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**'Unhappy News': The Construction of Happiness as a
Social Problem in UK Newspapers**

PhD Thesis

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Abstract

Interest in happiness has seen an unprecedented growth in both popular and scholarly writing, in the mass media, and has been institutionalised into the policy and practice of a wide array of institutions. Both implicit and explicit in this rising interest is the notion that happiness represents a serious problem requiring the intervention of a range of professional and political powers. The rapid and widespread affirmation that claims about happiness have received warrants critical examination.

This study examines the construction of happiness as a social problem in four major UK newspapers, from the perfunctory evocations of the past to the present-day project of redefining the idiom as the legitimate domain of expertise and campaigns to bring it to the forefront of public debate. With theoretical tools drawn from the constructionist study of social problems and methodological tools garnered from qualitative media analysis, it examines the roles played by various claimsmakers in the construction of the problem and the rhetoric mobilised in support of their cause. It offers important insights into the ascendance of happiness onto the public agenda and identifies some of the underlying cultural currents on which claims about happiness draw and which make it a particularly powerful idiom through which to conceptualise contemporary social problems.

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1 Introduction

In recent years, happiness has seen an exponential growth in interest across a broad range of disciplines, within the media at large, and has become a widely affirmed and oft-stated goal of public policy and state intervention. The shelves of bookstores are stocked with publications with titles like *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science* (Layard, 2005), *The How of Happiness* (Lyubomirsky, 2007), *The Happiness Hypothesis* (Haidt, 2007), and *The Age of Absurdity: Why Modern Life Makes it Hard to be Happy* (Foley, 2010). It is not only a public fascination, as academic journals are filled with studies on the subject, from the 'economics of happiness' to a new sub-discipline, 'positive psychology' announced in 1999, and the founding of several dedicated journals including the *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *The International Journal of Happiness and Development* and the *Journal of Positive Psychology*. News media in the United Kingdom (UK) have variously proclaimed the existence of an 'epidemic of unhappiness' (Ahuja, *The Times*: 2004; Leith, *The Daily Telegraph*: 2004; Laurance, *The Independent*: 2005; Griffiths, *The Sunday Times*: 2007), and that unhappiness is 'Britain's worst social problem' (Laurance, *The Independent*: 2005).¹ It was not long before the speeches by politicians and public figures, like David Cameron, who for example proclaimed that, 'we have the unhappiest children in the developed world' (Cameron, 2007), became littered with a new concern for happiness. That such discussions were not a passing fad is evidenced by the fact that relatively quickly policymakers began to not simply affirm, but act upon happiness claims. Some of the more prominent results in the UK have been the introduction in 2010 of an Office of National Statistics (ONS) initiative to measure and track happiness, or 'subjective wellbeing,' and the founding of a Cabinet Office 'Behavioural Insight Team' in 2010 heavily influenced by American academics Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein, whose influential 2008 publication *Nudge* advocated 'nudging' people toward decisions more conducive to 'health, wealth and happiness.'

¹As chapter 4 on methodology will describe in more detail, this study is based largely on an Nvivo database created from a sample of news media reports on happiness gathered from the Nexis (news) portion of the LexisNexis online archives. Given the large number of such sources used throughout, in-text citations of news media articles are hereafter given as 'Author [of newspaper article], *Newspaper*: Year' in order to clearly specify in-text from which newspaper each quotation has been drawn and minimise the complexity of the scheme for differentiating between articles produced by the same author in the same year in varying sources. Page numbers are not included as Nexis does not specify the particular pages on which portions of text were originally printed in their electronic reproductions of print media stories. Citation information offered by Nexis is contained in the reference list.

Emerging from these developments is the conclusion that happiness, or a lack thereof, has become a significant problem faced by Western societies that we would ignore only at our individual and collective peril. Given this huge and growing interest, it would seem self-evident that we are indeed faced by an 'epidemic of unhappiness' whose solutions must necessarily be broached by those with the power to intervene, act, and make a positive change in the world. Backed by prolific scientific research, it seems that the key to happiness may finally lie within the grasp of humanity. Richard Layard, a prominent advocate of happiness science, has asserted:

We want our rulers to make the world better by their actions, and we want to do the same ourselves. [...] So it is time to reassert the noble philosophy of the Enlightenment. In this view, every human being wants to be happy, and everybody counts equally. It follows that progress is measured by the overall scale of human happiness and misery. And the right action is the one that produces the greatest happiness in the world and (especially) the least misery. I can think of no nobler ideal (Layard, *The Guardian*: 2009).

Amid such inspirational and stirring rhetoric, it is difficult to imagine how or why one might question or oppose activities designed to increase happiness guided by the empirically tested results of happiness research. Indeed, as this study will show, this is part of the reason why it has become so popular. Yet, in order to grasp the significance now accorded to happiness in public debate, it is necessary to step back and critically examine its existence as a social, rather than solely natural or empirical, phenomenon. This study therefore examines the evolution of uses of happiness in public discourses from the turn of the previous century to the present-day problematisation of the concept. It offers an alternative account of the rise of happiness to the forefront of public debate through an analysis of the activities of the advocates who have promoted it and an elucidation of the core themes and constant repetitions in public discussions of the issue. To do so, the study uses major UK newspapers as an institution of daily life that specialises in 'orchestrating everyday consciousness,' where social meanings are created and contested, reality is 'certified' as reality, and where such certifications define and delimit the terms of effective opposition (Gitlin, 2003:2). Through this analysis, it attempts to show how discourses that speak in the language of universals may be thought of as historically contingent, and more specifically, how an apparently positive focus on human strengths nonetheless affirms a morality of low expectations and implicitly underscores prevailing cultural assumptions of the diminished individual.

1.1 The Vocabulary of Happiness

Numerous terms have been used in both public and academic debates, the most prominent of which have been happiness, wellbeing, eudaimonia, and more recently, flourishing. Happiness was chosen as the centre around which to structure the sampling strategy and subsequent analysis for a number of reasons. First, happiness was the predominant rhetorical vehicle through which claims about the existence of a new social problem initially made their way onto the public stage. To this day it maintains its popular resonance, even as many advocates attempt to gravitate to new idioms. Second, there is no consensus on 'correct' terminologies and although public discussions often do attempt to pin concepts to definitions, terms continue to be used interchangeably with the same definitions frequently applied to different words. Nor is there any single agreed upon definition, but rather certain terminologies and attempts to define are suffused with particular rhetorical offerings as well as their own sets of shortcomings, as chapter 7 will show in more detail. Finally, although associated keywords were also investigated, happiness was chosen as the primary keyword in order to focus the analysis on its development and change over time, with the preference for new idioms in these discussions reflecting shifting emphases and meanings while nonetheless retaining the core features of a single discernible problematisation. For the sake of simplicity, happiness is the predominant term used throughout this thesis, but it is more accurate to refer to this study as an examination of the problematisation of happiness and its associated vocabularies. These concerns and 'core features' of the problematisation form the focus of chapter 7.

1.2 Two Approaches to Social Problems

The wealth of literature on happiness produced over the last decade alone reveals that there are many ways that one might go about studying happiness. Chapter 2 examines some of the major concerns that dominate studies of happiness. However, what is of primary interest here is neither happiness in the abstract, nor its deeper, 'true,' or philosophical meanings, nor its uses or pursuits in the everyday lives of lay individuals. Rather, what is of primary interest is the problematisation of happiness—that is, the rise and subsequent success of claims that have asserted that happiness constitutes a serious problem for society, that individuals and governments have been mistaken in their pursuits either of happiness or other goals, and that these and a host of related problems can be ameliorated through harmoniously attuning activities and policies to the findings of happiness science.

Conceptualisations of social problems may be understood as falling into two broad philosophical perspectives: realist, or 'objectivist' approaches, and their 'subjectivist' counterparts (also called constructionist or interpretivist approaches). Put simply, the former attempt to describe social problems as objectively troubling conditions and offer explanations for how and why they occur, while the latter attempt to describe how some conditions come to be conceived of as social problems, and to account for how they are constructed or 'put together' (Clarke, 2001:3; Swift and Callahan, 2009:28). These approaches are not monolithic and may vary greatly in terms of their levels of analysis and sociological outlook. Constructionist perspectives can differ significantly in terms of their underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions, while realist perspectives range in focus from the individual biological, or even genetic, level, to the micro, meso, and macro social levels (Hacking, 1999; Clarke, 2001:5). These two perspectives are introduced below in order to highlight the underlying assumptions implicit in dominant discussions of happiness as a social problem toward the present and the distinct offerings of the constructionist point of view.

