiling boosts the immune system, increases positive affect, reduces stress, lowers blood pressure and enhances other people's perceptions of whoever is wearing the smile. People who feel positive in their lives 'grow psychologically' as well as becoming more optimistic, resilient, open, accepting and purposeful (Fredrickson & Tugade, 2003). In addition, happiness builds social connections and is energising, attractive and contagious (Gervais & Wilson, 2005).

Happiness builds physical health and is linked to lower levels of stress hormones (Steptoe, Wardle & Marmot, 2005) and higher levels of growth-related hormones (Berk & Tan, 1989). Happiness sends out more of the chemical dopamine (Ashby *et al.*, 1999) and opioids (Wager *et al.*, 2007) as well as reinforcing the immune system (Davidson & Kabat-Zinn, 2003). There is evidence that happiness will also reduce the propensity for a number of other ailments: lower blood pressure (Fredrickson & Mancuso, 2000), less pain (Gil & Carson, 2004), better sleep (Bardwell & Berry, 1999), and less likelihood of diabetes and stroke (Richman & Kubzansky, 2005).

## 1.5 Happiness: The Business Imperative

There are contrasting views on happiness in the workplace. One perspective is that work is to be endured. Arguing from a philosophical rather than academic perspective, DeBotton (2009) proposes that the most remarkable feature of today's workplace is not new technology, globalisation or rising customer demands, rather the widely-held belief that work should make us happy; *'All societies have had work right at the centre, ours is the first to suggest that work could be something other than a punishment or penance.'* (p. 54). DeBotton contrasts the contemporary workplace with previous cultures where work was largely regarded as a burden or punishment, suggesting, for example, that the Greeks viewed work *'...as a chore best left to the slaves.'* (p. 54). Furthermore, DeBotton ascertains that work was not accidentally miserable; *'It was one of the planks on which earthly suffering was irrevocably founded.'* (p. 54).

Notwithstanding this philosophical view that work has been traditionally viewed as a necessary evil, the majority of contemporary workplace researchers concur that happiness at work is beneficial at individual, team and organizational level. Indeed, many argue that having a happy workforce is a modern business imperative (e.g., Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008). This is illustrated by Ulrich (1997), who states, *'Employee contribution becomes a critical business issue because in trying to produce more output with less employee input, companies have no choice but to try to engage not only the body but the mind and soul of every employee.'* (p. 125).

Organizational researchers working in the areas of positive affect have identified constructs that refer to engagement and vitality, reflecting the fact that both are important indicators of wellness. For example, McNair *et al.* (1971) identified energy and vitality to be positively

related to mental health and negatively related to feelings of exhaustion. Similarly, Stewart, Hays & Ware (1992) assessed subjective feelings of energy and positivity, demonstrating their positive relations with mental health. Activated pleasant feelings have been found to be significantly associated with self-reported personal initiative (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2007) and with proactive behaviour (Tsai *et al.*, 2007 and Parker *et al.*, 2008). Significant associations with high-activation positive emotion have also been recorded for self-reported entrepreneurial effort (Foo *et al.*, 2009), proactive goal regulation (Bindl *et al.*, 2012), and citizenship behaviours (Dalal *et al.*, 2009; Tsai *et al.*, 2007). Warr *et al.* (2013) report significant links between positive affect, pro-social behaviours and discretionary effort.

Further studies of the economics of happiness report that a positive organizational culture is one of the most important predictors of high levels of performance over time (Cameron, 2008). Organizations that flourish have developed a culture of abundance (Cameron, 2013) which builds the collective capabilities of all members. Cameron describes an abundant culture as characterized by the presence of numerous positive energisers throughout the system, including embedded virtuous practices, adaptive learning, meaningfulness, profound purpose, engaged members and positive leadership. Various other studies point to a link between an abundant culture and organizational success (Cameron *et al.*, 2011; Cameron & Plews, 2012).

Baron *et al.* (1990) report that positive moods are associated with creativity and proactivity on the same day as well as creativity and proactivity the following day with positive affect also reducing interpersonal conflict and enhancing collaboratively negotiated outcomes.

Momentary positive mood is also reported to influence how other aspects of the work



environment are evaluated, with pleasant moods spreading to concurrent ratings of job satisfaction and the favourability of the task in hand (Brief *et al.*, 1995; Kraiger *et al.*, 1989).

When happiness is conceptualized as ‘dispositional positive affect’, there is evidence that it predicts career success and higher income. For example, Boehm & Lyubomirsky (2008) suggest that, ‘*Compared with their less happy peers, happy people earn more money, display superior performance and perform more helpful acts.*’ (p. 101). Furthermore, happy people are less likely to experience periods of unemployment and more likely to succeed in job search (Diener *et al.*, 2002).

At the collective level, there is evidence that average employee satisfaction within a work unit is often related to what Heskett *et al.* (1997) call hard and soft outcomes. Indeed, employee satisfaction is cited as a possible lead indicator of customer satisfaction and financial performance (Heskett *et al.* 1997; Rucci *et al.* 1998). Brown & Lam (2008) postulate that team-level employee satisfaction predicts customer satisfaction and perceptions of service quality. Similarly, an analysis of business unit engagement showed that average employee engagement at team level was significantly related to customer satisfaction, profit, productivity, employee turnover and safety (Harter *et al.*, 2002).

Studies by Harrison *et al.* (2006) and Ricketta (2008) support the predominant direction of causality being from job attitudes to job performance. Harrison *et al.* (2006) have shown that overall job attitude is a strong predictor of individual effectiveness leading their study to conclude that positive attitude is a powerful cause of individual effectiveness at work. Further, a review of the literature on attitudes predicting behaviour by Kraus (1995) verified the direction of causation from ‘attitude’ to ‘effectiveness at work’. Kraus postulated that

attitudes predicted behaviour more strongly when the attitudes were stable, certain, accessible and formed on the basis of direct personal experience. Thus, if the direction of causality runs from ‘attitudes’ to ‘organizational performance’, these affect shifts can translate into substantial bottom-line returns for more engaged business units.

### **1.6 The Downside of Happiness and Positivity**

Within the spectrum of normative emotional experience, the notion that excessive positivity might be harmful is consistent with the long-standing evidence that life satisfaction is better predicted by the frequency rather than the intensity of a person’s positive emotions (Diener, Sandvik, & Pavot, 1991). Whereas increasing levels of positive emotions bring benefits up to a point, extreme levels of positive emotion carry costs that begin to outweigh these benefits. An inverted U-shaped relationship has been found between positive emotions and a range of outcomes as diverse as creativity (George & Zhou, 2007); emotional stability (Diener, Colvin, Pavot, & Allman, 1991); income, education, and political participation (Oishi, Diener, & Lucas, 2007) and risky behaviors (Martin et al., 2002). Drawing on these and other findings, Grant & Schwartz (2011, p. 62) made the case for ‘*a fundamental and ubiquitous psychological principle: There is no such thing as an unmitigated good.*’

In an organizational context, Beal *et al.* (2005) argue that moods and emotions can harm concurrent work performance. Their suggestion is that all emotions, positive or negative, have the potential to reduce task performance by redirecting scarce attentional resources away from the task and towards the source of the affect. Further, Buckingham & Clifton’s (2005) work on signature strengths states that any strength, if over-played, becomes a weakness, suggesting that even seemingly positive traits such as happiness, courage and confidence can become debilitating if exhibited in the extreme.

Krugman (2009) argues that the downside of 'positive thinking' has shown itself in the on-going world financial crisis. According to Krugman, positivity's biggest 'come-uppance' came because of the ubiquitous and virtually unchallenged American culture of optimism in world markets; *'It was promoted on some of the most widely watched talk shows, like Larry King Live and The Oprah Winfrey Show: it was the stuff of runaway best sellers like 'The Secret'. It had been adopted as the theology of America's most successful evangelical preachers: it found a place in medicine as a potential adjuvant to the treatment of almost any disease. It had even penetrated the academy in the form of the new discipline of 'positive psychology', offering courses to students to pump up their optimism and nurture their positive feelings.'* (P. 12).

Krugman's thinking is given credence by Ehrenreich (2009); *'But nowhere did positive thinking find a warmer welcome than in American business...to the extent that positive thinking had become a business in itself...business was its principal client, eagerly consuming the good news that all things are possible through an effort of mind.'* (p. 12).

These quotes pertain to positive thinking rather than happiness per se, but are nevertheless worth considering as positivity, optimism and happiness are closely related (Lyubomirsky, 2007).

It is important to note, however, that some researchers do not find signs of dysfunction at very high levels of happiness (e.g., Friedman, Schwartz, & Haaga, 2002).

## 1.7 If Happiness is Good for us, why aren't we Happier?

The relatively recent advent of positive psychology has led to a proliferation of academic papers and popular psychology books leading Diener & Seligman (2002) to suggest that the conceptualisation of happiness is on the rise even if actual levels of happiness are not.

Seligman (2002) examines why there is so much negativity in such a comfortable age, concluding that human kind's perilous evolution is at least partly to blame: *'Because our brain evolved during a time of wars, flood and famine, we have a catastrophic brain. The way the brain works is looking for what's wrong. The problem is that this worked in the Pleistocene era. It favoured you. But it doesn't work in the modern world.'* (p. 39).

Essentially, Seligman's point is that it is easier to be negative because human brains have evolved that way. This is often termed *'negativity bias'* (Haidt, 2006, p. 28) and is based on the evolutionary principle that *'bad is stronger than good...responses to threats and unpleasantness are faster, stronger and harder to inhibit than responses to opportunities and pleasures.'* (p. 29).

Haidt (2006) proposes therefore that individuals cannot merely will themselves to see everything in a positive light because human minds have evolved to react to threats, violations and setbacks. This aligns with Seligman's (2002) proposition that humans find it easier to be negative and, indeed, that negativity is an individual's default position. This is salient insofar as it points to the human mind being more pre-disposed to negativity. Hence the role for this research - an examination of the strategies deployed by happy employees will help explain whether they are less pre-disposed to negativity or whether they have mental strategies that help them to overcome this reportedly natural human disposition.

Research by Dunbar (1993) and Hill & Buss (2008) postulates that modern life may act as an impediment to happiness. Archaeological evidence suggests that humans spent most of their evolutionary history as hunter-gatherers, living in small groups (Dunbar 1993) and, as a result, our ancestors are likely to have spent the majority of their lives surrounded by close kin and allies.

Although there is little doubt that the modern world offers a panoply of conveniences not available to our ancestral counterparts, Nesse & Williams (1996) proffer that many people do not have access to the immediate social support systems that likely characterised the conditions through which humans have spent the majority of their evolutionary history. Modern technology has opened up the opportunities for communication with the ONS (2013) reporting that access to the internet using a mobile phone more than doubled between 2010 and 2013 and internet penetration rates are 89.8% in the UK against European and world averages of 70.5 and 42.3% respectively (Miniwatts, 2015). This has opened up the prospect of social networking, with Halliday (2013) reporting that the UK has 33 million Facebook users, with 24 million logging on every day. And yet, despite a proliferation of communication channels, an increasing number of people feel isolated and alone (Ornish, 1998). Indeed, amidst the rise of social networking, several studies show that loneliness has risen as a major cause of depression (e.g., Cacioppo *et al.*, 2008)

### **1.8 The Modern World as an Impediment to Happiness**

Modern living, and 'busyness' in particular, may also play a part in limiting levels of happiness. According to Holden (2005), 'busyness' is a term used to describe how people in the modern era organise their lives, typified by downsized organizations where employees are asked to do more for less and where modern communication methods tend to demand an

instant response, prompting Holden (2005) to comment that *'The pace of life and work is accelerating beyond all previous measures.'* (p. 4).

Further, social critics have highlighted ways in which the pursuit of affluence has resulted in unintended pathologies (Bennett, 2001; Freud, 1930/2002; Schor, 1998). Many kinds of external good are subject not only to diminishing returns, but also to toxic reversals, causing consumers to become paradoxically unhappy and unhealthy in response to the successful pursuit of external rewards. Collectively, these pathologies of modernity have been loosely labelled 'affluenza': the toxicities of excessive materialism, comfort and hygiene (De Graaf, Wann & Naylor, 2001/2005; Hamilton & Denniss, 2005; James, 2007).

Offer (2006) proposes an alternative perspective on the notion that the modern way of life can act as an impediment to happiness, proposing that the flow of novelty generated by a market based consumer society is so strong that higher levels of commitment and self-discipline are needed to ensure that long term wellbeing is not sacrificed for short term gratification. Essentially, Offer's (2006) point is that in a modern consumer society individuals are subjected to a mass of marketing media to the extent that they become discontent with their current lifestyle, looks and possessions. Indeed, Offer suggests that the creation of this discontent is the primary role of the marketing media. In a similar vein, James (2007) describes the rise of a celebrity culture, arguing that mass media has increased the exposure and power of celebrity, his book jacket arguing thus: *'An epidemic of 'affluenza' is sweeping through the English-speaking world – an obsessive, envious keeping-up-with-the-Joneses – that makes us twice as prone to depression, anxiety and addictions than people in other developed nations.'*

Dolan (2014) provides an updated perspective, suggesting that *'Your attention, like everything else in life, is a scarce resource'* and that therefore *'You must ration it, since attention devoted to one thing is, by definition, attention that is not devoted to another.'* (p. 47). Dolan's wider point is that happiness is linked to how one allocates one's attention with modern media designed to focus individuals on wanting ever more products, services and experiences.

Gitomer (1995) extends the argument, purporting that it is not only marketing media that acts as a restraint on happiness, but media generally. Gitomer advises that *'All news is negative. Constant exposure to negative news can't possibly have a positive impact on your life.'* (p. 6).

VanPraag (1993) suggests the media perpetuates 'reference drift', arguing that social comparison nullifies any sustained attempt to raise individual happiness. Hill & Buss (2008) link this to a media saturated environment and that the human mind has been shaped by selection to have a positional bias in judging our relative success against others to the extent that *'Large scale media exposure increases the size and attractiveness of our reference groups and the range and grandeur of the possible goals that we can set for ourselves.'* (p. 68). For example, Gutierrez *et al.* (1999) demonstrated that women felt less attractive and had lower self-esteem after looking at photographs in glamour magazines, purporting that individuals tend to compare upwards not downwards, which ties in with James' (2007) consumer and celebrity-driven 'must have' notion of affluenza.

### **1.9 The Hedonic Treadmill**

Brickman and Campbell (1971) introduce the term 'hedonic treadmill' as a way of examining the concept of adaptation with Seligman (2002) suggesting that the hedonic treadmill, *'Causes you to rapidly and inevitably adapt to good things by taking them for granted...the deeds and things you worked so hard for no longer make you happy; you need to get*

*something even better to boost your levels of happiness into the upper reaches of its set range.*' (p. 49).

Some researchers have used the notion of hedonic adaptation to support the claim that the quest to improve happiness is a fruitless effort (Lykken & Tellegen, 1996). The effect of being on the hedonic treadmill means that although deriving initial satisfaction from a new purchase (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003) or pay rise (Parducci, 1995) the emotional effects are either small or short lived (Biswas-Diener, 2008). Biswas-Diener (2008) suggests that *'the concept of adaptation... may partly explain why highly materialistic goals do not typically translate to increased happiness.'* (p. 317). This corresponds with James' (2007) notion of affluenza, by implying that a materialistic chase will act as a quick happiness fix but will not result in sustained higher levels of happiness.

In addition to studies that show individuals adapt quickly to changes in income and marital status (Diener *et al.*, 2010; Lucas *et al.*, 2003) there is also evidence to suggest more attractive people are not happier (Diener & Seligman, 2002), and assuming basic needs are met, rich people are only slightly happier than their less wealthy counterparts (e.g., Diener, Horwitz, & Emmons, 1985). These findings allude to a growing collection of studies highlighting that happiness is not strongly related to life circumstances with factors such as marital status, income and beauty being particularly prone to adaptation.

Malka & Chatman (2003) argue the opposite, suggesting that high income, even though adapted to, could be valued for its capacity to confer esteem. Focusing specifically on the satisfaction aspect of subjective wellbeing and reflecting the terms of Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs, the suggestion is that excess income can aid in the satisfaction of esteem



needs because high income implies high competence and overall personal worth. Therefore, even when satisfaction of basic physiological and security needs is not an issue, high income will still be valued for its capacity to confer esteem.

### **1.10 The Role of Effort**

Lyubomirsky, Sheldon & Schkade (2005) examine the role of effort in initiating and sustaining an activity arguing that this distinction is necessary *'because it is clear that many activities have definite positive effects, if the person can only get started doing them.'* (p. 122). They use the example of exercising in the morning which can have significant benefits but only if the person can *'get over the hurdle'* (p. 123) of remembering to do it and overcoming any obstacles to initiating exercise.

Muraven & Baumeister (2000) discuss the notion that self-regulatory will-power is like a 'muscle,' which has a limited capacity and must be used strategically in order to avoid fatigue. Lyubomirsky, Sheldon & Schkade (2005) relate this analogy to the will-power necessary to initiate and sustain happiness inducing habits, purporting that, once initiated, sustaining happiness-enhancing activities should not be difficult because the tasks will likely be inherently interesting or rewarding, and thus will be autotelic in nature. However, they recognise that longer-term eudaimonic happiness might involve the sacrifice of short-term happiness and, thus, there is effort involved in promoting the internalization of important happiness-relevant activities that are not intrinsically enjoyable.

Further, a potential difficulty arises in response to the hedonic adaptation argument above. If activities such as positive thinking or goal setting make a difference for happiness, then it seems it would be a good idea to make a habit of doing them. Once acquired as a habit which

is practiced automatically and without variation it is likely to experience hedonic adaptation and lose its happiness-inducing potential.

Lyubomirsky, Sheldon & Schkade (2005) purport that hedonic adaptation only occurs with respect to particular experiences, and not with respect to the decisions that give rise to those experiences. Thus, habitually deciding to initiate an activity is not subject to hedonic adaptation, so remains useful in helping people to keep getting ‘over the hump.’ Their suggestion is that it is potentially problematic when people make a habit out of *how* they implement the activity. When this happens, the flow of experiences produced by such a habit is likely to remain relatively constant, and thus adaptation is likely to have the most pernicious effects. To overcome this, Lyubomirsky, Sheldon & Schkade (2005) suggest that people should mindfully attend to optimal timing and variety in the ways they practice an activity.

### **1.11 Impediments to Organizational Happiness**

While the preceding arguments make the case that elements of modern living may, in fact, be acting as a dampener on happiness, there is also evidence that impediments also lie within organizations themselves.

There is little doubt that the modern workplace has undergone significant changes in the last 25 years. Pettinger (1998) postulates that technological change, rising customer expectations and increased competition have led to a proliferation of restructuring and downsizing, in both the British public and private sectors. There has been an increase in part-time and contingent employment as well as short-term contracts with individuals holding down multiple jobs.

Monaghan (2014) reports that employment has increased by 1.08m between March 2008 and

August 2014, with only 26,000 being full-time employee roles. Monaghan states that while 1 in 40 of the net jobs added to the economy between 2008 and 2014 has been full-time, 24 in every 40 have been self-employed and 25 in every 40 have been part-time. For many organizations, the desire to compete has meant adopting practices that attempt to increase flexibility, reduce costs and increase productivity. According to De Meuse & Vanderheiden (1994), this ‘do more with less’ mentality often favours profits over people.

In addition, the UK is experiencing a shift towards a ‘knowledge economy’ (Brinkley, 2006), described by the Work Foundation as the result of the *‘interaction between technological change, workplace innovation and a highly skilled workforce’* (Fauth & McVerry 2008, p. 8). The knowledge economy may bring positive benefits in terms of productivity gains (Brinkley, 2006), but it could also have a detrimental effect on employee health. The knowledge economy has, according to Mahdon, Rudiger, Brinkley & Coat (2007), led to different ways of working, with greater potential for more workers to become portfolio workers, freelancers or self-employed.

Burnout reflects low levels of pleasure and activation and was originally conceived as a work-related syndrome that most often occurs among individuals who work with other people (Maslach & Jackson, 1986). However, research of the past decade has shown that two core burnout dimensions – emotional exhaustion and cynicism – can be observed in virtually any occupational group (Bakker, Demerouti & Schaufeli, 2002). Bakker *et al.* (2002) refer to emotional exhaustion as a general feeling of extreme chronic fatigue, caused by continuous exposure to demanding working conditions, while cynicism is defined as a callous, distanced and negative attitude toward the work itself or the people with whom one works. Of these two burnout dimensions, emotional exhaustion appears to be the central variable in the burnout

process (Shirom, 2005) with a number of studies showing that exhaustion is more strongly related to important outcome variables - such as absenteeism - than the other burnout dimensions (Lee & Ashforth, 1996). Leiter's (1993) 'process model of burnout' proposes that cynicism should be seen as a consequence of emotional exhaustion. Accordingly, feelings of exhaustion arise from stressful working conditions, whereby employees are repeatedly confronted with high job demands (such as work pressure or high emotional demands) and, as a consequence, they can develop a cynical attitude as a coping strategy to distance themselves emotionally and mentally from work (e.g., Bakker *et al.*, 2000).

### **1.12 Morale in an Economic Downturn**

The data for this thesis was collected between 2009 and 2012, a period of sustained public sector austerity. As well as directly affecting those who lost their jobs, an economic downturn in the short to medium-term is also likely to affect the health and wellbeing of those who remain in the workforce (Murphy, 2008). Economic uncertainty can force organizations to downsize and restructure, producing high levels of job insecurity. In turn, job insecurity can create chronic stress for workers, with symptoms including an elevated level of distress, depression and anxiety (Murphy, 2008).

Economic uncertainty can also put managers under stress, increasing the likelihood of negative managerial behaviour. For example, poor quality management may lead to reduced mental wellbeing of employees, including feelings of helplessness and alienation (Ashforth, 1997), stress and distress (Offerman & Hellman, 1996), burnout, anxiety and depression (Martin & Schinke, 1998). In fact, both 'minor' leadership mistakes such as criticism, and 'major' mistakes such as extreme behaviour and workplace bullying can result in low levels

of job and life satisfaction, lower levels of commitment, increased work-family conflict and increased psychological distress, such as depression and burnout (Murphy, 2008).

A downturn also has other adverse implications. In addition to the pressures of work, more employees are likely to struggle financially, putting pressure on relationships and family life. The result is often a rise in health damaging behaviours with Williams & Sansome (2007) reporting that money worries caused 43% of smokers to smoke more, 35% of people to put on weight and 26% to drink more alcohol.

### **1.13 Public Sector Focus**

Absenteeism statistics are notably worse for the public sector with the CIPD (2012) reporting an average of 7.9 days lost to sickness as against 5.7 days in the private sector. Education recorded the highest public sector average, with 13.2 days lost to sickness per year. It is therefore pertinent to examine what organizations can do to create happy, vibrant, energetic staff who will engage with the challenges of working in a downsized structure.

The current context of this thesis is one of a debt-burdened UK economy easing out of recession. Philpott (2009) stated, '*The public sector has yet to feel the full impact of the recession, and the resultant bloodbath in the public finances*' and, more recently, Mason (2014) reported that a further £25 billion of public sector cuts needs to be made. Thus, the ongoing climate of public sector austerity means teams are likely to see significant budget cuts in the coming years, affecting individual salaries, job security, pensions, stress levels and, by inference, levels of happiness. In many ways, it is the perfect 'unhappiness storm', which is why it is also an apposite time to examine those public-sector employees who remain happy, positive and upbeat at work.

### **1.14 The Unique Perspective of this Thesis**

As will be discussed in later chapters, positive psychology is an umbrella concept that encompasses the study of all that is right within human functioning. ‘Happiness’ falls under this umbrella and, it seems, is a notoriously difficult concept, both to define and embed. This thesis will investigate the meaning of ‘happiness’ and its relationship with related concepts of positivity and flourishing. Furthermore, in seeking out employees who are significantly happier than average, the research will attempt to elicit personal strategies that are most useful in maintaining positive affect. For example, does ‘happiness’ reside in the job, the culture of the organization, the individual employee, or a mixture of them all? Is happiness controllable by the individual, and, if so, is it possible or even desirable to raise one’s level of happiness? Moreover, what can be gleaned from the study of happy people that can be translated into actions that can be applied by the wider population? Ultimately, though couched in the workplace, the aim is for this research to be beneficial well beyond an employee’s working hours.

### **1.15 Beyond Individual Happiness**

This thesis will explore the past, present and future of individual happiness whilst acknowledging the difficulty of drawing the different definitions together. Gilbert (2006) refers to the study of happiness as a tremendous terminological mess suggesting its subjective nature renders happiness ‘...*a phrase for a feeling, an experience, an objective state, and thus it has no objective referent in the physical world*’ (p. 33).

The real focus of this thesis will however be on the more contemporary concept of flourishing within an organizational context. ‘Flourishing’ is a word that occurs frequently in academic literature and popular psychology (Lyubomirsky 2007, Peterson 2006) but is rarely defined. It

is invariably used to describe individuals who are deemed to be in a state of happiness or who are deemed to be doing well in life (Gaffney, 2011). ‘Happiness’ and ‘Flourishing’ are therefore closely related.

Historically, flourishing relates to eudaimonic theories of happiness and wellbeing (Ridley, 2001). The idea behind such theories is that individuals flourish by fully exercising their human capacities. Flourishing goes beyond the transient state of an individual’s positive affect and is about the transference of positive feelings to others, linking to the concept of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1996). For example, an individual can be happy within themselves but merely succeed in having a neutral or even downward emotional impact on those around them. Alternatively, an individual’s happiness can create an uplifting effect on those around them. For the purposes of this research the latter is ‘flourishing’ because it goes beyond the happiness of the individual, towards positively influencing group affect.

Fredrickson (2009) refers to flourishing as being *‘ripe with possibility and remarkably resilient in hard times.’* (p. 17). In addition, Fredrickson (2009) posits that people who flourish function at extraordinary high levels; *‘They are not simply people who feel good. Flourishing goes beyond happiness or satisfaction with life’*, proposing that those who flourish are *‘adding value to the world.’* (p. 17). The implication is that being a positive person is a pre-requisite to flourishing and that the opposite of flourishing is languishing or *‘barely holding on to life.’* (Fredrickson, 2009 p. 17). ‘Flourishing’ also appears in the work of Cameron (2008) and Rhoades & Eisenberger (2002), both suggesting that a positive working climate is an essential pre-requisite to workplace flourishing. Flourishing, in this respect, is similar to Diener & Biswas Diener’s (2008) definition of psychological wealth, as *‘the experience of wellbeing and a high quality life.’* (p. 6). They describe psychological

wealth as more than simple fleeting joy and more than an absence of anxiety or depression, suggesting *'Psychological wealth is the experience that our life is excellent – that we are living in a rewarding, engaged, meaningful and enjoyable way.'* (p. 6)

For the purposes of this thesis, I will use the term flourishing to imply a step further than individual happiness in that positive feelings are transferrable to work colleagues, creating upward emotional resonance in the workplace.

Thus, the working definition of those who are 'flourishing' for this thesis is as follows:

*'Individuals who are happier and more energetic than average and who succeed in engaging their work colleagues in these positive feelings, thereby helping create an uplift in the working environment.'*

This working definition is an amalgam of the positive affect element of Diener & Biswas Diener's (2008) concept of psychological wealth, Goleman's (2007) element of social contagion and Cameron's (2008) work on creating a positive working climate. As such, this thesis is not focused merely on feeling good at an individual level - it is about seeking out and learning from those who create upward emotional spirals in their work colleagues.

### **1.16 Research Objectives**

This thesis is focused on the exploration of happiness and positivity in the workplace, with a particular emphasis on public sector employees. The hypothesis is that it is a particularly challenging time for many public-sector employees in the UK. The current (2016) climate of on-going austerity and the prospect of pay restraint and job insecurity all contribute to a public-sector culture where happiness and positivity can be difficult to sustain. Referring to



Kahneman's (2003) research, circumstances are challenging and that will be having an impact on levels of happiness and positivity in the workplace. Therefore, if these are particularly challenging times, an examination of those who maintain their happy, cheerful and positive demeanour is especially pertinent. The specific research objectives are:

1. To investigate and report on wellbeing research through the ages, with a particular emphasis on contemporary themes of happiness, flourishing and engagement.
2. To review the literature and make the business case for happiness in the workplace.
3. To examine how researchers have sought to gather data on employee wellbeing.
4. Building on point 3, to devise a way of gathering reliable data to compare flourishing (i.e., employees who are happier and who are deemed to be having an uplifting effect on their work colleagues) and non-flourishing employees.
5. To establish the longevity of happiness with regards to flourishing and non-flourishing employees.
6. To gain insight into why happy employees are happy, as well as the factors that might cause their happiness levels to diminish.
7. To review the literature with regards to workplace motivation, with a particular emphasis on 'employee satisfaction' and 'employee engagement'.
8. To measure and compare 'employee satisfaction' and 'employee engagement' between the flourishing and non-flourishing groups.
9. To identify the 'within-person' factors that differentiate the flourishing and non-flourishing.
10. To report on any differences and to make recommendations at individual, managerial and organizational level.

### **1.17 Summary and Conclusion**

This chapter acted as a broad introduction to the subject area as well as discussing a number of central themes that will be elaborated on in subsequent chapters. It argued that measures of FTSE performance and/or factory output data do not represent the full gamut of societal wellbeing. The coalition government's 2012 publication of the UK's first ever 'Happiness Index' sparked discussion and whatever the political rights and wrongs, the happiness index did succeed in raising the political profile of UK happiness and wellbeing. This chapter also examined the health benefits of happiness before making the business case, purporting that happiness is generally deemed positive at individual, team and organizational levels.

The opening chapter also looked at impediments to happiness, citing aspects of busyness, affluenza and the media as possible detriments to modern day happiness. This section introduced the term 'flourishing', giving a working definition of this central concept. Flourishing, for the purposes of this research, goes beyond individual wellbeing towards being positively impactful on one's work colleagues.

The next chapter explores the history of happiness, tracing its roots back to Ancient Greece and through early Christian teachings, arguing that, for centuries, religion acted as a curb on worldly happiness, positioning it in the after-life. Chapter Two also brings the arguments up to date with an examination of some of the contemporary themes that form the kernel of this thesis, including the science of positive psychology, happiness, subjective wellbeing, the hedonic treadmill, broaden and build, flow, positivity, set-point theory, employee engagement, business energy and social contagion.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Happiness: Ancient and Modern**

## **Chapter 2: Happiness: Ancient and Modern**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the '*holy grail of wellbeing*' (Boniwell, 2006, p. 60) research in more depth, tracing its historical roots from ancient philosophers to contemporary academics. It examines the ancient Greek origins of eudaimonia as well as exploring early Christian messages, arguing that religion acted as an impediment to happiness for centuries and it was only with Enlightenment in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century that people were introduced to the prospect that they may not have to wait for happiness in the after-life.

This chapter then brings the debate up to date with an exploration of some of the contemporary academic concepts that underpin 'flourishing' and which comprise the central themes of this thesis, including the science of positive psychology, happiness, subjective wellbeing, set-point, hedonic treadmill, broaden and build, flow, employee engagement, corporate energy and social contagion.

### **2.2 Happiness and Positive Emotions: An Historic Perspective**

McMahon (2006) suggests that the pursuit of happiness is as old as history itself and that the assumption that happiness is the natural human state is a relatively recent phenomenon – '*the product of a dramatic shift in human expectations carried out since the 18th century.*' (p. 80). Indeed, McMahon (2006) suggests that history of happiness can be traced back to the Ancient Greeks who introduced the word 'eudaimonia' and although philosophers and social researchers have defined 'happiness' in a variety of ways (Kesebir & Diener, 2008), the largest divide is between hedonists and eudaimonists. The hedonistic perspective is to view happiness in the here and now, pointing to its immediacy via pleasant feelings and favourable

judgments. In contrast, eudaimonic wellbeing, self-actualization and related concepts suggest that a happy or 'good life' involves doing what is right and virtuous, true to one's self, meaningful, and/or growth producing (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryff & Singer, 2008). Eudaimonic wellbeing tends therefore to be about growth, pursuit of fulfilling goals, and using and developing one's skills and talents, regardless of how one may actually feel at any point in time (Seligman, 2002; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999; Warr, 2007). Ryan & Deci (2001) suggest that hedonic happiness is unsustainable over the long term in the absence of eudaimonic wellbeing.

McMahon (2006) suggests that Christian writings and teaching are threaded with messages about how life on Earth is meant to be one of suffering and sacrifice and that the general understanding of early Christian teachings was that suffering is normal until the person is released into the Kingdom of God. McMahon (2006) suggests things began to change during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, '*... a time of 'Enlightenment', when people in the West dared to think of happiness as something more than a divine gift or other worldly reward... for the first time in history, comparatively large numbers of people were exposed to the novel prospect that they might not have to wait until death. They could, and should, expect happiness as a right of life.*' (p. 86).

The pursuit of happiness lies behind every major social engineering project in the post-enlightenment world (McMahon, 2006). Marx (1983) wrote that '*the overcoming of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for the real happiness,*' (p. 115) and Engels & Marks (1975) stated that '*every individual strives to be happy.*' (vol. 6, p. 96). Indeed, the entry for 'happiness' in the great Soviet encyclopaedia reads '*through a*

*revolutionary struggle to transform society happiness could be secured for the masses in realising the ideals of communism.*’ (vol. 25 p. 48).

### **2.3 Contemporary Studies of Happiness and Positive Emotions**

The academic literature is unclear in its absolute definitions of some of the key terms used in this thesis. In some cases, academics prefer to avoid the term ‘happiness’ in their research. For example, Fredrickson (2009) has written extensively on ‘happiness’ but prefers to use the term ‘positivity’, reasoning that ‘happiness’ is *‘murky and overused’* (p. 37).

Reviewing the literature, it is clear that many researchers use ‘happiness’, ‘wellbeing’, ‘positivity’ and ‘flourishing’ interchangeably, hinting at their degree of inter-relatedness. McGillivray & Clarke (2006, p. 4) state that *‘subjective wellbeing involves a multidimensional evaluation of life, including cognitive judgments of life satisfaction and affective evaluations of emotions and moods.’*

Bruni & Porta (2007) provide some clarification on the differences between happiness and subjective wellbeing, pointing out that *‘Psychologists distinguish among 1) life satisfaction which is a cognitive element 2) affection, the affective element and 3) subjective wellbeing, as a state of wellbeing, synthetic of long duration which includes both the affective and cognitive component.’* (p. xviii).

They purport happiness to be a narrower concept, citing both ‘happiness’ and ‘life satisfaction’ as components of subjective wellbeing, with life satisfaction reflecting an individual’s perceived distance from their aspirations while happiness results from a balance between positive and negative affect. Despite these differences, economists have used the

terms ‘happiness’ and ‘life satisfaction’ interchangeably as measures of subjective wellbeing (Easterlin 2004).

Positive Psychology is described below as an umbrella theme, covering a range of sub-headings and avenues of research. The following section explores positive psychology as well as the key themes that emerge in this thesis; happiness, subjective wellbeing, flow, positivity, set-point, adaptation, broaden & build, employee engagement and social contagion.

### **2.3.1 Positive Psychology**

Positive psychology is a branch of psychology the aim of which, according to Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi (2000) is ‘...to achieve a scientific understanding and effective interventions to build thriving in individuals, families, and communities.’ (p. 5).

Peterson (2006) describes positive psychology as, ‘*The scientific study of what goes right in life, from birth to death and all stops in between...it is a newly Christened approach within psychology that takes seriously as a subject matter those things that make most worth living.*’ (p. 4).

Sheldon & King (2001) describe positive psychology as ‘... nothing more than the scientific study of ordinary human strengths and virtues. Positive psychology revisits “the average person,” with an interest in finding out what works, what is right, and what is improving . . . positive psychology is simply ‘psychology’.’ (p. 216). Gable & Haidt (2005) broaden the definition to include organizations, postulating that, ‘*Positive psychology is the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions.*’ (p. 104).

Ironically, the modern resurgence of happiness as a focus for the academic community was prompted by a self-confessed negative person, Professor Martin Seligman. Seligman was, by his own admission a *'dyed-in-the-wool pessimist'* (2003, p. 24). Strumpfer (2005) argues that if history is to be accurate it needs to acknowledge that the phrase 'positive psychology' was on the agenda long before Seligman popularised it. The term 'positive psychology' can be traced back to Maslow (1954) who, when alluding to the negative bias of traditional strands of psychology, wrote; *'The science of psychology has been far more successful on the negative than on the positive side. It has revealed to us much about man's shortcomings, his illness, his sins, but little about his potentialities, his virtues, his achievable aspirations, or his full psychological height. It is as if psychology has voluntarily restricted itself to only half its rightful jurisdiction, and that, the darker, meaner half.'* (p. 354).

According to Time Magazine's special edition on Happiness (2005), the impetus for positive psychology came in 1998 when Seligman chose it as the theme for his term as president of the American Psychological Association. Seligman (2002) pointed out that clinical psychology *'has been consumed by a single topic only - mental illness,'* (p. xi) with his tenure as President of the American Psychological Association bringing the positive aspects of psychology into mainstream discussion. So, although popularised by Seligman, positive psychology is aptly described as having *'A very short history with a very long past,'* (Peterson, 2006. p. 4), and, rather than inventing happiness and wellbeing, it has merely brought the strands under a single umbrella with Peterson (2006) suggesting, *'It has been a re-focusing of subject matter and not a revolution.'* (p. 18).

According to Seligman (2011), the notion of happiness is a cumbersome construct that hides the true multifaceted nature of human flourishing. In the first version of his theory, Seligman



(2002) claimed that happiness was composed of three subjective facets: positive emotion, engagement and meaning. Happiness, it was argued, was achievable by pursuing one or more of these facets. As a result, individuals low in one aspect could still be happy if they nurtured other components. Individuals low in positive emotions could, for instance, flourish by being highly engaged in their lives or by cultivating a rich sense of meaning. According to this version of Seligman's theory, positive psychology has three central concerns:

- i) Positive emotions: entailing the study of contentment with the past, happiness in the present and hope for the future.
- ii) Positive individual traits: consisting of the study of strengths and virtues, such as the capacity for love and work, courage, compassion, resilience, creativity, curiosity, integrity, self-knowledge, moderation, self-control and wisdom.
- iii) Positive institutions: entailing the study of organizational meaning and purpose as well as the strengths that foster better communities, such as responsibility, civility, parenting, work ethic, leadership, justice, teamwork, purpose and tolerance.

Each of these three domains is related to a different meaning of the scientifically unwieldy term 'happiness', and each has its own road to happiness (Seligman, 2002). Positive emotions lead to the pleasant life, which is similar to the hedonic theories of happiness. Using one's strengths in a challenging task leads to the experience of 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) and what Seligman (2002) terms 'the engaged life'.

Seligman's (2011) revised theory added two facets to the original account: positive relationships and accomplishment. This update posits that wellbeing consists of the nurturing of one or more of the five following elements: Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment (abbreviated using the acronym PERMA). Seligman purports

that these five elements are the best approximation of what humans pursue for their own sake, largely because they are intrinsically motivating in their own right.

### **2.3.2 Positive Organizational Behaviour and PsyCap**

Drawing from the positive psychology literature, the term ‘positive organizational behaviour’ is intended to identify a newly emerging focus on a positive approach to developing and managing human resources in the contemporary setting. Luthans (2002) describes positive organizational behaviour as *‘the study and application of positively oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement.’* (p. 59).

Keen to differentiate from other positive psychology approaches, Luthans, Avolio, Avey & Norman (2007) applied the following criteria for including constructs in the definition of positive organizational behaviour. Constructs had to be:

- (a) grounded in theory and research
- (b) have valid measurement
- (c) be relatively unique to the field of organizational behaviour
- (d) be ‘state-like’ and hence open to development and change (as opposed to being a fixed trait)
- (e) have a positive impact on work-related individual-level performance and satisfaction

Using these criteria, the positive psychological construct termed psychological capital or PsyCap (Luthans & Youssef, 2004; Luthans *et al.* 2007) has been introduced. This composite construct is characterized by: (1) having confidence to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; (2) making a positive attribution about succeeding now and in the future; (3) persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals in order to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond to attain success.’ (Luthans *et al.*, 2007, p. 3).

Luthans *et al* purport that the combined motivational effects of the four components (self-efficacy, optimism, hope and resilience) to be broader and more impactful than any one of the constructs individually. Thus, notwithstanding the fact that each facet includes both unique and common cognitive and motivational processes that enable performance, Luthans’ point is that when combined with each other, and taken in the round, the cognitive and motivational processes are expected to be enhanced. For example, Larson & Luthans (2006) report that employees who exhibit higher levels of hope are found to be more satisfied at work, but that even higher satisfaction will occur when such hope is accompanied by optimism and/or self-efficacy.

### **2.3.3 Happiness**

Examining the literature, ‘happiness’ is presented as a varied and eclectic mix of events, memories, thoughts and positive triggers that result in an upward spiral of feelings. Indeed, Gilbert (2006) suggests *‘philosophers have flung themselves headlong at the happiness problem for quite some time with little more than bruises to show for it.’* (p. 39).

Freud (1962) wrote, *‘The question of the purpose of human life has been raised countless times; it has never yet received a satisfactory answer and perhaps does not admit of one... We*

*will therefore turn to the less ambitious question of what men show by their behaviour to be the purpose and intention of their lives. What do they demand of life and wish to achieve in it? The answer to this can hardly be in doubt. They strive after happiness: they want to become happy and to remain so.*' (p. 75). The same observation appears in various guises in the psychological theories of Plato, Aristotle, Mill, Bentham and others (Gilbert, 2006).

Veenhoven (2009) uses the phrase '*confusion of tongues*' (p. 3) to suggest the word 'happiness' has multitudinal meanings. Layard (2005) provides the following, '*By happiness I mean feeling good – enjoying life and feeling it is wonderful. And by unhappiness I mean feeling bad and wishing things were different. There are countless sources of happiness, and countless sources of pain and misery. But all our experience has in it a dimension which corresponds to how good or bad we feel.*' (p. 29)

The concept of happiness is therefore often ambiguous. As above, it is often used to describe how a person feels, i.e., a phenomenological state of the person (Aspinwall & Staudinger, 2003). In this context, happiness is the state one is in when one feels contentment, satisfaction, euphoria and associated positive emotions. People report being happy when at a party, when out for a meal or if they unexpectedly see an old friend (Seligman, 2002), the inference being that this form of happiness is transient and circumstantial rather than something under the individual's direct control. In addition, some researchers use the term 'happiness' in the sense of the person living a good life, often defined as a high level of wellbeing (or a lot of 'prudential value') inferring that this type of happiness is more akin to the eudaimonic meaning and is more sustainable in the long term (Feldman, 2008).

This thesis is seeking individuals who have achieved longevity of happiness by gauging happiness over the previous 5 years and asking for estimates of their next 5 years, tying in with the more sustainable eudaimonic model articulated above. Thus, the working definition of ‘happiness’ for this thesis draws on the eudaimonic meaning and is as follows:

*‘Happiness’ is a sustainable state of mind or feeling characterized by contentment, satisfaction, pleasure or joy. Happiness, in this sense, is not fleeting. It is a habitual pattern enabling the individual to feel more upbeat and positive than the norm.*

#### **2.3.4 Subjective Wellbeing**

The subjective nature of happiness makes it difficult to measure and compare. Diener & Biswas-Diener (2008) suggest that ‘happiness’ struggles to be taken seriously by the academic community, suggesting that it be rebranded as ‘subjective wellbeing’ to lend it an air of scientific legitimacy to a sceptical academic world. Researchers such as Diener and Seligman use the terms ‘happiness’ and ‘subjective wellbeing’ interchangeably (Peterson, 2006). However, it seems happiness is a subset within subjective wellbeing. Individuals with high subjective wellbeing scores register as happy, avoiding feeling negative and being satisfied with life (Peterson, 2006). Haybron (2005) concurs with the inter-changeability of the terms ‘happiness’ and ‘subjective wellbeing’, suggesting that most academic literature treats ‘happiness’ as a synonym for ‘wellbeing’, writing *‘To ascribe happiness to people, in the wellbeing sense, is to say their lives are going well for them.’* (p. 27).

Diener, Lucas & Oishi (2005) define subjective wellbeing as *‘A person’s cognitive and affective evaluations of his or her life. These evaluations include emotional reactions to events as well as cognitive judgements of satisfaction and fulfilment’* (p. 63), arguing that one

of the reasons for the rise in academic popularity of subjective wellbeing is that people in Western nations have achieved a level of material abundance that allows them to go beyond mere survival in seeking the good life; *'People around the globe are entering a 'post-materialistic' world, in which they are concerned with issues of quality of life beyond economic prosperity.'* (p. 64).

The complexity of subjective wellbeing is described by McGillivray & Clarke (2006) as involving *'... a multidimensional evaluation of life, including cognitive judgments of life satisfaction and affective evaluations of emotions and moods.'* (p. 4). Bruni & Porta (2007) provide some clarification on the differences between happiness and subjective wellbeing pointing out that *'Psychologists distinguish among 1) life satisfaction which is a cognitive element 2) affection, the affective element and 3) subjective wellbeing, as a state of wellbeing, synthetic of long duration which includes both the affective and cognitive component.'* (p. xviii). They propose that positive subjective wellbeing is comprised of four components: pleasant emotions, lack of unpleasant emotions, global life judgment (life evaluation) and domain satisfaction (marriage, health, leisure, etc.). Further, they suggest that happiness is a narrower concept than subjective wellbeing and different from life satisfaction on the basis that although both happiness and life satisfaction are components of subjective wellbeing, *'Life satisfaction reflects individuals' perceived distance from their aspirations while happiness results from a balance between positive and negative affect.'* (p. xviii)

Subjective wellbeing is described by Diener *et al.* (2009) as consisting of three components: frequent instances of positive affect, infrequent instances of negative affect and a high level of life satisfaction. Their point is that positive and negative affect are simply experiences of good feelings and bad feelings respectively, whereas life satisfaction is a more global,

cognitive evaluation of how content a person is with the state of his or her life. Typically, those with a high level of life satisfaction would agree with statements such as, ‘The conditions of my life are excellent’ (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985).

### **2.3.5 Flow and Strengths**

Csikszentmihalyi (1975) describes flow as a state in which challenges and skills are in balance and one becomes lost in concentration. Flow is a very enjoyable state, having been described as exhilarating, euphoric, providing a deep sense of enjoyment, being an optimal or peak experience, characterized by high activation positive affect and requiring feelings of learning, development and mastery (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Csikszentmihalyi *et al.*, 2005). As Csikszentmihalyi (1999) describes ‘*people are happy not because of what they do, but because of how they do it.*’ (p. 826).

Strengths, and the means to identify them, have been suggested by various researchers as a way to increase happiness and productivity in the workplace. For example, Roberts *et al.* (2005) advocate a process of soliciting feedback from work colleagues about times that the focal individual was at their personal best, then seeking patterns across the qualitative replies received to form a picture of the reflected best self.

Csikszentmihalyi’s (2002) concept of flow is connected to strengths because, in its simplest sense, flow suggests that by focusing an employee’s energy on their areas of strength, the organization will reap improvements in work rate, motivation and wellbeing. This corresponds with work on ‘character strengths’, or, as Buckingham & Clifton (2005) call them, ‘signature strengths’, their wider point being that the typical organization, invariably and erroneously, facilitates training and coaching aimed at eradicating employees’

weaknesses whereas organizations would yield more value by investing their training budget in areas in which their employees have inherent strengths. Buckingham & Clifton (2005) and, more latterly, Linley's (2008) work on 'strengths based organizations' leads them to suggest the problem is an inherent human flaw – individuals may not even be aware of where their strengths lie; *'Unfortunately, many of us have little sense of our talents and strengths, much less our ability to build our life around them. Instead, guided by our teachers, parents and managers we become experts in our weaknesses and spend our lives trying to repair these flaws, whilst our strengths lie dormant and neglected.'* (Buckingham & Clifton, 2005).

Both flow and intrinsic motivation refer to the enjoyment experienced when engrossed in a task with the state of flow occurring when individuals are working on tasks that are above their own average on both challenge and skill requirements. When this occurs, *'the person is not only enjoying the moment, but is also stretching his or her capabilities with the likelihood of learning new skills and increasing self-esteem and personal complexity'* (Csikszentmihalyi & LeFevre, 1989, p. 816). Thus, flow occurs when one is totally absorbed in using one's skills to progress on a challenging task, such that irrelevant external stimuli and the passage of time are excluded from awareness.

Csikszentmihalyi's (2002) original study was centred on creative people, discovering that during the creative process artists persisted, single-mindedly, disregarding hunger, fatigue and discomfort. They were totally absorbed in the creative process yet rapidly lost interest in the artistic creation once it had been completed. Csikszentmihalyi & Nakamura (2005) suggest the conditions of flow include the fact that the challenges must stretch (neither overmatching nor underutilizing) existing skills and the individual has clear goals and receives immediate feedback about the progress that is being made. Crucially, when in flow, the individual



operates at full capacity (Deci, 1975). The state of flow is one of dynamic equilibrium and that the balance between overmatching and underutilising a person's capabilities is intrinsically fragile to the extent that if skill exceeds challenge one becomes bored and if challenge exceeds skill, one becomes anxious. In both instances, productivity is hampered (Csikszentmihalyi & Nakamura, 2005). It seems therefore that achieving flow is important in terms of inducing employees to operate at full capacity. However, it is elusive and is a very fine balancing act with anxiety at the over-stretched end and boredom at the under-utilised end of the flow spectrum.

### **2.3.6 The Happiness 'Set Point'**

Lyubomirsky (2001) alludes to the fact that individuals have an optimal happiness set-point to which they return. This baseline feeling is similar to the body's biological mechanisms with Lyubomirsky arguing that the set point acts as a psychological gauge for emotions that protects individuals from excessive happiness or sadness. This is borne out by Brickman, Coates & Janoff-Bulman's (1978) comparison of happiness levels of lottery winners with accident victims where, after a temporary rise in happiness of lottery winners and a corresponding fall in accident victims, there was almost no difference in the medium term with both groups returning to their 'normal' levels.