1.2.1 *The Objectivist Approach*

Superficially, the meaning of the term 'social problem' seems self-evident; they are simply harmful conditions that affect society (Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 2009:150). In everyday life, people are confronted with a wealth of information about new social problems, their causes and potential solutions. Conditions like crime, poverty, racism, and overpopulation, seem to pose serious threats to society, regardless of what people may know or think about them (Best, 2004:14-15). Such an understanding reflects an objectivist orientation, which has been the historically dominant approach to the study of social problems and which remains among the most popular means of organising the teaching of social problems in introductory courses and textbooks on the subject (Mauss, 1992:1916-1921; Best, 2008:4; Best, 2004:15).² It is also the dominant way with which information is presented in the mass media whose ubiquity provides a potentially endless loop of information about troubling conditions. Taking the existence of the

² Most modern introductory textbooks to the Sociology of social problems do of course draw attention to different and conflicting perspectives, including subjectivist approaches, but remain organised around chapters dealing with prominent social issues at the time of publication. For instance, a recent textbook by Mooney et al. (2012:2-3), indicates the complexity of defining social problems and settles on a combined subjectivist and objectivist definition: 'A social problem is a social condition that a segment of society views as harmful to members of society and in need of remedy' and is organised around wellbeing, inequality and globalization with little discussion of why those particular topics are taken as representative of social problems or their theoretical relationship to each other.

problem as their starting point, objectivist approaches are typically concerned with uncovering, explaining, and providing solutions to social problems (Clarke, 2001:4).

Although this approach takes many forms in practice and encompasses many different and even conflicting theoretical orientations, Loseke (2003:164-165) suggests that they share a number of commonalities. In addition to taking the examination of objectively harmful conditions as their starting point, they also tend to hold particular ideas about what sorts of conditions are intolerable and what causes them (Loseke, 2003:164). For example, a definition of social problems stemming from a conflict perspective states: 'The distribution of power in society is the key to understanding these social problems. The powerless, because they are dominated by the powerful, are likely to be thwarted in achieving their basic needs (sustenance, security, self-esteem, and productivity). In contrast the interests of the powerful are served' (Eitzen et al, 2008:12). Visions of the social world embedded in such views can range from individual biological, psychological or genetic causes of deviance to sources of conflict in micro-social group interactions (peers, family), meso-social subcultures, geographic localities or social institutions, and finally, large scale macro-social causes like socio-economic divisions, oppression, and domination (Clarke, 2001:5-6). Finally, many people who approach the study of social phenomena as objectively problematic may present themselves as 'experts,' offering an image of how the world should work and 'prognostic frames' for how troublesome conditions and behaviours should be changed (Loseke, 2003:165).

1.2.1.1 From Social Pathology to the Pathological Society

Further continuity amongst disparate approaches to understanding society's troubling conditions is evident when considering the historical development of their study. While discovering social problems and campaigning to bring about their solutions may seem a timeless human pursuit, the idea that some problems are not natural, if unfortunate, parts of life to be endured, but rather problems resolvable through the rational application of human reason, has relatively recent origins. Impressed by the accomplishments of the Enlightenment, nineteenth century social reformers sought to apply the scientific approach to the problems of society, modelling the practice of Sociology after developments in the natural sciences (Rubington and Weinberg, 2003:15; Clarke, 2001:4). Early social theorists rooted their analyses in visions of society as a biological organism, its problems representing impediments to the proper functioning of the whole. Spencer famously ruminated upon the complex structures of the body-politic—from the 'excess of nutrition over waste' in the circulatory system (profit and commodity circulation) to the

'balancing' centre of the brain (parliament) (Spencer, 1891:290, 303). From this perspective, defective arrangements or individuals were seen as degradations, degenerations or 'pathologies' afflicting the otherwise healthy social body. Thus, an early textbook informed students, 'Defect is an incident of evolution' and that the 'biologist prepares part of the data for sociology' (Henderson, 1901:12). Later social pathologists would locate the causes of social problems in incorrect or ineffective socialisation and the inculcation of erroneous values. As Rubington and Weinberg (2003:18) describe, 'In this perspective's "tender" mood, the people who contribute to the social problem are viewed as "sick"; in its tough mood, they are viewed as "criminal."'

Declining as a theoretical approach to social problems toward mid-century, the vestiges of social pathology can nonetheless be discerned in contemporary objectivist accounts of social problems in the mass media and, as Jamrozik and Nocella (1998:18) assert, in the 'field[s] of social control'—public policy, administration and 'service delivery apparatus' which maintain a tendency to explain deviance and non-compliance in social psychological, biological and behavioural terms. As we shall see throughout this thesis, it is conceptualisations such as these that dominate objectivist accounts of happiness as a social problem. However, the classical notion of society as a healthy organism underlying early objectivist accounts has fallen out of favour, and yet its underlying assumptions have not so much perished as they have been transformed.

Early treatments of social problems came under criticism for what Mills (1943:166, 179) characterised as lacking any 'level of abstraction to knit them together' and as essentially 'propaganda for conformity to those norms and traits ideally associated with small-town, middle-class milieux.' Yet the guiding ideal of such conceptualisations had nonetheless been a progressive notion of society as evolving toward greater rationality and freedom. The Enlightenment had given the initially religious notion of a linear ascent to a 'utopian endpoint' a finally secular form and 'the ethos of perfectionism became inseparable from the claims of reason' (Alexander, 1990:16). Theorists saw social problems as obstacles to the 'forward march of progress' (albeit toward what amounted to fairly narrowly defined interests) that could be rationally understood and rooted out (Rubington and Weinberg, 2003:16-17). However, the twentieth century saw fundamental challenges and ultimately changes to this underlying ethos so that '[t]he very possibility that there is a higher point, an 'end' towards which society should strive, has come to be thrown into doubt' (Alexander, 1990:16, 26). The 1960s counterculture began to see society itself as 'sick,' and analyses of problems began to locate the causes of pathology in society rather than the individual. As Rubington and Weinberg (2003:19) describe, contemporary approaches are 'indignant about the defects of society and are less optimistic in their prognosis. The most

indignant see societal pathology as total, spreading, and likely to dehumanize the entire population.'

Thus, there is a sense of reversal in which problematic conditions and people once thought of as pathological outgrowths of an otherwise healthy social order are now seen as potentially 'infected' by a sick or 'pathological' society. Writing on contemporary health promotion, Lupton (1995:48) describes how public health debates frequently represent the individual as 'distinct from the social' and society as 'having the potential of intruding into the individual.' Social problems are increasingly expressed through the language of health and illness, with ill-health conceptualised as 'a symptom of the pathology of civilization' and a 'sign that modern life is inherently damaging to health' (Lupton, 1995:51). Like the approaches of the past which placed a high degree of importance on the individual deviant as bearing responsibility for non-conformity, and in spite of the ostensible indictment of social structures, more recent approaches also tend to place the individual at the heart of discussions of social problems. According to Rubington and Weinberg (2003:19):

The recent variant [of social pathology], which tends to regard the society rather than its non-conforming members as 'sick,' has its roots in the Rousseauian view of human nature. Individuals are good; their institutions, on the other hand, are bad. Yet, even the modern pathologists see the remedy to 'sick' institutions as a change in people's values. Thus, according to this perspective, the only real solution to social problems is moral education.

However, it may be more accurate to say that rather than goodness, the defining characteristic of the human in such conceptualisations has become 'vulnerability.' Cultural narratives underpinning discussions of social problems toward the present implicitly underscore a notion of the human being as vulnerable to social contagion, both from the pressures and stresses of the external world and from the influences of others, in need of constant therapeutic help and guidance. Gradually, a shift has occurred from earlier narratives which emphasised qualities like rationality or resilience toward a narrative of vulnerability in the early twenty-first century (Furedi, 2007:235). As Pupavac (2001:360) observes, 'The 19th-century archetype of the robust risk-taking, self-made man is the antithesis of the risk-averse 21st century's exemplar of the vulnerable victim whose actions and environment are to be governed by the precautionary principle.'

In a study conducted by Frankenberg et al. (2001) attempting to investigate how childhood illness and injury were experienced and managed by, as the authors initially assumed, the small numbers of children affected by them as compared to unaffected children, the authors quickly learned that

such a distinction would not be possible. Rather, not only were all children encountered in their ethnography seen as vulnerable, but also the adults involved appeared to consider themselves and others as vulnerable as well. Yet, for the authors, the notion of vulnerability was difficult to pin down, appearing not as a particular identifiable phenomenon the same in all contexts, nor as an 'embedded' or 'embodied' characteristic of particular children, but rather as a free floating social category (Frankenberg et al., 2000:591-592). As the authors put it:

It is social either to the extent that whole categories of particular individuals, such as children, are considered by definition to be self-evident candidates for incorporation into such a status; or it is social to the extent that the degree of vulnerability of individual children is considered to be precipitated by and through the actions of others, usually, adults, whose malevolence, ignorance, or failure to protect and nurture (indeed whose own vulnerability) has brought about the vulnerability of the child (Frankenberg et al., 2000:589, emphasis removed).

Thus the concept of vulnerability works as a cultural metaphor, a resource drawn upon by a range of parties to characterise individuals and groups and to describe an increasingly diverse array of human experience (Furedi, 2005:77). According to Frankenberg et al., vulnerability connotes:

[...] a lack of realistic agency based on a misunderstanding, or more accurately complete lack of understanding of harmful settings, and situations, that finally appears to demand benevolent others to provide a protective cordon sanitaire within which the damaging effects of the vulnerability can be contained. In brief, in this framework, vulnerability appears through the demonstration of a lack of worldliness and the possession of an indiscriminating and individual naiveté in conducting the tough business of life (2000:589).

It is a view of the human condition that emphasises fragility and 'casts serious doubt about the capacity of the self to manage new challenges and to cope with adversity' (Furedi, 2005:76). 'As a cultural metaphor, vulnerability is used to highlight the claim that people and their communities lack the emotional and psychological resources necessary to deal with change and make choices' (Furedi, 2005:76).

It is also a potentially powerful rhetorical weapon in campaigns about new social problems, acting as a 'substantial goad to very particular forms of social and political action' (Frankenberg et al., 2001:591). Best (1999) describes how since the 1960s there has been an increasing emphasis upon victimisation in claims about new social problems. After its introduction in the early 1970s, the 'catchy' rhetoric of 'blaming the victim' quickly caught on as a means of characterising not just the underclass victims of unjust social structures, but an increasingly broad array of people. Through an emphasis upon the suffering of victims—'vulnerable, respectable innocents, exploited by more powerful, deviant strangers'—concern for new social problems crossed traditional

political boundaries (Best, 1999:98). According to Best (1999:99): 'Part of its appeal may have been its ambiguity; it let one identify victims without necessarily blaming the villains.'

However, the upshot of the turn toward focusing on the vulnerability of victims of a pathological society has been a tendency away from images of human beings as autonomous rational subjects able to overcome problems through the power of reason. As Pupavac (2001:360) observes, 'The idea of [the] autonomous rational subject is viewed as unrepresentative of the majority of the world's population.' For example, in David Brooks' (2011) bestseller, *The Social Animal*, the author details the disappointments of the previous century's attempts to deal with social problems, from the inability to control the boom and bust cycles of capitalism to educational under-achievement, and concludes that the roots of these failures lie in an over-reliance upon human reason. By contrast, Brooks suggests that more emphasis must be placed on integrating knowledge about the power of unconscious drives, on how 'genes shape individual lives, how brain chemistry works in particular cases, how family structure and cultural patterns can influence development in specific terms' with the goal of achieving 'human flourishing' and a different sort of 'success story' that emphasises not material gain, but 'the role of the inner mind' (Brooks, 2011:x-xvi). Perceptions of vulnerability and a focus on victims are a corollary of the decline of beliefs about the perfectibility of society and the rise of the ethos of 'no alternative' (Furedi, 2005:81). How problems are conceptualised also influences how their solutions are broached. Thus, it is little surprising that such accounts, while singling out social structures as 'villains,' nonetheless tend to produce a disproportionate focus on the life and mind of the individual in their proposals for change.

As this thesis will show, accounts of happiness as a social problem predominantly display these trends in discussions of major social issues toward the present, focusing upon the vulnerability and susceptibility of individuals and groups to the negative influences of pathological institutions and social structures.

1.2.2 *The Subjectivist Approach*

The ideas detailed thus far form the starting point, and conversely, the point of departure for the ensuing analysis. They are the starting point because treatments of happiness as an objective problem which causes objective suffering apart from our conceptualisations of it are considered here as 'claims' made by 'claimsmakers' that furnish the data for analysis. They are also the point of departure because although there is nothing inherently wrong with the notion that social

problems can be solved through the rational application of human reason, shifting emphases on particular types of knowledge have produced the opposite effect and have tended to produce a static vision of society and human potential. By contrast, rather than seeing society and the individual as separate parts vulnerable to mutual contamination, the subjectivist approach to happiness adopted by this study attempts to give an account of the 'the symbiotic relationship between the social and the individual' and to recognise that 'the subject is constituted in and through social processes, and subjects, in turn, influence the character of the social' (Lupton, 1995:48).

The 'subjectivist' or alternatively, constructionist or interpretivist approach to social problems initially arose out of a dissatisfaction with some of the shortcomings of earlier objectivist accounts. Objectivist understandings faced at least three challenges. Firstly, as described above, numerous diverse issues are often grouped together under the label of 'social problems' with little uniting them at the level of theoretical abstraction. Second, ideas of social problems have changed over time and few attempts had been made to account for the fact that conditions deemed acceptable or which went altogether unnoticed in different times and places could become serious social issues at others. Finally, while investigations of problematic conditions are seemingly inexhaustible, the concept of the 'social problem' in and of itself had generated little in the way of general theory (Best, 2004:15-16). Becker's objections in the early 1960s to sociological explanations that define 'deviance as the infraction of some agreed-upon rule' and which proceed to 'ask who breaks the rules, and to search for the factors in their personalities, and life situations that might account for the infractions' (Becker, 1963:8) encapsulated many of these arguments (Clarke, 2001:7). As he famously claimed, deviance is not universal but subjective: 'The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label' (Becker, 1963:9).

Of course, the subjectivist approach takes many different forms and claims many different intellectual lineages. One of the first books to introduce the concept of 'social construction' in English was that of Berger and Luckmann (1966:78), who wrote that 'man is capable of producing a world that he then experiences as something other than a human product.' However, approaching the study of social problems through the language of 'claims' and 'claimsmakers' situates this analysis within the tradition of social constructionism initially developed by Spector and Kitsuse (2001 [1977]). Specifically, the view of social problems adopted throughout this thesis draws on later developments of the paradigm known as 'contextual constructionism' (Best, 1993), which maintains a 'social dualist' metaphysic (Heap, 1995). That is, it does not deny that certain

phenomena are 'real' at the same time as they are 'constructed.' Rather, it views society as a 'matrix of meaning' and accords a 'central role to the process of constructing, producing and circulating meanings' and to a recognition that, 'we cannot grasp reality (or empirical phenomena) in a direct and unmediated way' (Clarke, 2001:6).³ The theoretical and methodological tools derived from this tradition are more fully articulated in chapter 3.

Wholly objectivist accounts of social problems can present a myopic vision of the social world about which a fully social story remains to be told, accounting not only for the social factors that lead into problematic situations, but the role of human actors in defining those situations as problematic and bringing them to the attention of others. Dominant constructions can quickly become ossified, 'taken for granted' realities about the nature of the world and what can be done to change it. These constructions are not simply words; 'truth claims come true in practice' as they become embedded in institutional arrangements and social practices (Clarke, 2011:12). It is therefore crucially important to ask critical questions about which issues become important at particular times and in the ways they do and the possible repercussions of such conceptualisations.

The first courses in positive psychology began to be taught in the United States as early as the 1990s and would later spread to universities across the world. It was not long before textbooks began to appear acknowledging the importance of attending to issues of happiness and psychological wellbeing. A recent textbook on social problems by Mooney et al. (2012) informs readers that the increased importance they have accorded wellbeing in the new edition is due to the availability of new studies, particularly relating to the wellbeing of students in universities; but is increased importance always correlated with the increased severity of the problem? Although objectivist approaches have their merits, they do not tell us why particular problems and particular claims about them come to dominate. If public awareness does not correspond to the severity of a problem, what other factors can account for the sudden visibility of an issue? Further, it is likely that many people hold ideas about the meaning of happiness, and yet

³ Poststructuralist approaches to discourse have their uses and there are numerous parallels with the approach taken here. However, the conceptualisation of discourse as something akin to ideology in the Marxian sense of the word seems more fruitful to the present study. However, it is not a matter of the 'bourgeoisie' consciously 'duping' the masses through an inculcation of false consciousness, as is sometimes casually understood, but rather some ideas reflect a more subtle tendency to view the world of every epoch as the natural and inevitable reflection of human nature, both material and divine. Further, as Lukacs (1971:10-11) put it: 'For the [ruling class] it is a matter of life and death to understand its own system of production in terms of eternally valid categories: it must think of capitalism as being predestined to eternal survival by the eternal laws of nature and reason.'

particular claims about its nature tend to be repeated while others fall away. Why do some interpretations tend to be favoured while other possibilities fall by the wayside or are not mentioned at all? The results of the research detailed hereafter suggest that a wholly objectivist approach focusing only on the contributing factors and rates of happiness in society is not sufficient to explain why it became a significant concern at this particular time.