The set-point argument is expanded by Fredrickson (2009) who suggests humans have a natural adaptive mechanism that prevents them from being overly happy. Fredrickson alludes to the fact that humans tend to have a baseline feeling and that while individuals vary slightly in their natural 'emotional set point' they will always return to whatever their baseline is (Lykken, 1999). Fredrickson suggests that a classic example of workplace adaptation is a pay

rise, which may give an emotional high for a short period before it becomes the norm and the individual gravitates back to his/her previous levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Hedonic adaptation implies there is an emotional upper limit beyond which individuals have little hope of breaking through resulting in the fact that '*individuals are doomed to be mildly happy most of the time,*' (Fredrickson, 2009 p. 34). Thus, adaptation suggests humans are incapable of experiencing euphoric highs over long periods of time with Fredrickson (2009) suggesting that chasing these highs can lead to alcohol and drug abuse. Conversely, adaptation also serves a useful purpose in terms of buffering individuals against emotional lows, essentially acting as a safety net that enables individuals to bounce back from adversity.

### **2.3.7 Broaden and Build**

The purpose of happiness has come under academic scrutiny with history commonly regarding happiness as little more than a pleasurable emotion with no evolutionary value (Fredrickson, 2009). Subjective wellbeing research consistently reveals that most people are moderately happy (Biswas-Diener *et al.*, 2005; Cacioppo & Berntston, 1994) with this holding true for tribes (Biswas-Diener *et al.*, 2005) as well as people on the Forbes rich list (Diener, Horwitz & Emmons, 1985). The idea of happiness serving an evolutionary function is not new. Darwin (1872) looked at the nature of a range of emotions, especially the fight or flight aspect, but, according to Fredrickson (2009) very little was done on the evolutionary function of happiness. According to Fredrickson, positive emotions work counter to negative emotions and 'broaden and build' theory states that if negative emotions serve to limit our choices, positive emotions work in the opposite direction, effectively expanding one's choices. Fredrickson states that positive feelings such as love, joy, pride and enthusiasm help

individuals develop their personal and social resources and that those experiencing positive affect are more likely to be creative, helpful, resourceful, sociable, energetic and motivated.

### **2.3.8 Employee Engagement**

Job satisfaction and engagement are similar in that both are forms of positive wellbeing reflecting some attainment of wanted states (Warr, 2007). More than two centuries ago, Ferguson (1767/1966) argued that *'Happiness is not that state of repose, or that imaginary freedom from care, which at a distance is so frequent an object of desire . . . it arises more from the pursuit than from the attainment of any end,'* (p. 49), adding that *'Activity is of more importance than the very pleasure one seeks'* (p. 43). These definitions allude to happiness as being driven rather than as a state of relaxation.

Personal engagement and psychological presence at work are concepts introduced by Kahn (1990, 1992) to refer to the amount of the authentic physical, cognitive and emotional self that individuals devote to their work and the feelings of attentiveness, connection, integration and focus that accompany moments of high engagement. There has been a plethora of relatively new constructs involving employee engagement. Spreitzer's concept of 'thriving at work' combines feelings of vitality and energy with beliefs that one is learning, developing and making progress towards self-actualization (Spreitzer & Sutcliffe 2007; Spreitzer *et al.* 2005).

It is clear that 'engagement', 'intrinsic motivation' and 'flow' are closely related concepts.

Intrinsic motivation is often measured either as self-rated task enjoyment or as the amount of time voluntarily spent on a task after it is clear that there is no extrinsic reason to persist (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Warr (2007) argues that engaged workers feel positive about their workplace, but beyond mere satisfaction they are motivated to expend energy on a task. Leiter and Bakker (2010) define job engagement as *'a positive, fulfilling, affective-motivational state of*

*work-related well-being*’ (p. 1) and a review by Bakker, Albrecht & Leiter (2011) identified a *‘growing consensus that engagement can be defined in terms of high levels of energy and high levels of involvement in work.’* (p. 22).

### **2.3.9 Social Contagion**

The term ‘social contagion’ is used to describe the manner in which moods spread from person to person with Goleman’s (1996) work on emotional and social intelligence suggesting humans are physically constructed to make this possible. Goleman (2007) writes about mirror neurons that fire in response to observing behaviour or emotions in others; *‘For instance, when volunteers lay in an fMRI watching a video showing someone smile or scowl, most brain areas that activated in the observers were the same as those active in the person displaying the emotion, though not as extreme.’* (p. 42).

This corresponds with Bandura’s (1971) Social Learning Theory, in that individuals pick up signals from people’s behaviour and emotions. Stern (2004) suggests that our nervous systems *‘are constructed to be captured by the nervous systems of others, so that we can experience others as if from within their skin.’* (p. 76). The inherent design of the human emotional system that allows emotions to transmit – described by Goleman *et al.* (2013) as an ‘open loop’ - suggests that without always being overtly aware of it, one’s moods are spreading to others. This socially contagious aspect of emotion can be in either positive or negative directions with Dutton (2003) stating that, *‘Any point of contact with another person can potentially be a high-quality connection. One conversation, one e-mail exchange, one moment of connecting in a meeting can infuse both participants with a greater sense of vitality, giving them a bounce in their steps and a greater capacity to act.’* (p. 2).

Goleman *et al.* (2013) introduce the term ‘limbic resonance’ (p. 48) – namely that not only is an individual’s emotional system an ‘open loop’ but that humans have an innate need to connect emotionally with those around them giving them an ability to resonate (drive emotions positively) and dissonate (drive emotion negatively). Further, it appears that emotional contagion spreads beyond one’s immediate colleagues with Christakis & Fowler (2011) purporting that the happiness of an individual is associated with the happiness of people up to three degrees removed in their social network. Their suggestion is that an individual’s happiness is enhanced by 15% if directly connected (by one degree of separation) to a happy person. Happiness is also contagious by 10% at two degrees of separation and 6% at ‘hyper-dyadic’ 3-degrees of separation. Happiness, in other words, is not merely a function of individual experience or individual choice but is also a property of groups of people, extending to a friend of a friend of a friend. Their conclusion is that changes in individual happiness can ripple through social networks and generate large scale impacts in the network. In an organizational context, this suggests H+ employees will give rise to clusters of happy colleagues and customers.

### **2.3.10 Corporate Energy**

Ryan & Frederick (1997) studied ‘subjective vitality’, defined as ‘*the positive feeling of having energy available to the self*’ (p. 529). People recognize ongoing changes in the energy they possess, not only as a function of physical states such as illness or fatigue, but also as a function of psychological factors (Thayer, 1996). Ryan & Frederick (1997) found that when individuals are intrinsically motivated they will not experience their efforts as draining and may even feel their energy enhanced. Thus, although success at either autonomous or controlled actions may leave individuals feeling a sense of happiness, contentment or being

pleased with themselves, success at autonomously regulated tasks will engender greater energy or vigour than success when their task behaviour is controlled.

Freud (1900) postulated an economic model in which psychic energy was viewed as a limited resource. The argument was that energy invested in defence or resistance was therefore depleting of one's general store of energy, resulting in exhaustion. Other theories in the psychodynamic field (e.g., Jung, 1960; Lifton, 1976; Perls, 1973) have also examined the issue of energy, most agreeing that energy can be lost or gained depending on how one invests it.

The concept of personal energy features heavily in Eastern thought with, as Cleary (1991) points out, *'the predominant philosophies of the East suggest that energy can be catalysed by certain spiritual, meditational, or physical practices such as zazen, yoga, reiki, and acupuncture.'* (p. 267). For example, the Chinese concept of 'Chi' refers to an unlimited source of energy that can be accessed by individuals depending on their lifestyles and personal practices (Jou, 1981). Thayer (1996) suggests that practices such as Tai Chi, Yoga and Zen meditation produce a state of calm energy akin to a state of alertness and vitality. Thayer (1996) purports that this is a restorative state in which one can renew one's reserves of positive energy.

In business thermodynamics, corporate entropy is a loosely defined term referring to a loss of productive energy inside the working actions of an organization. Demarco & Lister's (1999) definition of what they term the second thermodynamic law of management is that *'entropy is always increasing in the organization'*, postulating that this is the reason that *'elderly institutions are tighter and a lot less fun than sprightly young companies.'* (p. 97).

Berry (1978) describes corporate entropy as the portion of a system's energy that cannot be converted into external work. The term 'corporate entropy' is denoted as wasted energy by Ackoff (1981).

DeMarco and Lister (1999) define entropy in an organization as 'levelness or sameness' and that *'the more it increases, the less potential there is to generate energy or do work.'* (p. 96). Thus, in this regard, corporate entropy is a negative force that drains energy from the business.

In terms of this thesis, 'corporate entropy' is a crucial term. It implies that some employees are able to transmit energy to those around them, while others might have the opposite effect. The H+ employees, as defined in this thesis, are flourishing and, as such, are creating a noticeable emotional uplift.

## **2.4 Focusing on Flourishing**

The focus of this study is on those who feel happy, positive and who experience high levels of happiness and energy. Furthermore, they must also meet the crucial criterion of elevating the emotional state of their work colleagues, an end result that I denote as 'flourishing'. It is important to note that academics in the field often use the terms described above interchangeably. I intend to do the same for the closely related traits of 'happiness', 'subjective wellbeing' and 'positivity'. This research is about those who experience positive emotions and are more noticeably upbeat in their emotional tone. Thus, the term 'flourishing' will be reserved to denote those in the 'happy', 'upbeat', 'positive' echelons of their range of emotions and who have a noticeably upbeat impact on their co-workers.

To re-iterate, for the purposes of this research, ‘flourishing’ goes beyond the individual, implying the transference of positive emotions through the workplace. The working definition of flourishing for the purposes of this thesis is:

*‘Individuals who are happier and more energetic than average and who succeed in engaging their work colleagues in these positive feelings, thereby helping create an uplift in the working environment.’*

## **2.5 Summary and Conclusion**

The chapter proceeded to chart the history of happiness back to Ancient Greece and early Christian teachings where ‘happiness’, it is argued, was an expectation for the after-life and, consequently, religion acted as a dampener on mortal happiness. Enlightenment and the rise of consumerism offered hope that happiness was available to the living. The history is traced to the advent of positive psychology in the early 1990s, arguing that although most often credited to Seligman, positive psychology is hardly a new phenomenon, being purposefully described as an umbrella concept under which ‘happiness’, ‘flourishing’ and suchlike reside.

This section also examined a number of contemporary strands of thinking including the evolutionary imperative of positive affect. Fredrickson’s ‘broaden and build’ makes a compelling case that positive emotions act in the opposite way to negative emotions by effectively raising one’s aspirations and allowing the human race to be creative and visionary. This section attempted to give an overview of some of the common terminology that makes up the core of this thesis, namely; positive psychology, subjective wellbeing, set-point theory,



adaptation, engagement, flow and social contagion, all terms that will be revisited in more detail in subsequent chapters.

The next chapter starts by examining the totality of an individual's happiness experience, as described by Lyubomirsky's (2007) 'What Determines Happiness?' pie chart, dividing it into three portions of 'genetics', 'circumstances' and 'intentional strategies'. Each of these is studied in turn, before focusing on the portion of happiness that can be influenced in the here and now - 'intentional strategies'. The next chapter concludes with an examination of some of the most often quoted academic and popular-science 'intentional strategies' that are purported to have lasting happiness effects; optimism, gratitude, kindness, mindfulness, religion, relationships, goals, wealth, health and age.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Happiness: Nature or Nurture?**

## Chapter 3: Happiness: Nature or Nurture?

### 3.1 Introduction

Lyubomirsky (2007) refers to the ‘happiness set point’, Fredrickson (2009) ‘adaptation’ and Seligman (2003) ‘the hedonic treadmill’. The common thread is that happiness can apparently be increased in the short term, but individuals will return to their default happiness level.

Schwartz *et al.* (2002) concur by suggesting that happiness is a transient state, their study indicating that techniques such as giving people a gift, playing pleasant music or providing positive feedback all produce momentary increases in positive affect but that these increases do not last. It seems therefore that happiness is fleeting rather than lasting. Individual’s moods respond to and fluctuate along with changes in their environments. As Brickman *et al.* (1978) state, *‘When something wonderful happens, individuals report feeling happier. When something unfortunate happens, they feel sad. However, these changes are often short-lived, and people return to their baseline level of happiness fairly quickly.’* (p. 920)

This chapter starts by examining the three portions of Lyubomirsky’s (2007) ‘What Determines Happiness?’ pie chart; genetics, circumstances and intentional strategies. Each of these is studied in turn, arguing that ‘genetics’ and ‘circumstances’ are fixed, at least in the immediacy of the moment. The chapter therefore focuses on the section that can be influenced in the moment - ‘intentional strategies’ - concluding with an examination of some of the most often quoted academic and popular-science intentional strategies that are purported to have lasting happiness effects; optimism, gratitude, kindness, mindfulness, religion, relationships, goals, wealth, health and age.

### 3.2 The Constituent Parts of Happiness

Lyubomirsky (2007) suggests that the entirety of an individual's happiness comprises a genetically-determined set point (50%), happiness-relevant circumstantial factors (10%), and happiness-relevant activities and practices (40%) - represented in figure 3.1.

Subsequent chapters will re-visit this model of happiness. At this juncture, it is important to note Lyubomirsky's (2007) central tenet, that the 'genetic set point' and 'circumstances' portions of an individual's happiness are fixed, at least in the immediacy of the moment.

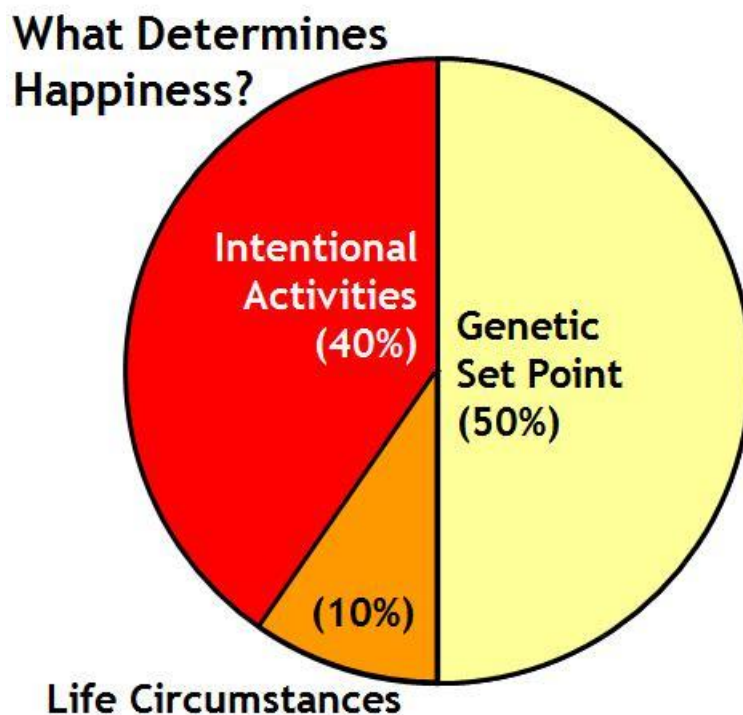


Figure 3.1: 'What Determines Happiness?' (Lyubomirsky, 2007, p. 20)

The 40% of an individual's happiness that is under the individual's direct control is the 'intentional activities' section of the diagram and it is this 40% that forms the core of this thesis. According to Lyubomirsky (2007), 'intentional activities' include an array of

techniques including practising gratitude, kindness, forgiveness, spirituality, choosing and pursuing authentic goals, nurturing social relationships, seeking opportunities to experience flow and engaging in meditation and physical exercise.

In a similar vein, Seligman (2003) suggests that authentic happiness is facilitated by developing and practising character virtues such as kindness, gratitude, optimism, curiosity, playfulness, humour, open-mindedness and hope, all of which can be construed as ‘intentional activities’. This corresponds with the principles of eudaimonic happiness, discussed in chapter 2. Eudaimonic happiness is thought to be increased by: *‘(1) pursuing intrinsic goals and values for their own sake, including personal growth, relationships, community, and health, rather than extrinsic goals and values, such as wealth, fame, image, and power; (2) behaving in autonomous, volitional or consensual ways, rather than heteronomous or controlled ways; (3) being mindful and acting with a sense of awareness; and (4) behaving in ways that satisfy basic psychological needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy.’* (Ryan *et al.*, 2008, 139).

### **3.3 Personality and Genetics**

Referring to Lyubomirsky’s (2007) work, it seems the baseline level of happiness, or ‘set point’, is higher for some people than for others. This natural disposition for happiness is corroborated in studies by Diener *et al.* (1999) and Lucas (2008) which point to genetic make-up and personality explaining some of the person-level variance in happiness, succinctly articulated by Fisher (2010); *‘...some individuals are naturally programmed to be happier than others’* (p. 22).

Research on twins suggests that up to 50% of the variance in subjective wellbeing is genetically determined (Lykken & Tellegen, 1996; Tellegen *et al.*, 1988; Weiss *et al.*, 2008). The fact that happiness has an element of heritability is also consistent with the finding that a person's level of happiness is strongly related to his or her standing on several personality traits (Diener & Lucas, 1999).

Lucas (2008) and Steel *et al.* (2008) suggest that personality traits such as locus of control, optimism and self-esteem are also inheritable factors that play a part in an individual's happiness make-up with some researchers postulating that happiness is therefore another personality trait which is stable and resistant to any kind of meaningful change (Costa & McCrae, 1980).

Carver *et al.* (2000) found that individuals with high positive affectivity appear to be more sensitive and reactive to potentially rewarding situations and respond with greater increases in pleasant feelings whereas those high on negative affectivity respond with stronger negative emotions in potentially difficult situations. They conclude that happy people find it easier to be happy and negative people are more pre-disposed to downward emotional spirals. Corr's (2008) study suggests that the biological basis for these traits is found in the distinct behavioural approach and behavioural avoidance systems in the brain.

Elliot & Thrash (2002) propose a higher-order construct called 'approach temperament' that combines extraversion, behavioural activation system sensitivity and dispositional positive affectivity. They state that these constructs *'share the same basic core – a general neurobiological sensitivity to positive/desirable (i.e. reward) stimuli (present or imagined) that is accompanied by perceptual vigilance for, affective reactivity to, and a behavioural*

*predisposition toward such stimuli.* ' (p. 805). This corroborates other studies that conclude that happy people habitually construe events differently from unhappy people. For example, they tend to refrain from making social comparisons that would disadvantage them, they dwell on their successes rather than ruminating on their failures, they are persistently optimistic and they use more effective coping strategies than their less happy peers (Lyubomirsky & Ross, 1997; Lyubomirsky, 2001).

### **3.4 Environmental Contributors to Happiness**

Ahuvia *et al* (2015) suggest, there are two commonly advocated paths toward the good life: *externalism* (i.e. an emphasis on altering one's social or material circumstances) and *internalism* (i.e. an emphasis on altering one's beliefs, values, emotional responses, and similar psychological states).

Lyubomirsky's (2001) proffers that, intuitively, it might seem sensible that if life circumstances improve then happiness will increase. Kammann (1983) counters by suggesting objective life circumstances have a negligible role in the theory of happiness. This concurs with the more recent findings of Lyubomirsky (2007) who suggests that only 10% of an individual's happiness is determined by circumstances. Examining the 10% section of Lyubomirsky's (2007) happiness totality, the hypothesis is that individuals are able to influence their circumstances – and therefore 10% of their happiness - in the medium term. This link between 'happiness' and 'life circumstances' is backed up by research by Argyle (2001) and Diener *et al.* (2010) who concur that approximately 10% of an individual's happiness is determined by factors that constitute the background of their life. Examples include a person's demographics (e.g., gender, ethnicity), personal experiences (e.g., past traumas and triumphs), life status variables (e.g., marital status, education level, health, and

income), physical appearance and the physical setting of where the person lives. Once again, it is important to note that these factors are malleable in the medium term but fixed in the immediacy of the moment.

Lyubomirsky's (2001) somewhat counter-intuitive proposal that life circumstances play less of a role than many people think is summed up thus, *'The general conclusion from almost a century of research on the determinants of wellbeing is that objective circumstances, demographic variables and life events are correlated with happiness less strongly than intuition and every day experience tell us they ought to be...we found that even the happiest people, the top 10% in happiness, have moods that go up and down – they are not stuck in euphoria.'* (p. 19).

There is evidence that subjective wellbeing is, on average, higher among those who are married, have supportive social networks, participate in religious and leisure activities, earn more money, are of higher social and occupational status, view themselves as healthy and live in prosperous, democratic countries (Argyle, 1999; Suh & Koo, 2008). Fowler & Christakis (2008) purport that individuals are likely to become happier if a close friend or neighbour has become happier in the preceding six months, pointing to the contagious nature of the emotional open loop. At the transient level of positive moods and pleasant emotions, immediate situational occurrences are clearly important in explaining variance in happiness within a person over time. For example, individuals experience positive emotions when they appraise a current situation or event as beneficial to their interests, or as representing progress towards important goals (Frijda, 1988; Lazarus, 1991).



Similarly, research on ‘hassles’ and ‘uplifts’ (terms coined by Kanner *et al.*, 1981) identified a host of minor daily events that result in negative and positive emotions, respectively. In the workplace, the ‘hassles’ included meetings and negative colleagues while the ‘uplifts’ included achievements and interacting with positive colleagues. Further, Kanner *et al.* (1981) report that the events that provoke momentary happiness are not necessarily the opposite of, or absence of, events that cause unhappiness.

### **3.5 Activities that are Reported to Increase Happiness**

If, as Lyubomirsky (2007) suggests, 10% of an individual’s happiness is accounted for by circumstances and a further 50% by genetics (both of which are fixed in the immediacy), that leaves 40% of the sustainable happiness model that is down to an individual’s ‘intentional activities’. Essentially, this is the aspect that gives researchers hope about the possibility of lastingly increases in wellbeing. In broad terms, intentional activities are actions or exercises that a person chooses to engage in. More specifically, they can be thoughts (e.g., counting your blessings) or behaviours (e.g., doing a random act of kindness) that alter an individual’s perspective of themselves, their life, and the world in general.

Ten ‘intentional activities’ that appear frequently in the academic and popular psychology literature are listed and evaluated in the following section.

#### **3.5.1 Optimism and Positive Thinking**

A great deal has been written about positive thinking and its effect on happiness. Book titles in the popular psychology genre suggest one can ‘Think and Grow Rich’ (Hill, 1975), ‘Think Yourself Successful’ (Azmandian, 2001) or ‘Think Good Feel Good’ (Stallard, 2002). Indeed, many popular psychologists and self-help authors start with the notion that positive thinking

and optimism are key ingredients in happiness (Holden, 2009, Wiseman, 2004). One of the principal aims of this research is to test whether what is essentially a ‘glass half-full’ approach is actually born out in practice. In short, do those in the H+ community have a more positive way of thinking than their NonH+ counterparts?

Ahuvia *et al* (2015) describe ‘internalism’ as the belief that happiness is produced largely by mental perception and that champions of internalism recognize that one’s experience of the world is constructed subjectively. Thus, intentionally changing one’s evaluations and perceptions can effect real psychological change with Ahuvia *et al.* arguing that proponents of internalism typically assert that happiness-enhancing mental strategies can be developed through practice. Internalism’s appeal can be seen in the idea that ‘changing one’s mind’ requires very few resources and thus, it is a happiness strategy that is available to people of all backgrounds. Indeed, they point out that clinical psychology is founded, to some extent, on the belief that tolerating and regulating emotional and other internal experiences is possible by engaging in internal processes and that so-called ‘talking therapies’ work by having people reflect upon their own interpretations of events and reframe them in more favourable terms.

Further, internalism is appealing because it appears to be effective – for example, it has been shown that attention (Brefczynski-Lewis, Lutz, Schaefer, Levinson, & Davidson, 2007), compassion and emotional regulation (Lutz, McFarlin, Perlman, Salomons, & Davidson, 2008) can be trained through meditation. Happy people tend to take responsibility for their successes whereas negative people blame luck when things go well (Myers, 1992). This correlates with Wiseman’s research (2004) which suggests that optimists are happier, largely because they see and take more opportunities, managing setbacks with more resilience, seeing them as temporary and external rather than permanent and internal. Additionally, having an

upbeat thinking pattern can be a predictor of future success because optimists, believing the future is bright, are able to maintain motivation better than pessimists (Seligman, 2003).

Several investigations have revealed that unhappy individuals are more likely than happy ones to dwell on negative or ambiguous events (e.g., Seligman, 2003, Wiseman, 2004). Such rumination may drain cognitive resources and thus bring to bear a variety of negative consequences, which could further reinforce unhappiness (Seligman, 2003).

In terms of reframing events, research suggests that happy people successfully enhance and maintain their happiness through the use of adaptive strategies in the areas of social comparison, decision making and self-reflection (Lieberman *et al.*, 2008; Schwartz *et al.*, 2002).

Ahuvia *et al* (2015) pose an ethical question mark over internalism, suggesting that the heavy emphasis on developing more resilient internal capacities might shift the responsibility for emotional wellbeing entirely to the individual - i.e., the 'blame' for unhappiness lies with people who are unhappy who, by this way of thinking, have not exerted the effort or made the choice to perceive their life in a more positive way. In answering their own question, they point out that most schools of internalism, including both Buddhism and cognitive therapies, reject the notion that improving outer conditions should be neglected, but merely point out that no matter what outer conditions might be - good or bad - there are always ways to work with one's mind in order to experience them in a more optimal way.

### **3.5.2 Gratitude and Good Deeds**

An ‘attitude of gratitude’ has been heralded by the popular psychology community as an essential part of the positive thinking process. For example, Emmons & Shelton (2001) suggest attitudes that generate a felt sense of wonder, thankfulness and appreciation for life are conducive to lasting happiness. According to this happiness tactic, to reap the benefits one must focus one’s attention on the positive things in life and truly savour them.

Several studies have shown that focusing attention on the positive things in life – essentially, ‘counting your blessings’ – leads to increases in both physical health and happiness (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2004).

A further strategy that is often quoted as producing upward spirals in wellbeing involves doing good deeds for others. This may be surprising, because pro-social behaviour can easily be construed as a self-sacrifice (Piliavin, 2003). Whether random kindness is done on an individual basis, or through a formal volunteer organization, Piliavin argues that helping others, and the fact that it involves time, can be thought of as time-consuming, tiring, and thankless.

However, mounting evidence suggests that pro-social behaviour actually has positive outcomes for both the recipient and the benefactor (Algoe & Haidt, 2009). This area of research suggests it simply feels good to observe the effects of one’s generosity. Furthermore, doing acts of kindness may help build strong social relationships and foster an upward spiral of social benefits, as noted by Algoe & Haidt (2009) who suggest the recipient of a kind act often feels a bolstered sense of positive feelings and connectedness to his or her benefactor, which strengthens their relationship. Moreover, doing things for others is socially engaging

with Algoe & Haidt, (2009) reporting that such acts of kindness and/or generosity still feel good even if they are anonymous.

### **3.5.3 Mindfulness**

Mindfulness is an ancient pathway to wellbeing, usually taught through meditation where practitioners practice non-judgmental awareness of everything that is going on in the present moment (Shapiro, Schwartz & Santerre, 2002). Zimbardo & Boyd (2009) encourage a sense of mindfulness towards the present, suggesting that, '*When you are mindful, you are aware of your position and your destination... You can make corrections to your path,*' (p. 261), although '*Too much present orientation can rob life of happiness.*' (Zimbardo & Boyd, 2009; p. 100).

This avenue of research indicates that mindfulness should be balanced with a healthy future time perspective. People with this perspective are more likely to do the things today that will bring them success and health in the future – for example, they are likely to study more, work harder, exercise more, eat better, drink less, smoke less, and take other preventive health measures more often than their more present-oriented counterparts (Zimbardo & Boyd, 2009). Seligman also sees the future as an important part of the wellbeing picture; '*Human beings are pulled by the future rather than being pushed by the past.*' (quote, 2009, IPPA World Congress)

### **3.5.4 Religion**

A question raised by twentieth century researchers was whether religion harms or benefits people with Jung (1933) believing that religion was of value and brought meaning to people's lives whereas Freud (1927) viewed religion as an expression of obsessional neurosis and a

defence mechanism against anxiety. There is some contemporary research that has found religiosity to be associated with negative outcomes such as guilt, fear of death and personal distress (King & Schafer, 1992; Lewis & Cruise, 2006).

However, religion and spirituality have also been linked with positive functioning, subjective wellbeing and happiness (e.g., Bergin, 1983; Koenig & Larson, 2001; Myers, 2008). Hackney & Sanders (2003) found positive correlations between religion and life satisfaction, with consistent finding across behavioural (e.g. church attendance) and psychological (e.g. personal devotion) aspects of religion.

According to the Values in Action classification of strengths, 'spirituality' is considered to be one of the traits that fosters positive wellbeing and achievement of the good life (Peterson, 2006). Okun and Stock (1987) found that, for the elderly, spirituality was among the top predictors of subjective wellbeing and Myers (2008) reports, quite simply, that attending church makes one happy. However, the link between religiosity and happiness appears to be dependent on certain conditions. Firstly, researchers found that the happiness associated with religiosity is, in part, a function of the match between the individual and the larger culture in which they live (Diener, Tay & Myers, 2011). More specifically, religious individuals living in highly religious nations experience substantially more positive emotions than their non-religious counterparts if they are living in a country with difficult life circumstances. Secondly, people appear to be happier if they live in a nation in which aggregate societal religiosity matches their own. This is consistent with other research that suggests that person-culture match is important to happiness (Fulmer et al., 2010).

### **3.5.5 Relationships**

Berscheid (2003) highlighted the centrality of social relationships to successful human functioning writing that *'relationships constitute the single most important factor responsible for the survival of homo sapiens'* (p. 39).

A major scientific review by Wilson (1967) correlated happiness with income, good health and job morale with Wilson noting the particular relevance of relationships, concluding *'the most impressive single finding lies in the relationship between happiness and the successful involvement with people.'* (p. 304). This corresponds with a study reporting that people who could list five or more close friends were significantly happier than those who could not (McCrae, 2008) and Diener & Seligman's (2002) conclusion that one of the major differences between 'happy' and 'very happy' people is rich and satisfying social relationships. Frey & Stutzer (2002) found that marriage raises happiness with married people reporting higher subjective wellbeing than their single, divorced, separated or widowed counterparts, explaining this in terms of additional sources of self-esteem, support and companionship.

### **3.5.6 Goal Setting and Strengths**

Argyle (2001) suggests goals have long been an anchor point of positive people with studies showing that setting goals gives purpose, meaning, direction and structure (Emmons, 1999). Further, research on goals and motivation suggests that intentions are crucial for any deliberate or purposeful action with Ajzen's (1985) theory of planned behaviour purporting that intentions are the most accurate predictors of behavioural outcomes. Behavioural studies have concluded that whether individuals finish their homework, maintain an exercise regime or use sunscreen partly depends on the strengths of their intentions to do so (Armitage & Conner, 2001; Milne *et al.*, 2000; Webb & Sheeran, 2006). Thus, forming intentions and

goals are necessary to direct individuals' attention and effort towards the target outcome (Gollwitzer, 1999; Gollwitzer & Sheeran, 2006) and, according to Locke and Latham (2002), '*... goals have an energizing function.*' (p. 706). Further, Locke & Latham (1990) suggest that the attention focusing effect of goal setting leads to higher effort as well as increased persistency of effort. They purport that goals motivate people to develop strategies that will enable them to perform at the required goal levels and that accomplishing the goal can lead to satisfaction and further motivation, or frustration and lower motivation if the goal is not accomplished. In addition to providing motivation, Gollwitzer (1999) proposes that goals work by eliciting situational cues that remind individuals to engage in the target behaviour at a non-conscious level. Similarly, theories on self-regulation, such as control theory (Carver & Scheier, 1998), and the model of action phases (Gollwitzer, 1990; Heckhausen & Gollwitzer, 1987), propose that the act of setting explicit goals prepares individuals to take deliberate actions related to the desired outcomes.

Cameron's (2013) work on positively deviant organizations alludes to the importance of matching the size of the goal with the perceived abilities of the individual or team with the suggestion that engaged employees are likely to flourish if set what are termed 'Everest goals'. These are akin to 'flow', and have 5 attributes:

Firstly, these goals are 'positively deviant': Everest goals aim not just to overcome problems and achieve success, but to reach extraordinary high levels of performance, which Cameron (2008) defines as performance that spectacularly and dramatically exceeds normal.

Secondly, such goals are focused on 'goods of first intent', i.e., the goal '*is good in itself and is to be chosen for its own sake*' (Cameron, 2013, p. 86). Goods of first intent possess inherent



value and are intrinsically desirable whereas Cameron describes second intent as *'that which is good for the sake of obtaining something else, such as power, profit or prestige'* (p. 86).

Cameron argues that goods of first intent never become satiated so do not diminish from habituation. Thus, working towards or the achievement of an Everest goal is akin to the sense of having a calling orientation at work (Wrzesniewski, 2014).

Third, such goals possess an affirmative orientation which Cameron describes as an inclination towards positive possibilities - toward 'why not?' rather than 'why?' Thus, they focus on opportunities, possibilities and potential.

Fourth, Everest goals are also described as 'contribution goals' in that they provide benefit to others, emphasising what the individual can give rather than what they can get (and are thus differentiated from achievement goals which are self-focused). Crocker, Olivier & Nuer (2009) suggest contribution goals produce a growth orientation and higher levels of meaningfulness of activities.

Cameron (2013) states the fifth characteristic of Everest goals is that they foster sustainable positive energy.

Turning to strengths, according to Seligman (2002), one of positive psychology's three central concerns is the study of strengths and virtue. As discussed in previous chapters, using one's strengths in a challenging task leads to the experience of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975) and what Seligman (2002) calls 'the engaged life'. Roberts *et al.* (2005) advocate a process of soliciting feedback from work colleagues about times that the focal individual was at their personal best, then seeking patterns across the qualitative replies received to form a picture of the 'reflected best self'. Further, Csikszentmihalyi's (2002) concept of flow, in its simplest

sense, suggests that by focusing employees' energy on their areas of strength, the organization will reap improvements in work rate, motivation and well-being.

### **3.5.7 Income**

A question that frequently crops up in academic and popular psychology literature is, 'Can one buy happiness?' (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2002/2008). According to Layard (2003), *'There is a paradox at the heart of our civilisation. Individuals want more income. Yet, as society has got richer, people have not become happier. Over the last 50 years we have got better homes, more clothes, longer holidays, and above all better health. Yet surveys show clearly that happiness has not increased in either the US, Japan, continental Europe or Britain.'* (p. 25-28)

The fact that money might be a misnomer in the quest for happiness is backed by Myers & Diener (1995) who write that *'Happiness and life satisfaction are similarly available to the young and old, women and men, black and white, the rich and working class...the enduring characteristics of the individual are more important than external life circumstances.'* (quoted in Holden 2005, p. 36).

Indeed, various social commentators have argued that increased individualism has led to a *'postmodern paradox'* (Hogg, 2000, p. 31), where increased individualism and materialism are associated with an overall decline in wellbeing (Cushman, 1990; B. Schwartz, 2010). James (2007) recounts stories of people who have 'chased happiness' through striving for celebrity status or through increasing their spending power, pointing to the adoption of the phrase, 'retail therapy', which in itself suggests that shopping is a therapeutic way to achieve happiness. James' research concurs with the findings of Lyubomirsky (2007) and others in

that although people believe they would feel happier if they had more money, lived in a warmer climate, or were better looking, this is generally not the case.

Layard (2005) collated research from the economics of happiness, tracing it back to the 1970s, postulating that although real income per head has nearly doubled, the proportion of people who say they are satisfied with their financial situation has fallen. More recently, Diener, Tay & Oishi (2013) suggest that the association between income and subjective wellbeing is more likely to occur when the average person's material welfare accompanies rising income, when individuals become more satisfied with their finances and more optimistic about their futures.

Thus, it remains unclear as to the role money play in happiness. Seligman (2003) confirms that '*...people who value money above other life goals report they are less satisfied not only with their financial status but also with their lives overall.*' (p. 55). James (2007) suggests that this is one of the reasons why Britain is lower in the world happiness comparisons than GNP would suggest - because money, and its association with material goods, has become something to chase. Thus, the literature points to a paradox whereby higher income might indeed result in higher wellbeing, but *chasing* higher income might result in lower levels of wellbeing.

### **3.5.8 Physical Exercise**

Another component of subjective wellbeing is, according to Argyle (2001), physical exercise. Argyle lists the benefits of regular exercise as lower stress, less tension, less tiredness, less anger, increased vigour, higher self-esteem and more positive moods. Contrary to set-point theory, adverse health changes have a lasting negative effect on happiness and adaptation is

incomplete to deteriorating health (Easterlin, 2003). In the case of severe changes in health, although humans have very strong resilience and can cope (Gilbert, 2006), those who have suffered an accident or illness report lower happiness levels than their comparison group (Brickman, Coates & Jannoff-Bulman, 1978; Easterlin, 2003).

Richards *et al* (2015) suggest that several studies have described a positive association between physical activity and mental well-being (e.g., Hyde, Maher & Elavsky, 2013; Penedo & Dahn, 2005) but there is a paucity of studies specific to the construct of happiness.

Richards *et al* (2015) found that for those who are ‘insufficiently active’ could increase their happiness by 20% if they introduced physical activity into their lives. They report that both low and high intensity physical activity are correlated with improvements in happiness, but that moderate-intensity activity has no impact on happiness. Further, the association with happiness is domain specific - results indicate it to be strongest for people who engage in ‘some’ vocational and/or ‘a lot’ of domestic physical activity.

Hassmén *et al* (2000) found that individuals who exercise on a regular basis tend to be happier over the long-term. Their study reported that leisure-time physical activity (LTPA) was associated with reduced odds of unhappiness after 2 and 4 years. People who were inactive in 2 consecutive cycles were more than twice as likely to be unhappy as those who remained active in both cycles after 2 years. Compared with those who became active, inactive participants who remained inactive were also more likely to become unhappy.

Several researchers remain sceptical about the association between physical activity and happiness. Blacklock *et al.* (2007) suggested that the contribution of physical activity to

happiness might be minor compared to other demographic and lifestyle factors such as education, income and companionship

### **3.5.9 Age**

Although less of an ‘intentional activity’ and more of an ‘inevitable process’, there is nevertheless, a plethora of research that links happiness to age. When it comes to age, the general belief is that older people are less happy than younger people (Blanchflower, 2008). However, contemporary studies have found that happiness follows a general U-shape through the life-cycle: high amongst the young, reaching a minimum at mid-40s and then lifting back up again (Blanchflower, 2008; Blanchflower & Oswald, 2007; Helliwell, 2003; Oswald, 1997).

Mogilner, Sepandar, Aaker & Aaker (2011) suggest there is a shifting meaning of happiness as one ages, concluding that younger people are more likely to associate happiness with excitement and, as one ages, one becomes more likely to associate happiness with peacefulness. This change is driven by a redirection of attention from the future to the present as people progress through their life with ramifications affecting purchasing behaviour as well as appropriate ways to increase one’s happiness at different stages of life. Barrett (1998) concurs that there is a dynamic and predictable shift in the meaning of happiness and how it is experienced over one’s life course.

Age-related differences in the amount of time one has left in life has significant consequences, affecting individual’s goals and decisions (Carstensen, 2006; Drolet & Williams, 2005).

When people have an expansive time horizon, they tend to seek novelty and information that will serve them well in the future (Carstensen *et al.*, 1999). In contrast, when people’s time

horizon is limited, they are more likely to foster current relationships that are satisfying and comforting in the present (Carstensen *et al.*, 1999). The implication is that emotions are likely to reflect these temporal orientations. Indeed, recent research shows excitement to be aligned with future events, whereas calm, blessed and peacefulness tend to be linked to an appreciation of the present (Harris & Kamvar, 2009).

### **3.6 Section Summary**

This chapter examined Lyubomirsky's (2007) 'What Determines Happiness?' pie chart, suggesting that there is an uneven split of portions that constitute 'happiness'. Reportedly, 50% of an individual's happiness is accounted for by their genetic make-up and a further 10% correlates to an individual's circumstances, both of which are deemed to be fixed, at least in the short term. That leaves 40% of an individual's happiness down to the exercising, or not, of 'intentional activities' and this is the portion that gives hope to being able to raise happiness levels. Ten of the most commonly quoted happiness remedies were listed and evaluated and it is these factors (plus others) that will be measured in the main body of this research.

It is clear that individuals can, to a certain degree, engage in activities and mental habits that will elevate their levels of happiness. The next chapter examines the organizational factors that, in conjunction with the aforementioned personal habits, can create flourishing organizations. It explores the traditional organizational behavioural notions of work design and job satisfaction before venturing into the relatively new area of worker engagement. Leadership is discussed as one of the key facilitators of a workplace culture in which employees are able to flourish. The next chapter also introduces Russell's (1980) circumplex diagram and examines the notion that traditional measures of job satisfaction have gone beyond their remit, straying into the more vigorous territory of employee engagement.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Flourishing in the Workplace**

## **Chapter 4: Flourishing in the Workplace**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Chapter 4 highlights the centrality of happiness to workplace motivation with the intention of bringing the organizational implications of positivity and wellbeing into sharper focus as well as investigating some of the academic themes that will be taken forward into the Methodology and Results sections.

It is clear that individuals differ in their happiness levels. The previous chapters have sought to explain some of the personal characteristics, societal issues and circumstances that contribute to, and detract from, individual wellbeing. Previous chapters have also argued that the workplace is becoming more fraught – employers are demanding more work and increasing flexibility from employees – resulting in longer hours and higher stress levels. Many organizations acknowledge the importance of employee wellbeing but, it seems, the economic imperative of demanding ‘more from less’ may be working in a counter-productive way.

This section reports on issues of organizational culture, work design and high quality human connections that are deemed to be pre-requisites of a flourishing workplace. It also elucidates on the central theme of employee engagement, examining Warr (2007) and Warr & Clapperton’s (2010) notion that traditional organizational behavioural measures of ‘job satisfaction’ have gone beyond their remit and effectively encroached into the realms of the more energised form of ‘engagement’.



This chapter introduces Russell's (1980) circumplex model as a means of classifying affects associated with satisfaction and engagement. It also introduces Warr's IWP Multi-Affect Indicator (1990) as the preferred means of measuring workplace affect. Both the circumplex model and the Multi-Affect Indicator are used in the gathering and reporting of data for this thesis.

This chapter concludes by distilling the literature review into 5 research questions.

## **4.2 Creating a Flourishing Culture**

Fisher (2010) suggests that the history of organizational behaviour has been dominated by the assumption that the causes of happiness, unhappiness and stress in organizations are to be found in attributes of the structure, culture, job, supervisor or other aspects of the work environment – rather than within the individuals themselves. Indeed, Warr & Clapperton (2010) suggest there is relatively little research on how individuals may volitionally contribute to their own happiness at work, though much of the advice on how to improve happiness in general (example, practice gratitude, pursue intrinsic goals, nurture relationships, finding flow) could also be applied in the work setting. Gavin & Mason (2004) point to the link between the domains of work and home, stating that, *'In order to achieve the good life people must work in good organizations.'* (p. 387).

Sirota, Mischkind & Meltzer (2005) suggest that three factors are critical in producing a happy and enthusiastic workforce: equity (respectful and dignified treatment, fairness, security); achievement (pride in the organization, empowerment, feedback, job challenge) and camaraderie with one's work colleagues. Thus, high performance work practices would typically involve redesigning work to be performed by autonomous teams, being highly

selective in employment, offering job security, investing in training, sharing information and power with employees, adopting flat organization structures, and the implementation of a reward system based on organizational performance (Huselid, 1995; Lawler, 1992; Pfeffer, 1998)

Research provides evidence that perceptions of affective, cognitive and instrumental aspects of organizational climate are consistently and strongly related to happiness in the form of job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Carr *et al.*, 2003). Further, Parker *et al.* (2003) showed that five cultural dimensions of role, job, leader, team and organization were consistently related to job satisfaction.

Perceptions of organizational justice are also related to job satisfaction and commitment (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt *et al.*, 2001). Fisher (2008) argues that perceived performance is a strong determinant of emotion at work, especially for individuals who care about their job and who have adopted approach goals. Various studies demonstrate that goal achievement and positive feedback predict satisfaction (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Kluger *et al.*, 1994; Locke *et al.*, 1970). Control theory suggests that the rate of progress towards a goal is a determinant of positive affect (Carver & Scheier, 1990) leading to the conclusion that employees' beliefs about how well they are doing should be both salient and continuously available.

It seems therefore that an organization is able, at least to some extent, to create conditions that are conducive to employee happiness. However, as well as mitigating for happiness by creating a positive workplace culture, organizations are also able to influence happiness at a job level. Indeed, much of the research on what makes employees happy has focused on

properties of the job, with complex, challenging, and interesting work assumed to produce positive work attitudes (e.g., Hackman & Oldham, 1975; Fried & Ferris, 1987). Warr (1987) provides a typology of job characteristics that goes beyond the job itself, incorporating items such as supervision, pay and career progression as additional predictors of happiness with greater quantities of these desirable job characteristics being generally considered healthy. However, Warr & Clapperton's (2010) 'vitamin model' suggests that, analogous to vitamins, increasing amounts of some job characteristics improves wellbeing only until deficiencies are overcome and one reaches the 'recommended daily allowance', and that beyond that point additional amounts are thought to have limited beneficial effects on happiness. Further, there may be some job characteristics that in high quantities actually reduce happiness. For example, the vitamin model postulates that it is possible to have too much personal control, variety and clarity.

### **4.3 Working Relationships**

An additional source of workplace happiness is pleasant relationships with one's work colleagues (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Other findings concur that high quality connections are important sources of happiness and energy for employees (Dutton, 2003; Dutton & Ragins, 2007) with Rath (2007) reporting that individuals who have a best friend at work are seven times more likely to be engaged in their job.

There is evidence that emotional contagion is multi-directional, occurring from leader to follower (Bono & Ilies, 2006; Johnson, 2008; Sy *et al.*, 2005) among teammates (Bakker *et al.*, 2006; Barsade, 2002; Ilies *et al.*, 2007; Kelly & Barsade, 2001; Totterdell, 2000; Walter & Bruch, 2008), and from customer to service provider (Dallimore *et al.*, 2007). According to Dutton (2003), the strategies that lead to high-quality connections in a workplace '*... involve*

*little actions that build trust, show respectful engagement, and enable others to do their tasks effectively, such as teaching, advocating for them, and accommodating their preferences.'* (p. 2-3)

Several studies correlate teamwork with a greater sense of wellbeing (e.g., Greller, Parsons & Mitchell, 1992). This is explained by the facilitation of social networks which, as Johoda (1982) notes, are a critical latent function of employment. Baumeister & Leary (1995) purport that work groups can help fulfil one's individual need to belong and evidence for the benefits of team working is also provided by Carter & West (1999) who report that higher team clarity and commitment to group goals predicts better team level wellbeing.

A further salient aspect of team wellbeing involves employees' emotional reactions towards their work groups and organization with Allen (1996) referring to 'group organizational congruence', meaning that employees who are greatly attached to their teams also tend to be more positively committed to the larger organization.

Cameron (2008) refers to positive energy networks and that; *'Interacting with positive energisers leaves others feeling lively and motivated. Positive energisers have been found to be optimistic, heedful, and unselfish. Interacting with them builds energy in people and is an inspiring experience.'* (p. 42). On a similar theme, Losada and Heaphy (2004) observed managers and their teams and coded their interactions as: 'Positive' or 'Negative', 'Self-focused' or 'Other focused', and 'Inquiry' (asking questions) or 'Advocacy' (defending a point of view). Their conclusion was that typically, teams had a 2:1 positivity ratio, with high performing teams registering 6:1 and low performing teams 1:1. According to their report, the tipping point or 'Losada Line' was 2.9013: 1.

Although the specificity of the ratio has been questioned by Brown *et al* (2013) considerable evidence underscores the claim that when it comes to positivity ratios, within bounds, higher is better. For example, Gottman's (1994) work on relationships suggests that flourishing marriages have a positivity ratio of 5:1 and failed marriages 1:1. These ratios correspond with the model tested by Tsai, Chen & Liu (2007) which sought to explain the relationship between positive mood and task performance via the following mediators: helping others and being helped, self-efficacy and task persistence. According to this study, high-quality connections boost positive affect, increase the likelihood that people will help each other and increase the energy that people have for persisting at tasks, all of which contribute to enhanced productivity.

#### **4.4 Work Design**

The literature review has revealed that very few researchers have studied 'happiness', per se, preferring to broaden the investigation to encompass subjective wellbeing. A summary of some of the salient findings, linking work design, employee satisfaction and/or employee wellbeing are summarised below.