1.3 Research Questions and Structure of Thesis

We have seen how objectivist approaches tend to conjure forth particular sets of questions. How many people are affected? What are the characteristics of the problem and its problematic populations? What are the causes of the problem and how can it be solved? From the constructionist perspective, the answers to these questions do not give an adequate account of the issue, but rather form the data with which claims about the problem are built. In order to more fully grasp the existence of the problem as a social phenomenon, the constructionist approach asks different sets of questions. Consequently, the research questions that guide this study are as follows:

1. Who says that happiness is a problem? That is, who are the 'claimsmakers'?
2. What sort of problem do they say it is?
3. How do constructs evolve?
4. How do they come to prevail?
5. What are their consequences?

These questions are important because, as previously mentioned, our understanding of the world is always mediated by language, and thus a fully social account of happiness as a social problem requires that one ask how meaning is attributed to the world in particular ways at particular points in time. Claimsmakers are not passive, they interact with each other and adapt accordingly. Nor are claims just words; they have consequences for how people conceive of themselves, their possibilities and how they act in and on the world. In seeking to ask different questions, this study offers an alternative construction, a reconstruction of happiness claims which potentially reveals a more fluid reality behind apparently universal appeals. It also warns about the potential for an apparently light-hearted, uncontroversial and positive rhetoric to both resonate with and reaffirm existing cultural beliefs about the limitations of progress and of the ability of human beings to adequately manage their material and emotional lives.

In order to respond to these questions, the thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 2 explores the driving forces behind the 'science of happiness,' identifying a concern with wealth as a key preoccupation. It attempts to place these concerns into historical context and highlights the need for a systematic account of the construction of happiness as a social problem. It also gives insight into the therapeutic system of meaning and depoliticisation as elements of the broader socio-historical context into which claims about happiness emerged and from which they draw much of their meaning and rhetorical power. Chapter 3 explores and defends the application of the constructionist perspective specifically to social problems and lays out the theoretical and conceptual tools necessary to understand the problem of happiness as the product of collective definition. Chapter 4 describes the methodology used throughout the study, which logically follows from its theory. Chapter 5 takes a historical view of happiness in newspaper discourses, revealing a dramatic shift in public usage of the term over the past century. It offers a periodisation of the development and direction of claimsmaking activities through the 'prehistory' of the problem to the present day and describes the emergence of some of the core themes that are more fully explored in later chapters. Chapter 6 identifies and analyses the role of claimsmakers who have led the problematisation of happiness, illustrating the activities not only of prominent 'owners' of the problem, but also its swift permeation of the public agenda and rapid, widespread uptake. Chapter 7 describes what sort of problem happiness is by identifying and analysing the most popular claims appearing in newspaper discussions of the issue and the rhetoric used in their promotion. Finally, chapter 8 draws together the findings of the thesis, considers the development of happiness as a 'master frame' for claimsmaking, and points to areas of future research.

2 Happiness and Context

Interest in happiness and its associated terminologies has risen exponentially over the past two decades across numerous academic disciplines.⁴ With such large and growing literatures, it is not possible to review all of the major themes and debates that have developed. Even so, it is clear that one of the most significant themes emerging from the 'science of happiness' has been a concern with wealth and the potentially deleterious effects of economic growth and prosperity. These discourses represent a shift in thinking about progress, and the role of human subjects implicated therein, which point to some of the socio-historical changes discussed toward the end of the chapter. Attempts to account for the rise of happiness, though limited, are briefly reviewed along with a consideration of attempts to define and conceptualise happiness in more sociologically oriented approaches. A need for a constructionist approach to happiness as a social problem is highlighted (a point further elaborated in Chapter 3). Finally, the examination of the construction of happiness as a social problem to follow is situated against the backdrop of a therapeutic system of meaning and a context of depoliticisation.

2.1 The Science of Happiness

The vast majority of academic interest in happiness has emerged from the disciplines of psychology and economics. Following his appointment as President of the American Psychological Association in 1998, the psychologist Martin Seligman outlined his plans for a 'new science of human strengths' that he termed 'positive psychology' (Seligman, 1999:560). The new sub-discipline would aim to be: 'A science of positive subjective experience, positive individual traits, and positive institutions' that would seek to 'improve quality of life and prevent pathologies that arise when life is barren and meaningless' (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000:5). Positive psychology would refocus the discipline away from an overwhelming focus upon pathology and a 'model of the human being lacking the positive features that make life worth living' (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000:5). Soon after, a multi-disciplinary *Journal of Happiness Studies* was

⁴ As mentioned in the previous chapter, the term happiness is used throughout for the sake of simplicity. Where it is significant to do so, as when it is the subject of debate or the term favoured by a particular theorist, different terminologies are used.

established bringing together much of the already burgeoning academic literature on happiness including many of the more subjectively oriented concerns that had become prominent in social indicators research.⁵ At the same time, interest from within the domain of economics has been steadily growing, borrowing many insights from psychology, and sharing a common evidence base that relies heavily upon survey and experimental research on happiness (Carlisle and Hanlon, 2007a:265).

Scholarly interest in happiness has produced a massive and growing literature dating back to the 1960s. Some of the major research foci have been the correlates of happiness, including for example, religiosity (Ellison, 1991), optimism (Scheier and Carver, 1992), individualism, human rights and societal equality (Diener, et al., 1995), particular personality traits (DeNeve and Cooper, 1998). Research has also examined the positive, negative or neutral impacts of various phenomena on happiness, including for example economic growth and economic institutions (Easterlin, 1974; Easterlin 2001; Frey and Stutzer, 2002), social interaction (Rook, 1984), lottery wins or major accidents (Brickman et al., 1978), social comparison (Luttmer, 2005), unemployment (Clark and Oswald, 1994), and identifying and explaining happiness levels amongst various populations and groups (Diener and Diener, 1996; Lykken and Tellegen, 1996; Blanchflower and Oswald, 2004; Inglehart et al., 2008). There has also been a long tradition of development and debate of the concepts themselves (Ryff, 1989; Ryff and Keyes, 1995; Ryan and Deci, 2001; Deci and Ryan, 2008; Seligman, 2002; Seligman, 2011), identifying 'strengths' (Peterson and Seligman, 2001; Peterson, 2006), elements of a 'good life' (Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi, 2006; Peterson, Park and Seligman, 2005; Seligman, 2011), methods of achieving happiness (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002; Brown and Ryan, 2003; Lyubomirsky et al., 2005) and the measurement of happiness (Cantril, 1965; Andrews and Withey, 2005 [1973]; Diener et al., 1985; Watson, Clark and Tellegen, 1988; Hills and Argyle, 2002; Kahneman and Krueger, 2006).

⁵ Research on social indicators was a precursor to contemporary happiness studies, combining the insights of psychology, economics and sociology and being primarily concerned with issues of national accounting. According to Andrews (1989:401), the 'social indicators movement,' a trend beginning in the 1960s focused on the creation of a broad range of quality of life indicators, had been spurred on by 'an explicit recognition that "life quality," however it might be defined, involved more than just economic considerations.' Noll (2002) describes how the movement developed in two discernible directions according to their tendency to emphasise subjective or objective social indicators. The former, generally accepted in Scandinavian countries, 'focuses almost exclusively on resources and objective living conditions,' while the latter considers the, 'subjective well-being of people as a final outcome of conditions and processes' and is favoured in the United States (Noll, 2002:51). According to Rapley (2003:11) the tendency to privilege the 'eye of the beholder,' or subjective indicators, became increasingly central to conceptualisations of quality of life over time. The emergence and prominence of happiness as a central focus can thus be seen as a fruition of these earlier tendencies.

Findings such as these form the building blocks of the problem in the public sphere, the most significant of which is the line of research instigated by Easterlin (1974).

2.2 Happiness and Wealth

The impetus for a science of happiness was not simply borne of a disinterested pursuit of knowledge about what makes people happy. From the first scattered studies emerging at mid-century to the present-day burgeoning sub-disciplinary focus, the interest has been inseparable from a central concern with wealth as a measure of progress and as a source of individual fulfilment. In Seligman's initial announcement of the positive psychology initiative, he begins by stating:

Standing alone on the pinnacle of economic and political leadership, the United States can continue to increase its material wealth while ignoring the human needs of our people and of the people on the rest of the planet. Such a course is likely to lead to increasing selfishness, alienation between the more and the less fortunate, and eventually to chaos and despair (Seligman, 1999:560).

In the face of this, Seligman asserts, 'psychology can play an enormously important role' in articulating an empirical vision of 'the good life' (1999:560). The economic interest in happiness shares similar concerns. The authors of a 2007 *Handbook on the Economics of Happiness* date the 'rediscovery' of happiness in economics to a 1971 paper by two psychologists entitled 'Hedonic relativism and the planning of the good society' (Bruni and Porta, 2007:xiv).⁶ According to Bruni and Porta (2007:xiv), this paper, which 'extended the "adaptation level" theory to happiness' to reach the conclusion that 'bettering the objective conditions of life (income or wealth) bears no lasting effects on personal well-being,' can 'rightly be considered the starting point of the new studies on happiness in relation to the economic domain.' Another text opens with a set of questions that initially led the author to the economics of happiness including: 'Why do economists, financial analysts, politicians and media fixate on growth measures (such as the GDP or gross domestic product) as the key indicator of human progress?' (Anielski, 2007:1). A review of developments in 'happiness economics' opens with a similar assertion: 'Modern economic policy aims at stabilizing a steady economic growth. In contrast, Aristotle defines "happiness" as

⁶ It is a 'rediscovery,' according to the authors, because they trace its origins as far back as Aristotle (Bruni and Porta, 2007:xiii-xiv).

self-sufficiency. Thus, there is an obvious discrepancy between happiness and what [we're] reaching for today' (Müller, 2009:1-2, emphasis in original).

Concerns about progress defined in material terms not only form the starting point for much of the interest in happiness from an economic perspective, but as the ensuing chapters will show, have also become central to contemporary claims about happiness as a social problem. Specifically, rising material wealth, often conceptualised in terms of economic growth or GDP, is forwarded as unrelated, or even detrimental, to happiness. Often traced to a 1974 paper by the economist, Richard Easterlin, it is a questioning that frequently takes the form of a 'paradox' created between wealth and happiness. For instance, Richard Layard's (2005) *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science* begins by asking, 'What's the problem?' He responds, 'There is a paradox at the heart of our lives. Most people want more and strive for it. Yet as Western societies have got richer, their people have become no happier' (Layard, 2005:3). David Halpern, director of research at the UK Institute for Government, identifies this paradox as 'the biggest puzzle in contemporary economics' (Halpern, 2010:2). Although the problematisation of happiness entails much more than this, this idea was the gateway for a profusion of additional claims emerging from the burgeoning new science of happiness. It was repeatedly emphasised in the first claims asserting a problem of happiness and, judging by its constant repetition and reverberation throughout the mass media, what got noticed. Thus its intellectual foundations bear some review, and given its propensity to transcend political boundaries, some contextual clarity.

2.2.1 The 'Paradox of Wealth'

The 'puzzle' to which Halpern (2010) refers is Easterlin's (1974) comparison of life satisfaction data between developed and less developed countries collected since the 1940s, and the conclusion that although wealthier individuals within a single nation report greater happiness than their less wealthy counterparts, richer nations are not on average any happier than poorer nations. Thus, rising absolute wealth, according to Easterlin, is self-defeating, since recipients will only compare themselves to others and raise their expectations, failing to gain in subjective terms although they have gained in absolute and objective terms. In short, happiness is adaptive and relative and relates only transiently to objective conditions. These results were also communicated in the then influential political journal, *The Public Interest*, adding that the argument points to the 'uncomfortable conclusion' that we are 'trapped in a material rat-race' (Easterlin, 1973:10).

A similar argument would be made two years later by Tibor Scitovsky in his *The Joyless Economy* (1992 [first in published 1976]),⁷ and Hirsch (1977) would draw on Easterlin's ideas as part of the development of his broader notion of the 'social limits to growth,' utilising a similar diagnosis of increased affluence breeding increased expectations that are likely to be, and indeed must be, frustrated. Frank (1985) would echo these conclusions (a point extended in his 1999 *Luxury Fever*). Toward the present, the idea of a 'happiness paradox' or a 'paradox of prosperity' has seen a dramatic take-off, spawning the sub-disciplines of 'positive psychology' and 'happiness economics,' mentioned above, as well as a huge influx of popular publications according this paradox a central place in their analyses (see for example, Layard, 2005; Easterbrook, 2003; Schwartz, 2004; Halpern, 2010; Roberts, 2011). The general conclusion toward which such data are directed is that if a particular phenomenon cannot be observed to correlate with increased happiness, then its pursuit, or at least emphasis, must be fundamentally questioned.⁸

It is noteworthy that significant discussion and debate about Easterlin's conclusions did not emerge until nearly two decades after its initial publication. One of the earliest disputes was raised by Veenhoven (1991) who questioned both the data (stating that income is especially important in poor countries), and the interpretation, quickly gaining currency at the time, that happiness does not rely on an objective good, but on subjective comparisons. He raises concerns about the 'ideological implications' underlying such an interpretation, including the justification of asceticism, 'no hope for improvement,' and casting human rationality into doubt (Veenhoven, 1991:7-8). As to the latter of these, he points out that the issue at stake is nothing less than the Enlightenment belief that 'humans are wise enough to make their own choices' (Veenhoven,

⁷ The preface to the 1992 edition begins with the reflection that the book had been written, 'more than 15 years ago in an America very different from the one we are living in today. Ours was then the world's richest nation. Thirty years of unbroken prosperity had almost doubled the average person's income in real terms and yet people seemed to be missing something' (Scitovsky, 1992:vi).

⁸ It is interesting to note that many of these assertions echo a similar statement made by Émile Durkheim in 1893: 'But, in fact, is it true that the happiness of the individual increases as man advances? Nothing is more doubtful' (Durkheim, 1984:186). However, for Durkheim, this is not because progress is futile, but because unlike production, which can theoretically increase indefinitely, happiness has a finite upper limit. Further, since social change often spans generations, not everyone who plays a part in these changes lives to share in their benefits, if there are any to be had. Thus, he reasons that, 'it is not the expectation of a greater happiness which drags them into such enterprises'—a point intended against any utilitarian approach to human progress (Durkheim, 1984:186). According to Durkheim, if it were the case that the 'division of labour' existed merely to increase happiness, 'it would have arrived at its extreme limit long ago, just as would have the civilisation that has arisen from it, and both would have come to a halt. [...] A moderate development would have been sufficient to assure individuals the sum-total of pleasures of which they were capable. Humanity would have rapidly come to a state from which it would not have emerged. That is what happened to animals; most have not changed for centuries, because they have arrived at this state of equilibrium' (Durkheim, 1984:186).

1991:8). If they are 'made happy by illusion rather than by quality, one can hardly maintain they are rational and able to make their own choices' (Veenhoven, 1991:8). Nonetheless, the idea continued to gain ground, with Veenhoven emerging as one of the few critics of what he called these 'sensational claims' (Veenhoven, 1991:2).

Academic debate around the paradox continued into the new millennium (see Hagerty and Veenhoven, 2003; Veenhoven and Hagerty, 2006; and Easterlin, 1995, 2001, 2005; Easterlin et al., 2010), with Veenhoven eventually gravitating toward a 'basic needs' interpretation of happiness trends (Veenhoven, 2009:59-60), and stating: 'Happiness requires livable conditions, but not Paradise' (Veenhoven 2003:1).⁹ The data would also be re-examined by Stevenson and Wolfers (2008) who conclude that there is no evidence of a paradox and further, that there is no 'satiation point' at which happiness ceases to increase with income. Easterlin et al. (2010) responded with a challenge to the new data and a reaffirmation of the initial conclusions.¹⁰ More recently, questions have been raised regarding the comparability of the two variables. As Johns and Ormerod (2007:31) point out, 'Happiness is often measured in surveys using a three-point scale, where (3) equates to "very happy". Higher levels cannot be given as an answer. [...] So even if they were actually reaching higher happiness levels, the survey could not track this,' noting that the criticism applies equally to more 'sophisticated' surveys using a ten-point scale. In order for happiness levels to increase in step with GDP, 22 per cent of the population would have to achieve 'a quantum leap in their happiness over a period of only four years' (Johns and Ormerod, 2007:32).¹¹ Yet, as Ormerod observes, these observations were rarely ruminated upon; 'Despite these shaky foundations, the relative income happiness hypothesis, as we might call it, has nevertheless been seized upon for policy recommendations' (2007:46).