Mayo's (1949) Hawthorne Experiments and the Total Quality Management movement (e.g., Deming, 1966) from the 1960s onwards explored the happy/productive worker relationship by examining the link between job satisfaction and job performance. More specifically, proponents of the Human Relations School of Management emphasized the power of social norms, the need for employees to get along with their co-workers and to be satisfied with their jobs (Landsberger, 1958). Job satisfaction thus came to be considered as a reflection of how desirable or attractive an employee considered their job to be (Perrow, 1986) and, as a

consequence, a number of theories evolved concerned with examining the proposed impact of job satisfaction on worker-related behaviours such as employee turnover, absenteeism and tardiness. For example, the job characteristics model (JCM) suggests that work can be organised to facilitate employee wellbeing (Hackman & Oldman, 1976). In the JCM, five characteristics – skill variety, task autonomy, task identity, task significance and task feedback – are seen as vital to generate contentment at work. The presence of these core dimensions leads to three psychological states; perceived meaningfulness at work, felt responsibility for outcomes and knowledge of results. In return, it is suggested that employees will display a range of positive work outcomes, including greater motivation, satisfaction, performance and lower absenteeism (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

Researchers have also used the demand/control model (Karasek, 1979) to design jobs that enhance psychological and physical wellbeing. This model suggests healthy work environments are those in which appropriate demands are made of workers who are given correspondingly suitable amounts of decision-making autonomy. The demand/control model also recognizes that social support promotes psychological health (Karasek & Theorell, 1990) through the provision of quality and helpful interactions provided by colleagues and supervisors with strong social support facilitating a sense of identity, group cohesion and wellbeing. Effectively, this school of thought suggests that successful work design produces upward spirals of behaviour and that jobs with high demand and control (termed ‘active jobs’) can foster positive affect by promoting employee confidence and active learning. Conversely, a ‘relaxed’ job (low demands and high control) does not provide employees with such intrinsic motivation. Similarly, high strain jobs (characterised by high demands and low control) are likely to overwhelm employees and encourage a form of helplessness that can

undermine motivation, whereas passive jobs (low demands and low control) do not encourage skills development and can result in employee helplessness (Karasek & Theorell, 1990).

In a similar vein, 'role clarity', 'role agreement' and 'role load' were identified by Weick (1988) as important factors in an employee's experience of work and therefore their motivation levels. Beehr (1995) explored how having sufficient information and predictability in one's work (i.e., role clarity), restricted sets of demands and expectations (i.e., role agreement) and work that is challenging yet achievable (i.e. role load) can affect morale and job related wellbeing. Barling *et al.* (1999) build on this notion, stating that role overload is becoming more of an issue in the modern workplace, a situation manifested in the general increased amount and pace of work which is, in turn, associated with negative moods, burnout and poor health (Sparks *et al.*, 1997).

#### **4.5 Job Satisfaction**

Locke (1976) suggests that job satisfaction is the most frequently studied workplace construct. Warr (1999) concurs, suggesting that attention has traditionally been focused on job satisfaction which is connoted as a relatively passive experience of low-to-moderate activation.

Blauner (1960) found that job satisfaction tends to peak for professional workers and there follows a line of decline through managers and administrators, higher clerical, skilled manual with unskilled manual workers recording the lowest levels of job satisfaction. Similarly, Noor (1995) reported that those at higher levels of job status are more satisfied, in part for the reasons just given, plus they tend to enjoy better physical conditions of work. Herzberg *et al.*

(1959) postulated that employees were most likely to feel 'exceptionally good' about their work when they experienced achievement and recognition.

Job satisfaction is an attitude, so should therefore contain both cognitive and affective components (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). However, according to Warr (2007) there has been a history of mismatch between the definition of 'satisfaction' and its measurement. For example, Locke (1976) describes job satisfaction largely in affective tones as a pleasurable emotional state that is dependent on the appraisal of one's job experiences. Others have pointed out that the most frequently used measures of job satisfaction ignore affect and have a predominant focus on the cognitive component (Brief, 1998; Organ & Near, 1985). As a result, Brief (1998) called for research on a new job satisfaction construct which explicitly includes affect as a component, suggesting that the affective component may relate to outcomes differently from the cognitive component which has been the focus of most existing research.

Inceoglu and Warr (2011) state that *'By definition, in terms of its original meaning, 'satisfaction' refers to an acceptable level rather than to an enthusiastic, energized state.'* (p. 1). Further, Warr (2012) describes job satisfaction as more reactive in terms of feelings about what has already been attained and is likely to be attained. As defined by Locke (1969), satisfaction is *'The pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job as achieving or facilitating the achievement of one's job values.'* (p. 316). The corollary is that an individual who is 'satisfied' with his or her job believes that it has provided (or will provide) an acceptable level of what is wanted. In these definitions, Warr purports that 'job satisfaction' is deemed to be analogous to achieving a level of comfort and/or adequacy rather than a state of dynamism.



## 4.6 Employee Engagement

One of the stated research questions for this thesis is: *To what extent do flourishing and non-flourishing employees differ on measures of 'employee satisfaction' and 'employee engagement'?*

There has been a plethora of contemporary constructs centering on employee engagement. For example, Spreitzer & Sutcliffe's (2007) concept of 'thriving at work' combines feelings of vitality and energy with beliefs that one is learning, developing and making progress towards self-actualization. 'Personal engagement' and 'psychological presence' at work are concepts introduced by Kahn (1990) to refer to the amount of the authentic physical, cognitive, and emotional energy that individuals devote to their work. Inceoglu & Warr (2012) purport that there is also a need to develop understanding of engagement's bases within individuals themselves, suggesting *'More engaged and less engaged employees are likely to differ in certain traits as well as in the nature of their jobs, but few studies or models of possible personality contributors to job engagement have been published.'* (p. 1).

However, it appears that the activated state of employee engagement may not be a new phenomenon. 'Job involvement' is described as a state of engagement with one's job, identifying with one's work, and viewing the job as central to one's identity and self-esteem, roughly opposite to the concept of alienation or meaninglessness (Brown, 1996). Measures of job involvement include those developed by Lodahl (1965), Kanungo (1982) and Saleh & Hosek (1976) in which typical items include, *'I eat, live, and breathe my job'* and *'The most important things that happen to me involve my present job.'* More recently, a number of researchers have investigated the more dynamic state of engagement, defining it in a variety of ways. Macey and Schneider (2008) describe person level engagement as; *'positive affect*

*associated with the job and the work setting connoting or explicitly indicating feelings of persistence, vigour, energy, dedication, absorption, enthusiasm, alertness, and pride. As such, engagement has components of organizational commitment, job involvement, and the positive affectivity components of job satisfaction.* ' (p. 24).

Bakker & Demerouti (2008) define engagement as, *'a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption'* (pp. 209-210). In their definition, vigour is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, dedication refers to being strongly invested in one's work and absorption is characterized by being fully present and happily engrossed in one's work, a state akin to flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), where time passes quickly and one has difficulties in detaching oneself from work.

Engagement is seen as the opposite of burnout and can be measured by the Utrecht Work Enthusiasm Scale (UWES; Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002). Sample items include, *'At my work, I feel bursting with energy'* (vigour), *'I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose'* (dedication), and *'When I am working, I forget everything else around me'* (absorption).

This conceptualization of engagement is usually considered a relatively stable orientation toward a given job. However, Sonnentag (2003) reworded the UWES to assess daily engagement (e.g., *'Today I felt strong and vigorous in my work,'* and *'Today, I got carried away by my work'*) and found that engagement varied meaningfully within person from day to day. It has been suggested that individuals will be more engaged if they feel a 'calling' or a

connection between what they do at work and a higher purpose or important value (Seligman, 2002; Wrzesniewski *et al.*, 1997).

Wrzesniewski & Dutton (2001) report on employees creating purpose and meaning by job crafting, described as modifying the tasks to be performed, building or changing relationships and psychologically reframing the meaning of work. Individuals are thought to craft their jobs to assert control, create a positive self-image at work, and fulfil basic needs for connection to others. For instance, Wrzesniewski & Dutton (2001) give an example of nurses redefining their work as ‘helping patients heal’ as opposed to performing menial tasks as directed by physicians. Thus, it seems that some employees are able to re-define what they do and how they do it, in order to find meaning and purpose.

In terms of personality and engagement, analysis by Halbesleben (2010) identified a small number of studies about optimism and self-efficacy (e.g., Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2009), but suggests that comprehensive information about a wider range of personality traits is lacking. For instance, Halbesleben argues that within the widely-applied Big Five taxonomy (Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness) there is contradictory evidence concerning which factors are relevant to employee engagement. Langelaan *et al.* (2006) considered neuroticism and extraversion, but in a five-factor comparison, Kim, Shin & Swanger (2009) found that conscientiousness was the significant factor. These findings allude to the fact that shorter-term job engagement is indeed a significant function of longer-term attributes that lie within the individual rather than within the job or workplace. In Kim, Shin & Swanger’s (2009) study, ‘emotional stability’ and ‘conscientiousness’ accounted for most of the variance in job engagement. Employees

who were experiencing high levels of workplace engagement tended to be emotionally stable, socially proactive and achievement oriented.

Other studies (e.g., Rich *et al.*, 2010; Shirom, 2010) show that job engagement is significantly associated with certain job and organizational characteristics, suggesting the need for models of employee wellbeing and performance to embrace environmental features. But, as Warr (2007) argues, those models will be incomplete and potentially misleading if they exclude individuals' dispositional features and the strategies that are within their control. Job engagement, it is argued, differs from job satisfaction in being more strongly activated (Warr, 2007). It has been stated that it is '*... the sense of energy and enthusiasm in engagement that makes the construct different*' (Macey & Schneider, 2008, p. 24), adding that, '*Engagement connotes activation, whereas satisfaction connotes satiation.*' (p. 8).

Leiter & Bakker (2010, p. 1) define job engagement as, '*a positive, fulfilling, affective-motivational state of work-related wellbeing.*' Bakker, Albrecht & Leiter (2011) assert there is '*A growing consensus that engagement can be defined in terms of high levels of energy and high levels of involvement in work.*' (p. 22).

Rich *et al.* (2010), describe engagement as a '*motivational concept*' (p. 619). Warr & Clapperton (2010) place energy as a central tenet of engagement, as do other studies which link engagement with energy that becomes directed towards the pursuit of goals that are believed to lead to valued and rewarding outcomes (e.g., Kanfer *et al.*, 2008; Steers *et al.*, 2004; Van Eerde & Thierry, 1996).

#### 4.7 The 'Job Engagement' Debate

Warr (2007) suggests that employee engagement differs from satisfaction in terms of the level of activation or arousal, a principal dimension within the affective circumplex model established in other areas of research (e.g., Remington, Fabrigar & Visser, 2000; Russell, 1980, 2003; Yik, Russell & Feldman Barrett, 1999).

The circumplex model specifies experiences in terms of displeasure-to-pleasure and also low-to-high mental arousal or activation (e.g., Remington, Fabrigar, & Visser, 2000; Russell, 1980, 2003). Feelings in terms of those two axes are illustrated around the outside of the circumplex model in Figure 4.1, and summary labels for each quadrant's content are indicated as: anxiety (activated negative affect), enthusiasm (activated positive affect), depression (low-activation negative affect) and comfort (low-activation positive affect). Warr (2012) suggests these labels are shorthand descriptions for affect-sets within more complex mental and behavioural constructs as, for example; *'They do not denote the entirety of 'Anxiety' and the other three constructs.'* (p. 4)

Warr (2012) purports that the notions of engagement and satisfaction both incorporate positive feelings but engagement encompasses energized experiences and enthusiasm within the top-right quadrant of the circumplex model. This is corroborated by Kahn (1990) who suggests engaged workers are motivated to expend energy even in the face of difficulties and threats to their wellbeing.

The circumplex framework views affects not only in respect of their positive or negative valence, the degree to which they are pleasant or unpleasant, but also in terms of energized

activation – defined as, *‘a person’s state of readiness for action or energy expenditure’* (Russell, 2003, p. 156).

Warr & Inceoglu (2012) describe job satisfaction as having positive affect with moderate-to-low arousal in the circumplex, suggesting that the term itself implies sufficiency or adequacy – *‘something is satisfactory or OK, rather than being wonderful or exciting’* (p. 1), concluding therefore that ‘job satisfaction’ falls into the bottom-right quadrant of ‘comfort’.

This draws Macey & Schneider (2008) to conclude that wants and feelings, although both central to engagement and satisfaction, differ in their primary role. In activated states such as engagement, individuals have wants that are unsatisfied, whereas in more placid states such as satisfaction, individual’s wants have been or are expected to be fulfilled. Warr (2011) states it thus; *‘In broad terms, engagement may be viewed as energized satisfaction; engaged workers are necessarily satisfied in some respects, but satisfied workers may or may not be engaged.’* (p. 2). Further, Inceoglu & Warr (2011) postulate that organizational studies have often been imprecise about the location of feelings in terms of the circumplex quadrants. For example, research into positive affect might encompass all feelings on the right-hand side of figure 4.1, involving both low and high activation. Inceoglu and Warr (2011) give the example of the widely used Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) suggesting that the 20 items purported to measure positive and negative affect actually only measure high-arousal feelings in the two upper segments of the circumplex (e.g., Remington *et al.*, 2000; Tellegen, Watson, & Clark, 1999).

Four-quadrant measures have been presented by Warr (1990), and Van Katwyk *et al.* (2000), with Burke *et al.* (1989) emphasising that a model based on the four quadrants together was

superior and Van Katwyk *et al.* (2000) advocating the use of an overall score across all quadrants as 'the most comprehensive assessment.' (p. 204).

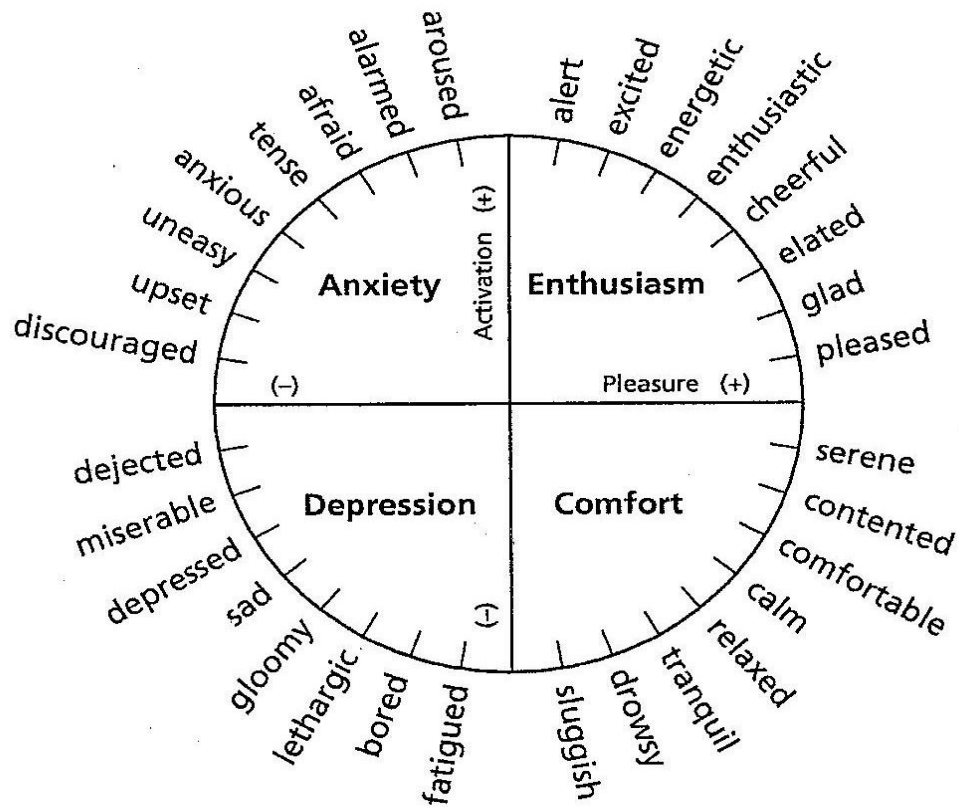


Figure 4.1: Circumplex Model of Affect (Russell, 1980, 2003)

In figure 4.1, Warr *et al.* (2013) label the quadrants thus:

**Top right quadrant: High-activation pleasant affect (HAPA)**, for example enthusiasm. It is suggested that energy within this kind of affect is likely to be important to self-start and to sustain challenging change activity, perhaps in the face of resistance and set-backs (Bindl & Parker, 2010)

**Bottom right quadrant: Low-activation pleasant affect (LAPA)** such as feeling comfortable. Warr *et al.* (2013) suggest that pleasant feelings with low activation are expected

to be less related to positive behaviours. Further, it is purported that feelings in this section of the circumplex contain no impetus for action, generating reflection more than activity (Frijda, 1986)

**Bottom left quadrant: Low-activation unpleasant affect (LAUA)**, for example, depression.

This quadrant is characterised by low mood and low energy and is often accompanied by counter-productive behaviours (Frijda, 1986)

**Top left quadrant: High-activation unpleasant affect (HAUA)** for example, anxiety. This section includes a collection of generally negative emotions, and ones that may cause high energy avoidance behaviours (Frijda, 1986)

One of the central points of the job satisfaction/engagement debate is the suggestion that ‘job satisfaction’ has gone beyond its original remit and definition. Warr’s (2011) assertion is that recent measurements of satisfaction have strayed into ‘vigour’ and ‘energy’ which fall within the top-right quadrant of ‘enthusiasm’. This quadrant is inhabited by employees with a more energised form of job satisfaction which Warr describes as ‘engagement’. Thus, employee engagement, in this context, has clear links with motivation, energy, flow, wellbeing and flourishing. As such, ‘engagement’ forms an important part of the thesis. According to Warr, this elevated and aroused form of job satisfaction has been neglected by traditional scholars of organizational behaviour.

#### **4.8 Is There a Need to Re-focus on ‘Job Engagement’?**

A fundamental assumption of subjective wellbeing is that (as the name implies) its reliance on self-reporting means it represents the opinion of the individual. This has the advantage of



being directly from the respondent without any interference or interpretation. However, subjective wellbeing can be criticised because it is subject to contextualised influences, biases and response styles (Schwartz & Clore, 1983; Green *et al.*, 1993)

Two principal perspectives and associated measuring instruments can be identified, which are very different in their content and theoretical background (Warr, 2007). First are models and measures of wellbeing entirely in terms of employees' affects, described as experiences that are '*primitive, universal, and simple, irreducible on the mental plane*' (Russell, 2003, p. 148) and range along a good-to-bad continuum with Warr & Clapperton (2010) recognising that wellbeing has also been examined through composites or 'syndromes' which comprise thoughts as well as feelings. For example, a measure of job-related stress might ask about feeling exhausted at the end of a work-day or a person's heavy-heartedness as they set off for work in the morning. Cognitive emotional syndromes therefore differ from basic emotions in that they involve thoughts and memories in addition to feelings. This higher degree of reflection and mental processing requires the respondent to attend to and remember particular instances, interpreting, evaluating and integrating what is recalled, and perhaps making comparisons with other people or other jobs (e.g., Staw & Cohen-Charash, 2005).

Warr (2007) suggests that to gather a true picture of affect it is appropriate to assess both kinds of wellbeing with 'affective wellbeing' focusing on a person's feelings and 'syndrome wellbeing' comprising a mix of perceptions, recollections, comparisons and anticipations as well as affects. Warr (2007) points out that some measures of job satisfaction already include elements of this more aroused sense of satisfaction, with, for example the Index of Organizational Reactions (e.g., Smith, Roberts, & Hulin, 1976) measuring satisfaction as including feelings of 'accomplishment', 'encouragement' and 'enthusiasm' and items of the

Job Descriptive Index (Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969) including ‘creative’, ‘challenging’, and ‘stimulating’. In a similar vein, the Job in General Scale (Ironson *et al.*, 1989) contains ‘worthwhile’, ‘ideal’, and ‘enjoyable’. Similarly, other investigations have made use of scales of job satisfaction including items like ‘great’ (Edwards & Cable, 2009) or ‘rewarding’ (Grandey, Cordeiro, & Crouter, 2005).

Warr (2007) purports that although scales of these kinds can be valuable in measuring wellbeing, they do not properly fit the conceptual definition of ‘satisfaction’, tending to take a broader perspective and essentially going beyond their remit by introducing activated notions that fall more naturally within the construct of ‘engagement’. Implications of this difference in emphasis between the relatively benign connotation of ‘satisfaction’ and the active wants of ‘engagement’ are important for this study. Warr’s assertion is that studies of job satisfaction have traditionally been examined in terms of person-environment (P-E) fit with incompatibility between an individual and his or her environment viewed as a significant source of stress. As described by Edwards and Van Harrison (1993), *‘The central hypothesis of P-E theory is that misfit between the person and the environment leads to psychological, physiological, and behavioural strains, such as dissatisfaction, boredom, anxiety, depression, elevated serum cholesterol, smoking, and so on.’* (pp. 628-9).

Various other studies have examined the relationship between employee and environment, (e.g., Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005; Ostroff & Judge, 2007), the common assumption being that a poor fit between an employee’s preferences and their working environment would result in lower wellbeing (e.g., French, Caplan & Van Harrison (1982). Therefore, the fact that employee engagement may be associated with unsatisfied wants seems almost counter-intuitive to traditional studies of organizational behaviour, as is the fact that the motivated

state of engagement is thus expected to be accompanied by worse rather than better person-job fit. According to Warr & Inceoglu (2012), *'The more passive state of 'satisfaction' is assumed to be primarily (but not exclusively) a reaction to external conditions, such that this form of wellbeing flows mainly from high levels of want-actual fit.'* (p. 4). They assert that the more vigorous state of engagement is, on the other hand, more likely to be facilitated by high levels of work demands and challenges that lead employees to become drawn in and energised.

Warr's desire to measure the more activated sense of employee engagement led to the development of the IWP Multi-Affect Indicator. Warr (2011) reports that although each type of feeling is related to certain outcomes, systematically different associations with other variables have been found. For instance, proactive behaviours and job engagement are significantly associated with activated positive affect (in the top-right quadrant of figure 4.1) whereas negative feelings (in the two left-hand quadrants) are unrelated to positive job features such as job discretion or skill use.

#### **4.9 Research Questions**

The research questions, introduced in the Executive Summary and outlined below, have been derived from the literature review and are particularly informed by:

1. The evolution of thinking and understanding of happiness and flourishing, including modern concepts that comprise positive psychology
2. The nature versus nurture debate and, in particular, Lyubormirsky's notion that 40% of an individual's happiness is in their own remit to control
3. An examination of flourishing in the workplace, in particular Warr's findings on the differences between 'satisfaction' and 'engagement' and his contention that engaged

employees will inhabit different sectors of Russell's (1980) circumplex model. This is deemed crucial in that the 'engaged' sector is commensurate with feelings of vigour and enthusiasm and, in turn, these affects lead to enhanced readiness for action.

Thus, the research questions for this thesis are:

**1. To what extent do flourishing and non-flourishing employees differ on measures of 'employee satisfaction' and 'employee engagement'?**

The starting point is to identify flourishing and non-flourishing employees and test them according to Warr's Multi-Affect Indicator. This will enable them to be mapped onto Russell's 4-quadrant circumplex model.

**2. What are the factors underpinning those who flourish at work?**

Having identified employees whose positive affect is contagious, the next step is to find out more about them. Information is sought on upbringing, type of job, happiness in home and work domains, as well as their reasons (in their own words) for their flourishing status.

**3. What intentional *within-person* strategies differentiate flourishing and non-flourishing employees?**

Once flourishing and non-flourishing employees have been identified, they will be asked a series of questions that seek to determine any differences with regards to happiness and positivity strategies.

**4. Which of these strategies is/are most widely used?**

The data will be subject to statistical analysis to determine the significance of any differences in 'intentional strategies'.

## **5. Does long term positive affect involve effort or is it effortless?**

In seeking to determine longevity of happiness (i.e., questions will be asked that pertain to past, present and predicted future happiness) this research question seeks to understand whether happiness is an effortless state or does longevity of happiness require a consistent effort. Lyubormirsky states that the 40% portion of happiness is an ‘intentional’ strategy, so does ‘intent’ require effort or might flourishing employees merely be happy by accident or disposition? Indeed, is it simply easier to adopt a default state of negative affect?

### **4.10 Summary and Conclusion**

The modern imperative is for organizations to achieve a Utopian blend of organizational efficiency while maintaining a flourishing culture. A positive organizational climate, favourable working relations and various forms of job design are all designed to create conditions in which employees can flourish. This chapter sought to move the debate towards an examination of the differences between the often-measured notion of ‘job satisfaction’ towards what Warr (2007) describes as the more motivated sense of ‘employee engagement’.

The chapter outlined Warr’s (2007) line of enquiry that traditional measures of satisfaction have attempted to gauge items such as ‘creative’, ‘challenging’, ‘stimulating’, ‘worthwhile’, ‘ideal’ and ‘enjoyable’, all of which take them beyond their ‘satisfaction’ remit. Warr & Inceoglu (2012) argue that although scales of these kinds can be valuable in measuring wellbeing, they fail to properly map onto the conceptual definition of satisfaction.

Further, this chapter explored the concept that employee engagement might, in fact, be higher if there was a lower job-person fit and therefore that the activated sense of employee engagement is more likely to be created in a less-than-perfect workplace. Indeed '*The greater the perceived incongruity the greater the likelihood of engagement with work,*' (Maslach & Leiter, 2008, p. 501), goes against the common assumption that a poor fit between an employee's preferences and their working environment would result in lower wellbeing (e.g., French, Caplan & Van Harrison, 1982).

Russell's (1980) circumplex model was introduced as a means of aggregating workplace affect into 4 principal categories, and to delineate between employees who are satisfied and those who are engaged. This chapter also sought to introduce Warr's Multi-Affect Indicator as a satisfactory means of measuring workplace affect.

The next chapter examines the methodology of collecting data. It looks at some of the existing measures of workplace wellbeing, arguing that, for various reasons, the collection of happiness data is problematic. It investigates how other researchers have sought data at individual, team and organizational level, exploring historical and contemporary methods.

The data collection methodology for this thesis is outlined and justified as are the advantages and disadvantages of on-line surveys.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Measuring Happiness**

## **Chapter 5: Measuring Happiness**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter reflects on the scarcity of the term ‘happiness’ as a workplace measurement, a factor prompted by its relative subjectivity and reminiscent of Gilbert’s (2006) suggestion that *‘philosophers have flung themselves headlong at the happiness problem for quite some time with little more than bruises to show for it.’* (p. 39). The argument is that researchers have preferred to measure job satisfaction and subjective wellbeing, neither of which have happiness in the name but both of which have strong elements of happiness contained therein. Issues of level and stability are considered as well as reporting on how other researchers have gained their data, providing an historical perspective, summarising some of the more contemporary approaches and postulating that there is no one best way of gathering data on happiness and wellbeing with all measures being subject to criticism.

This chapter then seeks to outline some of the wider methodological points pertaining to research in general, namely the qualitative versus quantitative debate, the best way of capturing data, survey design, length and structure, concluding with a reflection on the methods chosen for this thesis.

### **5.2 The Scarcity of the Term ‘Happiness’ in the Literature Review**

A critique of wellbeing data is offered by Diener & Seligman (2004) as *‘A haphazard mix of different measures of varying quality, usually taken from non-representative samples of respondents.’* (p. 4). They suggest, as a consequence, that it is difficult to formulate a set of summary statements or conclusions from the data that can be broadly generalised and accepted with a high degree of confidence.



Diener & Biswas-Diener (2008) imply that 'happiness' struggles to be taken seriously by the academic community, suggesting that it be rebranded as 'subjective wellbeing' to lend it an air of scientific legitimacy to a sceptical academic world. As a consequence of this somewhat haphazard approach, researchers such as Diener and Seligman use the terms 'happiness' and 'subjective wellbeing' interchangeably (Peterson, 2006). Haybron (2005) concurs with the morphing of the terms 'happiness' and 'subjective wellbeing', suggesting that most academic literature treats 'happiness' as a synonym for 'wellbeing'.

However, although happiness is not a term that has been extensively used in academic research on employee experiences in organizations, researchers have studied a number of constructs that have considerable overlap with the broad concept of happiness. Contemporary examples include 'engagement' (Warr, 2007), 'positivity' (Fredrickson, 2009), 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002) and 'meaning' (Sinek, 2011; Pink, 2011). Undoubtedly, the most central and frequently used of these in an organizational context is job or worker satisfaction, which has a long history as both an independent and dependent variable in organizational research (Brief, 1998; Cranny *et al.*, 1992).

Thus, in an investigation of how the academic literature has sought to measure happiness, it seems pertinent to take account of the full gamut of measures that are used synonymously for happiness, namely areas of subjective wellbeing, job satisfaction and employee engagement.

Fordyke (1988) purports there to be a widely shared cultural perception of happiness as being elusive, inexplicable and inviolably subjective, suggesting *'These perceptions led in turn to the view that happiness was equally nonviable as a psychological construct and thus fanciful, if not impossible, to measure and study empirically.'* (1983, p. 6).

However, happiness appears just as amenable to meaningful measurement as any other psychological phenomenon with Diener (1984) reporting that, overall, the reliability and validity of happiness measures has proven to be highly adequate and the consistency of resultant findings has been homogeneous over studies.

Thus, if the nature of happiness and its concomitants is stable and universal, the challenge has shifted from *'Can happiness be measured?'* to *'Which way are we going to measure it?'* (Fordyke, 1983, p. 6)

An abundance of wellbeing instrumentality exists, with Fordyce (1983) reporting that *'Over the years, scores of different approaches and measures have been designed to study happiness and few have ever been used more than once.'* (p. 6)

Linton, Dieppe & Medina-Lara (2016) comment on the proliferation of these measures purporting that *'Investigators within many disciplines are using measures of well-being, but it is not always clear what they are measuring, or which instruments may best meet their objectives.'* (p. 1). They report on a total of 99 measures, in which 196 dimensions of well-being are identified. These clustered around 6 key thematic domains of mental, social, physical & spiritual wellbeing, as well as activities and personal circumstances, leading to the conclusion that despite extensive study on the topic, *'there is little available consensus in the literature on the range, contents and differences between self-report measures of well-being.'* (p. 1).

Fundamental to the proliferation of wellbeing measurements is the extent of disagreement over the definition (Dodge et al, 2008) with definitions of wellbeing often differing by

discipline, and frequently confused with related topics such as health-related quality of life, happiness and wellness (Linton, Dieppe & Medina-Lara, 2016)

Kalmijn (2013) reports that there is much variety in the wording and number of response options used, which limits comparability across surveys. After studying 99 wellbeing measures Linton, Dieppe & Medina-Lara find themselves being unable to recommend a specific instrument, commenting instead that *'we reiterate that the most appropriate measure of well-being will depend on the dimensions of well-being of most interest.'* (p. 14)

A fundamental assumption of subjective wellbeing is that it is couched in self-reporting and, as such, represents the subjective opinion of the individual concerned. This has the advantage of being directly from the respondent without any interference or interpretation. However, the concept is open to criticism because it is subject to contextualised influences, biases and response styles (Schwartz & Clore, 1983. Green *et al.* (1993) report further limitations including a reliance on self-reporting surveys as the sole reporting mechanism and data gathered at one point in time, with no follow up, prompting Schwarz and Strack (1999) to argue that transient moods and other contextual factors may significantly affect these momentary snap-shots of workplace moods. Although a few researchers have assessed happiness by asking friends and family to give their impressions of how happy a particular person is (e.g., Sandvik, Diener, & Seidlitz, 1993), ultimately the final judge of happiness and/or subjective wellbeing is *'whoever lives inside the person's skin'* (Myers & Diener, 1995, p. 11).

The simplest measurement encountered during the literature review was the Fordyce Emotion Questionnaire (Fordyce, 1988), a measure of emotional wellbeing that provides an indication

of a person's intensity and frequency of happiness. The questionnaire consists of two items, the first measuring happiness on a 0 to 10 scale, with descriptors ranging from (0) 'extremely unhappy', to (5) 'neutral', to (10) 'extremely happy'. The second item is an estimate of the percentages of time respondents feel happy, unhappy, and neutral. A combination score can be calculated, which combines the scale score and percentage happy score in equal weights but Fordyce reports this score is seldom used in the literature, with item 1 as the reported norm.

Fordyce (1988) purports the measure to show '*... good reliability, exceptional stability, and a record of convergent, construct, and discriminative validity unparalleled in the field,*' (p.355) claiming its 1,500 administrations elevates it to being the '*granddaddy*' of all the happiness measures (1988, p. 65). Indeed, Diener (1984) reviewed 20 happiness and wellbeing instruments and concluded that Fordyce's scale, in comparison to other measures of wellbeing, has the strongest correlations with daily affect and life satisfaction, and is a reliable and valid test that, combined with its brevity of use, '*should receive more widespread use*' (1984, p. 549). Brief (1998) suggests that happiness-related constructs in organizational research vary in several ways. First is the level at which they are seen to exist, second is their duration or stability over time, and third is their specific content.

### **5.3 Level and Stability Issues in Happiness Constructs**

The measurement of happiness-related constructs varies in level, from transient emotional experiences through to organizational phenomena that occur at the level of individual employee, team, department or organization as a whole. At the transient level, Weiss & Cropanzano's (1996) introduced 'Affective Events Theory' which seeks to explore real-time work situations and the short-lived moods and emotions that individuals might experience as

a result. Typically, these include transient states such as positive moods, the experience of flow and discrete emotions such as joy, pleasure, happiness and contentment. Unit-level constructs describe the happiness of teams, usually based on aggregated reports of individual members of the team. For example, 'group affective tone' has been operationalized as the average of team members' ratings of their own affect during the past week (George, 1990), and 'unit-level engagement' is defined as the average of reports of the extent to which each person in the unit is individually engaged with his or her job (Harter *et al.*, 2002).

In terms of stability, it is reported that happiness fluctuates over short periods of time (Lazarus, 1991) with evidence of substantial within-person variation in happiness states at work. Fisher (2003) measured task satisfaction during a working week and found 76% of the total variation was within person over time whereas Miner *et al.* (2005) reported that 56% of the variance in affect at work was within person. These findings are crucial for this thesis in that they indicate that although external factors impinge on wellbeing, individuals are able to influence their own happiness levels, at least to some extent.

Generally, person-level and unit-level constructs are assumed to be more stable over time. For instance, Warr (2007) proposes that an individual's typical mood at work should vary less over time than their momentary mood. Attitudes such as job satisfaction are usually measured once and then assumed to characterize the respondent for some reasonable period of time on either side of the measurement occasion. Using these snapshot measurements, job satisfaction has been found to be modestly stable over two, three and five-year periods, even for those who change employers and/or occupations (Staw & Ross, 1985). This finding suggests, once again, that factors within the person are producing stability in their happiness at work across jobs and over time.

## 5.4 Measuring Happiness at Work

Historically, there have been a number of measures designed to evaluate happiness-related constructs such as wellbeing and quality of life (Bradburn, 1969; Fordyce, 1988). Many, such as the Affect Balance Scale (Bradburn, 1969) evaluate affect, splitting it into two dimensions of positive and negative, which broadly equate to the experience of pleasurable and unpleasurable emotions and moods (Kahneman, 1999). Subjective wellbeing typically introduces a third, cognitive dimension, where the respondent evaluates their own satisfaction with life. For example, the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS; Diener *et al.*, 1985) is a widely-used measure designed to assess an individual's overall level of life satisfaction, with Pavot & Diener (1993) suggesting it offers good internal consistency and reliability. The Temporal Satisfaction With Life Scale (TSWLS; Pavot, Diener & Suh, 1998) represents an adaptation of the original SWLS and is intended to assess an individual's past, present and future satisfaction. The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson, Clarke & Tellegen, 1988) includes 10 affective adjectives to gauge positive affect and negative affect. Examples include 'interested', 'enthusiastic' and 'inspired' on the positive scale and 'distressed', 'upset' and 'afraid' on the negative. With this thesis in mind, it is important to note that all of the aforementioned questionnaires can take more than an hour to complete.

The Oxford Happiness Inventory (OHI; Argyle, Martin & Lu 1995) incorporates terms related to emotional experiences and life satisfaction. The OHI gauges a mass of happiness-related data including energy levels, optimism, perceived control of life, goals, achievements and general sense of happiness. The OHI was simplified by Hills and Argyle (2002) to make it '*compact, easy to administer and allows endorsements over an extended range.*' (p. i). The simplified version can be administered online and has the advantage of taking less than 20 minutes to complete.

Warr's desire to measure the more activated state of engagement led to the development of the IWP Multi-Affect Indicator. Warr (1990) purports that this measure of affect has several advantages: It is domain-specific, focusing on feelings at work rather than in-general, and thus likely to be more predictive of work-related outcomes. It has a basis in the much-researched circumplex model of affect (Russell, 1980) giving it a strong theoretical grounding. The IWP Multi-Affect Indicator covers all four quadrants of the circumplex model, whereas similar measures often provide partial coverage. A further advantage is that its response anchors identify amounts of time in a brief recent period, minimizing recall errors. Plus, it has the benefit of building on Warr's (1987) widely-used measure of engagement, to better represent the four quadrants and to enhance reliability through a larger number of items.

The raft of self-report measures have raised some concerns academically with Schwartz & Strack (1991) showing that subjective wellbeing scores can be influenced by a number of factors such as situational context, the type of scales that are used, the order in which the items are presented and the mood of the respondent at the time of measurement.

To combat these short-comings, Lucas *et al.* (1996) recommend the use of a multi-method battery to assess subjective wellbeing, arguing that this is likely to gauge a more accurate measurement. Part of this battery, they purport, should include evaluations from those closest to the subject, usually friends, co-workers or managers. These reports, although rare, have been shown to have substantial correlation to self-reports of life satisfaction (Pavot *et al.*, 1991).

Further, and in response to some of the criticisms of memory bias and the tendency to recall the most salient and recent experiences most clearly (Kahneman, 1999), researchers have developed methods other than the standard self-report questionnaires. One example is the Day Reconstruction Method (DRM), used to measure the frequency and intensity of a variety of positive and negative emotions over time (Kahneman *et al.*, 2004). With the DRM, individuals are asked to list all of the activities they engaged in during a period of 24 hours and then rate those activities according to the positive and negative emotions they afforded. While the DRM remains a retrospective method, it allows for more fine-grained data regarding individuals' sum-total of positive and negative emotions (Kahneman, 1999).

In addition to the DRM, researchers have also used the Experience Sampling Method (ESM; Csikszentmihalyi, Larson, & Prescott, 1977) to improve accuracy in reports of positive and negative emotions. In ESM, respondents are signalled (paged in the original studies but now texted, most commonly) at random intervals during the day and are asked to answer questions regarding how they are feeling at that moment. ESM has a number of advantages including a high ecological validity because it allows individuals to answer questions while involved in real-life situations (Furr, 2009). Further, it prevents the memory biases associated with retrospective methods by asking respondents to describe their emotions at that moment (Scollon *et al.*, 2007). In addition, although ESM started as a costly and time-consuming method, the advent of new technologies has made it increasingly cost-effective and easy to use. ESM also has a number of drawbacks, most notably the time commitment required from participants may encourage self-selection and attrition issues with Scollon *et al.* (2007) reporting that ESM participants may be more motivated, conscientious and agreeable than average. Second, the technology involved may inhibit participation from certain groups and



third, participants may decide not to respond during particular activities, thus impinging on the randomness of sampling (Wheeler & Reis, 1991).

## **5.5 Approaches to Methodology**

In addition to the debate as to the best way to capture happiness-related data, there is also a consideration of the broader value of quantitative and qualitative methods, and whether the two approaches should be discrete and dichotomous. White & Mitchell (1976) suggest that quantitative methods are seen as advantageous in that they can cover a wide sample, are relatively quick and economical and provide relevant data for policy decisions but are criticised for being inflexible and unable to take into account the social meanings that people place on their actions. According to Silverman (1970), whilst qualitative methods have advantages such as being able to study situations over time and understand their context, they can be time-consuming in nature and therefore deemed impractical for some studies.

Gradually, however, there is an emergent recognition that a bridging of the gap between the two methodologies is beneficial, particularly with regards to studying organizational behaviour. As Easterby-Smith *et al.* (1991) remark, *'Increasingly there is a move amongst management researchers to develop methods and approaches which provide a middle ground, and some bridging between the two extreme viewpoints.'* (p. 26). By combining quantitative and qualitative approaches one can develop ideas and theories from exploratory, quantitative data and then formulate and test hypotheses using qualitative methods.

In this study, which comprises elements of human motivation, a hybrid of the two approaches was deemed particularly useful, with the initial data gathering designed to be quantitative in nature and then scrutinised using qualitative techniques. As alluded to in earlier chapters,

happiness data is often collected under the generic term ‘subjective wellbeing’ (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008). Qualitative exploration of the data will allow an appreciation of, ‘*the different constructions and meanings that people place on their experience*’ (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 1991: p. 24)

The quantitative approach specifies that research should be independent, value-free and that the results should have the ability to generalize to the wider population with the independence of the researcher, described thus, ‘*the thing under study is separate from, unrelated to, and unaffected by the researcher*’ (Evered & Louis, 1991: p. 11). Throughout this study, there is an appreciation that the selection of ‘happiness’ and ‘flourishing’ as topics are value-judgements in themselves, and the researcher must have found these topics interesting and relevant in order to warrant an in-depth study. Moreover, the questions and target areas that the researcher perceives as emerging from the data gathering activities, necessarily incorporates some degree of subjectivity. Easterby-Smith *et al.* (1991) warn that such value judgements should not affect the analysis of the data, stating, ‘*it is important for them [the researcher] to resist the strong temptation to look for data that confirms whatever position they are currently holding*’ (1991, p. 40). Yet even in the case of quantitative techniques, some value judgements must be involved in the selection, formatting and positioning of items in a questionnaire. An awareness of this will help to minimise its effect. As Mitchell (1983) writes, ‘*... the analyst may therefore take account of the unique circumstances surrounding the event in the case being analysed in order to show these circumstances obscure the simple and direct way in which the general principles are operating.*’ (p. 206).

For this thesis, I deemed it appropriate to study individuals from organizations that were roughly similar in context. This technique was adopted by Collinson & Edwards (1996) who stated that, although they were not assuming the generalisations of their study, the fact that

the organizations were all operating in similar environments and all undergoing restructuring, they were not leading edge exemplars, and this helped to create a context within which their results could be interpreted. Hence, it would seem that, although philosophically the two methodological paradigms of quantitative and qualitative are distinct, in practice they can be combined to create a wider and more valid perspective of a subjective subject such as happiness. As Crompton & Jones (1988) suggest, *'in organizational research it is not a mutually exclusive decision between quantitative and qualitative methodology. In reality it is very difficult to study organizations without using both sorts of methods. In any event, quantitative data always rests on qualitative decisions.'* (p. 72).

### **5.6 Data Capture: The Reality**

It is important to note that, at the outset, I envisaged that qualitative data would be gathered by means of focus groups. The purpose of these groups would be to gain insight into the attitudes, experiences and mental strategies of those towards the upper end of the happiness and wellbeing spectrum. Focus groups are essentially group interviews, the central ethos of which is, *'the explicit use of the group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group'* (Morgan, 1988: p. 12). This method is particularly useful for preliminary studies as it ensures that, *'issues which might have been ignored in an outsider's inventory of the topic are included'* (1988: p. 34). Focus groups are practical in many ways, most notably in allowing a relatively high number (typically 6-12) of people to be interviewed at one time which saves time and resources for the researcher and the organization. The participants also tend to direct the conversation towards what they feel are the most important elements (Morgan, 1988)

In practice, for this thesis, focus groups were attempted but curtailed after two attempts. The nature of modern workplaces and workloads meant that, despite the best intentions of all concerned, the focus groups were ill-attended. Employees were invited and either failed to attend or arrived very late, disrupting the flow of the conversations resulting in the practical difficulties weighing heavier than the theoretical benefits.

Thus, focus groups were replaced in favour of the more accessible format of on-line surveys and questionnaires that were sent by email. The fact that many employees were working flexibly, often from home, meant that this was a quicker and more accessible way forward for myself, the organization and the individual respondents. Indeed, in retrospect, it transpires that many employee surveys were completed late at night or early morning (i.e., out of office hours) alluding to the fact that respondents were benefiting from the freedom to complete the survey in their own time.

This thesis required access to employees in the public sector. As a mature student, with experience of working in business, I was able to make contact with key people. I took the opportunity of addressing a conference in spring 2009 during which I sought volunteer organizations who would help out with this research. I succeeded in attracting twelve public sector organizations. At this stage, the aim was to find and interview those who were seen to be flourishing in the workplace. I deemed that travelling to two of the organizations was going to be prohibitive, opting to work with ten public sector bodies that were based in the Midlands. The ten organizations consisted of an array of large county councils, smaller district councils and the emergency services. Issues centring on happiness and workplace wellbeing are sensitive in nature so anonymity of organizations and individuals within the organizations was assured. Thus, for the purposes of this research, the organizations will be

represented by a letter and individual respondents identified simply by gender and organizational letter.

I held a briefing with a representative from each organization. Typically, this was with a training manager or HR Director, although in two cases it was the chief executive. This face-to-face meeting was crucial in terms of discussing the aims and scope of the research, as well as talking through the barriers to data collection. It became clear that the biggest perceived barrier would be time. Employees were all very busy so a primary objective was to capture data in the simplest and quickest way, with the minimum disruption to employees' day-to-day work. One of the organizations opted out of the research at this point, citing workload and an imminent restructure as the key reasons. This left nine participating organizations.

Due to time, resource and practical constraints, it was decided that studying the entirety of all nine organizations was not a viable option. The most appropriate solution was to leave the survey distribution in the hands of an appropriate 'gatekeeper' (Buchanan *et al.*, 1998), who was either the human resource manager, a senior department head or the chief executive.

Anecdotally, it is known that some organizations held management meetings about the surveys and some managers sampled their entire departments. Some gatekeepers made the surveys available to the entire organization whereas others restricted circulation. In all cases, survey completion was voluntary. In accordance with Lee's (1993) assertion that *'Respondents wish to manage impressions of themselves in order to maintain their standing in the eyes of the interviews'* (p. 75), it may be the case that surveys were most widely distributed by managers who deemed morale to be buoyant and that the most positive departments are over-represented. As illustrated by La Piere (1934), attitudes are not always contingent with actual behaviour and, as a researcher, I must be aware that when people are

asked questions about their feelings, actions or emotions, the respondent will likely act to protect her/himself and portray themselves positively.

### **5.7 Survey Design**

The advantage of using questionnaires and surveys in this research is that it allowed me to test, in more depth, those items that emerge at the quantitative stage. The on-line nature of the data collection instruments allows respondents a degree of flexibility in terms of when they complete the survey.

The use of surveys, as opposed to focus groups or 1:1 interviews, would mean that, inevitably, some factors and personal nuances which may contribute to happiness and wellbeing may be missed. This is mitigated by ensuring the second and third sweeps of data are based on themes emerging from data capture number one. Additionally, the surveys included open questions, meaning that, as far as is practicably possible, this problem is negated.

Dillman (1978) argues that researchers can increase their chances of getting positive responses by minimising costs, maximising rewards and establishing trust that these rewards will be delivered. For this study, the principle ‘cost’ of survey completion is in terms of employee time. It was seen as imperative that all surveys in all phases would strike the balance between gathering enough high quality data, yet remaining as brief as possible. Herberlein & Baumgartner (1978) state that, ‘...*high return rates are due in part to lowering the costs involved in completing and returning a questionnaire. Hence investigators regularly include post-paid return envelopes to directly reduce costs for the respondents*’ (1978: p. 458). Contemporarily, on-line surveys have negated the postage element yet the costs in terms

of time and confidentiality remain significant barriers. After discussion with the gatekeepers, and with time constraints at the fore, it was deemed necessary that all the phases of data collection would be designed to take a maximum of 15 minutes.

Additionally, this thesis was seeking information regarding respondents' wellbeing both in and out of work, so assurances of confidentiality were highlighted. It was also felt to be important that the respondents knew that the results would be useful in assisting other workplaces to create a lively and flourishing culture, so the element of social benefit was also highlighted. The importance of this is alluded to by Herberlein & Baumgartner (1978), who state that, '*when the content of the questionnaire is salient to the respondent and the respondent is knowledgeable and interested in the topic, the cost of responding may be reduced, and personal input into the study may be judged by the respondent as more important.*' (p. 458).

The response rates for the participating organizations are shown in table 5.1

Table 5.1: 433 responses, broken down by participating organization

Organization (anonymised by initials)	Number of responses
B1	53
B2	32
C	52
D	29
E	14
N1	131
N2	41
R	39
W	42
Total	433

In terms of length, a questionnaire should generally be long enough so that it contains all the questions needed to gather the information essential to the study but short enough to

guarantee as a high a response rate as possible (Berdie, 1973). However, despite the general belief that the questionnaire should be as short as possible, Champion & Sear (1969) purport to have found little or modest negative effect between length of questionnaire and response rate. Indeed, Herberline & Baumgartner's (1978) study of questionnaire response rates found that, with an average questionnaire length of 7 pages and less than half an hour completion time, there was '*no significant zero-order correlation between any of the length measures and overall responses*' (p. 452). Further, Herberline & Baumgartner venture to suggest that questionnaire length can have a positive impact on response rates; '*Length, then, may signal importance to the respondent, possibly even enough to overcome the costs associated with it*' (1978: p. 459). For the purposes of this research, although the number of questions was kept as low as possible, the open-ended nature of the responses allowed respondents to go into as much detail as they felt necessary.

Falthzik & Carroll (1971) found that response rates were considerably higher from organizations who received questionnaires in closed question format (79%) as opposed to those who received open questions (27%). For the purposes of this research, it was decided to use both. Closed questions allow answers to be compared much more easily for analysis purposes and are particularly useful when asking about factual aspects of the respondent's background (age, job title, etc.). However, considering the nature of the study, it was deemed that closed questions may force the respondent to form an opinion or limit the choice of response. The individual and subjective nature of happiness-related constructs makes it necessary to allow the respondent to elaborate on the subject. So, for this particular thesis, it was considered that closed questions would be most appropriate when gathering personal data and open-ended questions were most pertinent when prompting respondents to express



themselves in their own words and to elaborate on affects and situations. This was deemed the most appropriate way to collect rich vocabulary and relevant comments.

## **5.8 Reflecting on Research Methods**

Inevitably, any research project has its limitations, regardless of the methodological approach taken and the care with which data have been gathered. The data presented here were collected over a three-year period and the inevitable changes that have taken place within the participating organizations may well have had an effect on the reliability of the results. The data were collected in three tranches. However, within these sweeps of data, the research was conducted over a relatively brief time-span. Yet, it is still the case that external factors such as changes in structure, public sector pay restraint and general economic downturn, will have had an impact. It could be argued that these tumultuous external factors made happiness and positivity a rarer commodity than in less turbulent times.

The methods employed have been conducted with a valid attempt at methodological pluralism (Bell and Newby, 1977) or 'triangulation' which Webb *et al.* (1965) critique as, '*the onslaught of a series of imperfect measures*' (p. 3). Organizational research necessitates this approach to some extent, for as mentioned earlier, the validity and reliability of the various methods can be compromised by organizational reality. In this research, triangulation has been adopted by gathering information from employees, their peers and existing studies. The aim of such triangulation is to reduce what Mark and Shotland (1987) term '*inappropriate certainty*' which occurs if just one source is used. As Easterby-Smith *et al.* (1991) write, '*the strength of almost every measure is flawed in some way or other, and therefore research designs and strategies can be offset by counterbalancing strengths from one to another*' (p. 133).

In this research, the methods were not merely chosen in order to minimise flaws. They were chosen as an emergent strategy and were adopted because the researcher believed them to be the best way of answering the exploratory research questions in real world conditions.

## **5.9 Summary and Conclusion**

Chapter 5 started with an explanation as to the paucity of data on ‘happiness’ *per se*, arguing that researchers have preferred to measure the more traditional and academically acceptable constructs of subjective wellbeing and job satisfaction. The chapter provided an insight into some of the more contemporary measures of happiness-related constructs, including a brief introduction of two of the measures chosen and elucidated in the next chapter; The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire and the IWP Multi-Affect Indicator.

In addition, this chapter investigated issues of level (i.e., should affect be measured at individual, team or organizational level?) and stability (i.e., is affect a momentary phenomenon or one that has some longevity?) The general conclusion is that most research has been focused at the individual level and affect is seen to be relatively stable at the within-person level (i.e., job-satisfaction is moderately stable over 2, 3 and 5-year periods; Staw & Ross, 1985). The chapter broadened into a discussion of the relative merits of qualitative and quantitative data as well as survey and questionnaire structure and design, before finishing with a reflection on the actual methods chosen. The argument is made that there is no perfect way of capturing data on happiness and positive affect, but that an appreciation of the drawbacks and limitations is helpful in mitigating against their imperfections.

The next chapter discusses the phases of data capture that were used for this thesis, with each phase explained and the questions justified.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Methodology: The Phases of Data Capture**

## **Chapter 6: Methodology: The Phases of Data Capture**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter explains that data was collected from nine public sector organizations in three distinct phases. It explains each phase, listing what questions were used, and why. It is clear from desk research that employee wellbeing is very high on many corporate agendas.

Preceding chapters have suggested that the link between wellbeing and business benefit is clearly understood, both in academic and business circles. Moreover, many organizations are working hard to create business environments and cultures where employees are able to flourish. Yet not all employees are flourishing. Researchers such as Lyubomirsky (2007) and Diener (2000) are already looking at trying to understand why some individuals are happier than others. My approach will be to explore the cognitive and motivational processes that distinguish individuals who show exceptionally high levels of happiness in the workplace. In particular, this study is interested in those whose positivity provides an uplift to those around them, effectively raising the bar from ‘happiness’ of the individual who is experiencing the affect, to ‘flourishing’ of the wider team who are catching the affect. The stated aim is to build on Lyubomirsky’s (2007) and Fredrickson’s (2001) empirical findings that have revealed happy and unhappy individuals to be systematically differing in a manner supportive of the particular cognitive and motivational strategies they use.

In times of rapid organizational change, there are many external events (for example, workplace re-structures, redundancies, pay freezes/cuts and technological changes) impacting on public sector employees. If, as the previous chapters have explained, personality traits and one’s immediate circumstances are fixed (Lyubomirsky, 2007), and assuming that individual employees cannot control the external events that are impacting upon them, it seems pertinent

to examine the mental strategies that the H+ community use in allowing them to achieve and maintain their flourishing status. This chapter seeks to explain the three stages of data collection including the methods and reasoning.

## **6.2 Data Capture, Phase One:**

The initial data capture took place between September 2009 and May 2010. The aim was to gather qualitative and quantitative data that identify those in the workplace who were seen to be flourishing. To paraphrase the earlier definition, these are individuals who rate themselves as happy and energetic and whom others are noticing as having an uplifting effect. An on-line survey was made available to the nine organizations. This initial data collection instrument consisted of two sections: Basic Happiness & Energy Survey (BHES) and Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ). Phase one was completed by 433 respondents from across 9 public sector organizations.

## **6.3 The Basic Happiness & Energy Survey**

Phase one consisted of a self-designed online instrument, the Basic Happiness & Energy Survey (BHES) which was designed to be a quick snapshot of respondents' biographical data (example; age, gender, religion) as well as a gauge of their self-reported happiness and energy levels, scored out of 10. As explained in chapter 5, this was the quickest and simplest way of gathering happiness data from a population that considers itself time-poor. As per the Fordyce Emotion Questionnaire (1988) the questions deal directly with happiness itself whereas many other instruments allude to 'life satisfaction' and 'subjective well-being'. This simplicity is noticeably rare with Fordyce (1972) arguing that most other measures either do not directly target 'happiness' at all, or combine happiness items with a variety of other affective and/or

behavioural domains, the net effect adding a greater diversity to what is included in the construct measured without any greater precision or validity to the results.

Thus, in line with Fordyce's argument and Diener's (1984) contention that, in general, each person is the best judge of whether they are in fact happy or not, respondents were asked to rate themselves on a 0-10 scale, with descriptors ranging from (0) 'not at all happy', to (5) 'reasonably happy' and (10) 'extremely happy'.

In addition, this section of data collection sought to gauge respondents' views as to how happy they rated their work colleagues. The BHES was intended to be a rudimentary first sweep of employees.

In addition, the first part of the BHES also asked each respondent to identify a person (or persons) within the organization whom they rated as emotionally uplifting. This question was phrased as simply as possible: *'Who makes you feel great at work? Please briefly consider what they do that makes you feel great.'* This question was crucial to find those who fall into the 'flourishing' category, namely those who are feeling upbeat and are deemed to be making others' feel good. The second part of the question, *'Please briefly consider what they do that makes you feel great'* was designed to elicit reasons for the perceived emotional uplift and might therefore form the basis for later groupings. For example, *'They make me feel great because they are in such a bad place that I'm grateful I'm not like them'* would be categorised differently from *'They make me feel great because they seem genuinely happy and their smiling is contagious'*. So, although the first scenario failed to materialise, it was deemed appropriate to screen for it at the outset.

In line with the stated research objective of establishing the longevity of happiness with regards to flourishing and non-flourishing employees, further questions in the BHES battery pertain to estimations of past and future happiness. For example, phase one sought answers to: *'How happy were you 5 years ago?'* and, *'How happy do you expect to be in the next 5 years?'* These questions were attempting to mitigate criticism by Schwartz & Strack (1991) as to the momentary nature of many of the established wellbeing questionnaires. By asking respondents to reflect on past and future happiness, the aim was to elicit a response that reflects a degree of longevity. Further, gauging whether happiness was transient or had some history and a predicted future is in line with Boniwell & Zimbardo's (2004) suggestion that happy people have a balanced approach to the time perspective. To paraphrase, happy people have a healthy 'now' through which the past and future are also viewed with a degree of positivity.

#### **6.4 The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ)**

The initial data capture phase also contained a second part. Having investigated several measures of happiness and subjective wellbeing the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (Argyle *et al.*, 1995) was chosen as having the best fit for what this survey was attempting to elicit.

The OHQ incorporates terms related to emotional experiences and life satisfaction and gauges a range of variables including energy, goals, optimism, perceived control of life, achievements and a general sense of happiness. Originally conceived as the 'Oxford Happiness Inventory', it was simplified by Hills & Argyle (2002) to make it *'Compact, easy to administer and allows endorsements over an extended range.'* (p i).

The streamlined and 2002 re-branded version of the OHQ provided a relatively simple means of capturing happiness data from a time-poor working population. The OHQ consists of 29

questions that could be transposed into the chosen on-line format and the aim was for the OHQ to provide data that would allow the creation of what would be, in effect, a happiness league table of respondents. This had obvious benefits in terms of choosing to do follow-up surveys with the happiest employees.

Combining both parts of phase one, the BHES would facilitate the creation of measures of self-rated happiness while the OHQ would provide a rank order of individuals against an established and widely-used happiness instrument. This would allow the cross referencing of those who scored highly on the OHQ with, for example, those who are scoring highly on happiness and energy and/or those who were being nominated as exuding positive affect on the BHES. Note, it was never the intention to analyse the OHQ scores further than ranking respondents to ascertain the upper quartile.

### **6.5 Critique of the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire**

The OHQ was designed by Argyle, Martin & Crossland (1989) to consist of a 29-item questionnaire, based on a seven-point rating scale from (7) 'strongly agree' through to (1) 'strongly disagree' and they report a test reliability of 0.78 and a Cronbach coefficient of between 0.64 and 0.87. The underlying definition of happiness on which the OHQ builds, as clearly set out by Argyle & Crossland (1987), maintains that happiness comprises three components: the frequency and degree of positive affect; the average level of satisfaction over a specified time; and the absence of negative feelings, such as depression and anxiety. Francis (1999) reviewed fifteen published studies which had employed the OHQ and concluded that it was facilitating a secure body of empirical knowledge about the nature and correlates of happiness.



According to Diener (2000), the OHQ's amalgamation of subjective wellbeing, various human strengths, cognitive characteristics and physical fitness is too broad. For example, the OHQ attempts to gauge subjective wellbeing with questions as varied as the degree to which individuals are interested in other people, have warm feelings toward others, find things amusing, find beauty in things and feel attractive. According to Diener, there are no theoretical models that include these qualities as defining components of happiness. Further, there is empirical evidence to suggest that some happy individuals exhibit low self-esteem (Lyubomirsky, 2001; Lyubomirsky & Ross, 1999), and that physical attractiveness fails to differentiate very happy individuals from their less happy peers (Diener & Seligman, 2002). Kahneman (1999) does not criticise the OHQ directly, rather proffering that researchers should use ecological momentary assessment (e.g., electronic diaries, cell phones, pagers) to obtain multiple daily reports from participants on the quality of their affective experiences and life evaluations.

This research has to reach a compromise between the quality of data gathered and ease of gathering. While Kahneman's suggestions would certainly result in high quality data, the downside is that intricacy, cost and time issues mean that it would be very difficult to gather sufficient quantity of data from business people, especially in light of the fact that time had been raised as the biggest single barrier to data collection. Thus, in terms of this research, the OHQ allows me to gather initial data of good quality and with the probability of reasonable quantity. The intention is to combine it with BHES and to use this as a starting point. I deem it to be well-suited to the particular sample group because it is relatively quick, simple to understand and can be completed on-line.

## 6.6 Phase Two: Reflections on Happiness Survey

This data capture phase followed on from the analysis of phase one and was an attempt to filter the respondents, capturing high quality quantitative and qualitative data from those who stood out in the first sweep of data. This information was gathered between September 2010 and February 2011. As before, and to assist familiarity, the survey instrument consisted of an online instrument, split into two parts; the Reflections on Happiness Survey (RHS) and the IWP Multi-Affect Indicator.

Comprised of my own questions, the RHS is designed to be simple and relatively quick to complete, whilst at the same time attempting to explore, in more detail, the habits and characteristics of those who stood out in phase 1. This survey was distributed to individuals who were sifted through 3 levels of filter:

1. Filter 1: They scored in the upper quartile on self-reported 'happiness' and 'energy' on the BHES, and therefore above the UK 'official' mean happiness level of 7.3 out of 10 (as measured by the question, '*Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?*' (ONS, 2013).
2. Filter 2: They also appeared in the upper quartile of the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire. This gauged a degree of self-report against a bank of established questions.
3. Filter 3: They were also mentioned as '*who in the workplace makes you feel good?*' at least twice by other staff within their organization. This triangulated the survey by providing opinions from work colleagues. This is important in order to meet the social contagion aspect of flourishing, as defined earlier.

Recalling 2 of the 5 principle research questions for this thesis a) '*What intentional within-person strategies differentiate flourishing and non-flourishing employees?*' and b) '*Which of these strategies is/are most significant?*' I concluded that a mixed methods approach was

necessary. While the ‘significance’ of frequency of use of intentional strategies can be tested by quantitative methods, the discovery of ‘within person strategies’ could only be gauged by asking open-ended questions. Essentially, those deemed to be flourishing would need to be able to tell their unexpurgated story.

Braun & Clarke (2006) suggest that one of the criticisms of qualitative research is the perception that ‘anything goes’. This sentiment is enunciated by Laubschagne (2003) who states: *‘For many scientists used to doing quantitative studies the whole concept of qualitative research is unclear, almost foreign, or ‘airy fairy’ - not ‘real’ research.’* (p. 101).

As the literature review suggests, ‘wellbeing’ is a subjective experience, giving rise to a number of measurement and comparison difficulties. It therefore necessitates the gathering of first-person data, since the ‘experience’ of wellbeing cannot be truly felt by anyone other than the one experiencing it.

Braun & Clarke (2006) purport that many of the disadvantages of qualitative data depend less on the method itself and more on poorly conducted analyses or inappropriate research question. Further, although qualitative research cannot be subjected to the same criteria as quantitative approaches, they state that criteria for conducting good qualitative research – both data collection and analysis - do exist (e.g., Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999; Parker, 2004; Seale, 1999; Silverman, 2000; Yardley, 2000).

Lofland (1971) suggested four criteria for collecting qualitative data: First, to get close enough to the people and situation being studied to personally understand, in depth, the detail of what is going on. Second, to capture the perceived facts by taking account of what actually

takes place and what people actually say. Third, to include a great deal of pure description of people, activities, interactions and settings, and fourth, to include direct quotations from people, both what they speak and what they write down. This, Loftland suggested, constitutes *'a significant commitment to represent the participants in their own terms'*. (1971, p. 4).

Indeed, the primary objective for this data collection was to do exactly that - represent the subjective viewpoint of participants who had shared their experiences and perceptions across a range of happiness questions. Essentially, the data collection was an attempt to capture their thoughts, ideas, experiences and wellbeing strategies, some of which may never have been articulated before.

Following data collection from 45 H+ respondents, their statements were entered into the QSR NVivo data management program, and a comprehensive process of data coding and identification of themes was undertaken. Traditionally, qualitative researchers conducted their analysis by cutting and pasting, either literally on pieces of paper and or more recently on word processors. I opted to use NVivo which does not 'do' the analysis but reduces the burden of data management. It enables data to be stored, coded, retrieved and interrogated with more efficiency than can be achieved using traditional methods (Lewins & Silver, 2007) and it has been suggested that such packages help enhance creativity through a reduction in clerical and administrative burden (Tesch, 1991) and the ability to 'play' with the data gives new analytical perspectives (Tesch 1990).

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within data, the aim of which, according to Braun & Clarke (2006), is to minimally organise and describe one's data set in rich detail. Indeed, Holloway & Todres (2003: p. 347) identify 'thematizing

meanings' as one of a few shared generic skills across qualitative analysis. For this reason, Boyatzis (1998) characterises thematic analysis as a tool to use across different methods, suggesting that it provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data. McLeod describes thematic analysis simply as a method seeking to '*uncover patterns of meaning in informant accounts of experience.*' (2001, pp. 145-147)

Braun & Clarke state that '*a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question...[that] represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the dataset*' (2006, p.82). They also emphasise that a pattern is not to be determined by a quantifiable measure (number or frequency of mentions) but through 'researcher judgement' which determines 'keyness' of a theme because '*it captures something important in relation to the overall research question.*' (p. 82)

From a hermeneutic perspective Rennie (2012) argues that the trustworthiness and validity of the researcher depends, among other factors, on a systematic, transparent approach to interpretation. To be effective, this strategy relies, according to McLeod (2011) '*on the reader of a study being provided with sufficient procedural information for them to be confident that the findings are reality-based or 'objective' rather than riven by the personal predilections of the researcher.*' (p. 45)

McLeod points to the incompleteness of qualitative research in terms of claims to absolute truth, because interpretation always involves the subjectivities of the researcher, the research subject and how they interact. Mindful of these biases, I mitigated against them by following Braun & Clarkes (2006) 6 step process:

## 1. Familiarization with the data

Thematic analysis is a search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon (Daly, Kellehear, & Gliksman, 1997). The process involves the identification of themes through '*careful reading and re-reading of the data*' (Rice & Ezzy, 1999, p. 258). Familiarization is a form of pattern recognition within the data, where emerging themes become the categories for analysis.

## 2. Attending to interesting features of the data

This involves identifying text segments relevant to the research questions, identifying meaning to these text segments and recording them as nodes which one can then code as individual extracts of data in as many different 'themes' as they fit into. According to Braun & Clarke, an extract may be uncoded, coded once, or coded many times, as relevant. Codes identify a feature of the data - semantic content or latent - that appears interesting to the analyst, and refer to '*the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon.*' (Boyatzis, 1998 p.63).

In line with Braun & Clarke's process, I worked systematically through all text segments, giving full and equal attention to each (also stressed by Boyatzis 1998, and Joffe 2011). While not coding for every possible meaning in a segment, I coded as advocated by Cayne & Loewenthal (2008), in which I was aiming for the '*main element of meaning*'. The coding process involved recognizing an important moment and encoding it ('seeing it as something') prior to a process of interpretation whilst being aware that a 'good code' is one that captures the qualitative richness of the phenomenon (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 1).

### 3. Searching for themes.

Codes were collated into 1st level of themes. Essentially, this is the first step in analysing the codes, providing opportunities to consider how different codes may combine to form an overarching theme – defined by Boyatzis as *'a pattern in the information that at minimum describes and organises the possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon.'* (p. 161).

Direct quotes from the data were grouped under the thematic headings, providing both a clear illustration of each theme - in participants' own words - and also some indication of the number of participants who addressed each theme. These frequencies are provided throughout the discussion that follows and while it is recognised that frequency is not necessarily a measure of significance, it offers a sense of the extent to which a particular construct, thought or strategy that might be common across responses, and hence the extent to which it might be understood as more broadly shared.

### 4. Reviewing themes and checking the codes and nodes.

During this phase, Braun & Clarke (2006) suggest that it will become evident that some themes are not really themes (e.g., if there are not enough data to support them, or the data are too diverse), while others might collapse into each other (e.g., two apparently separate themes might form one theme) and at the end of this phase the researcher should have a good idea of the different themes, how they fit together, and the overall story they tell about the data.

### 5. Defining and naming the themes

Braun & Clarke (2006) state that in addition to identifying the 'story' that each theme tells, it is important to consider how it fits into the broader overall narrative in relation to the research

questions. In the case of this research, the aim was to examine the themes and draw out ‘intentional strategies’ that would be measured in the next phase. Part of the refinement process meant identifying whether or not a theme contained any sub-themes as these themes-within-a-theme can be useful for giving structure to a particularly large and complex theme, and also for demonstrating the hierarchy of meaning within the data.

Further, according to Braun and Clarke, theme names need to be concise, punchy, and immediately recognizable to give the reader a sense of what the theme is about.

## 6. Producing the report

The subsequent write-up needs to do more than just provide data. Braun & Clarke (2006) suggest that extracts need to be embedded within an analytic narrative that compellingly illustrates the story of the data, and the analytic narrative needs to go beyond description of the data, and make an argument in relation to the research question(s). They conclude by saying that the sort of questions one needs to be asking, towards the end phases of thematic analysis, include: *‘What does this theme mean?’ ‘What are the assumptions underpinning it?’ ‘What are the implications of this theme?’ ‘What conditions are likely to have given rise to it?’ ‘Why do people talk about this thing in this particular way (as opposed to other ways)?’* and *‘What is the overall story the different themes reveal about the topic?’* (p. 24).

Interpretive rigor requires the researcher to demonstrate clearly how interpretations of the data have been achieved and to illustrate findings with quotations from, or access to, the raw data (Rice & Ezzy, 1999). The participants’ reflections, conveyed in their own words, strengthen the face validity and credibility of the research (Patton, 2002).



Ultimately, thematic analysis was chosen for this research study because, not only does it have a rich historical link with organizational reporting (Boyatzis & Kolb, 1995; Boyatzis, 1998), but the emphasis is also on the importance of practical outcomes, and, in much the same way as positive psychology, the ‘service of human flourishing’ (Reason & Torbert, 2001, p. 5). More importantly though, thematic analysis enabled me to make sense of a large amount of data and articulate themes in a readable, constructive and meaningful way.

### **6.7 Phase 2: Warr’s IWP Multi-Affect Indicator**

The second section of the phase two survey is based on Warr’s (1987, 2010, 2013) work into workplace engagement. Briefly re-visiting Warr’s research, worker engagement is closely linked with pro-social behaviours with Warr arguing that standard surveys of job satisfaction have gone beyond their remit, venturing into areas of engagement without acknowledging the fact. In essence, Warr purports that some traditional measures of job satisfaction have not measured what they set out to measure.

This section of the survey uses Warr & Parker’s (2010) IWP Multi-Affect Indicator, which was specifically developed to create reliable measurements of affects in work settings. As such, this section of the survey is deemed important in terms of gauging the degree to which flourishing employees are actively engaged in the workplace. The Multi-Affect Indicator consists of 16 responses, allowing employees to be plotted on Russell’s (1980) 4-point circumplex model, categorising them into the quadrants of anxiety (activated negative affect), enthusiasm (activated positive affect), depression (low-activation negative affect) and comfort (low-activation positive affect).

For consistency and ease of use, this part of the survey was also made available on-line. It would be completed by the 45 respondents that make up the H+ community as well as a volunteer sample from across each of the participating organizations, allowing data comparisons between those who are deemed as flourishing and those who are not. It is acknowledged that this sample may be skewed in favour of those who had already responded to previous surveys and/or those who had an interest in the subject and/or who are either very happy or unhappy. Despite its imperfections, the data would be interesting on many levels, not least whether the H+ respondents fall into the ‘satisfied’ or ‘engaged’ circumplex quadrants and how they fare in comparison with their NonH+ colleagues.

### **6.8 Phase Three: Intentional Strategies**

This final phase of data collection took place between June and September 2012. This phase filtered the research to the finest level, examining the frequency of use of intentional strategies of the 45 respondents within the H+ community. If, as Lyubormirsky (2007) suggests, personality and circumstances are indeed fixed in the short term, then it is these *within-person* strategies that play a part in differentiating flourishing employees from their non-flourishing counterparts.

The questions in this part of the survey were derived from factors mentioned in the literature review as well as factors that emerged from the data collection in phases one and two (see appendix C). The strategies were listed with each individual asked to gauge ‘frequency of use’ of each strategy, on an ascending rating of 1-10, where 1 is ‘hardly ever used’, 5 ‘used quite often’ and 10 ‘constantly used’ The Intentional Strategies Survey was undertaken with the 45 individuals who comprised the H+ community (i.e., met the three criteria of scoring 8 or above for both happiness and energy, scoring in the upper quartile of the Oxford Happiness

Questionnaire and were nominated at least twice as someone who ‘makes me feel good’) and also administered to a wider organizational group of NonH+ employees, allowing a comparison of within-person strategies. This phase would form an important part of the research conclusions as it would highlight the most and least salient intentional strategies used by the H+ and NonH+ groups. The strategies listed are:

- I am grateful
- I choose to be positive
- I reframe things positively
- I don't watch much news
- I make an effort to be positive
- I play to my strengths
- I set goals
- Happiness comes largely from my religious faith
- I don't dwell on bad stuff
- I give myself a pep talk
- I learned to be positive through adversity
- I am positive because I want others to feel good
- I learned to be positive in my early years
- I am positive because didn't want to be like my parents
- I listen to happy music
- I watch feel-good TV & films
- I think about people who are less fortunate

## 6.9 Validity and Reliability of Qualitative Data

Easterby-Smith *et al.* (1991) state that the validity of qualitative research can be evaluated by asking whether the researcher has gained access to the full knowledge and meanings of the respondents. This is elaborated by Miles & Huberman (1994) who distinguish between internal and external validity. They purport that internal validity is measured by first ascertaining whether or not the events have been uncontrolled and uncodified by the researcher's presence and action – termed, 'natural validity' (Warner, 1991). In this research, the confidentiality of the participants and the independence of the researcher was accentuated at every opportunity. However, it is impossible to state unequivocally that I did not affect the data in any way. Additionally, the problem of subjectivity involved in the analysis of qualitative data, as discussed previously, must be acknowledged. A further test of internal validity advocated by Miles & Huberman (1994) is an examination of whether the triangulation of methods produces convergent conclusions. If they do not, this is not necessarily a sign that the methods are not valid, but that an explanation for these differences should be sought (Mathison 1988)

'External validity', according to Miles & Huberman (1994), is related to whether or not the results can be meaningfully transferred across cases and compared to prior theory. Reliability of qualitative data is centred around the question, '*Will similar observations be made by different researchers on different occasions?*' (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 1991: p. 41). The changing and often transient nature of happiness, plus its inherent subjectivity, means it is always going to be problematic in terms of ascertaining an exact measurement. Additionally, external events such as pay restraint and organization restructures may affect results. Miles & Huberman (1994) purport that the researcher cannot allow for these changes, but an acknowledgment that these external circumstances may affect the reliability of the results is

important and it is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that the research has been completed with reasonable care. In this case, that means ensuring that the data was gathered across a range of similar organizations, in the same business sector and at similar times. It needs to be noted that the public sector has been particularly challenged during the time-frame of this study. While data reliability and validity have been prime concerns throughout, there is the acknowledgement that the research may have been weakened by the need to fit into the practicalities of organizational life. For example, although focus groups may well be a more reliable way of gathering data, the difficulties of time and cost meant this was not possible. Or, as Buchanan *et al.* (1988) write, *'whatever carefully constructed views the researcher has of the nature of social science research, of the process of theory development, of data collection methods, or of the status of different types of data, those views are constantly compromised by the practical realities, opportunities and constraints presented by organizational research.'* (p. 54)

## **6.10 Summary & Conclusion**

This chapter sought to explain the three phases of data capture.

Phase 1 comprised a sweep of 9 public sector organizations, in which 433 respondents completed the Basic Happiness and Energy Survey and the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire.

The respondents were analysed via three criteria:

- i. Self-rating in the upper quartile on 'happiness' and 'energy' (n91)
- ii. Scoring in the upper quartile of the OHQ (n108)
- iii. Being mentioned at least twice as someone who is having an uplifting effect (n47)

Of the 433 respondents, a total of 45 employees met all three criteria, thus forming the H+ group.

Phase 2 involved the distribution of a Reflections on Happiness Survey to the 45 H+ respondents, the purpose of which was to collect rich data in the form of open-ended narrative questions pertaining to happiness in the domains of work and home. In addition, phase 2 sought data on affect at work, collected via the IWP Multi-Affect Indicator. This would allow a comparison of H+ and NonH+ employees on Russell's (1980) circumplex model, ascertaining the degree to which they might differ in terms of affects associated with satisfaction and engagement.

Phase 3 comprised a menu of intentional strategies, with H+ and NonH+ employees rating their usefulness. Once again, this data would be analysed and presented in comparative form.

This chapter has also sought to critique the methods of data capture and the questionnaires themselves. The dangers of assuming validity and reliability are acknowledged and taken account of. In this respect, it is argued that every care has been taken to ensure the data is as reliable as is practicably possible under the constraints of data collection in the context at that time.

The next section moves towards an examination of the findings. The 'Results' chapters are split into the three phases of data capture.

## **Chapters 7, 8 & 9: Results**

This section highlights the major findings of the three phases of data capture. It describes the samples of H+ and NonH+ respondents as well as providing comparisons, graphical information and statistical representation of the key data. Throughout the results, a brief discussion of the findings will be included with the aim of elaborating the discussion in Chapter 10. The results are broken down into 3 chapters that align with the phases of data capture, as follows:

### **Chapter 7: Results Phase One: An Overview of the Population Sample**

The aim of phase one was to gather reliable data that would enable the creation of a sample of flourishing (H+) and non-flourishing (NonH+) employees. The aim of chapter 7 is to describe the sample and present a brief overview of the key findings. Chi-square tests were performed to test the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between happiness and any of gender, age, religion, past or perceived future happiness.

### **Chapter 8: Results Phase Two: Reflections on Happiness Survey(RHS) and IWP Multi-Affect Indicator**

This section provides a description of the qualitative data captured via the Reflections on Happiness Survey in phase two, examining the underlying reasons for happiness and positivity among those in the flourishing category. This qualitative data would, in essence, seek their own story in their own words. This section also seeks to examine the multiple domains of happiness, including an estimation of the effect upbringing might have had on adult affect.

The data collection in the second phase also included Warr & Parker's (2010) Multi-Affect Indicator. This chapter reports on the findings of independent samples *t*-tests to gauge the extent to which the H+ and NonH+ groups differ on the 4 quadrants of the Multi-Affect Indicator, relating to emotions in the workplace. This section is particularly concerned with the on-going organizational debate (elucidated in earlier chapters) between 'job satisfaction' and 'job engagement' and the extent to which H+ respondents might differ to their work colleagues in affects relating to these scales.

### **Chapter 9: Results Phase 3: Intentional Strategies**

This chapter analyses and compares the frequency of use of a series of personal approaches to happiness and positivity that have arisen from phases 1 and 2. In particular, this chapter uses independent samples *t*-tests to review how the H+ and NonH+ communities differ in the area of what Lyubomirsky (2007) calls 'intentional strategies' – techniques that are wilfully deployed by the individuals concerned.



## **Chapter 7**

### **Results Phase One: An Overview of the Population Sample**

## **Chapter 7: Results Phase One: An Overview of the Population Sample**

This chapter is designed to provide an overview of the sample. Discussion is provided in Chapter 10.

### **7.1 Participating Organizations**

The participating organizations are based in the Midlands and vary in size from 35 to 11,100 employees. The aim was to choose organizations from similar sectors in order to, as far as is practicably possible, homogenise the data.

None of the organizations are in the health or education sectors. Six are public sector administration organizations, varying from large county councils to smaller region and district councils. These offer a wide range of services from refuse and social housing, to education support and welfare payments. These organizations have various sources of revenue but their principal funding streams are via central government grants and the collection of council tax. Two of the organizations are emergency services, funded by a mix of central and local government. The remaining participant (organization E) is a public-sector support organization. This is a smaller organization, set up and funded by the regional members, with the purpose of providing training and/or advice. Although funded by a membership fee, this organization was also partly commercial in that its future security would be dependent on finding additional sources of income. Thus, this necessitated a more commercial outlook.

At the time of this part of the survey (2009), all nine organizations were under significant financial pressures. All were being restructured with many services and jobs at risk. As an indication of the magnitude of the crisis, a national news report stated that the largest

participating organization (N1) would have to lose 2000 jobs in the next 18 months and the nature of budget cuts elsewhere meant that organization E's existence was in question.

This on-line instrument comprised an initial survey of two parts. The Basic Happiness & Energy Survey (BHES) gathered participants' self-rated scores on 'happiness', 'energy' and 'happiness of their work colleagues'. The two happiness measures were scored on a 1-10 scale, with descriptors ranging from 1 'not at all happy', to 5 'reasonably happy', and 10 'extremely happy'. The energy scale was scored from 1 'no energy', to 5 'reasonably energetic', and 10 'bursting with energy'. Part two comprised the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ), a tried and tested bank of 39 questions, each presented as a single statement which is rated on a six-point Likert scale.

The survey was available to the employees of nine public sector organizations, with a total of 433 respondents, as shown in table 7.1.

Table 7.1: *Sample population, broken down by participating organization.*

<b>Organization (anonymised by initials)</b>	<b><i>n</i></b>	<b>Happiness <math>\bar{x}(SD)</math></b>	<b>Energy <math>\bar{x}(SD)</math></b>	<b>Others' happiness <math>\bar{x}(SD)</math></b>
B1	53	7.24 (1.31)	7.03 (1.43)	5.77 (1.33)
B2	32	6.34 (1.93)	6.37 (1.83)	5.37 (1.60)
C	52	7.17 (1.22)	6.69 (1.38)	5.75 (1.56)
D	29	7.51 (.99)	7.20 (1.32)	5.44 (1.15)
E	14	7.28 (1.20)	7.21 (.80)	5.57 (1.28)
N1	131	6.60 (1.41)	6.25 (1.61)	5.23 (1.50)
N2	41	7.19 (1.15)	6.86 (1.40)	5.34 (1.35)
R	39	7.51 (1.10)	7.41 (1.27)	5.82 (1.54)
W	42	6.38 (1.65)	6.30 (1.57)	5.42 (1.85)
<b>Total</b>	<b>433</b>	<b>6.93 (1.48)</b>	<b>6.67 (1.53)</b>	<b>5.48 (1.50)</b>

## **7.2 Phase 1: Basic Happiness & Energy Survey**

The aim of this section of the survey was to gather biographical data as well as self-reported happiness and energy levels. The purpose was to highlight those individuals who self-rate in the upper quartile of a 1-10 scale of 'happiness' and 'energy', with a view to studying this group in more detail in phases 2 and 3. In addition, questions pertained to past and future expectations of happiness and a reflective review of what would enhance the individual's happiness in the workplace.

As well as providing an initial snapshot of the working population, of primary concern was the collection of names of nominated individuals within the workplace who were noticeably upbeat and happy and who were deemed to be having an uplifting emotional impact. This was to guard against the criticism of a one-dimensional approach where the researcher bases their findings purely on self-rated scores of happiness. In these instances, '*...ultimately the final judge is whoever lives inside the person's skin.*' (Myers & Diener, 1995, p. 11). Sandvik, Diener & Seidlitz (1993) concur with these failings, suggesting that few researchers have assessed happiness by asking friends and family to give their impressions of how happy a particular person is. Thus, in summary, this first sweep of data was tasked with identifying those who self-rate in the upper quartile on 'happiness' and 'energy', and, in an effort to mitigate against Myers & Diener's criticism above, those who are also nominated by their work colleagues as '*someone at work who makes me feel good*'.

## **7.3 Gender, Age and Religion**

The sample is comprised 73% ( $n = 318$ ) females and 27% ( $n = 115$ ) males. This compares with national figures of 65% of public sector employment being female and 35% male (Fawcett Society, 2013).

For this study, females and males mean happiness scores are:

Female ( $n=318$ )  $\bar{x} = 6.96$  ( $sd = 1.38$ )

Males ( $n=115$ )  $\bar{x} = 6.86$  ( $sd = 1.52$ )

Independent samples  $t$ -test results show that for the sample as a whole ( $n=433$ ), there is no significant difference between gender and happiness:  $t(431) = .616, p = .538$

However, the results differ when comparing males and females in each of the H+ and NonH+ categories. Table 7.2 illustrates the gender composition of the two groups of respondents.

Table 7.2: Results of Chi-square Test and Descriptive Statistics for Gender

Gender	H+ respondents		NonH+ respondents	
	Count	Expected Count	Count	Expected count
Female	27 (60)	33	291 (75)	285
Male	18 (40)	12	97 (25)	103
Total	45 (100)	45	388 (100)	388

Note.  $\chi^2 = 4.65^*$ ,  $df = 1$ . Numbers in parentheses indicate column percentages.

\* $p < .05$

When broken down into H+ and NonH+ groupings, Chi-square results show evidence of difference in happiness between females and males, with males disproportionately represented in the H+ category ( $\chi^2 = 4.65, df = 1, p < .05$ ). This is discussed in chapter 10.

With regard to age, the general belief is that older people are unhappier than younger people (Blanchflower, 2007). However, recent studies have found that happiness follows a general U-shape through the life-cycle: high amongst the young, reaching a minimum at mid-40s and then rising again (Blanchflower 2007; Helliwell 2003, Oswald, 1997).

Table 7.3 shows the age structure of the sample, with over half of the flourishing respondents falling into the 40-49 age category.

Table 7.3: *Results of Chi-square Test and Descriptive Statistics for Age*

Age	H+ respondents		NonH+ respondents	
	Count	Expected Count	Count	Expected count
20-29	3 (6.7)	5.2	47 (12.1)	44.8
30-39	10 (22.2)	11.3	99 (25.5)	97.7
40-49	23 (51.1)	16	131 (33.8)	138
50-59	7 (15.6)	11.3	102 (26.3)	97.7
60-69	2 (4.4)	1.1	9 (2.3)	9.9
Total	45 (100)	45	388 (100)	388

Note.  $\chi^2 = 7.18^*$ ,  $df = 4$ . Numbers in parentheses indicate column percentages.

\* $p = .126$

Thus, the Chi-square test indicates that there is no evidence of a relationship between happiness and age.

Religion and spirituality have long been linked with positive functioning, subjective wellbeing and happiness (e.g., Bergin, 1983; Koenig & Larson, 2001; Myers, 2008).

According to the Values in Action (VIA) classification of strengths, spirituality is considered to be one of the traits that fosters positive wellbeing and achievement of the good life (Peterson, 2006).

Reported religious backgrounds for this study are presented in table 7.4. Note, the on-line survey sought to distinguish between Christianity, Hindu, Islam, Sikh, Other and Non-Religious. The initial Chi-square result ( $\chi^2 = 3.34$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p = .765$ ) revealed 35.7% of cells to have an expected count of less than 5 (minimum expected count is .62), so the categories were collapsed into 'Christianity', 'Other' and Non-Religious'.

Table 7.4: Results of Chi-square Test and Descriptive Statistics for Religion

Religion	H+ respondents		NonH+ respondents	
	Count	Expected Count	Count	Expected count
Christianity	26 (57.8)	23.6	201 (51.8)	204.4
Other	2 (4.4)	4.8	44 (11.3)	41.2
Non-religious	17 (37.8)	16.6	143 (36.9)	143
	45 (100)		388 (100)	

Note.  $\chi^2 = 2.09^*$ ,  $df = 2$ . Numbers in parentheses indicate column percentages.  
 $*p = .352$

In the re-calculated Chi-square table, one cell (18.7%) has an expected count less than 5. This adheres to the tolerance limits asserted by Yates, Moore & McCabe (1999), that 'No more than 20% of the expected counts are less than 5 and all individual expected counts are 1 or greater.' (p. 734). Thus, the Chi-square test indicates that there is no evidence of a relationship between religion and happiness.

Phase 1 sought data on self-rated happiness and energy, as well as a gauge of how happy respondents viewed their work colleagues. This data is summarised in table 7.5.

Table 7.5: Happiness, energy and colleagues' happiness

	<i>n</i>	$\bar{x}$	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
<b>Self-rated happiness</b>						
Sample total	433	6.93	1.42	7.18	431	<.05
H+ category	45	8.29	0.51			
NonH+ category	388	6.77	1.41			
<b>Self-rated energy</b>						
Sample total	433	6.68	1.53	7.85	431	<.05
H+ category	45	8.27	0.54			
NonH+ category	388	6.49	1.51			
<b>Others' happiness</b>						
Sample total	433	5.48	1.50	3.33	431	<.05
H+ category	45	6.18	1.19			
NonH+ category	388	5.40	1.51			

## 7.4 Self-Rated Happiness

In terms of self-rated happiness, table 7.5 shows that happiness for the sample population ( $N=433$ )  $\bar{x} = 6.93$  ( $SD = 1.42$ ), for the H+ category ( $n=45$ )  $\bar{x} = 8.29$  ( $SD = 0.51$ ) and the NonH+ category ( $n=388$ )  $\bar{x} = 6.77$  ( $SD = 1.41$ ).

UK national statistics show the ‘official’ mean UK happiness level to be 7.3 out of 10 (as measured by the question, ‘*Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?*’ ONS, 2013). Thus, although not a direct comparison (for this research respondents were asked, ‘*On a scale of happiness where 1 is ‘not at all’, 5 is ‘reasonably’ and 10 is ‘extremely’, where would you say your natural level is?*’) the ONS question acts as a gauge and, as a group, the H+ respondents are rating themselves 22.5% happier than their NonH+ work colleagues and scoring 13.6% above the national average.

The independent samples  $t$ -test result for the self-rated happiness data ( $t(431) = 7.18, p < 0.05$ ) indicates a significant difference between the H+ and NonH+ groups.

Table 7.6 displays a summary of the frequency of respondents’ self-rated scores for happiness, enabling a comparison between the sample as a whole and those who fall into the H+ community. It also allows a comparison with the 2013 happiness data collected by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).



Table 7.6: *Frequency of self-rated happiness scores*

<b>Self-rated happiness</b>	<b>Frequency (total sample N433)</b>	<b>% (N433)</b>	<b>ONS UK-wide data 2013 (%)</b>	<b>% H+ group (n45)</b>
1	1	0.2	0.9	0
2	3	0.7	2	0
3	7	1.6	2.5	0
4	21	4.8	3.8	0
5	32	7.4	9.3	0
6	62	14.3	8.8	0
7	128	29.6	16.4	0
8	151	34.9	24.2	73.3
9	27	6.2	15.6	24.4
10	1	0.2	15.2	2.2
total	433	100	100	100

### **7.5 Self-Rated Energy**

Phase one had two major objectives; firstly to identify those who scored themselves 8 or above on ‘happiness’ and ‘energy’ and, secondly, to identify a list of names put forward in response to the question, ‘*Who in your workplace makes you feel good?*’

Cameron (2008) refers to ‘positive energy networks’ that boost and uplift people, describing their effect thus; ‘*Interacting with positive energisers leaves others feeling lively and motivated. Positive energisers have been found to be optimistic, heedful and unselfish. Interacting with them builds energy in people and is an inspiring experience.*’ (p. 42). Thus, in terms of seeking out flourishing employees and in the context of Cameron’s (2008) work on positive energy networks, individuals were also asked to rate their energy levels on a scale of 1 to 10.

Table 7.5 shows that self-rated energy for the sample as a whole is:  $\bar{x} = 6.68$  ( $SD = 1.53$ ,  $N433$ ). For the H+ category,  $\bar{x} = 8.27$  ( $SD = 0.54$ ,  $n45$ ) and the NonH+ category,  $\bar{x} = 6.49$  ( $SD = 1.51$ ,  $n388$ )

The self-rated energy figures for the sample, non-flourishing and flourishing groups are summarised in table 7.7

Table 7.7: Frequency of self-rated energy scores

Energy Rating	% of sample (N433)	% of NonH+ (n388)	% of H+ (n45)
1	0.2	0.2	0
2	0.2	0.3	0
3	3.0	3.1	0
4	5.5	5.4	0
5	14.3	14.4	0
6	15.2	15.2	0
7	26.1	26.0	0
8	28.6	28.4	77.8
9	5.8	5.7	17.8
10	.9	0.8	4.4

The independent samples *t*-test result (table 7.5) for ‘self-rated energy’ ( $t(431) = 7.85$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) indicates that the higher energy scores recorded by the H+ respondents is significant.

## 7.6 Colleagues’ Happiness

Table 7.5 shows the data for rating of colleagues’ happiness is as follows:

Rating of colleagues’ happiness for the sample as a whole,  $\bar{x} = 5.48$  ( $SD = 1.50$ ,  $N433$ )

For the H+ category,  $\bar{x} = 6.18$  ( $SD = 1.19$ ,  $n45$ )

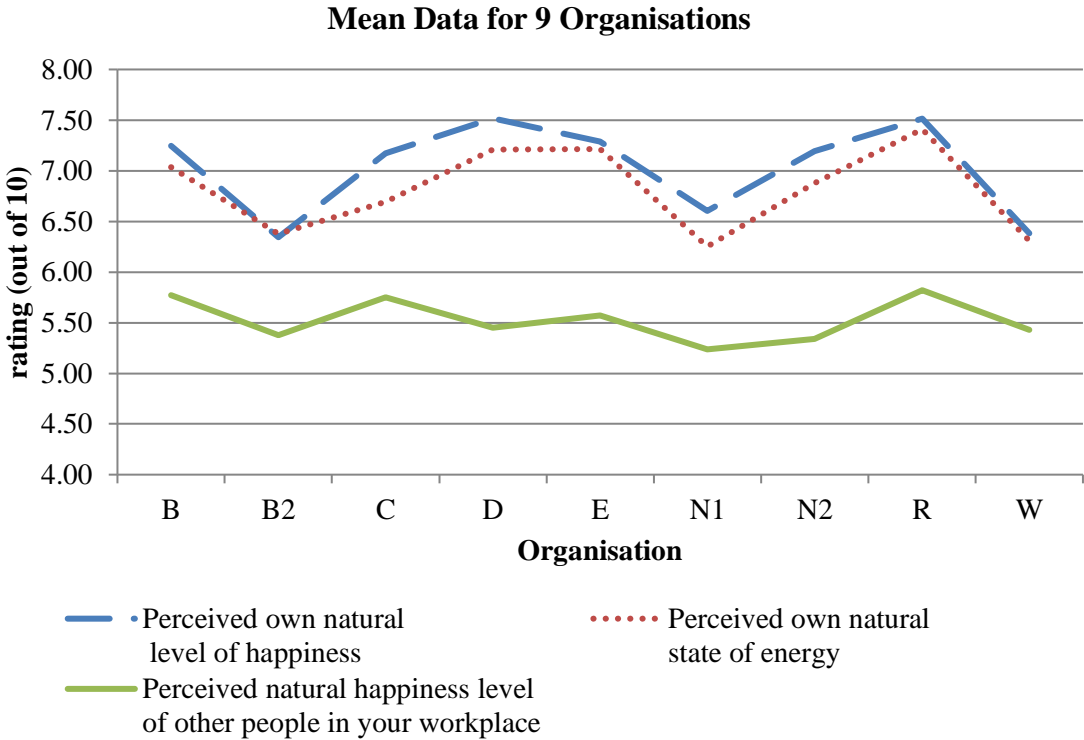
For the NonH+ category,  $\bar{x} = 5.40$  ( $SD = 1.51$ ,  $n388$ )

Examining the statistics of ‘other peoples’ happiness’ it can be seen that the H+ respondents rate their colleagues as happier ( $\bar{x} = 6.18, SD 1.19$ ) compared with their NonH+ counterparts ( $\bar{x} = 5.40, SD = 1.51$ ).

Figure 7.8 shows that the pattern of rating one’s own happiness higher than one’s colleagues is consistent across all 9 organizations and is a phenomenon exhibited by both groups of respondents.

The *t*-test result for ‘others happiness’ ( $t(431) = 3.33, p < 0.05$ ) indicates that the difference between the H+ and NonH+ respondents is significant.

Figure 7.8: Mean scores for ‘happiness’, ‘energy’ and ‘other’s happiness’ across 9 organizations



## **7.7 Happiness - Past, Present and Future**

Phase one also sought to gather data on longevity of happiness. As described in previous chapters, the concept of happiness is ambiguous, often being used as a short-hand description for how a person feels (Aspinwall & Staudinger, 2003). In this context, happiness is the state one is in when one feels contentment, satisfaction, euphoria and associated positive emotions. Thus, this feeling is ‘in the moment’ with Seligman (2002) reporting these transient affects are circumstantial rather than something under the individual’s control. This contrasts with happiness, conceptualised in eudaimonic terms, which encompasses much more than the person’s momentary phenomenological state and therefore has the potential for longevity. As such, respondents were asked to gauge their levels of happiness 5 years ago and their expected level of happiness in 5 years time.

In summary, 94% of the H+ respondents report their happiness levels being the same or happier than they were 5 years ago, with only 6% recording a sense of being happier in the past. These figures compare with 33% of non-flourishing respondents who rate being happier 5 years ago.

Table 7.9 shows the data for evaluations of current happiness in comparison with perceived levels of happiness 5 years ago. Chi-square analysis indicates a significant difference between the two groups.

Table 7.9: Results of Chi-square Test and Descriptive Statistics for respondents' happiness 5 years ago

Happiness 5 years ago	H+ respondents		NonH+ respondents	
	Count	Expected Count	Count	Expected count
Much less than now	7 (15.6)	8.6	76 (19.6)	74.4
A bit less than now	17 (37.8)	11.3	92 (23.7)	97.7
Same as now	18 (40.0)	10.1	79 (20.4)	86.9
A bit happier than now	12 (4.4)	8.9	84 (21.6)	77.1
Much happier than now	1 (2.2)	6.0	57 (14.7)	52.0
<b>Total</b>	45 (100)	45	388 (100)	388

Note.  $\chi^2 = 21.144^*$ ,  $df = 4$ . Numbers in parentheses indicate column percentages.  
 $*p = <.05$

Table 7.10 illustrates the comparison data for predicted happiness in the next 5 years. For both groups the data suggest an optimistic prediction of a happier future with only 6% of the entire sample forecasting their happiness levels will be lower 5 years hence. This pattern is exaggerated for the flourishing respondents. Notwithstanding the fact that these flourishing individuals have a higher current level of happiness ( $\bar{x} = 8.29$ ,  $SD = .51$ ) than their non-flourishing counterparts ( $\bar{x} = 6.77$ ,  $SD = 1.41$ ), 100% believe their happiness will be either maintained or increased 5 years hence.

Table 7.10: Results of Chi-square Test and Descriptive Statistics for respondents' predicted happiness in 5 years time

Expected happiness in 5 years	H+ respondents		NonH+ respondents	
	Count	Expected Count	Count	Expected count
Much less than now	0	1	8 (2.1)	7.2
A bit less than now	0	1.6	15 (3.9)	13.4
Same as now	20 (44.4)	13.8	113 (29.1)	119.2
A bit happier than now	19 (42.2)	16.4	139 (35.8)	141.6
Much happier than now	6 (13.3)	12.2	113 (29.1)	106.6
<b>Total</b>	45 (100)	45	388 (100)	388

Note.  $\chi^2 = 9.86^*$ ,  $df = 4$ . Numbers in parentheses indicate column percentages. ( $*p = .053$ )

In table 7.10, two cells (20%) have an expected count less than 5. This adheres to the tolerance limits asserted by Yates, Moore & McCabe (1999), that *'No more than 20% of the expected counts are less than 5 and all individual expected counts are 1 or greater.'* (p. 734). The  $p$ -value of  $> .05$  indicates that there is no statistical association between predicted future happiness of the flourishing and non-flourishing groups.