⁹ He has also advocated sustainable consumption (see Veenhoven, 2004).

¹⁰ Easterlin et al. (2010:22465) assert that the 'main problem with the Stevenson and Wolfers (S-W) analysis is that they, in fact, estimate a positive short-term relationship between life satisfaction and GDP, rather than the long-term relationship, which is nil. That life satisfaction and GDP tend to vary together in contractions and expansions has already been demonstrated for a group of developed countries [...].'

¹¹ A recent volume on the topic (Booth, 2012), contains a selection of critiques raising similar concerns and questioning the underlying assumptions of a paradox between wealth and happiness and its usage in public policy. In an argument similar to that made by this study, Snowdon (2012:98) points out that, 'For those wishing to prove that something has not made us happier [...] the relentless straight line [of happiness levels] can embellish almost any narrative.'

2.2.2 *Material Wealth and the Perfectibility of Society*

What is rather more interesting than the debate about whether or not the data are correct or if the interpretation fits the data, is the decision to compare these phenomena in the first place and the impulses and processes that underlie its subsequent and widespread embrace. Indeed, even as the paradox has been reassessed, with the results looking increasingly damaging for the initial conclusions, the centrality of happiness as a public issue has remained. Describing the mechanisms behind the construction of this problem as it has played out in the news media is the subject of this study. However, in order to grasp the transition in thinking that the problematisation of happiness reflects, it is necessary for the moment to put these ideas into historical context, particularly as an ambivalence toward the benefits of material wealth often forms the basis on which additional assertions are made including the casting of human aspiration as a 'hedonic treadmill' of constant striving and constant adaptation to new gains (Easterlin, 1974; Easterlin, 1995; Diener, 2000; Kahneman et al., 2004; Kahneman and Krueger, 2006) and the ill effects, or even fundamentally misleading nature of economic growth (Frank, 1999; Layard, 2005; James, 2007; Van den Bergh, 2007; Simms and Woodward, 2006; Simms et al., 2010).

The idea of a disconnect between economic growth and happiness has gained unprecedented prominence over the past decade. Even those critical of the rising interest in happiness have noted that the idea is appealing as it seems to represent a positive challenge to consumer culture and an 'individualistic competitive society' (Shaw and Taplin, 2007:361). Cromby (2011:842) notes that in a context 'dominated by the profit motive, saturated with imperatives to consume' and 'increasingly [recognising] the need for economic growth to be sustainable,' the possibility of putting people's 'thoughts and feelings' at the centre of policy is 'undeniably attractive.' Although there may be disagreements about the form that happiness promotion has taken, the idea of restraining consumption is frequently seen as uncontroversial. Carlisle and Hanlon (2008:267) defend against the charge that wellbeing risks becoming another commodity pursued 'as part of what many uncritically take to be the good life in capitalist society' by stating: 'Increasing numbers of people seem aware of the downside of over-consumption,' and pointing to evidence from social movements of the rise of 'downshiffters' as showing that happiness can resist neo-liberal impulses in 'pursuit of greater social and global equity.'

Yet, taking a much longer view of the role of material wealth in society, it is important to realise that although steadily growing affluence is not a recent invention, it is not something that has always existed either. The productive capabilities that began to develop in the sixteenth and

seventeenth centuries were revolutionary for their time, challenging the centralisation of wealth within rigid class structures that had prevailed for centuries. These changes saw the waning of the power of religion to legitimate the existing order and eighteenth century revolutions began to demand liberty from arbitrary authority and equality under the law. Ideas about the perfectibility of man began to break with the classical ideal of a bounded perfection attained through a union with God and looked forward instead to 'an infinitely extensible moral improvement' (Passmore, 2000:158). Wealth was seen as intrinsic part of this process. Auguste Comte, for example, considered that the 'object of Philosophy is to present a systematic view of human life, as a basis for modifying its imperfections' (Comte, 1853:8), and thought that 'all human progress, political, moral, or intellectual, is inseparable from material progression' (Comte, 1853:222). Human rationality and newly discovered abundance could be put in service of ameliorating problems once seen as natural or preordained elements of a divine social order.¹²

According to Friedman (2005), an optimism toward wealth and the growth of productive powers characterised much of Enlightenment thinking. Although their starting point had been a concern for knowledge and society in the broadest terms, 'the fulcrum of their theory of progress was economic arrangements,' with progress moving through 'scientific change to economic change to moral change' (Friedman, 2005:31). The early anarchist thinker William Godwin saw the potential to eliminate scarcity as being able to free humanity from menial labour and subservience. He remarked that kings 'have sometimes been alarmed with the progress of thinking, and oftener regarded the ease and propensity of their subjects as a source of terror and apprehension,' and often pronounced that 'it is necessary to keep the people in a state of poverty and endurance in order to render them submissive' (Godwin, 1842:417). Similarly, Karl Marx, who is perhaps best known as one of capitalism's most prominent opponents, actually viewed capitalist production optimistically as providing the foundations for a new society. He virulently attacked those like Thomas Malthus who attempted to posit social limits as natural limits (Marx, 1969:120). What is more, he defended David Ricardo against his 'sentimental opponents' who objected that 'production as such is not the object,' writing that such arguments 'forget that production for its own sake means nothing but the development of human productive forces, in other words, the

¹² Although sharing a similar commitment to the application of science to solve social problems, the contemporary idea of happiness as a social problem solvable through the application of reason in the form of expertise, as chapter 7 shows, is underwritten by a questioning of human rationality and a sense of acquiescence to the inevitability of the current state of affairs. The final sections of this chapter point to the reasons for this as lying in the contrast between the more optimistic prognoses of some thinkers of the past and an uncertainty about the future that prevails toward the present.

development of the richness of human nature as an end in itself (Marx, 1969:117-118, emphasis in original).¹³

It is not the objective of the present chapter to explore these ideas in full, but rather to point out the sorts of ideas that are able to gain currency at different times and places.¹⁴ Many Enlightenment thinkers were optimistic about the potential of abundance, and some radicals even saw the prospect of it radically transforming society, seeing themselves as opposing a ruling class that both feared and sought to impose limitations on these aspirations. Yet happiness discussions across the political spectrum reveal a distinct tendency to raise doubts about the benefits of growth and, as Smith (2010) points out, taken to its extreme by some ecological economists, to view economic growth not only as an option, but as an undesirable one.¹⁵

It is difficult to place precisely when the waning of this optimistic outlook began to occur. The historical analysis detailed in chapter 5 points to distinct shifts in usages of happiness and prosperity in the mid-1980s, with hints of a rising ambivalence emanating from the American political class in the decades before. Although a commitment to economic growth underpinned many of the social programmes associated with Lyndon B. Johnson's 'Great Society' initiatives, not the least the 'war on poverty,' Collins (2000:64) observes that the 'tension between quantity and quality remained a hallmark of growth liberalism during its ascendancy in the early and mid-

¹³ A frequently quoted anecdote of Marx, indeed quoted by Easterlin (1995:36) is: 'A house may be large or small; as long as the neighbouring houses are likewise small, it satisfies all social requirements for a residence. But let there arise next to the little house a palace, and the little house shrinks to a hut' (Marx, 1935:33). In spite of the similarity of this anecdote to many happiness claims (and indeed its use to support them), Marx's interpretation is vastly different: 'The little house now makes it clear that its inmate has no social position at all to maintain, or but a very insignificant one [...]' (Marx, 1935:33). No matter how high the living standards of workers might rise in the course of history, they would remain impoverished relative to the capitalist class whom they work to enrich. It was this exploitative relationship, not the feelings that arose from it, that was problematised. In fact, the dissatisfaction was seen as evidence that although the capitalist class claims to be enriching the working class, 'the interests of capital and the interests of wage-labour are diametrically opposed' (Marx, 1935:39).

¹⁴ For a detailed discussion of connections between Enlightenment thinking and material progress see Friedman (2005) and Ben-Ami (2012). The latter of these also details, and draws parallels between, the romantic reaction that emerged soon after the French Revolution and modern day 'romantic anti-capitalism' evident in what he terms 'growth scepticism' (Ben-Ami, 2012). However, Ben-Ami observes that even eighteenth century romantics tended to display a more optimistic outlook than do modern day growth sceptics (2012:22-23).