Thus, in terms of patterns of happiness longevity amongst the two groups, it does appear that there is a marked difference with regards to historical happiness, with 6.6% of the H+ group reporting their past being happier than now, as against 36.3% of the NonH+ respondents. Chi-squared analysis suggests this difference is significant at the level of  $p < .05$

However, in terms of their perceived projection of future happiness, only 2% of the entire sample are forecasting a 'much less happy' future. Chi-square analysis indicates no significant difference ( $\chi^2 = 9.86, df = 4, p = .053$ ) between the H+ and NonH+ groups. The tendency of both groups to predict a happier future is explored in chapter 10.

## **7.8 Summary & Conclusion**

Chapter 7 described the nature of the respondents before performing a series of statistical checks with regards to age, religion and predicted future happiness. In this study, Chi-square analysis shows no evidence of a relationship between happiness and either age or religion. However, there is evidence of a relationship between happiness and gender.

Further, respondents from both groups demonstrate an inclination to predict a happier future and a tendency to rate one's own happiness as higher than one's work colleagues. The H+ respondents rate their past as happier, compared to their NonH+ counterparts.

The next chapter looks at the results of phase 2. This includes qualitative responses from the Reflections on Happiness Survey, plus quantitative analysis of data captured via Warr's Multi-Affect Indicator.

## **Chapter 8**

**Phase Two Results: Reflections on Happiness Survey (RHS)**

**& IWP Multi-Affect Indicator**



## **Chapter 8: Phase Two Results: Reflections on Happiness Survey (RHS) & IWP Multi-Affect Indicator**

### **8.1 Introduction**

This chapter examines phase two data in which respondents from across the nine organizations were asked to complete a two-part on-line survey.

Part one, 'Reflections on Happiness Survey' (RHS) sought to explore some of the underlying reasons for happiness and positivity. The RHS was split into sub-sections, clustered around 'work', 'home' and 'upbringing' plus an open-ended question that asked respondents to reflect on the reasons for their own happiness in order to elicit any strategies that they may be consciously or unconsciously using. The aim was to test the popularity, strength and usefulness of these emerging strategies in the third phase of data collection. The RHS was distributed to the 45 H+ respondents and the data subjected to thematic analysis, coding against Lyubomirsky's (2007) 3-part happiness model of 'genetics', 'circumstances' and 'intentional strategies'.

The second section of the survey comprised of Warr's (1990) IWP Multi-Affect Indicator and was seeking to narrow the focus of the thesis from 'happiness across all life domains' to 'happiness at work'. The second part of this chapter therefore begins with a reminder of the challenging work environment that pervaded at the time of data collection. It delineates between what Van Dyne & LePine (1998) call 'extra role' and 'in role' behaviours before plotting the data on the 4 quadrants of Russell's (1980) circumplex model. This section reports on the results from all 4 circumplex quadrants, focusing in particular on the HAPA (high-activation pleasant affect) which is, according to Warr & Inceoglu (2012), associated

with job engagement and associated discretionary effort. Independent samples *t*-tests were calculated to ascertain that there are significant differences between H+ and NonH+ employees in respect of 15 of the 16 affects measured, falling to 13 out of 16 when the Bonferroni correction is administered. This section is aligned with research question 1; *'To what extent do flourishing and non-flourishing employees differ on measures of employee satisfaction and engagement?'*

## **8.2 Themes Arising from the 'Reflections on Happiness Survey'**

Thematic analysis was conducted using QSR NVivo data management program. (NVivo qualitative data analysis software, Version 10: QSR International Pty Ltd Australia, 2008)

I undertook what is termed a 'theoretical' thematic analysis - driven by the researcher's theoretical or analytic interest in the area. According to Braun & Clarke (2006), this form of thematic analysis tends to provide less a rich description of the data overall, and more a detailed analysis of some aspects of the data.

This phase of the data collection was specifically aimed at uncovering 'happiness habits', whether in thinking or behaviour, that could be measured in phase three. Thus, this section is designed to be an account of the findings, often portrayed in the participants' own words, that reveal some of the underlying factors behind their flourishing status. Discussion of the findings is reserved for Chapter 10.

### 8.3 Reasons for Flourishing, Coded Against Lyubomirsky's 3-Part Happiness Model

When examining participants' 'reasons for happiness', responses were initially coded in line with Lyubomirsky's (2007) 3-part happiness model, under the broad themes of 'Genetics', 'Circumstances' and 'Intentional Strategies'.

#### a) Genetics

When reflecting on their reasons for being in the flourishing group, genetic make-up was specifically cited on 5 occasions, for example:

*'Genetic disposition.'* (female, respondent #6)

*'Possible genetics... my dad was always a very positive person despite having a debilitating illness.'* (male, respondent #16)

A further 19 responses cited 'disposition' or 'nature' as an underlying reason for their happiness. For example:

*'I think I am naturally an optimistic and happy person. I always try to see the positive side of something.'* (female, respondent #1)

The response: *'This is my nature I suppose. I don't have time to be unhappy,'* (female, respondent #15) reflects a perceived natural disposition with a consolidating and practical reason for remaining so.

In terms of disposition, there was an emerging sub-theme of flourishing respondents recognising themselves as being 'a people person'. This was coded 18 times from the pointed:

*'I'm interested in people.'* (female, respondent #6),

to this description of how an individual prefers to conduct his business:

*'I prefer to walk from office to office to get things done rather than email people.'* (male, respondent #19)

With the same respondent noting later that the effect has been to:

*'... raise performance (sometimes against the odds).'*

Extending Lyubomirsky's genetic classification to encompass the influences of parenting, phase two of the data collection also revealed an interesting dichotomy between flourishing respondents who stated their happiness was due to positive early parental influences (14 references) and others who state their current happiness is a learned behaviour in response to negative parental influences (11 references).

Those who cite positive parenting as a factor in their current flourishing status suggest:

*'Quite possibly due to my upbringing - great parents...'* (female, respondent #25)

*'... spent most of my childhood with my mum and older sister; we struggled financially while mum did her midwifery training. I have happy memories of that time and mum was mostly positive.'* (female, respondent #44)

The latter is an example of several responses that allude to the emergence of happiness despite less than idyllic conditions.

The following responses typify the uplifting and long-lasting effect from participants who cite both their parents as positive:

*'... both my parents were positive and upbeat, however my Mother absolutely stood out and has been a massive source of strength and inspiration (and her mother as well).'* (female, respondent #24)

*'My parents have always been happy and positive and I'm sure this plays a significant part in why I am the same way. I lost my mum this year but right up to the end she retained real positivity and thanks for the life that she had. A remarkable woman. She is my inspiration to continue living out her positivity.'* (male, respondent #7)

Conversely, some respondents have reflected on current issues that may be brought about, at least in part, by negative parental traits. For example:

*'... they [parents] were very negative, another reason for my depression.'* (female, respondent #2)

Others' comments signify a reflection of the learning that can take place and choices that one can make with regard to influential people - for example:

*'Dad's glass was always empty, but my uncles was always full - I looked at the difference and decided who I wanted to be more like. They both lived the same amount of time, but one had more fun and an easier time of it.'* (female, respondent #26)

The comment above points to the fact that lessons are learned from a wider circle than parents, as does:

*'... I remember at a young age thinking how much people moan and whinge about everything in their lives and I don't want to grow up like that. My parents are also positive people and don't let things get them down easily.'* (male, respondent #7)

Some responses give a categorical negative response to the question of whether they experienced positive parenting. For example:

*'No, they were both very argumentative and grumpy.'* (male, respondent #37)

as well as a realisation that negativity might have detrimental effects on life:

*'... I believe they missed out on many opportunities in life as a result.'* (male, respondent #10)

Those who cite the opposite, namely that their current flourishing disposition is a conscious response to negative upbringing commented thus:

*'I didn't want to end up like my parents.'* (male, respondent #11)

*'My dad could be moody - you could tell if he wasn't in a good mood! Although I have to say my mum is a huge worrier and I try not to follow that path although I can see it in my two brothers.'* (female, respondent #3),

and, in direct response to negative parenting:

*'I have learnt to be different.'* (male, respondent #11)

## **b) Circumstances**

The second part of Lyubomirsky's happiness model, 'circumstances', received 79 citations as a happiness factor. Research on 'hassles' and 'uplifts' (Kanner *et al.*, 1981) identified a host of minor daily events that result in negative and positive emotions, respectively. In the

workplace, the ‘hassles’ included meetings and negative colleagues while the ‘uplifts’ included achievements and interacting with positive colleagues.

For these data, the ‘uplifts’ were sub-divided into 3 themes. The ‘work team’ was cited 3 times; from the joy of:

*‘Working with people who enjoy life.’* (female, respondent #43)

*‘Working with some really good people.’* (male, respondent #45)

to a response that points to the reciprocal nature of human affect:

*‘Work with colleagues who are as enthusiastic and passionate as I am thus contributing to how I feel.’* (female, respondent #15)

Enjoying one’s job was cited 5 times, for example:

*‘I enjoy my customer service role.’* (male, respondent #19)

*‘...career I enjoy.’* (female, respondent #2)

A further source of happiness emerged with 6 references to circumstances outside of work.

Examples include:

*‘I have a secure home life and I feel loved and supported.’* (female, respondent #2)

*‘Lovely home life and family.’* (female, respondent #39)

*‘...supportive parents, great husband and brilliant kids.’* (female, respondent #43)

Conversely, the external environment is also highlighted as something which tests an individual’s flourishing status. Non-work ‘hassles’ include the weather (mentioned 3 times, for example, *‘November, February, snow, lack of light...’* (female, respondent #14) and a variety of miscellaneous external challenges (4), for example, *‘We have just moved to a new house which we have built ourselves and there are still a few teething problems.’* (female, respondent #1)

However, the workplace is cited as a much bigger challenge, with numerous examples of ‘other people’ (29), ‘feeling overworked’ (23) and ‘feeling underworked’ (3). In the ‘other people’ category, ‘work colleagues’ were cited as ‘hassles’ 25 times. Examples include:

*‘Negative and unhappy people who come to work to moan about everything.’*  
(male, respondent #23)

*‘People who constantly find reasons or excuses for NOT doing something.’*  
(female, respondent #12)

Senior managers were coded 4 times, for example:

*‘Lack of decision making and focus from the exec team can drive me mad!’*  
(female, respondent #12).

Recalling that this tranche of data was collected in 2009, several statements reflect the challenging prevailing context of the global banking crisis and public sector cuts. For example, this statement hints at a resolve to remain upbeat despite the current turmoil:

*‘At the moment, in my life, I have had few experiences that have ‘tested’ my happiness however I feel that I am preparing myself through a positive outlook to ensure that I am able to carry on a positive trend.’* (female, respondent #42)

Indeed, self-efficacy was coded 18 times, with the following statement clearly identifying a sense of responsibility for one’s happiness, irrespective of external circumstances:

*‘I am the architect of my own happiness. This current post is only guaranteed until April 2013, hopefully there will be an opportunity for me to continue with this work, if not, then it’s an opportunity to do something different, try a different direction, challenge myself to re-invent myself in the workplace.’*  
(female, respondent #34)

The theme of relishing a challenge and learning from experiences is also highlighted thus:

*‘Because I know what it is like to be really unhappy when circumstances are out of your control. But it is how you deal with those circumstances, and how you can put those negative experiences to good use to help others who also may be having a hard time.’* (female, respondent #12)

Following on, this participant reflects on how they have become more responsible for their own emotional wellbeing:

*‘I’m very happy now in my personal life and expect to be more and more happy each year. I know this is possible because happiness for myself isn’t*

*found by other people giving it to me or by owning lots of possessions, it's what I can give to myself whenever I choose.' (female, respondent #35)*

Summing up the themes arising from an examination of external factors, firstly it can be noted that 'circumstances' are cited 14 times as an 'uplift' and 65 times a 'hassle'. It is recognised that the data was collected at a particularly turbulent time of financial instability and public sector uncertainty, which may partly explain why the environment is deemed disproportionately negative. Secondly, rather than letting the environment acts as a curb on positive affect, there is evidence to suggest that H+ respondents will take action to change their circumstances, for example:

*'I know I have power over my life - if I really hate my job, I can leave. I can affect my environment and I can change myself too.'* (female, respondent #6)

Thus, there is evidence that the H+ employees are willing to make changes to their external environment in order to maintain their flourishing status. This challenges Lyubomirsky's (2007) assertion of the fixed nature of an individual's 'circumstances'.

### **c) Intentional Strategies**

With Lyubomirsky (2007) purporting that 50% of an individual's happiness is accounted for by their genetic make-up and a further 10% by circumstances, that leaves 40% at the behest of the individual. Coding for 'reasons for happiness' resulted in 101 responses in the 'Intentional Strategies' category, further sub-divided into 10 themes. The largest theme is 'attitudinal choice' (27 responses), with a further 24 responses alluding to happiness being derived, at least in part, to a series of mental reframes that view challenges as 'opportunities' typified by one participant suggesting:

*'I hate to be told things are impossible.'* (male, respondent #40)



This data was collected from H+ respondents and I have no comparable data from NonH+, but it is salient to note that a quarter of H+ responses are in line with the notion of relishing challenge and change.

#### **i. Attitudinal Choice: Cognisance and Effort**

In order for a positive attitude to be chosen, there needs to be a cognisance of the fact that a choice is available. This ‘consciousness’ is highlighted several times, examples including:

*‘Most of the time it [positivity] just happens but when life is grey I make a conscious effort to manage my state.’* (female, respondent #8)

*‘...I decided that once crap happens, it’s happened and it’s my choice how I behave from then on - it won’t change anything so I may as well begin my journey to being upbeat again. Once I did this a few times, it became easier and now I don’t have to think about it quite so much - it just comes naturally.’* (female, respondent #15)

The latter statement points to an initial conscious attitudinal choice that eventually becomes habitual.

In terms of actively choosing an upbeat attitude, there is a clear narrative. There are several overt examples:

*‘Because I’ve decided to be. I realise it’s a choice.’* (male, respondent #32)

*‘I choose the attitude I want to have.’* (male, respondent #28)

the latter elaborating on the self-effacing nature of his choice by adding:

*‘If I have an issue I will seek to address it rather than letting it fester.’*

Of the 27 responses coded under ‘attitudinal choice’, 17 of them also highlight a degree of effort involved in making the choice. For example:

*‘Sometimes it [happiness] is hard and takes a bit of extra effort to fight the negative influences.’* (female, respondent #40)

with others being more specific about the negative influences:

*'...there are a lot of people trying to drag me down.'* (female, respondent #22)

The theme of rising above a general air of negativity is reflected several times, most notably:

*'I stand out because others have accepted misery and scarcity as the norm.'*  
(female, respondent #22)

Indeed, of the respondents who claim to have a positive pre-disposition all later allude to applying a degree of effort to remaining upbeat. For example, this respondent reflects that she is naturally upbeat:

*'Born with a happy disposition (according to my mum!) Tend to view life as glass half full.'* (female, respondent #8)

With the same respondent later elaborating that:

*'Some days or circumstances require a conscious reminder.'*

Thus, there is the clear emergence of flourishing status achieved by effort as much as natural disposition, typically illustrated in these statements:

*'I have had to try very hard to consciously be positive in recent years because of a difficult work situation.'* (female, respondent #12)

*'I'm naturally optimistic and upbeat, but there are times when (for whatever reason) I don't feel on top of the world and in those moments I consciously make an effort to be positive and get back on top.'* (female, respondent #41)

*'Sometimes life takes over and I have to work at it.'* (male, respondent #45)

The link between attitudinal choice and effort is also reflected in the responses coded as 'reframing'. There are several responses that allude to 'looking on the bright side' as a mental strategy:

*'I work hard to see the positives in things.'* (female, respondent #15)

*'It's easy to see the negative in things and get dragged down by some of the challenges.'* (female, respondent #3)

with the same individual later adding:

*'...but why would you – it's depressing!'*

The effort of not getting ‘dragged down’ by people and situations is cited 12 times, once again telling a story of the H+ respondents working to rise above what they see as attitudinal mediocrity. Further, there are statements that portray attitudinal choice serving a dual purpose, firstly in raising levels of affect above the norm and secondly, in helping sustain these levels, a point highlighted thus:

*‘I strongly believe this [attitudinal choice] gives you a force-field and no matter what people say to you with negative comments ... it allows you to stay positive while others around get sucked into the atmosphere.’* (male, respondent #23)

A further emergent theme is the recognition of the inevitability of bad days. Several statements were garnered suggesting that attitudinal choice does not make one immune from negative occurrences but is a useful resilience strategy. The following statements reflect on the notion that the flourishing respondents experience emotional downs as well as ups:

*‘I don’t necessarily think about being happy - but I know that I have to work at being positive - life isn’t permanently like that.’* (female, respondent #41)

*‘I have down days but I’m a pragmatist – there must be a way around things, simpler, better way.’* (male, respondent #40)

Related to the strategy of cognitive reframing (Beck, 1997) the data garnered numerous statements that alluded to current happiness being linked to a period of unhappiness and/or trauma that acted as a life-changing lesson. This corresponds with Tedeschi and Calhoun’s (2004) findings on post-traumatic growth. Powerful examples of comments gathered for this research include:

*‘I had ectopic pregnancies which sent me on a journey of self-discovery and insight.’* (female, respondent #15)

*‘Since the personal loss of my 11-year old son. I don’t take life for granted since then and try to enjoy every moment of my waking life.’* (male, respondent #37)

Investigations by Seligman (2003) and Wiseman (2004) have revealed that unhappy individuals are more likely than happy ones to dwell on negative events and that such

rumination may drain cognitive resources and thus bring to bear a variety of negative consequences, which could further reinforce unhappiness. Dolan's (2014) notion that attention is the sole conduit through which awareness is created is born out in 14 statements that are coded under the theme of 'changing focus':

*'I don't dwell on negatives and seem to have an ability to find silver linings.'*  
(female, respondent #36)

*'...there have been dark times to get through, I try to focus on what's good about my life...'* (female, respondent #27)

Many of the strategies are used simultaneously with, for example, this respondent using attitudinal choice, effort and reframing:

*'Although I have been through a number of traumas throughout my life and have been treated with depression, I just got fed-up with feeling sorry for myself and realised I had a choice on whether or not to let my past get me down, so I just learnt to look at the positives through every day and life altering situations and focus on those as much as possible - it then became natural to think more positively.'* (female, respondent #18)

The statement above also points to positivity being, at least to some degree, something which an individual can learn and which can become embedded as a way of thinking. This theme of 'practice makes perfect', sustaining mental strategies to the point of habituation, is again highlighted thus:

*'It [happiness] is a conscious decision which is becoming unconscious.'*  
(male, respondent #17)

Moreover, there is a theme not only of cognisance that attitudinal choice exists, and that there's effort involved, but that it is rewarded with an upwardly mobile emotional spiral affecting those in the wider work team:

*'I think I have learnt to think differently at work in recent years and accept that it is up to me what attitude I have and being positive with colleagues creates a much better atmosphere to work in.'* (male, respondent #37)

There is just one reference that reflects on a conscious downward force on attitude, with a participant noting:

*'At different times when I was a teenager I was both a punk rocker and a goth, so made a determined effort to be downbeat - it came with the territory.'*  
(female, respondent #22)

adding that:

*'I really started to consciously think about being positive when I had children.'*

When analysing the data via thematic coding, it becomes apparent that many in the H+ community strive for happiness and positivity, and that striving is, in fact, an effort. It would therefore be pertinent to investigate not only the strength of the strategy *'I choose to be positive'* but also the degree to which positive affect is naturally and effortlessly occurring.

## **ii. An Emotional Ripple Effect**

The transmission of affect is an area of particular interest for this research. From the outset, this research has sought out those who are deemed to be flourishing, that is, happy within themselves with the side effect of resonating with those around them. Flourishing, for the purposes of this research, goes beyond individual well-being towards being positively impactful on one's work colleagues with the aim of seeking out and reporting on those who convey this emotional uplift.

Social contagion can be in either positive or negative directions with Dutton (2003) stating that, *'Any point of contact with another person can potentially be a high-quality connection. One conversation, one e-mail exchange, one moment of connecting in a meeting can infuse both participants with a greater sense of vitality, giving them a bounce in their steps and a greater capacity to act.'* (p. 2).

Comments reported by the H+ community appear to bear out the overt desire to have an uplifting effect, in the domains of home and work. There are 20 responses that allude to the intention to create positive affect in others, an example of which is:

*'I am happy at home too and try to infect my family by staying happy most of the time.'* (male, respondent #42)

The home domain is again highlighted in this response:

*'Yes. I have a busy family life and always do my best to stay upbeat, especially with children as I want them to grow up being positive about life's opportunities.'* (female, respondent #43)

Setting out to influence others and thus create an emotional 'ripple effect' is, once again, highlighted in this straightforward response:

*'... I have a positive outlook on life and I think it is important to encourage others to be positive too.'* (male, respondent #32)

In addition to deliberately seeking to have an uplifting emotional effect on others, there are also a number of responses that acknowledge the reciprocity of emotion and that they are also the recipients of positive affect, for example:

*'I am fortunate to be married to a very positive person and I think that is the biggest contributor to being upbeat.'* (female, respondent #30)

Further, a theme emerges from the direction of causation from 'positive mindset' to 'positive outcomes':

*'A positive outlook leads to a feeling of confidence and an overall better feeling within which then flows into my work life. You then feel you can 'take on anything' and pretty much do!'* (male, respondent #7)

The following comment concurs with the direction of causation (i.e., a positive attitude preceding a positive outcome) and reflects on how an individual's attitudinal choice might trigger favourable workplace outcomes:

*'At one level it's a simple choice to be happy. I spend 10 hours a day in these 4 walls and that would be a huge amount of my life thrown away if I was miserable! Being happy and upbeat gives me energy to get through often long and demanding days and hopefully inspires those around me to give their best as well (which ultimately makes my job easier!).'* (male, respondent #11)

This reflection once again combines elements of attitudinal awareness and choice with the conscious notion of creating an upward emotional spiral:

*'I think about happiness a lot! I like to think I'm naturally upbeat, but as I'm easily distracted, it would be very easy for me to be sucked up by a passing negative person. I don't bounce round irritatingly (I hope), but I do consciously think about the impression I create, and how to make a positive impact.'* (female, respondent #33)

This respondent (a care worker) elucidates on her impact in the workplace, suggesting that emotional uplift can be felt by 'customers' as well as work colleagues:

*'I have found, interestingly, that positive thinking affects people with dementia. They react in a completely different way when they are approached by someone who has put aside minor worries and irritations. They respond to smiles, laughter and warmth, and if we can have such a marked effect on someone with cognitive issues, then it's worth thinking actively about happiness!'* (female, respondent #36)

### **iii. Resilience and Positive Self-Talk**

Related to 'conscious choice' and 'deliberate effort' alluded to in several comments above, reframing events in a more positive way was cited in 27 responses in phase two, examples include:

*'I don't really think about making an effort to be happy but sometimes think about putting a positive spin on something bad that may have happened.'* (female, respondent #30)

*'I see the positives much more than the problems.'* (male, respondent #37)

*'I work hard to see the positives in things, and find it easy to switch my thinking into a positive mode.'* (female, respondent #33)

These examples above allude to the mental strategy of rethinking situations from a more positive vantage point. Evidence from the literature review suggested that happy people refrain from making social comparisons that would disadvantage them, they dwell on their successes rather than ruminating on their failures, they are persistently optimistic, and they use more effective coping strategies than their less happy peers (Lyubomirsky & Ross, 1997;

Lyubomirsky, 2001). Comments from phase 2 that appear to corroborate this disinclination to ruminate and to exude a more solution-focused mind-set include:

*'I don't dwell on negatives and seem to have an ability to find silver linings.'* (female, respondent #3)

*'Some people see problems, others see challenges. Some people look for barriers, others find way round them!'* (female, respondent #14)

Further, a theme of positive internal dialogue, specifically in situations when it might be needed the most, is also a recurring theme from the phase two data. For example:

*'I am generally a happy person and, I am conscious when I am not happy and I give myself a talking to...'* (female, respondent #20)

The theme of giving oneself a positive pep talk in times of need is also highlighted in this statement:

*'I usually give myself a good talking to though and bring myself round fairly quickly.'* (female, respondent #33)

#### **iv. Gratitude**

Gratitude, as a source of happiness, was discussed in chapter 3. In phase 2 of the data collection, a sense of gratitude was also cited 7 times by the participants. For example:

*'I've got a lot to be thankful for.'* (male, respondent #17)

*'I have learned to appreciate what I have.'* (male, respondent #45)

*'Maybe because they [other people] take everything for granted and moan about the slightest issue.'* (female, respondent #6)

Reflecting on lack of happiness in her work team, this flourishing respondent suggests gratitude is a deliberate tactic, and that happiness, for her at least, is not something 'outside' of herself:

*'I think they [other people] blame a lot of stuff outside themselves for their perceived 'terrible' situation although I do softly remind them that there are plenty of people in the graveyard that would swap places with them.'* (female, respondent #20).

Similarly, one respondent suggests that she is:



*'...naturally optimistic and upbeat.'*

but that gratitude is a strategy used as a fall-back position, in situations:

*'When life gets a bit rough, I do try to remember the good things about my life and how fortunate I am.'* (female, respondent #21)

Gratitude is also highlighted with specific regards to the workplace domain. For example, in response to the question 'Why are you happier than other people on the same pay grade in the same job?' a salient response was recorded, thus:

*'They don't see what a fortunate position they are actually in.'* (female, respondent #13)

An interweaving of strategies (choice, effort, reframing, gratitude and impact) is revealed in this narrative:

*'Life happens and the man I loved left me and I lost my home, eventually had to make myself bankrupt but I realised I could still be happy without him and without owning a home. My losses sent me on a journey of discovery of finding out who I was again. I chose to do this because I realised that life is so short and precious and I wanted to be a good role model for my daughter who was 15. I could either spend it wallowing about my losses or embrace my them and be happy that I had them in the first place. Some people never find someone to love deeply, some people never have the pleasure of a beautiful home. I count my blessings every day.'* (female, respondent #34)

## **v. Strengths**

According to Seligman (2002), one of positive psychology's three central concerns is the study of strengths and virtue. As discussed in previous chapters, using one's strengths in a challenging task leads to the experience of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975) and what Seligman (2002) calls 'the engaged life'. The concept of flow is connected to strengths because, in its simplest sense, flow suggests that by focusing an employee's energy on their areas of strength, the organization will reap improvements in work rate, motivation and wellbeing.

The notion of playing to one's strengths appears in 8 responses in phase 2. For example, the following statement implies a conscious and deliberate attempt to generate a strengths-based culture:

*'I support social work and social care staff with getting the skills they need to do the job. More than that though, I create physical and emotional spaces for the softer skills, self-awareness and growth to occur through the magic of conversations... I've always been a strengths-spotter.'* (female, respondent #27)

In terms of the question, 'what motivates you at work?' the following response shows a degree of thought about creating a flourishing culture, with 'strengths' being part of the picture:

*'Inspiring others. Creating the atmosphere for people to gain insight, flourish, find what makes them happy. Learning. Other people's learning. Other people's strengths. Believing in someone long enough until they can believe it too.'* (female, respondent #39)

This person admits that they are not in their dream job but that they enjoy coming to work because:

*'Whatever I do I want to do it well and I think the role plays to my strengths.'* (female, respondent #18)

This respondent reflects on a 'breakthrough' or 'realisation' in their own thinking that has improved their own happiness level:

*'Working on signature strengths and spending less time on areas of weakness. The realisation of where natural strengths lie and acceptance of the parts of your life at which you may never excel is a huge breakthrough.'* (female, respondent #33)

The following response highlights the opposite effect - that lack of opportunity to play to one's strengths can inhibit morale – in response to 'What drags you down at work?', the response is:

*'The culture and work colleagues (plodders and neg-heads). Every day pressures that show up my weaknesses and don't allow me to exhibit my strengths.'* (female, respondent #12)

## vi. Goal Setting

Amongst the H+ respondents, 'achieving goals' (9) was rated as the third most important workplace motivator (behind 'making a difference' (32) and 'receiving praise/recognition' (12)). There is evidence of Locke and Latham's (2002) notion of goals having an energizing function:

*'If something I do has a positive result across the business then it feels like it must do when a footballer scores a goal. Also I respond well to praise from peers and team members.'* (male, respondent #38)

Further, Locke and Latham (1990) suggest that the attention focusing effect of goal setting leads to higher effort as well as increased persistency of effort, purporting that goals motivate people to develop strategies that will enable them to perform at the required goal levels. There were several comments pertaining to this motivational aspect of goal setting, for example, in response to the question 'what motivates you at work?' this answer is unequivocal in stating that personal goal setting is crucial

*'Setting goals for myself and providing the best service for clients. Inspiring others and helping them to develop their skills to enhance the service.'* (female, respondent #12)

Often goals are cited ambiguously, and I am unable to detect whether they pertain to work or outside of work, for example:

*'I have a clear and very structured 2-year plan and a longer 5-year plan.'* (female, respondent #12)

*'I think issues in the workplace will sort themselves out and I have medium term plans for my own development.'* (female, respondent #34)

The direction of motivation/goal causation is unclear. This statement appears to point towards motivation being the starting point for achieving one's goals:

*'I like my job currently and being positive helps me achieve my goals and guarantees results.'* (male, respondent #16)

whereas this response indicates that goals can be the source of one's motivation:

*'Because I don't get bogged down in 'stuff'. I keep my eyes on the further goal.'* (male, respondent #31)

Moreover, some statements suggest that goal setting can be individual:

*'...motivation is driven by my own desire to be motivated - my WHY - my job is a bridging gap to where I want to be and where I have set my goals to be and so far am on track to be there.'* (female, respondent #21)

or team related:

*'The day to day issues cannot be allowed to drag back the overall goals and vision. My team are excellent and happy to run with the day to day issues as they believe in the bigger overall picture.'* (male, respondent #19)

In most cases, participants mention work-based goals as motivational – for example:

*'I think I am happier because I have a plan of what I want to do and where I want to be so I try and take what I can in every situation that helps me towards my end goal whether that is the opportunity to make good contacts, to learn how to use a certain computer system, to write for a different audience so I don't feel that this one job will define the rest of my life.'* (male, respondent #37)

However, the motivating aspect of goal-setting also appears in some non-work situations:

*'I have set myself goals such as running a marathon when I didn't think I could run, have already now run three halves, and have self belief.'* (female, respondent #39)

*'We have a plan to achieve some of our goals (as a family) and make slight changes in our lives that I think would make me even happier than I am now if we achieved them.'* (female, respondent #29)

## **vii. Religiosity and Happiness**

Phase 2 gathered 4 overt references to religiosity as a potential source of happiness, ranging from:

*'I know who I am and I'm comfortable with that and I know that God has things under His control. Life does get very tough and it's my faith that keeps me on track.'* (female, respondent #33)

to the unequivocal one-word answer:

*'God.'* (male, respondent #19)

It is interesting to note the following statement in which the respondent acknowledges that religion might be a factor for other people's happiness but that, for them, 'personal choice' rates higher:

*'...others live for designer clothes and exotic holidays to make them feel good. Others have their children and live through them, religion and live through that. I am happier because I am choosing to put better things into my life...'*  
(female, respondent #1)

According to the Values in Action (VIA) classification of strengths, spirituality is considered to be one of the traits that fosters positive well-being and achievement of the good life (Peterson, 2006). It is therefore pertinent to observe that 'spirituality', with no corresponding mention of God, arises as a factor in 7 responses. For example:

*'I've always been a positive person, generally. My true awakening came in 2004 after the death of my mother and a divorce from a very difficult relationship. It was at this time I really explored who I was and also found spirituality (as opposed to some organised religion). This has naturally brought me to the company of lovely people and that has boosted my own positive outlook on life.'* (female, respondent #34)

The following statements highlight an undefined sense of spirituality as an ingredient in happiness;

*'All I know is that my love for people, the desire to laugh rather than cry and keeping myself grounded through my spiritual outlook on life works for me.'*  
(male, respondent #19)

as well as:

*'I have deep spiritual values and I think that helps. I believe I am accountable for all the circumstances in my life and that is a great leveller.'* (female, respondent #44)

Other quotes combine spirituality with gratitude and/or reframing, such as:

*'I recognise and reflect on how fortunate I am - I spend a few minutes each day asking for guidance from the 'great spirit','* (female, respondent #24)

and:

*'In 2007 when I began understanding more spiritually and practising meditation and affirmations, my world balanced out.'* (female, respondent #6)

### viii. Happy Music and Feel-Good TV

DeNora (2001) suggest that although not a conventional happiness activity such as practicing gratitude or exercising signature strengths, listening to music may be a viable method in improving well-being. Further, because of the affective response individuals have with music, engaging with music has been examined and utilized as a form of therapy for individuals (Thaut & Wheeler, 2010). These points are born out in comments gleaned from H+ respondents, such as:

*'I listen to my iPod at my desk, a play list of positive happy songs.'* (male, respondent #31)

and,

*'If things get me down I can go with that but find it hard to maintain a negative attitude - there is always something that will lift me, either my lovely wife, my friends or my ever faithful lifelong friend, music.'* (male, respondent #19)

Some responses include music, along with a mix of additional strategies. For example:

*'Positivity kicks in when I drive past a local forest with all the calming green around me. Otherwise when I'm singing. There is always music on and rightly or not I sing. (so now you know what that strange noise is)!'* (female, respondent# 6)

Further, some responses concur with the premise of section 1.8 of this thesis ('the media as an impediment to happiness') and that restricting news and TV consumption might be a viable happiness strategy for some. For example, when citing reasons for being happier than average, one respondent suggests that work colleagues are:

*'...folk wallowing in their own misery. It is a bit like the matrix, they are in a hypnotic world of celebrity wannabe.'* (male, respondent #38)

and that one of his strategies for remaining upbeat is:

*'Media, sensationalism in news – I have disconnected from all media possible.'*

Similarly, this respondent suggests the removal of certain thinking habits and negative aspects of her life (one of which is television) have helped her happiness levels:

*'I have removed things from my life that were not serving me well. I have let go of my past and given up on many of the unnecessary aspects of life that many see as necessary. For example, I don't have a TV. I am free to be me! I dance. I am a bit mad! But that works for me.'* (female, respondent #8)

#### **8.4 Job, Career or Calling?**

It has been suggested that individuals will be more authentically happy if they feel a 'calling' or a connection between what they do at work and a higher purpose or important value (Seligman 2002). Wrzesniewski *et al.* (1997) suggest that job, career and calling orientations are not necessarily exclusive categories so, for example, someone with a calling orientation may also desire a good salary and benefits. However, individuals with a calling orientation are more likely to say that they would do their job even if they were not paid. Further, Wrzesniewski *et al.* state that one cannot necessarily predict an employee's orientation based on their job title or income and most professions are fairly evenly divided with about a third of workers falling into each category. Wrzesniewski (2014) reports that individuals who have a calling orientation record higher satisfaction with their work, and are more likely to 'craft' their jobs to fit their strengths and interests, describing the calling orientation as a 'portable benefit' purporting that those who experience it are generally positive about a variety of work experiences. Conversely, those who have a job orientation may simply find more meaning in activities outside of the work setting.

Of the 44 H+ respondents in this survey, 2 respondents (4%) class what they do as a 'job', 52% recorded what they do as a 'career' with the remaining 43% viewing their work as a 'calling'. Further, of the 44 respondents, 9 (20%) agreed that they were employed in their dream job, 68% said they were not, with 2% and 9% responding 'almost' and 'sometimes' respectively. This response indicate that individuals can be outstandingly happy at work, even when not employed in their ideal job, pointing to 'happiness' and 'engagement' as factors that

stem, at least in part, from the internal strategy of the person, rather than the nature of their employment:

*'No. it isn't quite my dream job and I don't think I ever wanted to be, in effect, an 'accountant'. It does however fit my ethos that whatever I do I want to feel valued and to make a difference.'* (male, respondent #45)

Indeed, 'making a difference' and/or 'having a sense of purpose' was cited in a further 32 responses, with comments such as:

*'... sounds corny but knowing I have made a difference to someone in some way either by something small like making them a drink or through someone achieving something as a result of attending an event I have delivered makes me feel good.'* (female, respondent #25)

*'Making a difference. Doing the best I can with every internal or external call or query.'* (female, respondent #15)

and,

*'Playing my part in making a genuine difference to people's lives, whether that's those who work alongside me or those we serve.'* (male, respondent #11)

all highlight a link between purpose and positive affect.

The second most cited reason for feeling motivated amongst the H+ community was progress towards or achieving goals, eliciting 23% of responses. For example:

*'Feeling like I am doing a great job and achieving things.'* (male, respondent #10)

and,

*'... succeeding with meaningful projects always helps.'* (male, respondent #9).

The following comment combines elements of positive relationships and positive outcomes as motivational drivers:

*'I like to see staff and customers happy, I like to make decisions... I like to travel and see my staff regularly. I like to make sure I complete a task, and get satisfaction out of doing a good job not matter how big or small.'* (female, respondent #5)

Examining the big picture of NVivo coding, of the 67 coded responses for 'what motivates you at work?' 66 can be categorised under the headings of people, purpose and praise. The remaining singular response is coded as 'pay', specifically the perceived equity of her salary



grade:

*'Getting paid the correct wage I should do for the tasks I am carrying out (pay should be at least in line with other colleagues in other similar jobs elsewhere across the County).'* (female, respondent #33)

Thus, whilst acknowledging that I have no comparable data for the NonH+ respondents, it is clear that those experiencing higher levels of workplace engagement are, in the main, motivated by factors other than pay.

### **8.5 Reflecting on Workplace Affect (IWP Multi-Affect Indicator)**

Examining the data from earlier phases, it is clear that a recurring theme at the time of data collection was one of workplace re-structures, budget cuts and uncertainty of job tenure. It would therefore be pertinent to conduct a study of how the H+ and NonH+ employees might differ in their emotions at work, during what were particularly challenging times.

The second part of the on-line instrument sought to narrow the focus towards the single domain of workplace affect. The IWP Multi-Affect Indicator was completed by 44 H+ respondents as well as 151 of their NonH+ work colleagues.

This scale comprises 16 items to measure affective wellbeing, comprising 4 sets of 4 emotions:

- i. Engaged: enthusiastic, joyful, inspired & excited
- ii. Satisfied: calm, relaxed, paid back & at ease
- iii. Depressed: dejected, despondent, hopeless & depressed
- iv. Stressed: nervous, anxious, tense & worried

Respondents were asked to reflect on how often they had experienced these feelings at work over the past week, recording their responses on a percentage scale. Specifically, for the column entitled 'feelings at work' respondents were asked:

*For the past week, please indicate the approximate percentage of time you have experienced the following emotions while you were working in your job. Everyone has a lot of overlapping feelings, so you will have a total for all the items that is greater than 100% of the time:*

Warr *et al.* (2013) tested the Multi-Affect Indicator in several workplace scenarios and found the four scales to be highly reliable, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of internal consistency ranging from .80 to .87 (HAUA; High Activation Unpleasant Affect), from .78 to .90 (HAPA; High-Activation Pleasant Affect), from .82 to .89 (LAUA; Low-Activation Unpleasant Affect) and from .75 to .86 (LAPA; Low-Activation Pleasant Affect).

Cronbach's alphas for this study are shown below:

- i. HAUA quadrant: Nervous, excited, tense & worried;  $\alpha = 0.75$
- ii. LAPA quadrant: Calm, relaxed, laid back & at ease;  $\alpha = 0.73$
- iii. LAUA quadrant: Depressed, dejected, despondent & hopeless;  $\alpha = 0.74$
- iv. HAPA quadrant: Enthusiastic, excited, inspired & joyful;  $\alpha = 0.88$

Table 8.1 displays the *t*-tests and mean levels of affect variables (as measured by Warr's Multi-Affect Indicator) for the H+ (*n* 44) and NonH+ (*n*151) groups.

Table 8.1: Comparison of mean scores and *t*-tests for *H+* and *NonH+* on the 16 emotions measured by the IWP Multi-Affect Indicator

<b>Affect</b>	<b><i>n</i></b>	<b><math>\bar{x}</math></b>	<b><i>SD</i></b>	<b><i>t</i></b>	<b><i>df</i></b>	<b><i>p</i></b>																																																																																																																																																		
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	(H+) 44	8.8	.58				joyful	151	5.8	1.24	5.454	193	<.001	44	7.5	1.31	inspired	151	5.2	1.13	7.090	193	<.001	44	8.7	1.27	excited	151	5.6	1.32	9.586	193	<.001	44	8.5	.55	nervous	151	3.4	.97	-9.353	193	<.001	44	1.4	.57	anxious	151	3.5	.97	-9.927	193	<.001	44	1.4	.36	tense	151	3.2	.90	-7.203	193	<.001	44	1.4	1.07	worried	151	3.4	1.14	-8.192	193	<.0.01	44	1.1	.56	calm	151	6.3	1.17	4.463	193	<.001	44	7.6	1.18	relaxed	151	6.0	1.42	2.547	193	.012	44	6.9	1.48	laid back	151	3.9	1.65	.684	193	.475	44	5.0	1.80	at ease	151	6.2	1.32	2.737	193	.007	44	7.1	1.58	depressed	151	3.1	1.16	-10.754	193	<.001	44	.4	.42	dejected	151	3.3	1.10	-9.055	193	<.001	44	.7	.88	despondent	151	3.5	1.12	-10.844	193	<.001	44	.6	.73	hopeless	151	2.8	1.18	-10.447	193
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Table 8.1 shows that H+ respondents score highest on the emotions of ‘enthusiastic’ ( $\bar{x} = 8.8$ ,  $SD = .58$ ) and ‘inspired’ ( $\bar{x} = 8.7$ ,  $SD = .127$ ). Both fall within Warr’s HAPA (High-Activation Unpleasant Affect, top right, ‘job engagement’) quadrant of the circumplex model.

The NonH+ group score highest on ‘calm’ ( $\bar{x} = 6.3$ ,  $SD = 1.17$ ) and ‘at ease’ ( $\bar{x} = 6.2$ ,  $SD = 1.32$ ), both falling within the LAPA (Low-Activation Pleasant Affect, bottom right, ‘job satisfaction’) quadrant of the circumplex model.

Both groups lowest mean score is ‘hopeless’ with the NonH+ group averaging 2.8 ( $SD = 1.18$ ), higher than the H+ group mean = .50 ( $SD = .29$ )

The flourishing employees score higher on all affects in the ‘engagement’ and ‘satisfaction’ quadrants and lower in all measures of the ‘stressed’ and ‘depressed’ affects of the circumplex model.

As discussed in chapter 4, Warr *et al.* (2013) postulate that the different emotions experienced in each quadrant give rise to particular workplace behaviours, with the top right quadrant more likely to induce discretionary effort.

The IWP Multi-Affect Indicator results for 44 H+ employees and 151 NonH+ were mapped onto the circumplex in figure 8.2.



Figure 8.2: A comparison of mean scores for H+ and NonH+ work affects as measured by Warr's Multi-Affect Indicator

A summary of the *t*-test results show *p*-values <.05 in 15 of the 16 affects measured by Warr's inventory. In order to limit the probability of type-1 errors, the Bonferroni correction was used. This adjusted the *p*-value to a more stringent 0.003 ( $\alpha$ -value /number of tests which is, in this case, 0.05/16). Post hoc comparisons using *t*-test with Bonferroni correction revealed significant results (*p* <.003) for the following workplace affects: enthusiasm, joy, inspiration, excitement, nervousness, anxiety, tension, worry, calmness, depression, dejection, despondency and hopelessness.

The data for 'laid back' indicates a non-significant result ( $t(193) = .684, p = .475$ ). Applying the Bonferroni correction, 'relaxed' ( $t(193) = 2.55, p = .012$ ) and 'at ease' ( $t(193) = 2.74, p = .007$ ) also reveal non-significant results.

The possible implications of these emotional differences and their corresponding impacts on organizational behaviour will be explored in the 'Discussion of Results' in Chapter 10.

## **8.6 Summary and Conclusion**

Thematic analysis revealed several emerging patterns from the Reflection on Happiness Survey. Coding against Lyubomirski's 3-part happiness model, 24 statements mapped against 'genetics' and/or 'disposition', with 100% of those claiming a pre-disposition to positivity suggesting that a degree of effort is required. The impact of parenting reveals nebulous results, with flourishing almost equally attributed to positive parenting and lessons learned from negative parenting.

Reporting on 'hassles' and 'uplifts' in the external environment, the most cited downward forces are 'other people' and 'excessive workload', the latter perhaps reflecting the time period of the data collection. The self-effacing nature of positivity is revealed in a theme of extra effort being expended to remain upbeat in trying circumstances. 'Intentional strategies' were coded 101 times, categorised under 10 themes. The strongest theme is one of attitudinal choice, with the corollary that effort is involved in the maintenance of one's flourishing status. The conscious desire to raise affect in others is discussed, as are the emerging themes of gratitude, focus, positive self-talk, strengths, goals setting and religion.

An examination of Wrzesniewski & Dutton's (2001) workplace categorisations suggests that few of the H+ employees are doing their 'dream job' but most enjoy their job - indeed, the majority (96%) reflecting on their occupation as a 'career' or 'calling', rather than a 'job'.

The second part of the chapter sought to focus on emotions within the workplace, using descriptive statistics and independent samples *t*-tests to report on the results of Warr's Multi-Affect Indicator and the associated quadrants of 'Engagement', 'Satisfaction', 'Depression' and 'Stressed'. It elucidates Warr *et al*'s (2013) point that the emotional tone of each quadrant is likely to be associated with certain types of workplace behaviours. The results focused in particular on the top right HAPA quadrant of the circumplex diagram and in a comparison of 44 H+ employees against 151 NonH+ employees it can be shown that workplace affect is significantly different (at the level of  $p < .05$ ) between the two groups in 15 of the 16 workplace emotions measured by Warr's instrument. Using the more stringent Bonferroni correction ( $p < .003$ ), 13 of the affects are of significant difference. These differences will be analysed and commented upon in more detail in Chapter 10, as will the likely transference of these emotional states to actual workplace behaviours that can either help or hinder productivity.

The next chapter explores the final phase of data collection in which the H+ and NonH+ workplace groups were asked to reflect on a series of personal interventions that could assist with raising levels of happiness and positivity. The next chapter explains the source of these interventions and uses statistical techniques to highlight significant differences between the intentional strategies of the H+ and NonH+ groups.

## **Chapter 9**

### **Phase 3 Results: Intentional Strategies**



## Chapter 9: Phase 3 Results: Intentional Strategies

### 9.1 Introduction

Three of the principal research questions stated at the outset of this study were:

1. What intentional *within-person* strategies differentiate flourishing and non-flourishing employees?
2. Which of these strategies is/are the most widely used?
3. Does long term positive affect involve effort or is it effortless?

This chapter seeks to address these questions by analysing and comparing frequency of use of a series of personal approaches that have arisen from the data collection in phase 2. In particular, this chapter seeks to review how the H+ community differ in the area of what Lyubomirsky (2007) refers to as ‘intentional strategies’. If, as Lyubomirsky purports, personality and circumstances are indeed fixed (at least in the short term) then it is these strategies that differentiate flourishing from non-flourishing employees.

The statements that comprise the Intentional Strategies Survey are borne out of factors that emerged from data analysis of phase 2. Seventeen strategies were listed with each individual asked to gauge the frequency of use of each strategy based on a 0-10 rating, where 0 was ‘not used at all’, 5 was ‘used moderately’ and 10 ‘used frequently’ Independent samples *t*-tests were carried out on the data, with significant differences discovered between flourishing and non-flourishing employees in frequency of use of 11 of the 17 strategies.

## **9.2 The Menu of ‘Intentional Strategies’ Provided in Phase 3**

The phase 3 survey was distributed to the 45 individuals who comprise the H+ community and also administered to a wider organizational group, allowing strategy comparisons.

Responses were received from 38 H+ employees and 42 NonH+. This phase would form an important part of the research conclusions as it would highlight the most and least frequently used intentional strategies used by the H+ and NonH+ communities.

The 17 strategies included in part 3 of the data capture are listed in table 9.1. These strategies evolved directly from the participants’ responses in phase 2 of the data gathering.

Table 9.1: *Menu of strategies offered to phase 3 participants*

Intentional strategy	Frequency of use										
	Not used at all			Moderate use				Used frequently			
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. I am grateful											
2. I choose to be positive											
3. I reframe things positively											
4. I don't watch much news											
5. I make an effort to be positive											
6. I play to my strengths											
7. I set goals											
8. Happiness comes largely from my religious faith											
9. I don't dwell on bad stuff											
10. I give myself a pep talk											
11. I learned to be positive through adversity											
12. I am positive because I want others to feel good											
13. I learned to be positive in my early years											
14. I am positive because I didn't want to be like my parents											
15. I listen to happy music											
16. I watch feel-good TV & films											
17. I think about people who are less fortunate											

### 9.3 The Most Prominent Strategies

A visual representation of the comparative usefulness of each intentional strategy is provided in figure 9.2 and a summary of the mean, standard deviation and *t*-test results is provided in table 9.3.

It can be seen that the H+ respondents rate *'I choose to be positive'* and *'I make an effort to be positive'* as the highest mean scores of 9.23 (*SD* = 1.31) and 9.13 (*SD* = .57) respectively. The H+ strategy with the lowest mean score is *'Happiness comes largely from my religious faith'* ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.29, *SD* = 1.18).

Within the NonH+ respondents, the most frequently used strategies centre on 'gratitude'. The highest mean score of 7.29 (*SD* = 2.12) is recorded for *'I think about people who are less fortunate'* and the second highest mean of 6.88 (*SD* = 1.27) recorded for *'I am grateful'*. The NonH+ group concur with their H+ work colleagues in rating *'Happiness comes largely from my religious faith'* as one of their least frequent strategies ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.95, *SD* = 1.17)

The data show that H+ employees outscore their NonH+ counterparts in frequency of use of all but 4 of the intentional strategies. The 4 strategies in which the non-flourishing group score higher are:

*'Happiness comes largely from my religious faith'* ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.95, *SD* = 1.17), *'I learned to be positive through adversity'* ( $\bar{x}$  = 6.26, *SD* = 1.32), *'I am positive because didn't want to be like my parents'* ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.88, *SD* = 1.12) and *'I watch feel-good TV & films'* ( $\bar{x}$  = 6.52, *SD* = 2.75)

Figure 9.2: *Intentional strategies: frequency of use*

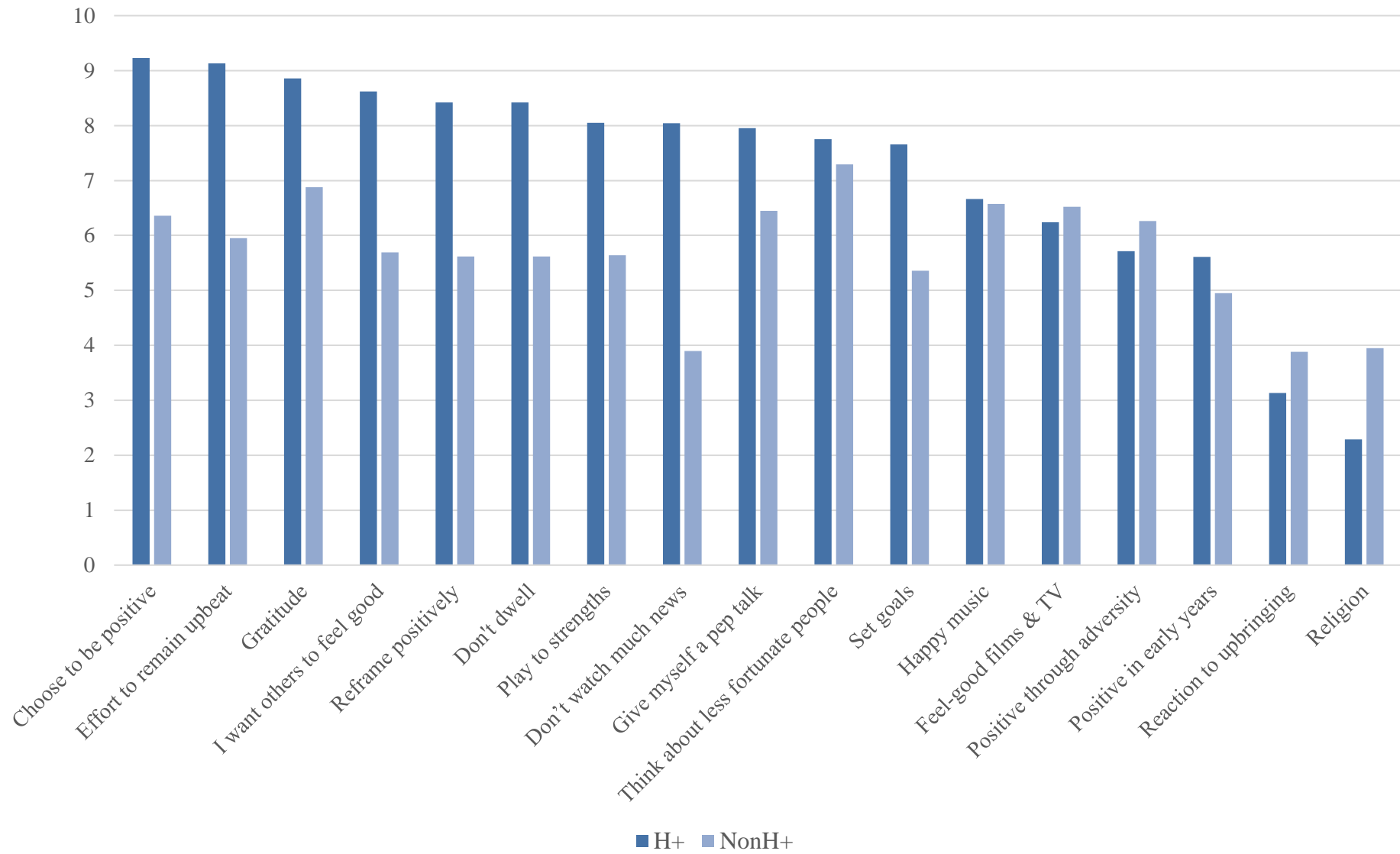


Table 9.3: *Intentional Strategies: Frequency of use for H+ and NonH+ respondents*

<b>Strategy</b>	<b><i>n</i></b>	<b><math>\bar{x}</math></b>	<b><i>SD</i></b>	<b><i>t</i></b>	<b><i>df</i></b>	<b><i>p</i></b>
I am grateful	NonH+ ( <i>n</i> 42)	6.88	1.27	4.271	78	< 0.001
	H+ ( <i>n</i> 38)	8.86	.58			
I choose to be positive	42	6.36	1.24	8.376	78	< 0.001
	38	9.23	1.31			
I reframe things positively	42	5.62	1.13	5.666	78	< 0.001
	38	8.42	1.28			
I don't watch much news	42	3.90	1.32	5.683	78	< 0.001
	38	8.04	.55			
I make an effort to be positive	42	5.95	.97	8.572	78	< 0.001
	38	9.13	.57			
I play to my strengths	42	5.64	.90	5.200	78	< 0.001
	38	8.05	1.07			
I set goals	42	5.36	1.14	3.830	78	< 0.001
	38	7.66	.57			
Happiness comes largely from my religious faith	42	3.95	1.17	-2.606	78	0.011
	38	2.29	1.18			
I don't dwell on bad stuff	42	5.62	1.43	6.434	78	< 0.001
	38	8.42	1.47			
I give myself a pep talk	42	6.45	1.65	2.584	78	0.012
	38	7.95	1.80			
I learned to be positive through adversity	42	6.26	1.32	-.736	76.58	0.464
	38	5.71	1.58			

I am positive because I want others to feel good	42	5.69	1.16	4.865	78	< 0.001
	38	8.62	.42			
I learned to be positive in early years	42	4.95	1.10	.489	77.50	0.398
	38	5.61	.88			
Positive because didn't want to be like parents	42	3.88	1.12	1.156	74.90	0.251
	38	3.13	.73			
I listen to happy music	42	6.57	1.18	.162	77.81	0.872
	38	6.66	.29			
I think about people who are less fortunate	42	7.29	2.12	.810	77.48	0.421
	38	7.75	2.08			
I watch feel-good TV and films	42	6.52	2.75	.517	76.87	0.606
	38	6.24	2.20			

#### 9.4 Statistically Significant Differences

Independent samples *t*-tests were used to establish whether the H+ group differs from their NonH+ counterparts in the frequency of use of intentional strategies with regards to achieving and maintaining higher levels of positive affect.

A summary of *t*-values, *df* and *p*-values is shown in table 9.3.

In order to limit the probability of type 1 errors, the Bonferroni correction was used. This adjusted the *p*-value to a more stringent 0.029 ( $\alpha$ -value /number of tests which is, in this case, 0.05/17). Post hoc comparisons using *t*-test with Bonferroni correction revealed significant results for the following strategies:

*'I choose to be positive'* ( $t(78) = 8.38, p < 0.001$ ), *'I reframe things positively'* ( $t(78) = 5.67, p < 0.001$ ), *'I don't watch much news'* ( $t(78) = 5.68, p < 0.001$ ), *'I make an effort to be positive'* ( $t(78) = 8.57, p < 0.001$ ), *'I play to my strengths'* ( $t(78) = 5.20, p < 0.001$ ), *'I set goals'* ( $t(78) = 3.83, p < 0.001$ ), *'Happiness comes largely from my religious faith'* ( $t(78) = -2.61, p = .011$ ), *'I don't dwell on bad stuff'* ( $t(78) = 6.43, p < 0.001$ ), *'I give myself a pep talk'* ( $t(78) = 2.58, p = .012$ ), *'I am grateful'* ( $t(78) = 4.27, p < 0.001$ ) and *'I am positive because I want others to feel good'* ( $t(78) = 4.87, p < 0.001$ )

Thus, of the strategies measured, the *t*-test results using Bonferroni to mitigate against type 1 errors, there are significant differences between the H+ and NonH+ groups in frequency of use of 11 of the 17 intentional strategies. The possible implications of these differences will be explored in the 'Discussion of Results' in Chapter 10.



## 9.5 Strategies in Which H+ and NonH+ Respondents Have no Significant Differences

The *t*-test results also highlight a number of strategies for which there are no significant difference in frequency of use between the flourishing and non-flourishing groups:

*'I learned to be positive through adversity'*  $t(76.58) = .74, p = .464$

*'I learned to be positive in my early years'*  $t(77.50) = .49, p = .398$

*'I am positive because I didn't want to be like my parents'*  $t(74.90) = 1.16, p = .251$

*'I listen to happy music'*  $t(77.81) = .16, p = .872$

*'I watch feel-good TV/films'*  $t(76.87) = .517, p = .606$

*'I think about people who are less fortunate'*  $t(77.48) = .81, p = .421$

## 9.6 Summary

This chapter sought to gauge the frequency of use of a number of intentional strategies that the H+ and NonH+ groups actively use. Independent samples *t*-tests were then calculated to assess the differences between the H+ and NonH+ groups. Using the more stringent Bonferroni correction, significant differences were found in 11 of the 17 strategies, most notably in the areas of choosing to be positive and the associated effort of making a conscious and sustained choice.

The next chapter provides more in-depth commentary and discussion of the findings from the three phases of data capture, focusing in particular on the significant differences with regards to the intentional strategies adopted by the H+ group.

## **Chapter 10**

### **Discussion of Results**

## **Chapter 10: Discussion of Results**

### **10.1 Introduction**

This chapter looks, in more depth, at some of the differences between the flourishing and non-flourishing groups in terms of workplace affect and behaviours. It combines qualitative and quantitative results to engage in discussion of the three phases of study:

Phase 1: The discussion centres on the notion of the possibility of being ‘too happy’ in the workplace, alluding to the potential difficulty of achieving an optimum level. This section also examines Cameron’s (2013) concepts of ‘organizational vitality’ and ‘relational energy’ as well as discussing the consistent pattern of employees rating their own happiness higher than that of their work colleagues. The data also reveals a pattern of collective optimism regarding happiness in the future, with the discussion tying in with Taylor & Brown’s (1988) ‘positive illusions’ and Sharot’s (2011) ‘above average effect’.

This part of the discussion makes the case that the H+ respondents have recorded a longevity of happiness - past, present and future - that is in line with eudaimonic definitions and sources.

Phase 2: The discussion centres on the notion of job engagement reflecting on the mapping of H+ and NonH+ respondents onto Russell’s (1980) circumplex model showing that the H+ employees score higher on all 8 affects associated with job satisfaction and engagement. *T*-tests (with Bonferroni correction) reveal that these higher ratings are significant in 5 of the 8 affects. This narrative argues that their more positive affective tone is likely to be reflected in pro-organizational behaviours, as well as alluding to flourishing being a portable benefit,

pertaining to the individual rather than the job. Indeed, evidence is provided that shows H+ employees remaining upbeat in trying circumstances.

The concepts of ‘making a difference’ and ‘connectedness’ are discussed in relation to raising the affective tone of the H+ employees. Conversely, negativity in their work colleagues is suggested as the biggest demotivator among the H+ group. This section concludes with an examination of the difference and potentially fine line between ‘engagement’ and ‘workaholism’.

Phase 3: Flourishing and non-flourishing groups are compared and discussed with regards to the frequency of use of intentional strategies deployed. This section argues that the dominant factor of ‘intentional choice’ requires a degree of awareness in order to be implemented, and that ‘choosing to be positive’ may be a common strategy in times of adversity but less so in everyday situations. This section also argues that there is a degree of effort involved in being in the H+ category.

## **10.2 Self-Rated Happiness & Energy**

The H+ respondents are rating themselves 22.5% happier than their NonH+ work colleagues and scoring 13.6% above the national average with *t*-test results indicating the differences to be significant ( $t(431) = 7.18, p < 0.05$ ).

Further, the H+ respondents have, on average, 27.4% higher energy ratings than their NonH+ colleagues with statistical analysis suggesting a significant difference in the energy levels between the H+ and NonH+ groups ( $t(431) = 7.85, p < 0.05$ )

One of the key questions in phase 1 of the data collection was, '*Who makes you feel great at work?*' This question was very specifically worded. The aim was not to seek nominations of whom the respondent felt was the happiest, loudest or most extrovert person in the workplace. Rather than asking 'who do you think is positive and upbeat?' the question was phrased to elicit names of colleagues who make the respondent feel uplifted. Thus, the respondent is not being asked to second-guess their colleagues' levels of happiness, rather they are rating their own feelings in relation to the nominated person. This corresponds with Goleman's *et al*'s (2003) notion of emotional contagion.

Cameron (2013) notes that being a positive energizer is '*not the same as being extrovert, gregarious, charismatic or perky*' (p. 56). Cameron cites low and non-significant correlations between the Big 5 personality attributes and positive energy, noting that being the first to speak or the loudest is not necessarily positively energising for others.

Further, Cameron's (2013) work in organizations has found that positive energy is associated with a set of behaviours that are mostly interactive and behavioural and which can be learned and developed. Revisiting the concept of PsyCap (chapter 2), the positive psychological capacities of self-efficacy, optimism, hope and resilience are described as states (rather than fixed traits), that are open to development, and all have proven guidelines for their enhancement (Luthans *et al*, 2006). Thus, there is evidence that being a positive energizer is, at least in part, a learned behaviour.

Within the H+ group, nobody answered affirmatively to the question '*Is there anyone in your workplace who you consider to be too happy?*' Of the NonH+ group, 9.72% of respondents answered 'yes' to this question. This points to the notion that there might be an unacceptably

high level of happiness that irritates some employees. Specifically, very high levels of demonstrable happiness appear to be unacceptable, fake or worrying to a proportion of those in the NonH+ group, with respondent #309 noting that one of her work colleagues was *'giddy with cheer which seems silly and unnatural to me.'*

Whether the flourishing group have a higher threshold of 'acceptable happiness' (or no threshold) is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, evidence from the results indicates that too much of a carefree attitude is deemed inappropriate in some situations. The question 'Is there anyone in your workplace who you consider to be too happy?' did not ask for the person (or persons) to be named. I am therefore unable to ascertain whether any of the comments are indeed aimed at the H+ community or whether the comments relate to NonH+ work colleagues.

The benefits of 'getting it right' align with the job engagement quadrant of the circumplex model described in previous chapters. Cameron (2013) states that positive energy creates feelings of aliveness, arousal, vitality and zest, suggesting, *'It is the life-giving force that allows us to perform, to create and to persist.'* (p. 49). Various studies correlate positive energy with an increased ability to flourish (Baker, Cross & Wooten, 2003; Quinn, Spreitzer & Lam, 2012). Cameron's (2013) work on organizational vitality examines four types of energy, only one of which is renewable:

i) Physical energy is the body's naturally occurring energy, produced by burning calories.

Cameron suggests this is depleted during the day by, for example, arduous work or demanding physical exercise.

ii) Psychological energy is associated with mental concentration and cognitive focus. This is expended when, for example, one becomes mentally fatigued while studying for an exam.

iii) Emotional energy is, according to Cameron, associated with experiencing intense feelings.

This can also be depleted by, for example, periods of intense excitement or sadness, leading to emotional exhaustion.

iv) Relational energy, by contrast, is purported to increase as it is exercised, suggesting that this form of energy is enhanced and revitalised through positive interpersonal relationships. Cameron (2013) describes relational energy as uplifting, invigorating and rejuvenating concluding that it is *'life-giving rather than life-depleting.'* (p. 51).

The notion of relational energy being renewable is substantiated by many comments from the H+ respondents, including phrases such as other people's attitudes *'feeding off mine'* (female, respondent #3) or simply *'other people give me energy'* (male, respondent #23). Cameron (2013) describes it as a common assumption that motivation and energy are synonymous but that *'theories of motivation seldom acknowledge energy as the driving force behind action and performance. Instead they usually assume that people are motivated by need fulfilment, by goals, or by cognitive evaluations,'* (p. 51) and while acknowledging the validity of existing theories of motivation Cameron remains unequivocal in the suggestion that *'positive energy trumps most other factors in accounting for organizational success.'* (p. 53). Baker *et al.* (2003) concur, suggesting that energy is four times more important in predicting performance than either hierarchical position or information held.

### **10.3 Positive Futures; Real or Illusory?**

Notwithstanding the fact that the H+ respondents score their colleagues as happier than do the NonH+ group, there is a consistent tendency to rate one's own happiness higher than that of one's colleagues, a pattern correlating to the concept of 'positive illusions', an evolutionary manifestation that enables individuals to remain happy, more contented, caring, productive and creative (Taylor & Brown, 1988). Gaffney (2011) argues that this form of 'positivity bias'

is an attempt to offset ‘negativity bias’ and that *‘the strategy has a habit of allowing us to be realistic when setting goals and being unrealistically positive when implementing them.’* (p. 401).

Similarly, Sharot (2011) suggests individuals can have an optimistic bias that manifests in the ‘above-average effect’ with people consistently regarding themselves more positively than they regard others and less negatively than others regard them. Alicke & Govorun (2005) explain the above-average-effect by suggesting that individuals deem positive attributes to be more descriptive of themselves than of an average person, whereas negative attributes are judged to be less descriptive of oneself than of an average person.

The principle of positive illusions may also be born out in historical recollections and predictions of future happiness. In this respect, data for the entire sample points to a general collective optimism that happiness levels will be upward in the next 5 years with only 4.1% of the sample predicting lower levels of personal happiness in 5 years time.

This collective optimism about the future is borne out in several other academic studies. For example, Gilbert (2006) states, *‘we tend to overestimate the likelihood that good events will actually happen to us, which leads us to be unrealistically optimistic about our futures.’* (p. 18). Taylor & Brown’s (1988) review of social cognition research concluded that *‘contrary to much traditional psychological wisdom... the mentally healthy person appears to have the enviable capacity to distort reality in a direction that enhances self-esteem, maintains beliefs in personal efficacy, and promotes an optimistic view of the future’* (p. 204). Indeed, it was Taylor & Brown (1988) who suggested the term ‘positive illusions’ which they define as the *‘pervasive tendency to see oneself in the best possible light’* (Peterson, 2006 p. 117). Taylor &



Brown (1988) state that positive illusions are '*unrealistically positive self-evaluations, exaggerated perceptions of control and unrealistic optimism*' (p. 194) suggesting these illusions serve an evolutionary purpose, enabling humans to construct a self-enhancing world in which to live, postulating that if one has a hope and expectation that the future will be bright, this may engender forward momentum. This notion corresponds with Fredrickson's (2009) concept of 'broaden and build', in which it is reported that positive emotions serve an evolutionary purpose in that they allow individuals to open their minds and think about the future.

The H+ group were originally selected for study because of their current levels of happiness being above the sample and UK national averages. It seems therefore that many of the H+ community are happy now as well as having a history and predicted future of happiness.

Seligman (2002) stipulates that hedonic happiness, conceptualized as mere pursuit of pleasurable experiences, is unsustainable over the long term, suggesting the H+ respondents' longevity of happiness is due to the presence of eudaimonic sources of well-being.

#### **10.4 Rising Above Job Satisfaction**

Phase 2 sought qualitative data on happiness domains as well as an exploration of personal reflections on happiness from those who make up the H+ community. This area of discussion is essentially 'their story', focusing on 5 key themes arising from the qualitative data gathered via the Reflections on Happiness Survey (RHS). The 5 themes are listed and discussed below:

- i. The H+ community are happy at home as well as work.
- ii. Few of the H+ respondents are engaged in doing their 'dream job' but the vast majority enjoy their job.

- iii. Attitudinal choice stands out as a major underlying factor in personal happiness. And with choice comes effort.
- iv. The biggest demotivator for H+ respondents is ‘negativity in others’.
- v. The biggest motivator for the H+ community is ‘making a difference’.

#### **10.4.1 Theme 1: The H+ Community are Happy at Home as Well as Work.**

The findings from this thesis are that there is no relationship between happiness and age ( $\chi^2 (4) = 7.18, p = .126$ ) or religion ( $\chi^2 (2) = 2.09, p = .352$ ), but that there is a relationship between happiness and gender ( $\chi^2 (1) = 4.65, p < 0.05$ ), with males over-represented in the H+ category.

Research on happiness and gender is contradictory. Sacks, Stevenson & Wolfers (2010), in a meta-analysis of happiness studies since 1972, report that women’s happiness levels have been dropping steadily over the last few decades, to the point that women now report lower happiness levels than men, something they suggest is a role reversal from the 1970s.

Conversely, Graham & Chattopadhyay (2012) report ‘...*some consistent patterns across genders, with women typically happier than men.*’ (p. 1)

Mikiko (2014) suggests gender differences are revealed not only in the level of happiness between men and women but also in the factors affecting their happiness, reporting that, on average, women evidenced lower happiness than men, but the results were complicated by job status, marital status and number of children.

Plagnol (2008) conducted a study that suggests women are, on average, happier than men in early adulthood, citing a turning point for men at age 34, when they are more likely to get married. After this, the gap between men and women in consideration of happiness starts to diminish up to age 48 which is, according to Plagnol, when there is a reversal in the life satisfaction of the genders. Plagnol's conclusions were tied to marital status and financial situation, suggesting that in later life it is *'men [who] come closer to fulfilling their aspirations, are more satisfied with their family lives and financial situations, and are the happier of the two.'* (p. 603)

Sacks, Stevenson & Wolfers (2010) analysed time-use studies over four decades, suggesting a pattern in which men have gradually cut back on activities they find unpleasant, the result being they now work less and relax more. Over the same span, women have replaced housework with paid work and, as a result, are spending almost as much time doing things they don't enjoy as in the past. They postulate that in the 1960s, a typical woman spent 23 hours a week in an activity considered unpleasant, or 40 more minutes than a typical man. Today, with more women in paid employment, the gap is 90 minutes.

Thus, findings from other studies are contradictory and my research has failed to gather enough data on factors such as marital status and number of children, to be able to comment, with any authority, on the factors behind heightened male happiness.

It is possible however, to comment on the finding that the flourishing group are happy across the domains of home and work, with 74% of the H+ employees report they are happy at home with the remaining 26% responding 'mostly'. In relation to the home domain, several responses allude to a conscious choice while others point to the importance of positivity as

setting the tone for their family. There are several comments pertaining to the fact that this positive emotional ripple effect is sometimes achieved despite less than perfect circumstances.

A key feature of the responses to the question of a happy home domain centre around the fact that some H+ respondents accept that being happy and/or upbeat is not possible all the time. For example, respondent #45 admits to an occasional slippage of his positive attitude and respondent #36 alludes to attitudinal choice being a *'battle'*.

Thus, the emergent pattern is that flourishing employees rate themselves as happy in the work and home domains and their happiness at home often requires effort and can be achieved despite sub-optimal circumstances.

#### **10.4.2 Theme 2: Few of the H+ Respondents are Engaged in Doing Their 'Dream Job' but the Majority Enjoy Their Job.**

20% of the H+ respondents agreed that they were employed in their dream job, 68% reporting they were not, with 2% and 9% responding 'almost' and 'sometimes' respectively. The responses might be best summed up by this comment from a male employee, respondent #45 who states, *'It probably isn't my 'dream job' - but I love what I do.'*

The responses follow a similar pattern to that of home, namely that the state of flourishing at work is often achieved even when operating in less than perfect circumstances. The comments gleaned demonstrate a pattern whereby individuals can be outstandingly happy at work, even when not employed in their ideal job pointing to 'happiness' and 'engagement' as factors that stem, at least in part, from within-person factors, rather than the nature of their employment.

The H+ employees were asked to reflect on Wrzesniewski *et al*'s (1997) notion of being employed in a 'career', 'calling' or 'job'. According to Wrzesniewski *et al.*, most professions are fairly evenly divided with about a third of workers falling into each category. Of the 44 H+ respondents in this thesis, there is no such balance; 2 of respondents (4%) class what they do as a job, 52% recorded what they do as a career and the remaining 43% viewing their employment as a calling.

Wrzesniewski & Dutton's (2001) research shows that individuals who have a calling orientation report higher satisfaction with their lives and work, and are more likely to craft their jobs to fit their strengths and interests. They describe 'job crafting' as modifying the tasks to be performed, building or changing relationships with co-workers or clients, and psychologically reframing the meaning. The responses for this survey do not specifically allude to examples of job crafting. However, there are comments that pertain to a similar concept but on a larger scale; a sense that the H+ respondents are engaged in what might be termed 'career crafting' or even 'life crafting'. For example, when reflecting on current and past employment there are statements that suggest flourishing individuals will consider changing jobs if their happiness levels tail off. Referring back to Lybomirsky's (2007) view that 10% of an individual's happiness is due to external circumstances, there is evidence that H+ employees feel it is within their control to manipulate this 10%. For example, respondent #36 recognises that *'if I really hate my job, I can leave'* while respondent #8 refers to *'finding a way out'* and *'moving onto a better environment'*.

I have no comparable evidence from the NonH+ community for this particular part of the survey. It appears that the H+ employees have the propensity to actively seek alternative employment if their happiness levels cannot be sustained. In future studies, it would be

apposite to gauge the extent to which this attitude towards a fresh challenge might have on an H+ employee's ability to maintain their happiness and energy. Conversely, would it be more likely that their NonH+ counterparts are more willing to tolerate workplaces that are less conducive to happiness?

Wrzesniewski *et al.* (2007) describe the calling orientation as a 'portable benefit', meaning the employee is able to maintain a generally positive demeanour about a variety of work experiences. There is evidence that the H+ community possess this portable benefit, with their calling orientation transferring into internal happiness strategies that apply to whatever occupation they are in at the time. Numerous comments were garnered with regard to the portability of engagement and that it might be rooted within the person rather than the job, most notably respondent #16 who provides a list of her previous employment (from fast-food to teaching) and has '*enjoyed them all*'.

#### **10.4.3 Theme 3: Attitudinal Choice Stands Out as a Major Underlying Factor in Personal Happiness. And With Choice, Comes Effort.**

Personal choices about happiness and positivity are reflected in numerous remarks collected in this thesis.

Rogers (1961), the originator of the concept of humanistic psychology, describes attitudinal choice as: '*...man's tendency to actualize himself, to become potentialities... it may be hidden behind elaborate facades that deny its existence; it is my belief, however, based on my experience, that it exists in every individual, and awaits only the proper conditions to be released and expressed.*' (p. 350-51). The implication that every employee possesses this form of 'latent potential' points, once again, to the importance of positive affect being a function of co-creation between the individual and their workplace environment.

The free-will to make choices that influence well-being starts, presumably, with an acknowledgement that the individual is cognisant of the fact that an attitudinal choice is available. And while the ‘choice to be positive’ may seem obvious when stated, one of the aims of this research was to uncover the extent to which the active and conscious ‘choice’ is exercised in practice, or was Rogers correct in suggesting one’s tendency to express choice has ‘*become deeply buried under layer after layer of encrusted psychological defences; it may be hidden behind elaborate facades that deny its existence.*’ (p. 350).

The question, stated unequivocally as, ‘*Is happiness a conscious choice?*’ elicited the most detailed and thoughtful answers of the entire survey. 40% of the responses pointed to happiness being effortless with 60% of the responses pointing to the importance of happiness and/or positivity as being a conscious choice with many citing a degree of personal change, suggesting that happiness can, to some extent, be learned, or indeed, as respondent #45 states ‘*discovered*’.

It is pertinent to note that many of the reflections mention a degree of effort involved in maintaining an upbeat approach.

#### **10.4.4 Theme 4: The Biggest Motivator for the H+ Community is ‘Making a Difference’**

It has been suggested that individuals will be more authentically happy if they feel a calling or a connection between what they do at work and a higher purpose or important value (Seligman 2002; Wrzesniewski *et al.*, 1997). Tillich (1952) suggested that purpose in life is central to the essence of religion and Frankl (1959) believed that the essence of being human lies in the search for meaning and purpose (Francis, Jewell, & Robbins, 2010). More recently, Seligman (2002) claimed that people are searching for a sense of meaning and purpose in life

more than ever, with purpose described as a central, self-organising life aim that provides a person with a framework for pursuing goals (Kashdan & McKnight, 2009). Studies have found that purpose in life has a strong association with happiness and other positive psychology constructs such as life satisfaction, positive affect and well-being (Byron & Miller-Perrin, 2009; Chamberlain & Zika, 1988). For example, Lewis *et al.* (1998) found purpose in life was associated with higher levels of happiness and Robak & Griffin (2000) also found results that indicated a strong positive relationship between purpose in life and happiness. Several salient responses were recorded in my research with, for example, respondent #2 reflecting that she was a '*cog in a machine*' but that she understood the importance of what she did.

'Relatedness' appears as one of the components of Deci & Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory. The essence of this basic psychological need (Ryan & Frederick, 1997) is reflected in the concept of 'making a difference' which appears in numerous guises.

In line with Wrzesniewski's (1997) concept of a calling orientation, it appears that it is not necessarily those with high powered jobs or in senior positions who have exclusivity on a calling orientation. For example, respondent #15, a female call centre worker reports that her motivation comes from a sense of making a difference.

Ryan & Frederick (1997) argue that subjective vitality is best maintained or enhanced under conditions where the basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are satisfied. They propose that the role of autonomy may be particularly important in the dynamics of energy. Autonomous behaviours are those that are experienced as flowing from and expressing one's self, whereas controlled actions are experienced as demands to think,



feel, or behave in specified ways and could thus feel like a drain on personal energy (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan, 1995). Given that vitality is defined as a feeling of possessing energy available to one's self, Ryan & Frederick's research demonstrates that vitality is higher when successfully completing autonomously motivated actions than when successfully completing controlled actions.

The ability to find meaning and relatedness in employment is further highlighted in several statements that allude to making a contribution or creating a happy team.

#### **10.4.5 Theme 5: The Biggest Demotivator for Flourishing Employees is Negativity in Others**

Bakker (2009) suggests several reasons why engaged workers perform better than non-engaged workers.

First, engaged employees often experience active, positive emotions, including joy and enthusiasm with these positive emotions seeming to broaden people's thought-action repertoire (Fredrickson, 2001; Sekerka, Vacharkulksemsuk, & Fredrickson, 2012).

In addition, engaged workers transfer their engagement to others in their immediate environment (Bakker & Demerouti, 2009; Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2009). Thus, if organizational performance is the result of collaborative effort, the engagement of one person may transfer to others thus indirectly facilitating team performance. In order to test the hypothesis that this energy transfer can work in a downward as well as upward trajectory, Baker, Cross & Wooten (2003) studied the extent to which interpersonal relationships generated or depleted a subjective feeling of energy. Their study involved asking employees

to describe what an energising relationship felt like, reporting responses such as feeling stimulated, up, intense and animated. Further, respondents described how energising relationships made them feel engrossed and engaged as well as being enthused and drawn in. These emotions resulted in pro-organizational behaviours including willingness to devote discretionary time to work issues.

Lewis (2011) describes how energy transfers between individuals and groups via connectivity; '*Connectivity within groups is expressed through the number of nexi found in the conversation, nexi being strong and sustained patterns of interlocked behaviour between members which are indicative of a process of mutual influence.*' (p. 75). Losada & Heaphy (2004) conclude that the ratio of positive to negative interactions is the single most important factor in predicting team performance with high performing teams recording a positivity/negativity ratio of 5.6 to 1, median performing groups scoring 1.8 positive interactions for every negative and low performing groups scoring 3 negative to every positive. This points to positive feedback being one of the cornerstones of employee engagement. There are numerous H+ statements in response to '*What motivates you at work?*' that appear to bear this out. Positive statements emerge around the themes of someone saying thanks, colleagues being kind and/or smiling which are, in themselves small acts, but that add up to significant positive affect.

The data for this thesis alludes to the fragility of workplace happiness and that emotional contagion also works in a downward trajectory. While 'workload' and 'change' accounted for 38% of responses for 'What drags you down?' (example, '*I think I am naturally upbeat although it is sometimes harder to stay upbeat when the workload stacks up and I'm being pulled in many different directions,*' male, respondent #38), the biggest factor (50%) was 'other people', specifically those deemed to be of a negative mind-set. Goleman (2007) uses

the analogy of second hand smoke; *'the leakage of emotions can make a bystander an innocent casualty of someone's toxic state.'* (p. 14). In terms of reflecting on causes of demotivation amongst the H+ group, the toxicity of other people features highly.

### **10.5 Dis-satisfaction as a Motivator**

Activated positive emotions are central to several models of self-regulation addressed primarily to behaviour outside organizations. For instance, Carver & Scheier (1998) suggest there is an affective feedback loop through which successful behaviour towards a target gives rise to feelings of activated elation. Similarly, Higgins's (1997) argues that successful approach behaviours are linked to pleasant feelings that are especially characterized by cheerfulness and similar activated states. Thus, both of these models emphasize the top-right (HAPA) quadrant of Russell's circumplex model. Similarly, activated pleasant feelings were found to be significantly associated with personal initiative by Den Hartog & Belschak (2007) and Fritz & Sonnentag (2009), and with proactive behaviour by Tsai *et al.* (2007) and Parker *et al.* (2008).

Warr *et al.* (2013) list a set of workplace behaviours that can be deemed as desirable versus undesirable to an organization, with positive desirable behaviours including task performance, proactivity, initiative-taking, meeting targets and numerous variations of 'citizenship contributions'. On the undesirable side are negative work behaviours that are deemed counter-productive, including effort withdrawal, sabotage, disengagement, theft, workplace violence, bullying and incivility. These harm the organization, either directly by affecting its functioning or property or indirectly by reducing the effectiveness of other employees (Fox, Spector, & Miles, 2001). In addition, it is important to distinguish between those behaviours which are required by a role and those that are more spontaneous, discretionary activities that

exceed core obligations (Katz, 1964). These discretionary activities are also described as pro-social employee behaviours (Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983) and include a range of actions such as helping one's colleagues, expressing loyalty to the organization, taking charge of a situation (Morrison & Phelps, 1999) and using one's personal initiative (Frese & Fay, 2001). Researchers distinguish these acts as 'extra-role' as against 'in-role' behaviour, with the former referring to positive, discretionary activities that are not specified in advance nor clearly recognized by formal reward and punishment systems (e.g., Van Dyne & LePine, 1998).

Early research into 'job satisfaction' focussed on correlations with environmental factors such as quality of supervision, employee discretion in decision-making and workload but, according to Warr *et al.* (2013), the body of research has tended to neglect within-person factors. The focus of this study is directly on these within-person factors, aligned to what Russell (2003) refers to as 'core affect'; *'that neurophysiological state consciously accessible as the simplest raw (non-reflective) feelings.'* (p. 148). Core affect is considered by Russell (1980, 2003) to represent an integral blend of two primary attributes; pleasure and arousal. Those are shown as horizontal and vertical dimensions respectively within the circumplex diagram in Figure 8.4 (e.g., Remington *et al.*, 2000; Russell, 1980, 2003; Seo *et al.*, 2004; Yik *et al.*, 2011). The horizontal dimension covers emotional valence with the vertical axis measuring an individual's *'readiness for action or energy expenditure'* (Russell, 2003, p. 156). Other researchers have referred to these dimensions as *'motivational intensity'* or *'the impetus to act'* (Gable & Harmon-Jones, 2010, p. 323), and in Thayer's (1989) research, the upper two quadrants are viewed as 'tense arousal' and 'energetic arousal'.

Of the 16 affects measured by the IWP Multi-Affect Indicator, the *t*-test results indicate significant differences between the H+ and NonH+ groups in 15 of the 16 factors. This number falls to 13 out of 16 when recalculated using the more stringent Bonferroni correction. It would appear therefore that flourishing employees are experiencing significantly more of the elevated emotions associated with employee engagement; enthusiasm, joy, inspiration & excited. They also score higher in all 4 of the employee satisfaction affects – calm, relaxed, laid back & at ease - although only significantly so in ‘calmness’. In addition to experiencing heightened affects associated with employee engagement, the H+ respondents also score significantly lower in all 8 affects associated with stress (nervous, anxious, tense, worried) and depression (dejected, despondent, hopeless, depressed).

Warr *et al.* (2013) postulate that the different emotions experienced in each quadrant give rise to particular workplace behaviours. If this is the case, with significant differences in 13 of the 16 emotions, an organization can expect vastly differing work behaviours between the two sets of employees. Thus, there appears to be a clear link between the HAPA quadrant and the pro-social behaviours and discretionary effort that is synonymous with the more motivated state of ‘job engagement’.

Macey & Schneider (2008) conclude that wants and feelings, although both central to engagement and satisfaction, differ in their primary role. In motivated states such as engagement, individuals have wants that are unsatisfied, whereas in more reactive states like satisfaction, individual’s wants have been or are expected to be fulfilled. Warr (2007) suggests that, in broad terms, engagement may be viewed as energized satisfaction and that engaged workers are necessarily satisfied in some respects, but satisfied workers may or may not be engaged. The fact that employee engagement might, in fact, be associated with

unsatisfied wants seems almost counter-intuitive to job design as is Warr's (2012) finding that the motivated state of engagement is expected to be accompanied by worse rather than better person-job fit. This finding reverses the more usual assumption that *'The greater the perceived congruity the greater the likelihood of engagement with work,'* (Maslach & Leiter, 2008, p. 501). According to Warr (2012), *'...For job engagement, high levels of work demands and challenges can be attractive for workers who are more engaged in a job, leading them to become drawn in and still more energized. Raised levels of some job features may thus increase wanted levels (thereby reducing fit) for more engaged workers, as feature-enhanced motivation nourishes their initial engagement.'* (p. 5)

There are several examples of H+ statements that corroborate this form of energised action stemming from a challenge and/or 'healthy dissatisfaction' with the status quo. When asked 'What motivates you at work?' numerous comments about personal growth and challenge were obtained. Participants used language such as *'challenge'*, *'being stretched'*, *'extending my comfort zone'* and relishing a project that is *'something to get my teeth into'*. These statements, in conjunction with the finding that flourishing employees are more satisfied *and* engaged, support the notion that organizations should be striving to create a culture of healthy dissatisfaction, where employees are both satisfied in the now and stretched/challenged by the future.

## **10.6 Workaholism**

It is salient to debate the line between a highly engaged employee with energy and vigour, and the potential to venture into 'workaholism', defined as a strong inner drive to work excessively hard (Oates, 1971; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2008). In the circumplex model, workaholism is positioned in the upper left quadrant (worried, tense, anxious, nervous), as it reflects

low(er) levels of pleasure and a high level of activation regarding work. Workaholics have the compulsion to work incessantly, and tend to allocate an exceptional amount of time to work, going beyond what is reasonably expected to meet organizational or economic requirements (Taris, Schaufeli & Shimazu, 2010). Workaholics' compulsive tendencies mean they devote more resources (e.g., time, effort) to work, leaving them with fewer resources to devote to their family and other facets of their non-work domains. As a consequence, workaholics often neglect their life outside their job (Taris, Schaufeli & Shimazu, 2010). Indeed, survey studies have shown that workaholism is positively related to working overtime and work-family conflict (Bonebright, Clay, & Ankenmann, 2003). Workaholics are willing to sacrifice personal relationships to derive satisfaction from work (Porter, 2001), with research showing a negative relationship between workaholism and quality of relationships (Bakker, Demerouti & Burke, 2009). There is also evidence that workaholism is related to poorer psychological and physical well-being (e.g., Andreassen, Ursin, & Eriksen, 2007; Burke & Matthiesen, 2004).

The flourishing employees align with workaholics in that they enjoy the experience of working. However, their reportedly flourishing home lives indicate that they do not let their engagement at work impact negatively in their home domain. Schaufeli, Taris & Bakker (2006) report that engaged employees often indicate that their enthusiasm and energy also appears outside work, for example in sports, creative hobbies and volunteer work. Further, although engaged employees report feeling tired after work, they are more likely to describe their tiredness as a pleasant state because it is associated with positive accomplishments (Schaufeli, Taris & Bakker, 2006).

## 10.7 Flow

At its upper end, engagement has been referred to as ‘flow’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997), or the overall feeling referred to as ‘being in the zone’. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1997), high levels of engagement are characterized by the following five factors:

1. the individual has clear goals and is intrinsically interested in the task at hand
2. the task presents challenges that meet the skill level of the individual
3. the task provides direct and immediate feedback to the individual
4. the individual retains a sense of personal control over the activity
5. action and awareness become merged, such that the individual becomes completely immersed in what he or she is doing (Forgeard *et al.*, 2011)

Flow is similar to the description of engagement in the work of Bakker *et al.* (2002) who define engagement as ‘*A positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption.*’ (p. 74). In this definition, vigour is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience, dedication refers to being strongly involved in one's work (and experiencing a sense of significance) while absorption is characterized by full concentration and being happily engrossed in one's work to the point whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work.

It is widely agreed that engagement arises from both personal and environmental sources (Macey & Schneider, 2008). However, according to the same authors, theoretical discussions and empirical investigations have so far emphasized one of those, mainly examining engagement as a response to characteristics of the job. Indeed, Csikszentmihalyi's 5 conditions for flow (outlined above) largely pertain to the task rather than the individual.



From the outset, this research has been more concerned with discovering the ‘within-person’ factors that cause engagement and it is these ‘intentional strategies’ that are discussed in the next section.

### **10.8 Phase 3: Discussion of ‘Intentional Strategies’**

To recap, data collection from phases 1 and 2 highlighted 17 strategies that employees use in order to elevate and maintain their levels of happiness and positivity. These factors were listed in an on-line survey with employees asked to rate the frequency of use of each strategy on a 1-10 scale. Responses were received from 38 H+ and 45 NonH+ employees.

Before discussing the hierarchy and relative significance of these intentional strategies it is apposite to recall Csikszentihalyi’s (1997) view that seeking to be happy may be among the least successful strategies in actually being happy. Or as stated by Robinson & Compton (2008), *‘Being happy, therefore, is not something that we can easily will upon ourselves. Rather, it is something that naturally emerges from a life well lived.’* (p. 220). Robinson & Compton suggest that subjective well-being is determined by cognition of *‘the prioritization of certain classes of information over others’*, enabling selective attention to matters that enhance subjective well-being. They postulate that *‘because almost all of the prior studies focused on relations between negative affect and attention to threat’*, could it be that *‘positive affect might be associated with, and cause, selective biases favouring rewarding information?’* (p. 220-234).

Diener and Seligman (2002) proffer that personality affects the selective attention to external stimuli and that this top down effect proves there is strong and pervasive impact of personality factors on people’s evaluation of their lives (Heller, Watson & Ilies, 2004). As

Lucas (2008) observes, '*Presumably, those individuals with a temperament-based tendency to be happy also tend to see the world through rose-coloured glasses.*' (p. 180).

This ability to screen information and interpret it in meaningful and positive ways is revealed in the discussion below.

### **10.9 Attitudinal Cognisance and 'Choosing to be Positive'**

The most frequently used factor in the H+ list of strategies, '*I choose to be positive*' ( $\bar{x} = 9.23$ ,  $SD = 1.31$ ), is of statistical significance ( $t(78) = 8.38$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Yet despite the apparent frequency of this strategy (and notwithstanding the apparent simplicity of its nature) the degree to which happiness and positivity can be consciously chosen is an area largely neglected in other academic studies. With regard to the open question, '*Why do you think you are happier than average?*' H+ responses reflect a strong inclination towards a conscious, determined and self-effacing attitudinal choice.

Patently, the more aware one is of each of the happiness strategies, the more control one will have over their manifestation and the more likely one will be to influence their successful outcome. Therefore 'awareness' becomes an important aspect of all of the intentional strategies that were measured as part of this thesis. For example, with regards to 'choosing to be positive' being recorded as the most frequently adopted strategy amongst the H+ respondents, it is worth considering that 'awareness' might be the starting point - are the H+ respondents simply more aware that this choice exists or, indeed, could it be that the NonH+ individuals are aware of the salience of attitudinal choice but are failing to exercise it?

The notion that 'happiness' and 'choice' can be learned, and that individuals are able to implement active strategies to enhance their happiness is reflected in several statements.

Respondents report being actively engaged in an eclectic mix of activities such as NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming), reading uplifting books, EFT (Emotional Freedom Therapy), 'writing morning pages', meditating, walking, dancing and yoga. Thus, the 'choice' component suggests that H+ individuals might desire a higher level of happiness and well-being as outcomes, hence their explicit intentions to help rather than hinder the process of attaining these outcomes.

Analogous to the concept of 'job crafting' (Wrzesniewski, 2003), the techniques above suggest that flourishing individuals engage in a form of 'life-crafting', whereby they manipulate their mind-set and circumstances to increase opportunities for happiness. For instance, consider a person who has been experiencing low wellbeing - if this person does not initiate a change in their 'intentional strategies' the likelihood is that the low level of wellbeing will continue. The individual may experience an improvement in their circumstances (accounting for 10% of their total potential happiness, Lyubomirsky, 2007) which may result in marginal improvements in medium term happiness. However, these improvements are outside of the individual's momentary control. Effectively, without attitudinal change from within, the individual is relying on external enhancements to raise their levels of happiness by marginal levels. Effectively, they are waiting for what they deem are appropriate circumstances in which to flourish.

Alternatively, the H+ community appear to be cognisant of - and are able to exercise - the conscious choice to experience life more fully and to be happier. This awareness and subsequent decisive action appears to serve as the impetus for cognitive and behavioural changes that facilitate flourishing. In effect, there is less waiting.

The question of whether trying to become happier is self-defeating is important to consider given how highly individuals value happiness. James' (2007) notion of 'affluenza' suggests individuals are pursuing happiness via a retail strategy akin to 'keeping up with the Joneses', and that investing happiness in purchases is effectively seeking it hedonistically and sourcing it externally. Responses from the H+ community point to the importance of 'choosing to be positive' as being sourced internally and may well be the catalyst for flourishing and engagement. The H+ respondents consistently allude to 'effort' as the key to sustainable well-being, with a notable narrative that effort is particularly necessary in '*difficult times*' (female, respondent #15)

Thus, researchers interested in happiness interventions might consider the motivational mindset as an important facet of improving well-being. The fact that some H+ respondents think about and are interested in happiness is surely part of the awareness process. In line with conscious thought processes, several statements allude to happiness/psychology being of interest to the individual as well as a topic of discussion at home.

The frequency of the 'choice to be positive' and the fact that *t*-tests show there to be significance in the differences between H+ and NonH+ employees suggests that it is beneficial for individuals to put effort into improving their well-being. It is nevertheless possible that explicit intentions may be harmful under certain circumstances. According to ironic processes theory (Wegner, 1994), when individuals intentionally try to control their mental states, they sometimes experience the opposite of what they attempt, especially in conditions where they are simultaneously under cognitive duress. Ironic processes theory proposes that when individuals who are already preoccupied with a different cognitive task intentionally try to suppress negative feelings, they may instead end up exacerbating their

negative state. This happens as the ironic monitoring process alerts individuals that their conscious process was unsuccessful at alleviating the negative state.

However, there is no evidence that the H+ respondents attempt to suppress negative feelings - more that they deploy intentional strategies to manipulate these feelings.

### **10.10 Happiness ‘Satisficers’ and ‘Maximizers’**

Rational choice theory has attempted to explain preference and choice by assuming that people are rational choosers (von Neumann & Morgenstern, 1944). According to the rational choice framework in its purest economic sense, individuals have well-ordered preferences that are impervious to variations in the way the alternatives they face are described. The notion is that individuals proceed through life with perfect information - all their options are displayed before them and that they have complete information about the costs and benefits associated with each option. The theoretical framework suggests that the individual compares each option against the others, choosing, with complete rationality, the option that yields optimum utility. Although the science of economics has historically depended on the tenets of rational choice theory, it is now well established that many of the psychological assumptions underlying rational choice theory are unrealistic and that human beings routinely violate the principles of rational choice (e.g., Baron, 2000; Kahneman & Tversky, 1979).

Simon (1955, 1956) argued that the presumed goal of utility maximization is virtually always unrealizable in real life, owing both to the complexity of the human environment and the limitations of human information processing. Simon suggested that in choice situations, individuals tend therefore towards the goal of ‘satisficing’ rather than maximizing. To satisfice, people need only to be able to place goods on a scale of the degree of satisfaction

they will afford, and to have a threshold of acceptability. A ‘satisficer’ is therefore someone who encounters and evaluates goods until one is encountered that exceeds the acceptability threshold. In subsequent encounters with other goods, the scale of acceptability enables one to reject a formerly chosen good for a higher ranked one. A ‘satisficer’ thus often moves in the direction of maximization without ever having it as a deliberate goal. Simon’s alternative to rational choice theory questions not only the processes by which options are assessed and choices made, but also the motives that underlie choice. To ‘satisfice’ is therefore to pursue not the best option, but a ‘good enough’ option which leads, in essence, to ‘making do’.

Simon’s (1955, 1956) model relates to economics and therefore to the acquisition of good and services. However, it could be that a similar process applies to attitudinal choices. The non-flourishing ‘attitude satisficer’ is looking for an attitude that crosses the threshold of acceptability; an option that is ‘good enough’ whereas the flourishing ‘attitude maximizer’ is looking for an attitudinal choice that will gain maximum utility (in this case, ‘satisfaction’ or ‘happiness’) raising their level above that of ‘making do’. If one is seeking to maximize, it is likely that one will make more effort in choosing the best option.