¹⁵ More radical expressions of these tendencies advocate slow growth, or even 'zero growth,' or 'steady state' economies, as in, for example, Simms et al. (2010), Boyle and Simms (2009), Jackson (2009), Daly (1973; 1996), and emanating from the New Economics Foundation (NEF) in general. As chapter 7 will show, the more common tendency in happiness claims is toward downplaying the benefits or centrality of growth and material prosperity rather than a sincere desire to halt growth altogether. It is for this reason that Ben-Ami has termed these cultural trends not 'anti-growth' but 'growth scepticism' (Ben-Ami, 2012:xiii).

1960s.’ Indeed, the ‘social indicators movement,’ which saw the birth of many alternative indicators, both objective and subjective, received a boost under Johnson (Andrews, 1989). Richard Goodwin, a speechwriter and advisor to Johnson (as well as John F. Kennedy and Robert Kennedy), is quoted in the preface to an influential 1966 text on social indicators as stating: ‘The Great Society looks beyond the prospects of abundance to the problems of abundance. [...] Thus the Great Society is concerned not with how much, but how good—not with the quantity of our goods but with the quality of our lives’ (Bauer, 1966:xii)—ideas that were echoed in Johnson’s speeches at the time (Collins, 2000:64). Still, as Ben-Ami (2012:24) points out, although numerous works had begun to appear questioning the benefits of wealth as a measure of progress in the 1950s and 1960s, a positive attitude remained the dominant outlook until at least the 1970s when a rising ambivalence toward such goals and a questioning of human rationality became observable in mainstream popular and political thought.¹⁶ Already by 1976, Daniel Bell was able to observe: ‘The liberal answer to social problems such as poverty was that growth would provide the resources to raise the incomes of the poor. [...] And yet, paradoxically, it is the very idea of economic growth that is now coming under attack—and by liberals. Affluence is no longer seen as an answer’ (Bell, 1976:80).¹⁷ What is therefore perhaps most significant about Easterlin’s study was not its conclusion, but its attempt to give an empirical foundation to what were already growing misgivings about the connection between material progress and happiness.¹⁸

¹⁶ Ben-Ami (2012) points to John Kenneth Galbraith’s *The Affluent Society* (1958), Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962), David Riesman’s *Abundance for What?* (1968), and E.F. Schumacher’s *Small is Beautiful* (1973), among others (see pages 69-70 for lists), as prominent examples of this rising mode of thought.

¹⁷ Significantly, while supportive of the notion of limitations, Bell hints at the vacuum left behind by ‘economic growth as a positive goal for [...] society,’ wondering, ‘without a commitment to economic growth, what is the *raison d’être* of capitalism?’ (Bell, 1976:80).

¹⁸ Evidence of an underlying tendency to question the benefits of material gains and the rationality of human actors in seeking them is also evident in the study’s intellectual lineage. In 1920, Pigou had distinguished economic welfare from the broader ‘total welfare’ of the population but defended the study of the former as the subject of welfare economics citing little reason to believe that, ‘since economic welfare is only a part of welfare as a whole, welfare will often change while economic welfare remains the same’ (Pigou, 2002:12). However, by 1951 he considers that there may be some ‘illusion’ about the pursuit of wealth, adding, ‘From a long-run standpoint [...] after incomes in excess of a certain moderate level have been attained, further increases in it may well not be significant for economic welfare’ (Pigou, 1951:294). Drawing on Pigou, Abramovitz (1959) questions welfare economics’ underlying assumptions about rational actors when it is ‘difficult to speak of the welfare significance of income for people whose personalities are, to a greater or lesser extent, the compound of repressions, addictions, compulsions, and obsessions’ (Abramovitz, 1959:15). According to Abramovitz, increased wealth fosters the ‘competitive, self-defeating, and irrational elements in consumption’; so long as ‘consumption levels are barely sufficient to provide for survival and minimum comfort, the competitive and irrational drives of individuals are held in check, at least to a greater extent than they are when food, clothing and shelter are more abundant’ (Abramovitz, 1959:15). Easterlin saw himself as answering Abramovitz’s ‘little-headed call’ for empirical data to support these assertions (Easterlin, 1974:89).

These trends raise the question of how to account for the significance of happiness to contemporary debates about social problems. The next section reviews attempts made to understand and conceptualise happiness from more sociologically oriented perspectives. It is followed by a description of the socio-historical shifts that set the stage for issues like happiness, conceived in particular ways, to emerge as plausible and attractive conceptualisations of the problems facing society today. Although they 'set the stage,' they are not alone enough to account for the pervasiveness of the problem which requires recourse to the constructionist framework detailed in chapter 3.

2.3 Accounting for the Significance of Happiness

Toward the present, there is a steadily growing literature offering more sociologically informed insights into issues relating to happiness. Many of these take on the concerns and prominent research foci traditionally dominated by happiness studies in economics and psychology, including identifying the correlations and contributors to happiness (see for example, Burt and Atkinson [2011] on hobbies contributing to 'flow'; Hsieh [2011] on happiness, income, and the life cycle; Schnittker [2008] on genetic endowments; Firebaugh and Shroeder [2009] on money and social comparison) and measuring or describing the happiness levels of particular populations (examples include Radcliff [2005] on union members; Freedman et al. [2012] on older people with disabilities).¹⁹ It has also become an increasingly important topic in health promotion (Cameron et al., 2006; Cropper et al., 2007; Carlisle and Hanlon, 2007a, 2007b, 2008; Hanlon and Carlisle, 2009; Carlisle et al., 2009; Kobau et al., 2011).

However, an important question regards precisely how, why, and in what ways happiness became such a popular means of making sense of the world. There have been few concerted attempts to answer these questions. Many studies simply note the rise in interest and posit the need for a sociological counter to what are perceived as overly individualistic and biological conceptualisations of happiness. A 2002 review of developments in the Sociology of mental health and illness notes:

Psychologists have paid far more attention to positive states of mental health than sociologists [...]. They often assert that the environment can only create short-term

¹⁹ Besides these examples, most sociological research on happiness continues to be found in 'niche' publications including *Social Indicators Research* and the *Journal of Happiness Studies*.

fluctuations in happiness, which is a stable individual or genetic trait [...]. It is time that sociologists met this challenge by examining the social determinants of positive states of well-being [...]. Happiness, no less than distress, ought to respond to changes in the social structure and culture (Horwitz, 2002:148).

Others see the growing interest in a science of happiness as a straightforward result of the significance of the discoveries made. Firebaugh and Schroeder (2009:807-808) consider that as the result of growing scientific evidence that happiness has 'significant real-life consequences,' 'scholarly interest in happiness has surged in recent years.' They point to sociologists' traditional emphasis on social context as making them uniquely placed to contribute to the study of happiness since, 'Individual characteristics alone are unlikely to provide a satisfactory account of the variation in happiness across individuals' (Firebaugh and Schroeder, 2009:808).

Others have reasoned that happiness has always been a concern of societies and theorisations of society, but is only now being rediscovered after a long preoccupation with studying negatives. Veenhoven (2006:3) asserts that 'sociology's blind eye' for happiness is odd considering that it had 'been on the agenda of the 19th century founding fathers of sociology,' including Comte and Spencer. He further reasons that sociologists had been inclined to ignore the issue due to a long-held 'preoccupation with misery' (Veenhoven, 2006:4). Helliwell and Putnam (2004:1435) observe that 'philosophers from Aristotle to John Stuart Mill have articulated this view, only in recent years have psychologists, economists and others begun to demonstrate that subjective well-being can be measured with reliability and validity [...].' A recent text, offering an interdisciplinary perspective on happiness, stresses that happiness is 'a new theme despite the fact that happiness has been central to people's everyday life for many years, and has been at the core of philosophical discussions of the good society and the good life for centuries' (Greve, 2012:1).

Carlisle and Hanlon (2007b:8) point to the significant rise of happiness studies since the 1960s as evidence that 'well-being is a significant human problem that spans many fields of knowledge.' Elsewhere, the authors assert that wellbeing is a 'collateral casualty of modernity,' whereby the escalation of consumerism and the 'endless pursuit of economic growth' has led to 'a growing sense of individual alienation, social fragmentation and civic disengagement and [...] the decline of more spiritual, moral and ethical aspects of life' (Carlisle, Henderson, and Hanlon, 2009:1556). Similarly, Salmela et al. (2008:4) reason that the quest for more knowledge about happiness is the result of a 'growing unease and discontentment in today's world' as 'the elements that improve and partly constitute happiness [...] have become undermined.'