### **10.11 Resilience**

This research concurs with several investigations revealing that happy individuals are less likely to dwell on negative or ambiguous events (e.g., Seligman 2002, Wiseman 2004). Three strategies pertaining to ‘internal dialogue’ reveal a statistically difference between the H+ group and their NonH+ counterparts: *‘I reframe things positively’* ( $t(78) = 5.67, p < 0.001$ ), *‘I don’t dwell on bad stuff’* ( $t(78) = 6.43, p < 0.001$ ) and *‘I give myself a pep talk’* ( $t(78) = 2.59, p = .012$ )

Some reframing and positive internal dialogue comments were garnered from the H+ respondents. Typically these allude to language nuances (e.g., '*challenges instead of problems*', respondent #35) and a refusal to worry about uncontrollable (respondent #13)

Notably, there is a narrative that is cognisant of negative occurrences and in some cases respondents have reported devastating personal stories. Thus, flourishing employees are not immune from, or dismissive of, negative events. Rather, the significance of these strategies proffers that the H+ community actively and frequently engage in internal (and intentional) strategies of positive self-talk and reframing. If 'choosing to be positive' is the most important factor in being in the H+ group, internal dialogue strategies pertain more towards 'how does one choose?' (i.e., what is it, exactly, that one has to do?) The internal dialogue includes an aspect of 'giving oneself a talking to'.

It would seem therefore that flourishing individuals use positive internal self-talk and reframing strategies to enable a degree of resilience in the face of inevitable setbacks.

Notwithstanding the discussion about positive self-talk and reframing of negative events, an interesting narrative arises around the theme of extreme trauma. '*I learned to be positive through adversity*' is one of the few strategies that is rated higher by NonH+ ( $\bar{x} = 6.26$ ,  $SD = 1.318$ ) than H+ ( $\bar{x} = 5.71$ ,  $SD = 1.576$ ) groups. However, the difference is non-significant ( $t(76.58) = -.736$ ,  $p = .464$ )

According to Gaffney (2011), understanding and finding meaning in suffering is a key part of post-traumatic growth. At the core lies the realization that one has choices about how one interprets what is happening as well as response choices. Brickman (1987) describes

‘acceptance’ as establishing a different relationship between ‘want to’ and ‘have to’. When a person ‘has to’ accept what has happened, the negative dominates, leaving that person susceptible to feelings of depression and bitterness. If an individual is able to reframe the ‘have to’ towards a ‘want to’, implying that the situation has been accepted, then positive feelings are more likely to dominate.

Masten (2001) describes the ability to bounce back from adversity as ‘ordinary magic’, suggesting that those who flourish after times of adversity do so because of what happened, not in spite of it. Notwithstanding the difficulty of reframing negative and potentially traumatic events, it seems that both the H+ and NonH+ groups use this as a strategy for bouncing back from severe adversity. Indeed, some comments reflect a strong degree of post adversarial growth, whether it be from the death of someone close (the passing of parent, close friend and child were all reported) or a serious illness such as cancer.

These comments provide possible insight into individual’s ‘explanatory styles’ (Peterson & Barrett, 1987), namely how one chooses to explain the nature of past events. Individuals with an optimistic explanatory style interpret adversity as being local and temporary while those with a pessimistic style see negative events as more global and permanent. Seligman’s (1976) work on learned helplessness suggests these beliefs directly affect behaviours whereby those with a pessimistic explanatory style are more likely to give up and/or suffer from bouts of depression.

### **10.12 TV, Music and News**

*T*-test results indicate no significant difference between the H+ and their NonH+ counterparts with regards to frequency of use of music ( $t(77.81) = .162, p = .872$ ) and TV/film habits ( $t(76.87) = .517, p = .606$ ). However, there is a significant difference with regards to the H+



respondents reporting less frequent consumption of TV and newspaper news. Indeed, the H+ average of 8.04 is more than twice that of the NonH+ group ( $\bar{x} = 3.90$ ) representing a larger percentage difference than any of the other strategies that were measured ( $t(78) = 5.68, p < 0.001$ ).

Gitomer (1995) advises that *'All news is negative. Constant exposure to negative news can't possibly have a positive impact on your life.'* (p. 6). People who watch less TV are more positive (Babyak *et al.*, 2000) with Achor (2011) concluding, *'these people are less likely to see sensationalist or one-sided sources of information'* (p. 53).

It is possible to postulate that lower consumption of TV and news may mean that the H+ groups are less well informed of world events. However, the suggestion is not that H+ individuals consume no news, merely that they judge their consumption to be parsimonious. Less exposure to news may be part of the explanation as to why the H+ group are less likely to ruminate on bad events. Further, it may also be another example of 'life-crafting' whereby a deliberate policy of consuming less news is an example of altering one's environment, a strategy deployed to maximise the likelihood of remaining upbeat.

### **10.13 Strengths & Goals**

Goal setting ( $t(78) = 3.83, p < 0.001$ ) and playing to one's strengths ( $t(78) = 5.20, p < 0.001$ ) are both areas of significant difference between the H+ and NonH+ respondents. This thesis is able to ascertain that setting goals is more probable within the H+ community but is unable to be specific on the types of goals, their magnitude or frequency. It is however apposite to reflect on the direction of causation; does the fact that flourishing respondents set goals cause them to be happier or does the fact they are already happy mean they are more likely to set goals?

MaCrae & Costa (1991) suggest an interplay between personality, goal-setting and happiness, positing two general classes of explanations between personality and well-being; instrumental and temperamental. According to instrumental interpretations, personality traits affect subjective well-being indirectly, through choice of situations or the experience of life events. For example, optimists may expect good things to happen and therefore try harder to reach their goals. This extra effort may lead to the attainment of more beneficial outcomes, thus enhancing current and future happiness.

With the H+ respondents also significantly more likely to be experiencing positive emotions associated with job engagement, it is worthwhile revising the literature concerning the link between goals and flow (Locke & Latham 2002; Ryan & Deci 2000). In response to ‘What motivates you at work?’ some goal-related comments were procured, several pertaining to non-workplace goals such as running a marathon or, more vaguely, ‘*big life goals*’ (male, respondent #19)

Cameron’s (2013) work on positively deviant organizations alludes to the importance of matching the size of the goal with the perceived abilities of the individual or team with the suggestion that engaged employees are likely to flourish if set what are termed ‘Everest goals’. One of Cameron’s stated characteristics of Everest goals is that they foster sustainable positive energy. This research can state that H+ employees have a stronger proclivity to set goals but has failed to collect sufficient penetrative data that tests the magnitude of the goals. However, in relation to some of the specific quotes above (e.g., ‘running a marathon’ and having ‘big life goals’) it seems probable that some of the H+ respondents have indeed set ‘Everest goals’.

In terms of strengths, Sheldon & King (2001) describe 'positive psychology' thus: *'It is nothing more than the scientific study of ordinary human strengths and virtues.'* (p. 216).

Linley (2008) defines strengths as the *'pre-existing capacity for a particular way of behaving, thinking or feeling that is authentic, energizing to the user, and enables optimum functioning, development and performance.'* (p. 9). Linley purports that when individuals use their strengths they become engaged, energised and authentic suggesting that realizing strengths can be the smallest thing that is likely to have the biggest difference to workplace performance and, further, that individuals can *'dial one's strengths up or down to achieve 'the golden mean''* – that is, the right strength in the right amount in the right way at the right time (2008, p. 58).

Buckingham & Clifton (2005) suggests an inherent human flaw, namely that individuals may not even be aware of where their strengths lie. Thus, an interesting debate that is beyond the scope of this thesis, pertains once again to 'awareness'. Do the H+ employees rate *'I play to my strengths'* significantly higher than their NonH+ colleagues because they are more aware of their strengths or because they have engineered workplace opportunities to play to them? Are they just lucky, or have they crafted their career in such a way that they have deliberately sought opportunities to play to their strengths?

#### **10.14 Impact on, and of, Other People**

Questions pertaining to positive parenting (*'I learned to be upbeat and positive in my early years'* ( $t(77.50) = .489, p = .398$ ) and negative parenting (*'I learned to be upbeat and positive because my parents were negative and I didn't want to end up like them'* ( $t(74.90) = 1.156, p = .251$ ) show no significant difference between the H+ and NonH+ groups.

This pattern is born out in an array of mixed comments that H+ employees have about their own parents. Some mention two positive parents, some one positive parent, and some cite neither:

However, when reflecting to one's own impact as a parent, it appears there is more of an awareness of impact as well as an effort involved in setting a positive example. For the strategy, *'I am positive because I want others to feel good'*, there is a significant difference in frequency of use between the H+ ( $\bar{x} = 8.62, SD = .42$ ) and NonH+ ( $\bar{x} = 5.69, SD = 1.16$ ) groups ( $t(78) = 4.865, p < .001$ ). The consciousness of this contagious effect is reflected in several comments from the H+ group, often centring on being a role model (female, respondent #35) and/or an awareness of emotional contagion (female, respondent #22)

The conclusion appears to be that all individuals, irrespective of their H+ or NonH+ status, are able to learn off positive and negative parents. It appears that one's experience of being parented might be less important than the experience of *becoming* a parent, with this acting as more of a catalyst for the H+ community to accentuate their happiness and positivity, with a view to consciously influencing their own children in a positive manner. Also, the impact works both ways with some comments making it clear that negativity and/or problems with children lowers the emotional well-being of the parents.

### **10.15 Feeling Connected**

Ahuvia *et al.* (2015) talk of an interactionist approach that focuses on the way happiness emerges from the interaction of mind and world. A key element of interactionist strategies is to identify the internal and external factors that are most important for affecting change; with

special attention paid to synergies that give rise to self-reinforcing loops, or ‘felicitation feedbacks.’ (p.5).

In terms of the workplace, Dutton (2014) speaks of ‘high quality connections’ (HQC) which give a sense of heightened energy. In HQCs people feel attuned to each other and experience a sense of mutuality and positive regard as well as feeling a sense of worth and value.

Fredrickson (2013) purports that these moments of connection start people on an upward spiral of growth and fulfilment.

HQCs are fostered by what Dutton (2014) calls ‘respectfully engaging others’. It is perhaps a feature of the public sector focus that the notion of HQCs is reflected in comments pertaining to connections that begin in the workplace and that can extend out into the communities served by the organization.

Dutton (2014) suggests that workplace austerity is characterised by staff being asked to do more for less, a situation that can lead to frustration and that conveying ‘presence’ (required for HQCs) takes time and effort. The following comment from a senior police officer, appears to corroborate that the effort required for ‘presence’ is worthwhile in creating HQCs:

*‘... I prefer to walk from office to office to get things done rather than e-mail people. Generally speaking, I receive about 5 emails a day compared to my colleagues who can be getting upwards of 100!! One might think that I'm not working hard but in every area of business I have raised performance (sometimes against the odds). My Chief Officers have remarked upon my ability to get the best out of a department but I have also been told once by the Chief Constable that he has no idea how I do it. The truth is, neither do I!! All I know is that my love for people, the desire to laugh rather than cry... works for me.’ (male, respondent #19)*

### **10.16 Religion and Flourishing**

Several studies have found a positive association between religious variables and happiness (Francis, Jones, & Wilcox, 2000; Francis & Lester, 1997). In a review of the literature by Lewis & Cruise (2006), it was concluded that research using the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (Hills & Argyle, 2002) consistently reported a positive association between religiosity and happiness.

For the strategy '*Happiness comes largely from my religious faith*', the data for this study shows mean scores to be low for H+ ( $\bar{x} = 2.29$ ,  $SD = 1.80$ ) and NonH+ groups ( $\bar{x} = 3.95$ ,  $SD = 1.17$ ). The  $t$ -test result ( $t(78) = -2.60$ ,  $p = 0.011$ ) shows no significant difference between the groups

The data indicates that the non-flourishing respondents use religious faith more frequently as a happiness strategy. It is however the lowest rated strategy among the H+ respondents.

### **10.17 Summary**

This chapter sought to encapsulate the narrative from across the 3 phases of the study, essentially 'telling the story' of an H+ employee, who is, on average, 22.5% happier and 27.4% more energetic than their non-flourishing counterparts. The chapter looked at the consequences of being 'too happy', with 10% of the NonH+ employees suggesting that some work colleagues fall into this category. Relational energy was discussed, with Cameron (2013) suggesting that this is renewable and that other people can be a huge source of energy for those around them. There seems therefore to be an element of judging the appropriate level of happiness and 'getting it right'.

This chapter progressed into a discussion of positive illusions and the role they might play in why most respondents rate themselves as happier than their colleagues. This may also explain why respondents display a collective sense of optimism about having a happier future.

The H+ employees rate themselves as happy across the work and home domains and most enjoy their job, with evidence that they have enjoyed other jobs too. This ties in with the portable nature of positive affect and that its source is at least partly internal. Making the effort to choose a positive approach is born out as the most prominent strategy in the H+ respondents. Making a difference is a driver at work, with negativity of colleagues likely to demotivate, thus alluding to the potential fragility of positive affect.

The H+ respondents rate higher on all engagement and satisfaction affects as measured by the IWP Multi-Affect Indicator. Their propensity to occupy the HAPA quadrant of the circumplex diagram indicates that pro-social and energised behaviours are more likely. Although they enjoy the experience of work, the H+ employees appear to temper their behaviours, avoiding workaholism and its associated family detriments.

In terms of strategies, choosing to be positive stands out as the most frequently used, as does the effort involved. The discussion centred around the possibility the H+ employees being 'maximizers' rather than 'satisficers' of attitudinal choice, i.e., striving for a great attitude rather than making do. The H+ employees also have a higher propensity for gratitude and goal setting. They are likely to consume less news and they have a more positive internal dialogue. Upbringing and religion are not important factors.

The next chapter proposes recommendations. It examines factors, including structural and leadership aspects of organizational design, as well as ways in which individuals might facilitate their own internal intentional strategies.



**Chapter 11**  
**Recommendations**

## **Chapter 11: Recommendations**

### **11.1 Introduction**

Employee engagement is associated with a range of pro-organizational benefits, already reported on, that can be summarised under the business vernacular of ‘going the extra mile’. This chapter seeks to encapsulate the main findings of the thesis and progress the discussion towards a series of recommendations designed to enhance flourishing cultures and flourishing people. The recommendations are presented under two main headings:

1. Organizational recommendations: further sub-divided under headings of structure, leadership, policy and culture. There is a particular emphasis on transformational leadership as the key to creating high quality relationships as well as a framework for setting meaningful goals and facilitating strengths-based teams.
2. Individual strategies: focusing on learning from the within-person strategies that will raise personal happiness and flourishing. The argument here is that to achieve a within-person shift requires a new kind of training strategy, both in terms of content and style.

Throughout the recommendations, there is an understanding that the ‘individual employee’ and ‘organizational culture’ are part of the same network and that many of the themes overlap. Work is, for most people, a very significant life domain. Moreover, the individual is playing a part in shaping the organizational culture with the culture reciprocating, impacting on an individual employee’s quality of life.

This chapter also includes a brief discussion of the importance of society and government as central players in wellbeing, arguing that context is the starting point, but it is the within-person strategies that ultimately create a flourishing individual.

## 11.2 Government-Sponsored Wellbeing

Concepts such as wellbeing, wellness, happiness and engagement sit within a societal framework, with the benefits extending beyond the flourishing individual. There are therefore macro-economic policies that can help create an external environment where flourishing is more likely. These are socio-political issues that go beyond the scope of this report. Suffice to say that individual wellbeing sits within the wider context of workplace wellbeing which, in turn, sits within the domain of societal wellbeing.

Thus, access to high quality healthcare, high quality social housing, a strong sense of community, good education provision, a sense of safety & security and ready access to community sporting facilities could all be said to fit into the wider wellbeing context. Using Lyubomirsky's (2007) terminology, these wider contextual factors can also be classed as 'intentional strategies', albeit socially constructed rather than within-person.

In addition to these overarching societal factors, governments can also use more direct levers to stimulate organizational wellbeing. For example, governments can use tax incentives to directly stimulate workplace wellness initiatives, such as the setting up of an independent government funded occupational health assessment and advice service<sup>1</sup> and various NICE guidelines on workplace health including smoking cessation and mental well-being (Marmot Review, 2010).

In examining the role of government policy in relation to the health of the working age population, the Black Review (2008) provided 10 recommendations that centre on

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-support-to-tackle-long-term-sickness-absence> (2014)

government policy and cross-governmental restructuring. There is nothing tangible that is aimed at the organizations themselves.<sup>2</sup>

However, the recommendations for this report are based on measures that organizations and individuals can take in order to create a flourishing environment plus a series of internal strategies that can be applied in order to raise levels of positivity and happiness at the level of the individual.

### **11.3 Organizational Policies – the Wellness ‘Safety Net’**

Organizations can create conditions that encourage staff to flourish. Research undertaken by Ipsos MORI (2011) showed the importance that firms attach to wellness programmes, concluding that *‘all FTSE 100 firms include wellness and engagement themes in public reporting.’* (p. 14). The Harvard Business Review (2010) defines a workplace wellness program as *‘an organised, employer-sponsored program that is designed to support employees (and, sometimes, their families) as they adopt and sustain behaviours that reduce risks, improve quality of life, enhance personal effectiveness, and benefit the organization’s bottom line.’* The GLA Intelligence Unit (2012) notes that organizational wellness programmes, however laudable, are not enough, with structural components such as flexible working and employee communication being vital in order that an organization may successfully engage with its employees. Further, the Marmot Review (2010) argues that *‘jobs need to be sustainable and offer a minimum level of quality, to include not only a decent living wage, but also opportunities for in-work development, the flexibility to enable people to*

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<sup>2</sup> Black Review  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/209782/hwwb-working-for-a-healthier-tomorrow.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/209782/hwwb-working-for-a-healthier-tomorrow.pdf)

*balance work and family life, and protection from adverse working conditions that can damage health.* ' (p. 20).

The CIPD (2011) reported on the fragility of workplace wellness programmes during times of recession with 'health and well-being' placed fifth out of six priorities but, despite their vulnerability, nearly half of employers have an employee wellbeing strategy in place with large and public sector organizations more likely to have such a policy. However, looking behind the headline figure, the most common form of wellbeing programme is 'access to counselling' with 73 per cent of all respondent's reporting that they have a counselling service available (CIPD, 2011). It may well be that this is for those who are disengaged or severely stressed and, as such, is a form of wellbeing aimed at those employees who have reached their lowest ebb.

This basic level of organizational wellbeing acts as a safety net for those in most need while failing to address the more activated senses of satisfaction and engagement in the majority. Thus, the following recommendations are contextualised by the need for organizational wellbeing programmes designed to maintain the motivation of those who are already flourishing as well as addressing the needs of those who are not.

#### **11.4 Flourishing Organizations**

Taking a benevolent view of the British workforce, it might be assumed that very few employees, if any, want to feel disengaged and/or demotivated. If the starting point is that most employees turn up to work wanting to do a good job, it may be the case that the organization is inadvertently hindering them. This may be due to any number of factors, such as structure, management style or the nature of the work itself.

‘Flourishing’, defined earlier in this thesis, is when an individual feels happy and this positive affect is transmitted to their work colleagues. The H+ respondents have been identified as fitting into the category, ‘*who in the workplace makes you feel good?*’ and, thus, their positive affect is having a multiplier effect. Similarly, the introduction of the concept of ‘flourishing organizations’ describes a culture where the staff are engaged and this engagement is felt beyond the workplace. In such instances, the multiplier effect could be felt within the organization’s suppliers, business partners, employees’ families or the wider community. For example, Tisdale & Pitt-Catsuphes (2012) found that a child’s sense of well-being is affected less by the long working hours of their parents and more by their mood on returning home. Their conclusion is that working long hours in a job one loves is better for family relations than working shorter hours and coming home unhappy.

The findings of this research concur with Stairs & Gilpin’s (2010) evidence that employees have a strong desire to find meaning in their work and, if they can, they are more likely to be engaged. Once engaged, there ensues a host of benefits such as enhanced wellbeing, attendance, turnover, profit, customer satisfaction, shareholder return and business growth. The implication is that employee engagement is critical to business success but their findings are that only 19% of employees are engaged in their work. The practical implications are that organizational structures, leadership styles and job-design can be used to create an environment where employee engagement is more likely, but it is not a guarantee.

### **11.5 Creating a State of ‘Healthy Dissatisfaction’**

Referring once more to Russell’s (1980) circumplex model, pleasant affect that is activated leads to a state of engagement, positioning the employee in the top-right quadrant. This

activated sense of motivation that raises the employee above ‘satisfaction’ is more likely in high-discretion jobs that involve initiative-taking and proactive contributions. The results of this research show that the H+ employees rate significantly higher than their NonH+ colleagues on 7 of the 8 IWP Multi-Affect ratings of ‘satisfaction’ and ‘engagement’. This points to happiness in their job as well as a ‘healthy dissatisfaction’ that is both energising and motivating.

This research differs with regards to Warr’s (2013) findings that engaged employees are not necessarily ‘satisfied’. The conclusion here is that engaged workers are indeed satisfied - they rate significantly higher than their work colleagues on feelings of ‘calm’, ‘relaxed’ and ‘at ease’ - yet are also experiencing heightened feelings of ‘enthusiasm’, ‘joy’, ‘inspiration’ and ‘excitement’; emotions that are driving them in their pursuit of something extra. This provides an interesting challenge for organizational culture and design. If indeed engaged employees are driven by a sense of ‘positive’ or ‘healthy’ dissatisfaction then it may be that organizations should not strive for worker happiness in general, but should instead seek to promote ‘challenged happiness’; a state where some negative feelings are also present within an overall positive framework. By implication, rather than aiming simply for a satisfied workforce, a key goal for organizational designers is to create a culture of challenge, from which positively activated well-being and high performance might both be expected.

### **11.6 Flourishing by Design**

The implication of the discussion above is that policies which merely aim to increase job satisfaction (i.e., giving people what they want) are unlikely to be sufficient to engender the more vigorous sense of engagement. This seems especially true if one factors in the concept of habituation. Habituation implies that motivational factors are short-lived because they

become ‘custom and practice’ and, once embedded, lose their motivational power. Thus, engagement can be viewed as a fluid state and organizations must not become complacent in their approach.

Organizational policies that are focussed on ‘challenged happiness’ are more likely to create and sustain employee engagement and, crucially, Warr & Inceoglu (2012) purport that this is where some wants are met by the internal strategies of the employees themselves, the implication being that the organization alone cannot create a culture of engagement because ‘engagement’ is partly an internal construct. This interplay between the organization and the individual is discussed in a series of recommendations below.

In line with the discussion of findings in Chapter 10, this section elaborates on 4 key components that organizations can focus on in order to encourage employee engagement: structure, leadership, policies and culture. It is recognised that many of these strategies have been written about in traditional discussions of organizational behaviour. The emphasis here is to select organizational strategies that are likely to foster the elevated state of employee engagement (enthusiastic, excited, inspired & joyful) rather than the more comfortable connoted state of satisfaction (calm, relaxed, laid back & at ease).

### **11.7 High Quality Connections (HQCs)**

Quinn, Spreitzer & Lam (2012) suggest that thriving employees achieve positive outcomes partly because their higher state of energy and enthusiasm inoculates against burning out. Further, they suggest that feelings of vitality enable employees to create internal resources, including meaning and positive affect, which helps sustain their energy. Spreitzer *et al.* (2005) concur, suggesting that high quality connections (HQCs) are another ingredient of continued



thriving. Both of the aforementioned studies imply that vitality, once habituated, becomes self-sustaining; a fact born out in this report which demonstrates a longevity of happiness (past, present and projected into the future) amongst the H+ community.

A lesson for organizational designers may therefore be to create structures that enable and perpetuate energizing relationships and that mitigate against de-energizing relationships which have four times the negative effect as energizing relationships (Parker, Gerbasi & Porath, 2013).

Cameron (2013) suggests that ‘relational energy’ is enhanced and revitalised through positive interpersonal relationships. It would be ideal therefore if employees were given as much opportunity as possible to create high quality relationships. The centrality of leadership to the creation of HQCs is outlined below.

### **11.8 An Outbreak of ‘Happiness’**

The emotionally contagious aspect of positive affect is of particular interest to this thesis.

Indeed, the H+ respondents have been singled out as people who raise the emotional tone of those around them, analogous to a positive viral effect.

The Framingham Heart Study (reported on by Fowler & Christakis, 2008) revealed the dynamic spread of happiness in a large social network. This study revealed that one of the crucial determinants of individual happiness is the happiness of others in the individual’s social network. The conclusion was that happy people tend to be located in the centre of their local social networks and in large clusters of other happy people. This is corroborated by

other experiments that have demonstrated that people can ‘catch’ emotional states and that these states can last from seconds to weeks (Larson & Richards, 1994).

The data for this study does not allow for the measurement of the magnitude of emotional contagion but the question ‘*who in the workplace makes you feel good?*’ corroborates that positive networks can arise. As discussed later, this is particularly the case if the senior leader is in the H+ category. Christakis & Fowler’s (2011) hyper-dyadic spread of 15%, 10% and 6% suggests that although the person to person effects tend to be quite strong, they decay well before reaching the whole network. Hence, the reach of a particular affect cascade is not limitless.

Most important, from the perspective of this study, is the recognition that people are embedded in social networks and that the health and wellbeing of one person affects the health and wellbeing of others. Thus, human happiness is not merely the province of isolated individuals. Barsade & Gibson (1998) suggest that while all emotions are contagious, not all spread with the same ease, with cheerfulness and warmth spreading most easily. The implication is that organizations should take care in placing flourishing individuals in positions that are central to communication networks, thus maximising their hyper-dyadic impact.

### **11.9 Flocking Behaviour**

Christakis & Fowler (2011) describe an organization as a complex adaptive system, analogous to flocks in the natural world. ‘Emergence’ is the notion that flocking behaviour emerges from individual behaviour. The emergent phenomenon of ‘flocking’ is created by the individual actions of each bird yet the individual action of each bird is influenced by the

emergent phenomenon of the flock, forming a complex adaptive system. Applied to organizations, this gives an insight of the interconnectedness of ‘people’ and ‘culture’. Often, a culture change programme is implemented which involves forcing change through via new processes and procedures. Christakis & Fowler’s emergent model suggests culture change is more viral, spreading via the changing nature of interactions between people. Thus, culture is the emergent phenomenon created by people behaving in recurrent patterns and that the organizational culture created by this, in turn, affects each individual’s behaviour.

The implications are that rather than changing procedures, structures and systems, it would be more productive for organizations to nurture the H+ community and capitalise on their hyper-dyadic (spreading positivity via three degrees of separation) effect. Following on, this means nobody is really ‘in charge’ of culture. Rather than being at the behest of managers, control lies in the pattern of the system, the connectedness of the people and the nature of their propensity to flourish. The more HQCs and the more that engagement is seen as an emergent phenomenon, the more likelihood there is of happiness and positivity spreading virally.

#### **11.10 Leadership Styles Most Likely to Propagate the Multiplier Effect**

‘Group affective tone’ describes a situation in which shared emotional norms are proliferated and reinforced by verbal and non-verbal behaviours (Kelly & Barsade (2001). It is their contagious aspect which makes positive emotions a potentially powerful tool in promoting flourishing organizational cultures. An organization cannot command employees to be happy. The organization can create the environment for happiness to flourish but still, the organizational conditions are deemed circumstantial and therefore amounting to only 10% of an employee’s happiness (Lyubomirsky, 2007).

Dweck's (2006) work on dandelion and orchid personalities, although originally pertaining to children, seems especially pertinent in this respect. Dweck's analogy, that some people are like dandelions (hardy, flourishing in almost any environment, requiring minimum attention) and others are orchids (very difficult to get them to bloom, hence requiring constant attention and nurturing) bears similarity to the 'portable benefit' described by Wrzesniewski *et al.* (1997) whereby the H+ employees seem able to flourish in a wide variety of roles and situations.

In terms of leadership styles, it would appear therefore that Hersey & Blanchard's (1969) concept of situational leadership applies to employee engagement. The fact there is no 'one best way', with the appropriate style depending on context and the 'readiness of the followers' means that leadership is far from an exact science. For instance, those who are already feeling motivated and engaged will require a different leadership style to those who are dissatisfied and/or disengaged. This implies a leader whom is able to read and recognise employee affect, as well as providing a flexibility of styles to suit the individual employee. Organizations may be able to assist managers in understanding this crucial role by providing structured programmes that include soft-skill elements such as emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1996) and giving managers the time and space to develop a skill set that allows them to engage in high quality connections with their employees.

Returning to Warr's (2007) quadrants pertaining to workplace affect (and resultant behaviours) it seems an obvious imperative that employees are 'treated' on an individual basis and that the leader takes account of the quadrant the employee is currently in. Management development programmes would benefit from an inclusion of coaching, giving managers the knowledge and skills to work on a one-to-one basis with their staff. Additionally, it may be

beneficial for staff to complete the IWP Multi-Affect Indicator to map the quadrants. An understanding of current affect has to be the starting point for leaders to remedy the situation and to move their staff towards the HAPA quadrant.

### **11.11 Heliotropic Leadership**

Related to the above, Friedman & Riggio (1981) report that some staff have a greater impact on emotions in the workplace. The more expressive someone is, the more their feelings spread, with the most emotionally expressive person transmitting his or her mood to the others in two minutes (Friedman & Riggio, 1981).

Achor (2011) suggests *'the power to spark positive emotional contagion multiplies if you are in a leadership position.'* (p. 208). George & Bettenhausen (1990) concur, showing that a positive leader engenders positive moods in their team and coordinates tasks better with less effort. Cameron (2008) talks of positivity being analogous to the 'heliotropic effect'; *'All living systems have an inclination towards the positive... plants lean towards the light...'* (p xi). Further Diener (1995) and Fredrickson & Tugade (2003) purport that leaders have a more than proportionate impact on the climate of the organization.

'Social referencing' describes the practice of taking one's cue from the leader (Goleman *et al.*, 2003). Thus, when a leader is in a positive mood, his or her positivity cascades down the organization and, according to Gaffney (2011), *'this in turn makes them [employees] more optimistic about achieving their own goals, better at absorbing and understanding information, more creative and flexible and more effective as decision makers'* (p. 251).

Social referencing is noticeable in the results for this thesis. Looking behind the statistics for this study, there is one particular individual within Organization W who is consistently

nominated by their colleagues, receiving 11 nominations for '*who in the workplace makes you feel good?*' the highest in the survey. This individual happens to be the department head and this department is, according to their organization's own staff survey, the most productive and has the highest morale (their team of 65 people recording 15% higher job satisfaction than any other department in the 8,000 workforce)

Although anecdotal in nature, this example is given to illustrate the potential multiplier effect of having a flourishing individual in a senior management position. Goleman *et al.* (2003) state that employees take their emotional cues from the senior leaders. Indeed, Pescosolido (2000) discovered several ways in which a leader creates an emotional ripple effect;

- i. Leaders typically talk more than team members and what they said was listened to more carefully.
- ii. Leaders are usually the first to speak and when others make comments their remarks most often refer to what the leader has said.
- iii. Because the leader's way of seeing things has extra weight, leaders 'manage meaning' for the group.
- iv. Even when not talking, the leader is the most carefully watched member of a team
- v. When team members raise questions for the group as a whole, most keep their eyes on the leader in order to gauge their response.
- vi. Group members generally see the leader's emotional reaction as the most valid response, modelling their own on it (particularly in ambiguous situations)

Cameron's (2008) work on deviant organizations describes organizational culture as a feeling and, thus, no one person is in charge of culture. By implication, if flourishing employees get into the ascendancy (i.e., becoming the majority group within an organization or team) then positivity and happiness are more likely to become established as the prevailing norm. Put

simply, while every employee's emotions contribute to the overall mood of the team, leaders are more contagious and the case can therefore be made that they should be recruited from the pool of H+ employees or be recruited for their H+ characteristics. In addition, it would be useful for organizations to find ways of getting leaders to understand the magnitude of their impact. This could be done through workshops and seminars that highlight aspects of affect contagion.

### **11.12 Developing a Persuasive Vision of the Work and Why it Matters**

Positive meaning has been proposed as a universal human need (Baumeister & Vohs, 2002; Frankl, 1959) and 'making a difference' features as the main motivator for the H+ group.

'Meaning' and/or a sense of 'making a difference' has been revealed as a key driver of the H+ community. Indeed, it is the primary reason cited for feeling motivated at work. 'Meaning' has been defined in various ways: as *'the ontological significance of life from the point of view of the experiencing individual'* (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1964, p. 201), as the feeling of belonging and serving something larger than the self (Seligman, 2011), or simply as the response to the question *'what does my life mean?'* (e.g., Baumeister, 1992). Forgeard *et al* (2011) suggest that the study of meaning was prevalent in early humanistic tradition (Frankl, 1959; Maslow, 1968; Yalom, 1980) but has been largely ignored in psychology over the past fifty years due to lack of empirical evidence. Psychologists have however returned to the topic in recent years (Baumeister, 1992; King, Hicks, Krull, & Gaiso, 2006; Park, 2010) largely through the advent of positive psychology.

The leader is able to play a vital part in bringing meaning to their team and it is possible to manipulate the workplace to build a heightened sense of purpose. Firstly, work can be

reframed to highlight the positive impact it has on others. Hackman & Oldman (1980) discovered that employees who were aware of the positive impact of their contribution had a significantly higher level of meaningfulness. Thus, workplaces may be reconfigured to give opportunities for employees to interact directly with those receiving their output or service.

Grant's (2014) concept of '*outsourcing inspiration*' (p. 22) is the notion that instead of the organization attempting to motivate employees, the aim is to get them to feel motivated intrinsically, with Rosso, Dekas & Wrzesniewski (2010) suggesting that meaningful work is the cornerstone of inspiration. Researchers have recognised the motivational potential of 'task significance' (e.g., Hackman & Oldman, 1976) yet many employees never have the chance to see or meet the people affected by their work. Grant (2008) studied call centre workers who improved their productivity by 400% after meeting their customers. Thus, seeing the impact of one's work can be a powerful source of intrinsic motivation by building meaning into the job.

In the context of this study one could, for example, provide opportunities for back-office or call-centre staff to visit customers who have benefitted from their service. Lawrence & Nohria (2002) suggest that highlighting the long-term impact of a team's work also enhances meaningfulness. Thus, in some instances, the leader has the opportunity to remind the team that they are creating a legacy and that their influence extends beyond the immediate time frame.

It may well be that some employees (the flourishing group in particular) are already cognisant of 'meaning' and 'purpose' and have internalised these as intentional strategies, as discussed in chapter 10. However, it may be that the leader can play a crucial role in reminding individuals or indeed, arrange seminars or workshops where employees are able to learn to



find meaning for themselves. This may be particularly relevant in the public sector where teams are likely to be delivering public services that have a wider societal value.

The concept of meaning sits at the heart of Sinek's (2011) golden circle model in which he purports that all employees will be able to describe what their job is in terms of what they do and how they do it, but that fewer will be able to articulate why they do it. Sinek's point is that the stronger an individual employee's 'why?' the more likely they will have intrinsic motivation and view their occupation as having a calling orientation. This sense of purpose or 'making a difference' stands out as a key driver of the H+ employees. Using Sinek's terminology, some employees may already be cognisant of their 'why'. However, where a sense of purpose is lacking or weak, it may be that the leader's role is in helping teams and individuals find a strong and compelling purpose.

### **11.13 Seeking Purpose Through Goals**

In a related concept, Ryan & Frederick's (1997) research implies that success at both autonomous and controlled activities would result in raised affect but that the longevity of affect would differ. Success in an intrinsic activity would be energy maintaining and restorative in nature. Similarly, success at an extrinsic activity would also yield a positive affective state, for the person would have achieved a goal and relieved a source of stress. However, this second kind of success would not be expected to be restorative or to enhance feelings of vitality.

The difference between hedonistic and eudaimonic happiness also has implications for organizations since it pertains to the longevity of positive affect. Whereas hedonistic happiness is often defined by the mere satisfaction of desires, eudaimonia refers to the

satisfaction that results from self-realization (Ryff, 1995). As Ryan & Frederick (1997) argue, vitality appears to be a central indicant of eudaimonia, whereas the positive affect of happiness, which can result from attaining a goal or getting what one wants (Argyle, 2001), does not require pursuing goals that are conducive to growth or self-realization and does not require being autonomous in pursuing one's goals.

Cameron's concept of 'Everest goals' (discussed in Chapter 10) has resonance with the concepts of engagement, meaning, flow and positive dissatisfaction. Such goals are positively deviant in that they are not just designed to overcome problems and achieve success, but to reach extraordinary high levels of performance, which Cameron & Levine (2006) define as performance that spectacularly and dramatically exceeds normal. Further, such goals are focused on 'goods of first intent', i.e., the goal '*is good in itself and is to be chosen for its own sake*' (Cameron, 2013, p. 106). Cameron argues that goods of first intent never become satiated so do not diminish from habituation. Thus, working towards or the achievement of an Everest goal is akin to the sense of having a calling orientation.

Everest goals are also described as 'contribution goals' (Crocker, Olivier & Nuer, 2009) in that they provide benefit to others, emphasising what the individual can give rather than what they can get. As such, they are differentiated from achievement goals which are self-focused. Managers and teams should therefore be encouraged to set goals that are stretching, meaningful and focused on 'goods of first intent'. This may require some reframing of existing goals or running 'Everest goals' alongside existing team goals.

### **11.14 Positive Communication**

The notion of ‘choosing to be positive’ stands out as the most significant deliberate strategy deployed by the flourishing group. The study has not attempted to measure the extent to which a conscious positive choice impacts on communication. However, Losada & Heaphy (2004) report that high performing teams have a positive to negative ratio of 5.6 to 1, medium performing organizations have a ratio of 1.85 to 1 with low performance characterised by .036 to 1. Additionally, high performing organizations are found to be balanced in the number of inquiry statements compared to advocacy. High performing organizations score almost twice as high on ‘connectivity’ which Losada & Heaphy define as ‘information flows’ and ‘participation’. Thus, Losada & Heaphy (2004) purport that high performing teams have positive communication patterns and are far more supportive, positive and complimentary. Cameron (2008) provides a reminder that some negativity is acceptable; ‘... *It is not that they ignore the negative or adopt a Pollyannaish perspective, but they counter the tendency toward negativity with an abundance of positivity.*’ (p. 21).

Baumeister *et al.* (2001) highlighted the fact that negative occurrences, bad events and disapproving feedback are more influential and longer lasting in individuals than positive, encouraging and upbeat occurrences. Thus, it may be the case that happiness and inspiration may be more difficult to generate and have a perishability factor, giving extra impetus to the role that leaders play in creating a positive climate. The fact that happiness and inspiration are perishable points to the heightened importance of positive communication as a way of constantly renewing this limited resource. Thus, positive leadership communications such as ‘catching staff doing things well’ or ‘starting meetings with a discussion of the team’s successes’ are likely to lift the mood and play a part in engendering a more positive climate.

Moreover, the perishable aspect of inspiration suggests this should be an on-going focus for leaders.

### **11.15 Recruitment and Succession**

Phase one of the data capture discovered that it was possible to identify flourishing employees who not only self-rate as significantly happier than their colleagues but are also recognised as creating positivity in others. Baker, Cross & Wooten (2003) found that positive energizers enthuse their colleagues and that high performing organizations have three times more positive energizers than average organizations. With such an important link between affect and performance, it makes business sense to either recruit individuals who have this ‘portable benefit’ (i.e., screen for H+ tendencies at recruitment) or nurture these attributes within current employees.

Also, it is important to note that a flourishing employee might energise and enthuse some people but not others. Baker (2000) suggests diagnosing positive energy networks by formal network analysis in which all employees are rated on a 1-5 scale (1 represents ‘very de-energizing’ and 5 ‘very energizing’) with the data analysed to produce an organizational energy map. More simply, as with this study, each employee could be asked to submit 2 or 3 names of colleagues whom they deem to be positive energizers and the results tabulated to find the most frequently named individuals.

Further, a successful organizational strategy may be to ask the positive energizers to coach and mentor others.

### **11.16 Crafting**

Job crafting is a way of building meaning into a job, thus adding a renewable motivational resource (Ford & Smith, 2007) with Spreitzer & Porath (2014) describing its importance, thus: *'Having meaning energizes by creating purpose in one's life, and with meaning, people care about their work.'* (p. 47).

Wrzesniewski & Dutton (2001) define job crafting as *'the physical and cognitive changes individuals make in the task or relational boundaries of their work'* (p. 179) purporting that it is widespread. Crafting allows employees to derive more meaning and optimally bridges the demands of their job and the resources they have, thus capitalising on employee resourcefulness and proactivity (Tims, Bakker & Derks, 2012). An organization can enable job crafting by allowing managers to be the *'architects of the contexts'* (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001, p. 71). Further, organizations can foster crafting by allowing discretion via more transformational (and less micromanaging) leadership styles. In addition, crafting opportunities can be built into the performance appraisal system with, for example, managers asking employees to reflect on changes that would make work more enjoyable and/or interesting, allowing staff some leeway to organise things *'their way'*.

Once again, this alludes to a development programme in which these leadership *'soft skills'* are learned and encouraged.

### **11.17 A strengths Audit**

*'I play to my strengths'* is an intentional strategy that rates as significantly stronger between the H+ and NonH+ cohorts (H+ mean 8.05, NonH+ mean 5.64,  $t(76) = -5.27, p < .001$ )

This ties in with Cooperrider & Whitney's (2005) concept of Appreciative Inquiry in that it is about a deliberate focus on what is right and virtuous. The process of 'reflective best self' requires employees to ask their colleagues to write three short anecdotes in response to the question, *'When you have seen me make a special or important contribution, what unique value did I create?'* The answers should provide a raft of positive feedback as well as an insight into the employee's personal strengths. The aim is for the individual to analyse the feedback and devise strategies to capitalise on these strengths. Clifton & Harter (2003) make the point that providing feedback on weaknesses is also important but that a focus on deficiencies leads only to the development of competence whereas a focus on strengths leads to excellence and positively deviant performance.

Further, the state of flow is associated with an employee playing to their strengths. This requires the employee to be aware of their strengths, a point that Buckingham & Clifton (2005) articulate thus: *'The real tragedy of life is not that each of us doesn't have enough strengths, it's that we fail to use the ones we have.'* (p. 9). As well as creating an awareness of strengths, an organization must also create opportunities for employees to engage in strength-based activities.

Thus, some form of strengths audit is an appropriate starting point in as much as it provides an opportunity to discuss strengths and open a dialogue about how tasks may be crafted to account for individual strengths. This requires the leader or team manager to, in effect, be ahead of the game both in understanding the interplay of strengths and engagement, as well as being able to reshape their team in accordance with the findings of a team strengths audit.

## **11.18 Reflections on Leadership and Organizational Factors that Facilitate Flourishing Cultures**

The recommendations to date have centred on organizational factors - with leadership as a particular focal point - that can be implemented in order to increase the chances of creating engagement. Placing flourishing employees at the centre of communications networks (thus maximising their hyper-dyadic impact), creating opportunities for high quality connections, adopting transformational leadership styles, building autonomy into jobs, tuning into an individual's 'why?', articulating a vision & purpose, setting Everest goals, adopting the Losada ratio in communication, recruiting and promoting with H+ traits in mind, allowing job crafting and maximising the opportunities for staff to play to their strengths are all valid and all flow naturally from the findings of this thesis. However, various combinations of these findings can be found in organizational behaviour textbooks and research findings elsewhere.

Indeed, many organizations are aware of these factors and have designed structures to suit. Further, they have provided leadership training to facilitate styles that are in line with these recommendations – and yet these organizations still fail to engage some of their employees. The central theme of this thesis has been to discover the within-person strategies that flourishing employees use to maintain their positive affect. Chapter 10 demonstrated that the H+ community are significantly more likely to be 'engaged' (as measured by Warr's Multi-Affect Indicator) than their NonH+ colleagues. Assuming the H+ employees are doing similar jobs and are on similar pay grades as their NonH+ counterparts, it seems likely that their within-person strategies must therefore be different. These strategies were measured and discussed in Chapter 10. This section seeks to recommend how individuals might be better able to take charge of their own internal strategies to create more engagement from within. Or, indeed, how organizations might facilitate this outsourcing of flourishing.

Further, the correlation between positive energy and the personality factor ‘extraversion/introversion’ is ‘essentially zero’ (Baker, Cross & Parker, 2003) indicating that positive energising is a learned behaviour, rather than a personality attribute. The pertinent question is therefore, how can one learn to flourish? If the organization has done all it can to facilitate flourishing, this final section of recommendations examines the ‘hearts and minds’ aspect of organizational culture and is about cultivating within-person change.

### **11.19 Attitudinal Choice**

Analysing the results of phase 3 of this research it appears that engagement in the workplace is no accident. It may well be that the organization has striven to create ideal conditions in which employees can flourish but the fact remains that many are merely ‘comfortable’ rather than ‘engaged’. Further, despite the organization’s best efforts, some employees continue to languish, recording high levels of negative affect which manifest in counter-productive and/or avoidance behaviours. Therefore, although the environment is conducive to flourishing, some individuals are still failing to engage. The logical conclusion is that those who are disengaged are existing in an identical environment to those who are engaged and it must therefore be a series of mental strategies that increase their likelihood of experiencing positive affect.

This thesis has revealed that the H+ community have more strategies and that they use them more strongly. Further, that attitudinal choice is central to the concept flourishing. As argued earlier, this research is unable to ascertain the extent to which an awareness of the ‘choice to be positive’ differentiates the two groups. It may be that the NonH+ employees are unaware that there is an attitudinal choice to be made, which is why they are less inclined to make it. Or it may point to the second highest differential between the two groups, that there is considerable effort involved in the state of flourishing; namely that ‘choosing’ to be positive



is more difficult than ‘not choosing’. It is recognised that the data was collected during a particularly turbulent time for British public sector employees so the effort incurred in maintaining a flourishing outlook may have been even more considerable.

In terms of recommendations, organizations need to create an awareness of the saliency of attitudinal choices. This could be through workshops and/or coaching, the aim being to elevate employees towards attitudinal choices that are more likely to achieve engagement. It must be remembered that the seemingly simple factor of ‘choice’ is designed to raise the emotional tone of the individual employee for the benefit of themselves and the organization. The added benefit is that flourishing employees are also likely to carry this ‘portable benefit’ into the home domain. Thus, a shift in emphasis from attempting to instil organizationally desired behaviours and values, towards a whole-person approach, might be beneficial.

In addition to the aforementioned organizational factors (e.g., transformational leadership, meaningful goals, placing H+ employees centrally in communication hubs, etc.) it may be that learning sets (Wright, 2001) are appropriate, where small groups can discuss and challenge the concept of attitudinal choice.

In terms of providing training interventions, Proudfoot *et al.* (2009) developed a cognitive-behavioural training program lasting seven weeks, with six further weeks of follow-up, to teach financial services sales agents to change dysfunctional thinking and adopt an optimistic attributional style. The intervention increased job satisfaction and well-being assessed three months later and reduced employee turnover and enhanced performance up to two years later. Thus, it seems that employees can be ‘trained’ to adopt more positive attitudes.

Disposition also affects happiness in general and at work, such that happiness may be somewhat ‘sticky’ and less than perfectly responsive to improvements in objective organization and job features (Staw & Ross 1985).

In addition, as alluded to in earlier sections, individuals may readily habituate to improved circumstances (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky 2006) suggesting that concerted organizational efforts may not enhance wellbeing in the long run. This suggests organizations should attempt to retain a freshness of approach, looking for innovative ways of creating a flourishing environment.

Similarly, habituation can occur with an individual’s happiness strategies. The episodic nature of activity also suggests that an additional way to maximize the impact of an activity is to attend to the *timing* of that activity. For example, a person might choose to ‘count her blessings’ but if she did that daily she might become bored with the routine and cease to extract meaning from it. Thus, the *length* of time before re-engaging in a happiness-boosting activity is an important part of its potency. By being cognisant of the ‘refractory period’ (Kalat, 2001) after which a recently performed activity regains its full happiness-inducing potential, individuals may maximize the benefits of the activity over time and avoid reducing the activity’s effectiveness through overuse.

Thus, people should strive to discover the optimal timing for each activity – that is, a frequency of engagement that allows that activity to remain fresh, meaningful, and positive for a particular person.

Further, the fact that individuals bring different needs, preferences and expectations to work suggests that no single solution will make all employees equally happy. This ‘horses for courses’ element of the individual nature of happiness brings researchers full circle to the difficulty of finding an objective measurement of happiness.

### **11.20 Resilience**

A cluster of intentional strategies centre on the fact that the H+ respondents are more resilient than their NonH+ counterparts and that their positive self-talk and lack of rumination (*‘I reframe things positively’, ‘I don’t dwell on bad stuff’ & ‘I give myself a pep talk’*) are key strategies.

Once again, the organization can design or source workshops that centre on resilience techniques. Mindfulness and workshops that include elements of cognitive behavioural therapy would begin to address issues of negative self-talk and rumination.

Resilience workshops may be especially pertinent in times of austerity when the external environment feels particularly pressurised. There is an appreciation that workshops on mindfulness and resilience constitute a new approach as well as a considerable expense. The current approach tends to be one of creating an organizational climate that is conducive to engagement, while also putting in place a safety net of counselling for those in most need (i.e., those who are likely to have slipped into the ‘stressed’ or ‘depressed’ quadrants of Russell’s circumplex model). Workshops with gratitude and/or mindfulness themes require organizations to go above this base level of wellbeing provision and to focus on the employee as a ‘whole person’ rather than simply seeking to improve their ‘at work’ domain.

### **11.21 Awareness and the ‘Whole Person’**

Following on, organizations need a new approach to learning that keeps those elements that are working and supplements them with a more holistic strategy that seeks to create awareness of the mechanics of within-person change. This is where programmes that incorporate elements of positive psychology and mindfulness might be most useful in helping alter mind-sets. If, as alluded to earlier, an organization cannot force staff to be engaged or command them to be happy, a new approach is sought that encourages positive affect from within.

Once more, the concept of awareness becomes vital. The assumption is that the more aware one is of each of these happiness components, the more control one will have over their manifestation and the more able one will be to influence their successful outcome. Creating awareness is thus an important intervention objective in the maximisation of happiness because, quite simply, one cannot intentionally choose a strategy if one has no awareness of its existence. Awareness creates attention and as Dolan (2014), states *‘Your happiness is determined by how you allocate your attention’* (p. xviii).

H+ strategies of deliberate attitudinal choice, gratitude, reframing, consuming less news and instilling positive self-talk are all about redirecting attention towards what is good and positive. So, whereas many previous attempts to explain the causes of happiness have sought to directly relate inputs (e.g., income, job satisfaction, relationships) to the final output of happiness, this thesis recasts the inputs as stimuli vying for the individual’s attention, with the effects on happiness determined by 1) cognisance of their existence and 2) how much they are attended to. Therefore, at a practical level, it could be that the effect of income on one’s happiness is determined less by the actual amount and more by how much attention the

employee gives it. This has implications that go to the heart of this thesis because, returning to the 40% of an individual's happiness that is in their direct control (Lyubomirsky 2007), the same inputs will affect employees according to how much attention they pay to them. This thesis postulates that those who are experiencing a state of flourishing are exercising more control and simply allocating attention in ways that give them a better chance of achieving positive affect. This 'ordinary magic' (Masten, 2001) is potentially available to all employees.

Thus, for organizations to begin to elicit within-person change, it may be that a more holistic approach is taken to training and development. This may be interpreted as more of an 'enlightened' approach to engagement, rather than a forced approach since all the H+ strategies are deliberate and all involve internal change. If employees are able to see benefits at work and home, then this is less likely to be viewed as an organization-only initiative akin to 'something the organization is doing to us'. By taking a whole-person perspective, a more enlightened approach may be viewed as 'something the organization is doing for us', with a better chance of achieving employee buy-in.

Revisiting Luthan's concept of PsyCap (chapters 2 and 10), the argument is that unlike traditional financial capital and tangible assets, psychological capital can be upgraded at relatively little monetary cost. The positive psychological capacities of self-efficacy, optimism, hope and resilience are states that are open to development, and all have proven guidelines for their enhancement (Luthans *et al*, 2006). PsyCap therefore stretches beyond human ('what you know') and social ('who you know') capital, and is more directly concerned with 'who you are' and more importantly 'who you are becoming'. This changes the emphasis from *developing one's actual self* to *becoming the best possible self*.

It is hoped that, in time, the extra investment in an holistic approach will create within-person changes that result in savings in areas of employee absence and counselling. Following the line of argument from the main body of the thesis, if the wellbeing programme achieves enhanced levels of employee engagement then profitability and/or output rises. For example, Fisher & Noble (2000) report that happy employees feel optimistic about their ability to achieve a goal, are more creative and predisposed to be more helpful. This is a crucial point, because all the evidence of this thesis points to engagement being a portable benefit that applies to the individual rather than their job. Indeed, where external conditions are identical, it is solely the within-person strategies that elevate employees into the H+ category.

### **11.22 A Summary of recommendations**

**This section summarises the recommendations into 2 categories:**

- a) Those arising from the wider positive psychology literature**
- b) Those arising directly from this research**

#### **a) Recommendations arising as ‘general good practise’ from the literature**

1. Organizations to appreciate that there is no ‘one best way’ to lead but that, in general, the principles of Transformational Leadership fit the needs of an engagement culture.
2. Leadership development to include elements that foster an engaged culture; positive psychology, emotional intelligence, transformational leadership, mindfulness, social referencing, coaching and suchlike.
3. Organizations to re-design tasks for maximum human interaction and that offer the chance to foster high quality relationships.
4. Where possible, build autonomy into tasks (for example, less scripting in call centres).
5. Where possible, take steps to build meaning into tasks and teams (for example, staff

should be given opportunities to visit highly satisfied recipients of their service).

6. Where possible, staff to be given opportunities to reflect on the longer-term impact of their jobs (for example, those involved in social housing projects to visit new builds or refurbished properties to experience the 'social good').
7. Allow staff some leeway in setting meaningful goals (meaningful to the organization and the individual)
8. Allow and encourage job crafting.

**b) Recommendations arising directly from this research**

9. Flourishing staff to be trained in coaching skills and to be deployed in coaching roles.
10. Leaders to be made aware of Sinek's 'golden circle' model and tasked with connecting (or reconnecting) employees with their purpose.
11. Undertake a strengths audit (in conjunction with the 'reflective best self' activity) and include discussions on strengths in staff reviews.
12. Organizations to invest in well-being programmes that go beyond the safety net level of 'access to counselling'.
13. Teams to be aware of and working towards a sense of positive advocacy. A ratio of 5:1 positive to negative comments to be the norm (for example, restructure team meetings so they start and end with a positive)
14. Organizational leaders to develop an understanding of the reciprocal nature of a holistic well-being programme, and the fact that investment of this kind pays back through increases in productivity, creativity and attendance achieved by raising levels of employee engagement.
15. For organizations to move beyond measures of 'satisfaction', towards 'engagement'.

16. Organizational leaders to consider the use of the IWP Multi-Affect Indicator to create an ‘affect map’. This identifies staff in all 4 quadrants, with well-being measures put in place for each quadrant.
17. For organizational leaders and staff to understand that ‘habituation’ means engagement is a fluid concept. The onus is on maintaining a ‘fresh’ and ‘creative’ approach to well-being.
18. For organizational leaders to understand the concept of ‘challenged happiness’ and that ‘engagement’ is a product of organizational *and* within-person factor.
19. Organizational leaders to implement recruitment policies that screen for H+ characteristics (bringing H+ people into the organization).
20. Organizational leaders to understand the hyper-dyadic spread of positive affect and, accordingly, to place H+ employees in key communication nodes.
21. Conversely, organizational leaders to mitigate against negative emotional contagion by removing negative staff from key communication nodes.
22. Maximise the concept of flourishing being a ‘portable benefit’ and recruit, train and retain leaders and staff who exhibit flourishing characteristics.
23. Where possible, ensure goals are larger, more dynamic and more compelling than ‘SMART’.
24. Produce an organizational ‘energy map’ (Baker, 2000) and use it to place positive energizers in hub positions.
25. Nurture within-person changes by, for example, offering staff workshops in non-traditional subjects such as mindfulness, CBT, resilience and elements of positive psychology.
26. Supplement the development workshops with a framework of learning sets. This acts as means of challenging the status quo and avoiding a sense of motivational habituation.



## **Chapter 12:**

### **Limitations of the Study and Implications for Future Research**

## **Chapter 12: Limitations of the Study and Implications for Future Research**

### **12.1 Introduction**

Due to the fact that this research is of an exploratory nature, one might expect there to be fruitful areas of employee happiness and flourishing which can be addressed through further study.

Throughout this thesis, the approach has been one that emphasised practicality as well as academic acceptability. A number of points have already been raised concerning the limitations of the investigation and suggestions for future research. The purpose of this chapter is to address these issues in more detail as well as recommending ways in which future studies may build on the findings. Hence this reflection will address issues from a theoretical perspective, especially in terms of identifying limitations, explaining how some of these limitations have been overcome and suggesting new avenues of research that would be beneficial.

### **12.2 Balancing the Data**

In order to adequately evaluate the findings and contributions of the research, it is imperative to take account of the limitations, especially relating to aspects of research design, such as measurement, interpretation and generalizability of the findings. In this research, it was important to strike a balance between choosing data gathering methods that would minimise flaws but that were also deemed acceptable to busy employees. Therefore, considerable effort was taken to design data capture methods that were detailed enough to gather high quality data yet expedient enough to attract enough respondents. This was especially pertinent in that time pressures had been cited as the major barrier at the outset of the thesis. The realisation is

that rather like the study of happiness itself, this trade-off between rigour and expediency is not an exact science.

According to Kuhn (1970) the qualitative and quantitative paradigms are incommensurable, 'poles apart', underpinned by different philosophical assumptions. Brannen (2005) elaborates that quantitative researchers have regarded qualitative researchers as too context specific, their samples as unrepresentative and their claims about their work as unwarranted – *'that is judged from the vantage point of statistical generalisation'* (p. 7). Examined from the perspective of qualitative researchers, quantitative research is seen as *'overly simplistic, decontextualized, reductionist in terms of its generalisations, and failing to capture the meanings that actors attach to their lives and circumstances.'* (p. 7). Brannen (2005) suggests these paradigmatic polar opposites cannot be made in a philosophical void and that in terms of best practice, researchers may be well advised to consider what kind of knowledge they seek to generate.

Further, Bryman (1984) suggested that, in practice, research is driven by pragmatic assumptions and these 'technical' issues weight equally as philosophical assumptions. Thus, the framing of research questions is in part shaped by epistemological assumptions but is also influenced by the need to find theory that 'fits' a specific set of cases or contexts.

Contextualised for this thesis, the argument is that a researcher following a purely grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) would expect to reformulate their research questions during the course of an investigation, whereas the 'real world' implication is that any piece of research is likely to comprise a complexity of research questions that emerge as the research progresses. Moreover, in a thesis concerning emotions and behaviours, a focus on

meaning within quantitative research is often inescapable since researchers typically study people's behaviour via self-reports of thinking and behaviour.

Sammons et al (2005) justify using mixed methods in situations where '*complex and pluralistic social contexts demand analysis that is informed by multiple and diverse perspectives*' (p. 221), thereby suggesting that the inferences they can make from their research are in, general, strengthened by the use of a mix of methods.

### **12.3 Self-Report Bias**

On-line surveys were the preferred method. Given that employees reported their own behaviour, the data may have suffered self-report bias (Spector, 1987) associated with self-administered surveys. The threat of this potential systematic bias occurs due to individuals misrepresenting or misinterpreting their own behaviour (Paulhus, 1986). The findings may also have been influenced by social desirability, that is, the respondents giving culturally acceptable responses rather than their actual thinking on the topic (Nancarrow & Brace, 2000). Further, the exclusivity of the on-line format may have biased the results towards those who are more IT literate or may have favoured those with the means and time to complete the surveys at home.

It may also be the case that responses are drawn from the extremes of the happiness spectrum with, at one end, the happiest employees most naturally drawn towards completing a happiness survey. Conversely, it may also be the case that the surveys attracted extreme answers from the opposite end of the spectrum. In times of turbulent change, a series of happiness surveys may have been seen as an irritation and therefore attracted the attention of those who were in a particularly negative frame of mind.

The lack of time and resources necessary for face-to-face interviews meant that survey distribution was delegated to a single contact in the organization. Consciously or unconsciously, these gatekeepers may also have had an agenda. Despite assurances of anonymity, there may be an element of distribution bias whereby the gatekeepers issued surveys to individuals, teams or departments where they deemed morale to be reasonably buoyant, thus enhancing the results of their organization.

#### **12.4 Happy Introverts**

An attempt was made to mitigate against these biases by asking work colleagues to nominate co-workers who elevated their moods (*'who in the workplace makes you feel good?'*), thereby steering the research away from purely self-nominated individuals towards those whom others also deem as flourishing. This attempt at methodological pluralism (Bell & Newby, 1977) or 'triangulation' is described by Webb *et al.* (1965) as the onslaught of a series of imperfect measures, partly because co-worker or third party evaluations pose methodological challenges in themselves (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1989). In the case of this research, nominating those who stand out as happy and positive may merely have resulted in names of those members of staff who are more visible within the organization, or who are more extrovert.

This research, while focusing on intentional strategies, has neglected to assess personality traits as a potential factor in happiness. As such, the data gathering for this thesis may have conspired against introverts who self-rated as happy but whose quiet inward happiness is of a type that is not being noted as contagious by work colleagues. One important consideration is that individuals are not equally endowed with the ability to experience positive emotion. Introverts, for instance, are less likely than extroverts to experience positive emotion (Hills &

Argyle, 2001). As a result, interventions that are designed to boost positive emotion will do so more easily in extroverts, and measurements of positive emotion will favour extroverts over introverts. Organizational designers may therefore end up unintentionally over-counting what works for extroverts and discounting what works for introverts. The fairness of using positive emotion as a main metric for wellbeing is therefore disputable, and it might be more fruitful to focus on the measurement and cultivation of other facets of wellbeing (Seligman, 2011).

### **12.5 Better Quality Data**

This thesis clearly shows that flourishing and engagement are very important in organizations, since these affects impact on behaviours which, in turn, contribute to bottom line outcomes such as job performance. Despite the promising findings concerning the intentional strategies of flourishing employees, further research is needed. It is important to emphasize that global reports of past feelings are based on semantic knowledge with Gilbert (2006) suggesting that when asked about feelings during a particular activity (e.g., at work), people draw on their general beliefs about the activity and its attributes to arrive at an answer. The actual experience does not figure prominently in these global reports because the experience itself is no longer accessible to introspection and episodic reconstruction is not used to answer a global question. Crucially, a person's 'global memory' often fails to reflect what he or she actually experienced from moment to moment (Schwarz, Kahneman & Xu, 2009).

Braun & Clarke (2006) suggest that thematic analysis is a poorly demarcated, rarely-acknowledged, yet widely-used qualitative analytic method within psychology. An account of themes 'emerging' or being 'discovered' is a passive account of the process of analysis, and it denies the active role the researcher always plays in identifying patterns/themes, selecting which are of interest, and reporting them to the readers (Taylor & Ussher, 2001). The

language of ‘themes emerging’ can be misinterpreted to mean that themes ‘reside’ in the data, and if one looks hard enough they will ‘emerge’. If themes ‘reside’ anywhere, they reside in our heads from our thinking about our data and creating links as we understand them. (Ely, Vinz, Downing, & Anzul, 1997: 205-6)

However, thematic analysis faces similar criticism to that of action research with scientists suggesting that it has ‘*no particular kudos as an analytical method*’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 97). Gadamer (1960, 2004) conceptualized understanding as ‘genuine conversation’, whether between reader and text or between people with preconceptions, prejudice and bias standing in the way of such genuine conversations.

Thematic analysis is a method to identify meanings which is an interpretive act, and hermeneutics is the study of theorizing of interpretation. McLeod stated that ‘*qualitative research is always, to greater or lesser extent, a hermeneutic enterprise – where interpretation occurs, further competing interpretations are always possible.*’ (2011, p. 45).

A further problem with retrospective self-report instruments used to assess positive emotions is that individuals may use the way they feel at the moment they are answering to determine how they have felt over a longer period of time (especially if the survey calls for a longer timeframe, as in ‘*How happy were you 5 years ago?*’. Respondents may also be subject to memory biases, such as the tendency to recall the most salient and/or most recent experience (Kahneman, 1999).

Therefore, a more accurate measure of affect might have been achieved by using a diary method whereby employees fill in short questionnaires including state measures once or

several times a day, for several days in a row. An important advantage of diary research is that it relies less on retrospective recall than regular surveys, since the questions relate to individuals' perceptions and feelings on a certain day. Moreover, diary research may also reveal the day-to-day triggers of state engagement. For example, Xanthopoulou *et al.* (2009) investigated how daily fluctuations in job resources (i.e., autonomy, coaching, supervision, etc.) were related to employees' personal resources (i.e., self-efficacy, self-esteem and optimism) and work engagement. They discovered, for example, that the previous day's coaching had a positive, lagged effect on next day's work engagement and on the next day's financial returns.

There is little doubt that the use of affect diaries and/or the day reconstruction method would build a more accurate picture of workplace affect. However, cost and time commitments rendered these unfeasible in this case. The recommendation is that future research would benefit from the implementation of data gathering methods that include but are not exclusively drawn from on-line surveys.

## **12.6 Direction of Causation**

Most existing studies on organizational well-being are cross-sectional in nature and although this study had three data-capture points, these were used to build a picture of flourishing employees rather than capturing the same data three times. Thus, longitudinal studies are needed to examine the possibility that positive forms of work-related positive affect either (a) precede job performance, (b) follow from job performance, or (c) are reciprocally related to performance. For example, job satisfaction is strongly correlated with happiness and overall satisfaction but which causes which? While this thesis has been concerned with identifying and reporting on those who are deemed to be flourishing, it has not attempted to argue a



direction of causation between happiness and energy or happiness and engagement. However, this remains as an area of significant interest for myself and future research, especially in light of studies that have found evidence that both directions operate (Near, Rice and Hunt, 1978).

### **12.7 The Downside of Engagement**

Future research should also aim to investigate whether there is a negative side to positive affect. Halbesleben, Harvey & Bolino (2009) hypothesized that engagement was associated with family problems due to the time commitments involved with extra-role work behaviour such as organizational citizenship behaviours. These findings illustrate that employees may become too engaged or even addicted to their work, which may eventually interfere with opportunities to recover from work-related efforts during non-work time. While this research touched on the debate as to when engagement may encroach into workaholism and burnout, a more focused academic study would be worthwhile.

### **12.8 A Private Sector Focus**

Additionally, the three data samples for this thesis were drawn from the UK public sector. It would be valuable to be able to compare public sector employees with private and third sector workforces, as well as undertaking international comparisons of workplace engagement and flourishing. Although people across the globe generally seem to value happiness (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008), certain cultural differences in the effectiveness of happiness strategies exist (Boehm, Lyubomirsky, & Sheldon, 2011). If this is the case, the findings regarding intentional strategies should be interpreted cautiously when applying them to non-UK and indeed non-public sector individuals.

## **12.9 The Timeframe**

The research presented here was collected over a three-year period and the changes which have taken place within the organizations studied may have had an effect on the reliability of the results.

Further, the 2008 banking crisis and subsequent economic shock created a set of unique circumstances which may well have impacted on the results. At the time of the data collection, all nine participating public sector organizations were in the throes of being restructured and, in many instances, teams had been downsized to the point whereby a sense of frustration was born out in the narrative. However, despite the external turmoil, the assumption is that each organization, now more than ever, needed their employees to be proactive and show initiative, take responsibility for their own professional development and to be committed to high-quality performance standards. Thus, the modern imperative is that organizations need employees who feel energetic and dedicated (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008), a fact illustrated by Ulrich (1997), who states, *'Employee contribution becomes a critical business issue because in trying to produce more output with less employee input, companies have no choice but to try to engage not only the body but the mind and soul of every employee.'* (p. 125).

It must be noted that the turbulence of the time was not typical and may therefore have affected the data.

## **12.10 Limitations of the Theoretical Approach Taken.**

This thesis began with a review of the literature, reporting that one way of avoiding the problem of defining happiness was to switch emphasis to the more academically acceptable

‘subjective wellbeing’ and/or resort to its subjective reporting. In this purely subjective approach, respondents would simply be asked whether they feel happy or not, with King *et al.* (2006) suggesting the very probable reason that this short circuits the problem of definition; after all, they argue, if someone says they feel happy, who are we to disagree? King *et al.* argue that the assumption in this design is that self-reported affect represents the essence of happiness but that unwittingly this design assumes that one’s emotions provide the most accurate picture of what is happening to the individual and their world. According to King *et al.* (2006), reliance on this model of subjectivity posits a one to one relation between our consciousness and the reality of our inner beings and the world around us.

A further problem with happiness research is that many researchers infer that a linear relationship takes place; e.g., improved pay results in better workplace wellbeing. This study has shown that this is not necessarily the case, as more complex interactions occur.

### **12.11 Propensity to Flourish**

It would be apposite to develop a ‘propensity to flourish’ predictive instrument that could be used in recruitment and succession planning. If indeed flourishing is, at least in part, an internal strategy and thus a portable benefit, a questionnaire could be devised which would gauge an individual’s propensity to have an uplifting effect on those around them.

A further conclusion is that future research on the measurement of happiness and emotional contagion should strive to capture the multifaceted and dynamic nature of the subject area. The suggestion is that future research should combine both objective and subjective measures of wellbeing, in order to provide the full picture of human flourishing. Subjective measures appear to be indispensable insofar as the presence of objective conditions of wellbeing may

not always be accompanied with subjective feelings of wellbeing. Yet subjective measures are insufficient; objective measures provide essential additional information by conveying the circumstances in which individuals live and develop.

### **12.12 Intentional Happiness**

Mill (1964) remarks that although happiness is an important end that people seek, it is only attained when individuals *'have their minds fixed on some object other than their own happiness'* (p. 112). Thus, somewhat counter-intuitively, the suggestion is that not thinking about one's own happiness is the path to greater happiness.

This thesis demonstrates the contrary; that mental strategies are important to one's engagement with the interventions and to the eventual state of flourishing. Further, research on goals and motivation suggests that intentions are crucial for any deliberate or purposeful action. According to the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1985), intentions are the most proximate predictors of behavioural outcomes with meta-analyses of correlational and experimental studies examining the relationship between behavioural intentions and actual behaviour outcomes concluding that intentions do predict later behaviour and outcomes (Armitage & Conner, 2001; Milne, Sheeran, & Orbell, 2000; Webb & Sheeran, 2006). Similarly, theories on self-regulation, such as control theory (Carver & Scheier, 1998), and the model of action phases (Gollwitzer, 1990; Heckhausen & Gollwitzer, 1987), propose that the act of setting explicit goals prepares individuals to take specific actions related to the desired outcomes. These ideas suggest that if individuals desire a higher level of happiness and well-being as outcomes, explicit intentions may help rather than hinder the process of attaining these outcomes. However, more work would be useful in this area.

The discussion of this thesis centres around the notion of implementing intentional strategies that facilitate the state of flourishing, and that this state benefits the individual and those in the wider organization through a hyper-dyadic effect. The implication is that the H+ community are happier than average because they have learned to be so. Remembering that the H+ individuals have more strategies and work those strategies harder than their NonH+ counterparts, this research aligns very strongly with the fact that focusing on happiness is the starting point for developing strategies that might eventually raise it. However, the specific notion of deliberately attempting to be happy remains unexplored.

### **12.13 Finding the Expected?**

On page 13, I suggested this research was born out of my enthusiasm for the subject coupled with personal experience of positive change. Thus, there is an argument to suggest that by knowing what works for me, I have merely found out what I intended to find out or, indeed, what I was looking for.

Whilst impossible to dismiss entirely, the point is mitigated by a) an awareness of its existence and b) a concerted attempt to apply rigorous academic techniques. Filtering the H+ respondents through 3 levels (rate their happiness as 8+, scoring in the upper quartile of the OHQ and being named at least two colleagues as ‘someone who makes me feel good’) has sought to identify those who are genuinely flourishing. Gauging their past and future happiness has identified individuals who have been flourishing for a prolonged period and hence mitigates against those surveyed who were merely having a good day.

Further, using the data from section 2 to inform the strategies offered in section 3 was an attempt to distance myself from providing a personal list of strategies that have worked for me. The list is derived entirely from what is working for the H+ respondents.

Ultimately, the results and discussion far exceeded my personal experience and knowledge. Aspects of employee engagement and some of the strategies adopted by the H+ respondents were new and surprising.

Hence, although born from enthusiasm for the subject, every effort has been made to build professionalism and impartiality into the results and discussion.

## **Chapter 13**

### **Conclusion**

*'I can say, without the slightest hesitation,' Taylor told a congressional committee, 'that the science of handling pig-iron is so great that the man who is ... physically able to handle pig-iron and is sufficiently phlegmatic and stupid to choose this for his occupation is rarely able to comprehend the science of handling pig-iron.'*

F. W. Taylor cited in: Montgomery (1989) *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925*. p. 251

## Chapter 13: Conclusion

The final chapter is an opportunity to reflect on the entirety of the body of work and, in light of lessons learned, to re-examine the 5 research questions:

1. To what extent do flourishing (H+) and non-flourishing (NonH+) employees differ on measures of ‘employee satisfaction’ and ‘employee engagement’?
2. What are the factors underpinning those who flourish at work?
3. What intentional *within-person* strategies differentiate flourishing and non-flourishing employees?
4. Which of these strategies is/are the most widely used?
5. Does long term positive affect involve effort or is it effortless?

### **13.1 To what extent do flourishing and non-flourishing employees differ on measures of ‘employee satisfaction’ and ‘employee engagement’?**

This thesis recognizes that happiness emerges from, and is embedded in, a rich network of interactions, including internal and external factors. Indeed, the starting point may be external - the organization needs to ‘get its own house in order’ to create an environment in which flourishing can take place. The suggestion from the literature review is that this not enough to guarantee employee engagement.

Indeed, organizations can and sometimes do go to extraordinary lengths to create an environment that is conducive to employee engagement. However, this study finds that a conducive environment does not *guarantee* employee engagement. The subtlety of human affect is such that engagement requires a more holistic approach that recognizes the



interactions and co-dependencies between internal and external variables and seeks the right combination of mind and world.

In direct response to the research question, evidence collected as part of thesis suggests the differences in ‘satisfaction’ *and* ‘engagement’ are significant. The implication is that flourishing respondents are experiencing significantly higher levels of affects associated with ‘satisfaction’ (calm, relaxed & at ease) while also experiencing heightened invigoration for the challenges ahead. As reported in the literature review, affects associated with the more elevated state of ‘engagement’ are likely to be manifested not only in feelings of zest within themselves (enthusiastic, joyful, inspired & excited) but they are creating upward emotional spirals in others as well as the increased likelihood of engaging in a host of pro-social behaviours.

Herein lie some challenges for organizational design. If flourishing employees are experiencing a combination of higher satisfaction and engagement, the implication is that they are working in an imperfect environment of ‘challenged happiness’ – their current situation is adequate (connoted with ‘satisfaction’) but they are driven by the more elevated state of engagement. As maximizers, they do not want to ‘make do’.

Further, the literature suggests strong evidence that leader behavior is related to employee happiness. For example, charismatic leadership is strongly related to subordinate job satisfaction (DeGroot *et al.*, 2000), and leader-member relationships is also strongly related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Gerstner & Day, 1997). Likewise, trust in the leader is a strong predictor of satisfaction and commitment (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002) as is the appropriate level of autonomy displayed by leaders (Baard *et al.*, 2004). Crucially,

Kopelman *et al.* (2006) suggest the positive leaders create upward emotional spirals which help colleagues cope better with change.

Thus, if there was one thing an organization could do to foster engagement it would be to have flourishing leaders. Stated in the opposite way, the point seems more stark; if it is the leaders who are disengaged then the organization is very unlikely to flourish.

### **13.2 What are the factors underpinning those who flourish at work?**

The RHS data collection instrument in phase two sought qualitative data on a range of issues, allowing flourishing respondents some leeway to describe, in their own words, the factors that contribute to their engaged status.

In terms of NVivo coding there was no clear fit between the responses gleaned from the flourishing employees, and Lyubormirsky (2007) 3-part happiness model. For example, Lyubormirsky's happiness model purports that genetic make-up accounts for 50% of an individual's happiness, yet the H+ group cited genes/disposition as one of their 'reasons for happiness' just 24 times. In terms of upbringing, 14 comments cited positive parenting as a factor in their current happiness, while 11 commented that their current happiness is due to negative parenting (i.e., essentially, they have learned how 'not to be').

The 'circumstances' portion of the model, which Lyubormirsky suggests accounts for just 10% of an individual's happiness, was cited 79 times. Situations such as working as part of a team, the enjoyment of one's job and a favourable home life were all mentioned as factors that create an emotional uplift. Pay was mentioned only once and, even then, it was not a

comment suggesting that pay was low, rather than that that person was seeking parity with others in her profession in other parts of the country.

The majority of the H+ respondents report being employed in a career or calling, with 'making a difference' cited as the single biggest reason for feeling good at work (mentioned 32 times). Respondents mentioned several high-scoring circumstantial factors that cause a loss of positive affect, for example 'other people' (29 citations) and 'excessive workload' (22).

However, notwithstanding the importance of genetic make-up and circumstances, this study shows that those in the flourishing category are underpinned by a sense of self-efficacy and purposeful strategies. Indeed, the 40% of an individual's happiness that Lyubormirsky calls 'intentional strategies' were cited 101 times. There is significant interplay between the 'circumstances' and 'intentional strategies' element of Lyubormirsky's model. For example, there is evidence to suggest that flourishing employees deliberately attempt to create a positive ripple effect at home, thus impacting on the 'circumstances' section of the happiness model. Further, it appears that H+ respondents operate a form of 'life-crafting', whereby if they are unable to create a favourable environment, they will move on. This tendency to be an 'attitude maximizer' and the accompanying disinclination to 'make-do' involves both cognisance that attitudinal choice exists and a determination to exercise it. Indeed, the attitudinal effort involved in maintaining one's flourishing status is ranked as the second most important strategy.

Reflecting on the entirety of the findings, it is clear that in order to flourish at work, employers need to create an environment in which employees enjoy their jobs to the point of

feeling it to be a career or calling, but further, that employees are connected to a sense of purpose. Having positive work colleagues is important, especially in respect of the downward emotional pull of negative work colleagues.

### **13.3 What intentional *within-person* strategies differentiate flourishing and non-flourishing employees?**

In its simplest form, Peterson (2006) suggests positive psychology is about accruing a body of knowledge that is useful to people who want to live a good, happy and long life. Reflecting on the entirety of this study, it could be stated that positive psychology comprises much more than ‘positive thinking’ but that it perhaps starts with the wilful intention to exercise positive attitudinal choices.

Further, just as an individual’s personal experience of being at their best reveals their potential, so the study of flourishing in an organization reveals the highest potential of the whole organization. Cameron *et al.* (2003) suggest that excellence always exists, even in the most dysfunctional organizations. This study suggests that the ‘secret’ lies in tapping into the source – the positive core, the people - resulting in higher levels of engagement, motivation and productivity.

Flourishing at work is a broad concept that includes a large number of constructs ranging from transient moods and emotions at an individual level to aggregated attitudes at the organizational level. In the workplace, happiness is influenced by both short-lived events and conditions inherent in the task, job and organization. It is further complicated by influences at individual level such as personality and the fit between what the job/organization provides and the individual's expectations, needs and preferences. Understanding these contributors to

happiness, together with this research on volitional actions to improve happiness, offers some potential levers for improving happiness at work.

It is important to note that the benefits of feeling good are not because such feelings allow individuals to play down, ignore or distort negative information. Rather, positive affect leads people to be able to consider many aspects of a situation simultaneously, make evaluations and choose behaviours responsive to the situation. Indeed, this thesis has collected many first-hand accounts of what can only be described as trauma.

Gaffney (2011) suggests there are four elements of flourishing: challenge, connectivity, autonomy and using one's valued competencies. Further, Gaffney suggests these core components are enhanced by what is termed a 'mental life', an alignment of an individual's thinking and feeling that are on the same wavelength. Gaffney's point is that it is easy to explain goals, purpose and values in a cognitive way. In many organizations, values posters adorn the walls. In my role as a trainer, I have had rather too many discussions with exasperated managers, paraphrased along the lines of *'They [the employees] don't get it! They are not living by the values on the posters!'* And herein lies the point; to function at one's best one needs to feel a connection and however positive the organizational environment, however interesting the work and however transformational the leadership style, these will merely increase the odds of engagement. This thesis points to true and long lasting engagement as an internal source which lies within an array of attitudinal choices and mental constructs created by the individual.

It is hoped that all staff will have experienced feelings of engagement. For some employees, these feelings arise circumstantially; they are effectively waiting for the right conditions in

which to engage. This thesis points to the notion that flourishing employees are less inclined to wait. Instead, they tap into a set of intentional strategies which allow them to take personal responsibility for feeling good.

In direct response to the research question, the results of this thesis demonstrate that flourishing employees deploy the following strategies more frequently than their non-flourishing counterparts:

- I am grateful
- I choose to be positive
- I reframe things positively
- I don't watch much news
- I make an effort to be positive
- I play to my strengths
- I set goals
- I don't dwell on bad stuff
- I give myself a pep talk
- I am positive because I want others to feel good
- I learned to be positive in my early years
- I listen to happy music
- I think about those who are less fortunate

The following strategies are used less frequently in comparison with the non-flourishing counterparts:

- I watch feel-good TV and films
- I am positive because I didn't want to be like my parents

- I learned to be positive through adversity
- Happiness comes largely through my religious faith

#### **13.4 Which of these strategies is/are most significant?**

At the outset, this research question seemed straightforward, with respondents given a menu of intentional strategy choices that would culminate in a ranked order of frequency of use. However, after scrutiny, the intentional strategies become inseparable from the theme of cognisance of attitudinal choice.

Thematic analysis of the phase two data revealed a strong narrative of ‘choice’, bordering on a ‘realisation’ for some. When subsequently tested in phase 3, ‘choosing to be positive’ was rated as the most frequently accessed intentional strategy.

The ‘conscious’ nature of attitudinal choice arose as a theme of this thesis, in that one cannot choose a positive attitude unless one first acknowledges that a choice exists. A strong narrative from the flourishing respondents is that ‘choice’, whether manifested as gratitude, resilience or a mental reframe, is often used in times of adversity, almost as a fall-back position for when life is especially difficult. Moreover, evidence from the narratives appears to indicate that one’s ability to choose a positive mental attitude can, over time, become instilled as a new mental habit.

Dolan’s (2014) comment that *‘Attention is the glue that holds your life together’* (p. xviii) appears to hold true for the flourishing employees. The comment *‘I see the world differently to them’* (male, respondent #45), provides a succinct account of Dolan’s point and highlights one of the main differences between the H+ and NonH+ respondents.

Thus, if reality depends, at least in part, on how one views it, it becomes less of a surprise that external circumstances account for only 10% of total happiness (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon & Schkade, 2005). Indeed, Lyubomirsky (2007) prefers the phrase ‘creation or construction of happiness’ to the more popular ‘pursuit of happiness’, *‘since research shows that it’s in our power to fashion it for ourselves.’* (p. 15)

Further, if ‘reality’ is linked to mind-set and self-identity, then Dweck’s (2006) work on fixed and growth mind-sets becomes more salient. Dweck purports that those of fixed mind-set believe their capabilities are already set whereas a growth mind-set is conducive to self-improvement through effort. Dweck suggests that a growth mind-set is not dismissive of innate abilities, recognising that *‘although people may differ in every which way – in their initial talents and aptitudes, interests or temperaments – everyone can change and grow through application and experience’* (p. 12).

Therefore, if ‘awareness’ comes first, and ‘choice’ follows, this thesis purports that it is one’s belief that the effort is worthwhile that is the next step. As Dweck reports, it is those with fixed mind-sets who often miss opportunities for improvement and consistently underperform while those with a growth mind-set watch their abilities move ever upward.

Of the strategies measured, the following are all practised by the H+ respondents, with significant statistical difference to their NonH+ colleagues. The hierarchy of ‘frequency of use’ runs thus:

- 1 I choose to be positive
- 2 I make an effort to be positive
- 3 I am grateful



- 4 I reframe things positively
- 5 I choose not to dwell on bad stuff
- 6 I want others to feel good
- 7 I give myself a pep-talk
- 8 I play to my strengths
- 9 I set myself goals
- 10 I don't watch much news

The strategies above consist of a mixture of internal cognitive and thinking techniques (e.g., I am grateful, I give myself a pep-talk) and life-crafting strategies (e.g., I set myself goals, I don't watch much news) that seek to manipulate the 'circumstances' portion of their happiness totality.

Strategies with which no significant difference was recorded are as follows:

- 1 I learned to be positive through adversity
- 2 I learned to be positive in my early years
- 3 I am positive because I didn't want to be like my parents
- 4 I listen to happy music
- 5 I watch feel-good TV/films
- 6 I think about people who are less fortunate

The strategies listed above are in use, but deployed less frequently than the flourishing group. Further, there are no statistically significant differences in frequency of use between the groups.

Only one strategy was recorded more frequently deployed at a level of statistical significance by the NonH+ respondents – *'Happiness comes largely from my religious faith'*.

Thus, in succinctly answering the research questions, 11 of the 17 strategies are recorded as significantly stronger amongst the flourishing respondents and, of those, the choice to be positive and effort in doing so stand out as the most frequently used.

### **13.5 Does long term positive affect involve effort or is it effortless?**

The list of *within person* strategies, when written down, appears to be simple and straightforward. One suspects that the biggest single factor highlighted by this study, that of consciously and deliberately choosing to be positive, stands out as common sense. However, this research has uncovered that such strategies are by no means common practice.

On reflection, it may be that one can become psychologically disconnected from one's best self. The busyness agenda and impediments of modern life (discussed in chapter 1) have resulted in a reactive approach to life rather than an introspective 'inside-out' approach that is conducive to flourishing.

Thus, in conclusion to the research question, the responsibility for 'effort' lies on both sides. Organizational designers and management teams need to make an effort to create the conditions in which engagement is possible, but all of this is negated unless individual employees take some responsibility for their own mental strategies.

Indeed, statements gathered for this thesis point to effort in initiating and *sustaining* more positive ways of thinking. The relatively stable basic affective state of happiness refers to the

momentary level of happiness that an individual typically experiences - the individual's 'set point' (Williams & Thompson, 1993). The implication is that this component ensures that different individuals may experience different levels of happiness when all other factors are held constant. Although all individuals can experience a range of emotions at different intensities, there is a tendency for these to return to their idiosyncratic 'set point'.

Diener *et al.* (2006) argue that one's happiness set point is determined by the individual's sense of identity which is in turn determined by their psychology. At its simplest, most people think like the person they perceive themselves to be (e.g., victims get stuck in 'learned helplessness', winners have a winning mentality, confident people behave confidently, etc.) The question therefore arises, is it possible to change one's mental habits and/or one's sense of personal identity? The concept of neuro-plasticity (Goleman, *et al.*, 2003) suggests the brain is always learning. Siegel (2007) states that '*Where attention goes, neurons fire. And where neurons fire, they can re-wire*' (p. 291). This capacity for the brain to be reconfigured opens up the possibility for genuine and permanent personal change.

If one's brain has an element of neuroplasticity it may be that the 'set point' is nothing more than a 'familiar point'. It raises the possibility that with some mental dexterity and a little effort, it may be possible to alter one's 'normal' or 'familiar' level of happiness. In terms of this study, the NonH+ mean happiness is 6.77 and the H+ mean is 8.29. Thus, inquiring into the mental strategies of the H+ group and applying them to the NonH+ group could conceivably result in an increase in the 'familiar point' of 22.5%. As argued in earlier chapters, the knock-on behavioural effects of such an affective increase would achieve significant business results.

However, the notions of 'effort', 'plasticity' and 'set-point' are also applicable to organizational culture, and for 'culture' one should read 'people'. Organizations that flourish have developed a 'culture of abundance' (Cameron, 2013) which builds the collective capabilities of all members. It is characterized by the presence of numerous positive energisers throughout the system, including embedded virtuous practices, adaptive learning, meaningfulness, profound purpose, engaged members and positive leadership.

Achor (2013) uses the term 'franchising success' to introduce the notion of something that is simple and easy to copy. Using the example of the '10/5 principle', supplanted from the Ritz-Carlton hotel chain to an American hospital, Achor suggests the simple notion of smiling at anyone who comes within 10 feet and making eye contact and giving a positive greeting to anyone within 5 feet is an example of 'franchising success'. And while sceptics might point to the 10/5 principle being cosmetic, false or, indeed, overly American in tone, Achor reports a different reality. When the behaviour becomes contagious it changes the reality and the feeling of the hospital. Achor reports that staff were smiling and this was 'franchised' to patients and visitors. Crucially, this new behaviour became normalised, embedded in the hospital's culture.

Just as the key to individual flourishing is to understand and put effort into functioning at our best, so it is with organizations. The traditional organizational focus has been on deficit management, eliminating weaknesses and solving problems. This is important, but flourishing organizations must go further and, according to Cameron (2013), they must focus on what is 'positively deviant', i.e., what is 'outstanding', what is already working and what is world class. In line with Cooperrider's (2005) work on Appreciative Inquiry, this provides a dramatic shift of focus.

Cameron (2013) suggests that organizational culture refers to taken-for-granted values, expectations, collective memories and implicit meanings that define an organization's core identity and behaviour. One suspects that these taken-for-granted values become the organization's 'set-point'. Once again, if, for 'culture' one reads 'people', this organizational set-point is nothing more than something that has become familiar. 'Culture' reflects the prevailing ideology that people carry inside their heads, providing unwritten and usually unspoken guidelines for what is acceptable and what is not. The wider point of creating an organizational culture conducive to flourishing is that an organization cannot 'force' an employee to be engaged. Thus, by implication, the suggestion is that the organization alone cannot create a culture of engagement because 'engagement' is partly an internal concept. Therefore, if push motives such as 'forcing' are out, it may be that pull motives such as 'allowing' or 'encouraging' are in.

Reflecting on 8 years of study and taking the learning in the round, it is difficult not to have a nagging doubt about the upsurge of interest in the science of positive psychology. The business imperative is strong and this may be the source of my doubt. It could be that positive psychology is the right philosophy but for the wrong reasons. Organizational behaviourists are using the science of happiness and well-being to create workplaces that are engaging and fun, where people can experience a sense of meaning and value. The underlying public sector mantra that lies behind the science is that by creating these conditions, employees will therefore work harder. In austere times, maintaining levels of service with fewer staff is the cost-efficient Utopia of squeezing 'more from less'. And while this makes perfect sense at one level, treating people well because it is good for the bottom line is, perhaps, the wrong reason for treating them well.

In the recommendations, I spoke of a more enlightened way of conducting organizational behaviour. Enlightened organizations may be the ones who take a leap of faith and conspire to treat employees well because that is absolutely the right thing to do.

This research points to happiness being a conflux of genetics, circumstances and internal strategies. According to Lyubormirsky (2007), the ‘circumstances’ element of the happiness pie is a rather insignificant 10%. Therefore, tweaking the structure, altering the appraisal system, or providing gym membership and a dress-down Friday, are all having a tiny effect on individual happiness. Much more salient are the mental habits that employees choose (or do not choose) to bring to work. This points to organizational culture spreading in a more viral way, because happiness and its contagion is about sustaining new thinking and behaviours, rather than processes.

Rather than command and control, this is more about influencing people to *want* to change. Statistical analysis suggests the data for this study is reliable. Thus, I can confidently state that a sense of personal attitudinal choice stands as a central tenet of flourishing. The organization may well engender this sense of personal choice if it is seen to be doing things for the right reasons. Therefore, the focus naturally shifts towards ‘meaning’. The H+ community feels a very strong sense of meaning and purpose which is reflected in flourishing behaviours. The hyper-dyadic nature of affective contagion means that other employees will ‘catch’ the new feelings and behaviours. This points towards a paradigm shift away from culture change being a ‘top down’ or even a ‘bottom up’ process, towards an ‘inside-out’ phenomenon.

There is a dichotomy at the heart of positive psychology. The science is both supremely complex and effortlessly simple. The pig iron quotation that heralded the start of this chapter seems somewhat disingenuous towards the pig-iron worker. It is perfectly possible to couch the subject in such academic terms so as to lose the average worker. Yet, at its heart, the constituent parts of happiness remain simple enough for everyone to understand. The concept of ‘consciously choosing a positive attitude’ and ‘making an effort to do so’ seem simple enough. It may be the lack of cognisance that an attitudinal choice is available or the subsequent effort involved in sustaining a positive attitude that is more problematic.

It may well be that some occupations are inherently more purposeful and carry greater meaning. However, this report suggests that if the aforementioned pig iron worker chooses to be positive and engages in positive mental strategies, if s/he can find meaning in their work and have challenging tasks, stretching personal goals and, moreover, if handling pig iron plays to their strengths, then engagement is more likely. The duality of ‘employee’ and ‘organization’ to create the state of flourishing is not only co-creation but also co-responsibility.

In terms of context, this research project was almost cancelled on the grounds of ‘right research, wrong time’. The head of organization B1, who turned out to be a strong champion of this thesis, stated somewhat sardonically, in a meeting prior to phase 1; *‘This is an interesting time to be measuring motivation.’* Her point was that the challenges of the 2008 banking crisis and the subsequent knock-on effects of austerity would make happiness and engagement more challenging than ever. Bearing in mind the finding that flourishing employees deploy more strategies and work those strategies harder it could be that conducting this research in such challenging circumstances was exactly the right time.

It could be that in trying times the key to flourishing is to try even harder.



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# Appendix A: Basic Happiness & Energy Survey

## Part 1

Name:

Organisation/Department:

Town/City:

Email:

Age:

20-29	<input type="checkbox"/>
30-39	<input type="checkbox"/>
40-49	<input type="checkbox"/>
50-59	<input type="checkbox"/>
60-69	<input type="checkbox"/>

Gender: Male/Female

Religion:

Buddhism	<input type="checkbox"/>
Christianity	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hindu	<input type="checkbox"/>
Islam	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sikh	<input type="checkbox"/>
None	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

On a scale of **happiness** where 1 is 'not at all', 5 is 'reasonably' and 10 is 'extremely', where would you say your natural level is?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

On a scale of **energy** where 1 is 'no energy', 5 'reasonably energetic', and 10 'bursting with energy', where would you say your natural level is?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

On a scale of happiness where 1 is 'not at all', 5 is 'reasonably' and 10 is 'extremely', where would you say your **work colleagues** are?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

How happy were you 5 years ago?

Much less happy than I am today	<input type="checkbox"/>
A bit less happy than I am today	<input type="checkbox"/>

About the same as I am today  
 A bit happier than I am today  
 Much happier than I am today


If there is a significant difference between your happiness levels 5 years ago and now, please explain why

How happy do you expect to be in 5 years time?

Much less happy than I am today  
 A bit less happy than I am today  
 About the same as I am today  
 A bit happier than I am today  
 Much happier than I am today


If there is a significant difference between your happiness levels 5 years ago and now, please explain why

Briefly, what do you think would make you happier at work?

Who makes you feel great at work? Briefly, what do they do that makes you feel so good?

Is there anyone in your workplace whom you consider too happy? If so, who and why?

## Part 2

### Oxford Happiness Questionnaire

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>I don't feel particularly pleased with the way I am</b>	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
<b>I am intensely interested in other people</b>	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>I feel that life is very rewarding</b>	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
<b>I have very warm feelings towards almost everyone</b>	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
<b>I rarely wake up feeling rested</b>	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
<b>I am not particularly optimistic about the future</b>	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
<b>I find most things amusing</b>	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
<b>I am always committed and involved</b>	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
<b>Life is good</b>	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
<b>I don't think that the world is a good place</b>	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
<b>I laugh a lot</b>	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
<b>I am well satisfied about everything in my life</b>	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
<b>I don't think I look attractive</b>	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
<b>There is a gap between what I would like to do and what I have done</b>	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>I am very happy</b>	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
<b>I find beauty in some things</b>	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
<b>I always have a cheerful effect on others</b>	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
<b>I can fit in everything I want to</b>	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
<b>I feel that I am not especially in control of my life</b>	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
<b>I feel able to take anything on</b>	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
<b>I feel fully mentally alert</b>	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
<b>I often experience joy and elation</b>	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
<b>I do not find it easy to make decisions</b>	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
<b>I do not have a particular sense of meaning and purpose in my life</b>	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
<b>I feel I have a great deal of energy</b>	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
<b>I usually have a good influence on events</b>	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6



	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>I do not have fun with other people</b>	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
<b>I don't feel particularly healthy</b>	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6
<b>I do not have particularly happy memories of the past</b>	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

## **Appendix B: Reflections on Happiness Survey**

1. Name:
2. Organisation:
3. Your job title:
4. Describe your job, what you do and how long you've been doing it:
5. Please read the descriptions below and decide how you feel about your work. Would you describe what you do as a 'job', 'career' or a 'calling':
  - a) A 'job' is something that you have to do. It can feel like a chore but it pays the bills
  - b) A 'career' is where there is advancement and progression. You're invested in your work and want to do well
  - c) A 'calling' is when your work is totally fulfilling. You feel you are contributing to the greater good. It draws on your personal strengths and gives your life meaning and purpose
6. Is what you currently do your 'dream job'? i.e., is it something you always wanted to do?
7. Why do you think that you're happier than most?
8. What do you think are the signs that you're happier and more upbeat than most? i.e., why do you think colleagues have nominated you?
9. Is 'happiness' something you think about?
10. Would you describe yourself as happy at home too?
11. Have you always been positive and upbeat? If not, can you pinpoint when you became happier?
12. Were you happy and upbeat in your previous jobs? Please explain your answer
13. Would you describe your parents as happy and positive?
14. Your colleagues are doing similar jobs, in the same environment and on the same pay grade. But you seem to be happier. Why do you think that is?
15. What drags you down?
16. What motivates you at work?

## Feelings at work

For the past week, please indicate the approximate percentage of time you have felt the following emotions while you were working in your job. Everyone has a lot of overlapping feelings, so you will have a total for all the items that is greater than 100% of the time:

	I have felt:	Approximate % of time
1	Enthusiastic	
2	Nervous	
3	Calm	
4	Depressed	
5	Joyful	
6	Anxious	
7	Relaxed	
8	Dejected	
9	Inspired	
10	Tense	
11	Laid-back	
12	Despondent	
13	Excited	
14	Worried	
15	At ease	
16	Hopeless	

**Appendix C: Intentional Strategies Survey**

Intentional strategy	Frequency of use										
	Not used at all			Moderate use				Used frequently			
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. I am grateful											
2. I choose to be positive											
3. I reframe things positively											
4. I don't watch much news											
5. I make an effort to be positive											
6. I play to my strengths											
7. I set goals											
8. Happiness comes largely from my religious faith											
9. I don't dwell on bad stuff											
10. I give myself a pep talk											
11. I learned to be positive through adversity											
12. I am positive because I want others to feel good											
13. I learned to be positive in my early years											
14. I am positive because I didn't want to be like my parents											
15. I listen to happy music											
16. I watch feel-good TV & films											
17. I think about people who are less fortunate											