It should be noted that these are assertions made in passing, and few of these studies attempt to systematically account for the rise of happiness. An exception is Sointu (2005) who has traced changing conceptualisations of 'wellbeing' in newspaper stories since 1985 as a means of 'glimpsing into some wider norms and values imbuing the rise of the ideal of wellbeing' (Sointu, 2005:256). She identifies a shift in conceptualisations from referring to the 'body politic' to the 'body personal,' in which 'the wellbeing of a citizen in a traditional nation state [...] has been eclipsed by an increasing emphasis on wellbeing that is actively produced by the choosing consumer' (Sointu, 2005:256). Similarly, Duncan (2007:87) conceptualises the rise of happiness as a 'key signifier of third-way ideology, reflecting the loss of the alternative utopian vision supplied by socialism, on one hand, and a loss of confidence in unfettered capitalism, on the other.' These analyses, and others influenced by discursive methodologies (see next section), offer valuable insights into the variability and historical contingency of happiness as a social phenomenon as well as illustrating how shifts in the meanings of concepts can offer a window into the culture that produced them.

2.4 What is Happiness?

There is no widely accepted standard for terminologies dealing with happiness, much less definitions. Happiness is often used interchangeably with wellbeing, quality of life, subjective wellbeing, life satisfaction, positive mental health and emotional wellbeing (Edwards and Imrie, 2008:352; Easterlin, 2001; Carlisle and Hanlon, 2008:265). This conceptual ambiguity has led some to dismiss the concept as 'muddying' the conceptual waters (Cameron et al., 2006:349) and a 'red-herring' (Seedhouse, 1995). Cromby (2011:843) notes that in 'what might be considered a gesture of despair at these difficulties' advocates have increasingly looked to neuroscience for a 'solid basis' on which to ground their efforts. Atkinson and Joyce (2011:134) point out that 'research mostly takes a normative approach to definition and deals with the abstract nature of the concept by breaking it down into constitutive components.' Thus, Stiglitz et al. (2009:14-15) define wellbeing as comprising no less than eight constituent parts and recent reviews have demonstrated similar trends toward expansiveness (Ryan and Deci, 2001; Deci and Ryan, 2008).²⁰ Working with this conceptual ambiguity rather than against it, Atkinson and Joyce (2011:147)

²⁰ See chapter 7 for an examination of this tendency within the context of social problem claimsmaking.

argue that the lack of clarity opens up spaces for resistance, and that the 'boundary work' which attempts to 'narrow the scope of how the concept is practised' should be opposed.

In spite of these ambiguities, there is a clear gravitation toward the term 'wellbeing' toward the present. Dean (2010:100) sees the 'advantage of well-being as a term [that can] draw our attention to the positive aspects of social policy, as opposed to the negative aspects relating to social problems.[...] It also places the emphasis on human "being" as opposed to "having" or "doing."' White (2008:159) also sees one of the advantages of 'wellbeing' as its 'positive charge': 'The "well" within "wellbeing" commands assent: who could not desire it?' Another advantage is its 'holistic outlook,' offering to 'connect mind, body, and spirit, overcoming the divisions integral to post-Enlightenment modernist understandings of the person' (White, 2010:159). Hanlon and Carlisle (2009:27) also advocate wellbeing as representing a more widely held goal amongst members of the public than the ideal of 'health.' However, as Ganesh and McAllum (2010:492) point out, this attractiveness also means that it is 'positively valenced': 'In this way, one might argue that the term well-being functions as a god term [...] that automatically appears inherently desirable and thus defies critique.'

This latter observation indicates some of the importance of considering happiness not simply as something that may be felt, measured, or produced through various interventions, but as an idiom that takes on many of the concerns of the broader cultural context. Fries (2008) and Sointu (2005) see the rise of wellbeing as a corollary of the needs of neoliberal governance and Edwards and Imrie (2008:337) point out that most analyses mobilise a highly normative conceptualisation of happiness as stemming from idealised forms of behaviour and ways of being as well as relying on 'individuated actions and (self) responsibilities.' Taylor (2011) has raised similar concerns about the normativity of accounts of wellbeing, warning of its propensity toward individualisation and highlighting the importance of process in considerations of happiness. To this latter end, Ehrenreich (2009) has also examined the role of moral entrepreneurs in the spread of 'positive thinking,' highlighting the importance of considering connections between the rise of particular ideas and campaigns that consciously seek to foster their spread. Similarly, Yen (2010) has examined the rhetoric of scholarly positive psychology publications as a form of 'boundary work' in which practitioners actively engage in the demarcation of boundaries around what counts as scientific enquiry, viewing positive psychology as a 'a form of social, cultural, and political activity' (Yen, 2010:70).

These latter analyses point to the existence of happiness not as a stable construct, but as dynamic and rhetorical, the subject of active social construction. However, questions still remain.

Specifically, there remains a need to systematically account for the construction of happiness not only in abstract terms but as a *social problem* commanding the attention of the public and policymakers. How did this idea that happiness constitutes a significant issue facing modern societies evolve and how did it come to prevail? What roles did particular types of social actors play in constructing the problem? According to these social actors, what sort of problem is it? It is toward providing an answer to these questions that this study is directed.

2.5 The Construction of Happiness as a Social Problem

Combining context with a consideration of the problematisation of happiness as a social dynamic process is the objective of this research. In doing so, it intends to make a contribution less to the broader study of happiness than to offer a case study in the contemporary construction of a social problem. The intention is to elucidate the processes through which happiness came to be problematised and the cultural resources on which advocates draw in their attempts to convince others of the issue's importance and severity. This analysis is facilitated by the theoretical and methodological tools of social problems constructionism, developed in detail in chapter 3.

2.5.1 Context and Constructionism

The theoretical and methodological tools delineated in the next chapter risk losing their explanatory power if they are not considered in conjunction with the broader socio-historical context within which these processes transpire. This section details the socio-historical backdrop into which claims about happiness as a new social problem emerged and which contributed to its plausibility as an accurate description of the social world.

As chapter 3 will describe in more detail, in order for claims about new social problems to be accepted, they must achieve a sufficient 'fit' with the plausibility structures of the broader culture, with the cultural criteria for believability, and with discourses of acceptable evidence prevailing at a particular time and place (Altheide, 2009:77). Although groups might organise around the cause of UFO abductions or biblical prophecy, without harmoniously attuning these claims to the plausibility structures of contemporary British society, it is unlikely that others will feel compelled to act or join the cause. Best (1990:17) points out that, 'All claims emerge within a cultural context. In seventeenth-century New England, claims were routinely couched in religious language. Three centuries later, religion rarely plays a significant role in policymaking, and claims-

makers are more likely to use terms from medicine or science.' It is therefore imperative to 'approach claims-making in terms of its culture, as well as its organization' (Best, 1990:17).

It should be noted that the role that context should play in constructionist studies of social problems has not been an undisputed one. Since the initial formulation of the programmatic statements of constructionism as applied to the study of social problems in the 1970s (Spector and Kitsuse, 2001), a schism has developed between 'strict constructionists' on the one hand diverging from 'contextual constructionists' on the other (Ibarra and Kitsuse, 1993; Best, 1993). In his study of the changing cultural context of claims pertaining to the 'Japanese threat' in the United States, Nichols (1995:314) characterises the central issue as 'methodological' and refers to:

[...] whether and how sociologists should use their understanding of context in analyzing claimsmaking. The so-called 'strict constructionists' insist that analysts avoid making judgments about context, because such judgments divert analysis away from the examination of claims, and toward an investigation of conditions. In contrast, 'contextual constructionists' insist that some understanding of context is indispensable for interpreting claimsmaking.

Context is indispensable to gaining an understanding of changing uses and conceptualisations of happiness, the variability of which gives important insights into the particular historical and cultural moments of which they form a dialogical part. To this end, contextual constructionism furnishes the researcher with the apprehension that human beings never operate within a value and context-free domain and reminds that it is therefore neither possible nor desirable to analyse claims outside of their context. According to Best (1995:345):

Claims emerge at particular historical moments in particular societies; they are made by particular claimsmakers, who address particular audiences. Claimsmakers have particular reasons for choosing particular rhetoric to address particular problems. Such specific elements form claimsmaking's context, and contextual constructionists argue that understanding social problems claims often depends upon understanding their context.

Put simply, claims are constituent, dialogical and contributory parts of culture, and thus help us to describe and understand it. What is said and what is not said draws our attention to the codes of acceptability; claimsmakers learn what is acceptable and what is not. For Best, the exclusive focus of strict constructionists on the social organisation of claimsmaking leads to insufficient attention being given to the 'style and content of claims' (1990:17). It is crucial to understand that in spite of the organisation, resources and dedication of claimsmakers, '[g]iven the realities of the social problems marketplace, many claims will fail' (Best, 1990:17). In constructing claims they hope to

be persuasive, claimsmakers necessarily draw upon existing cultural resources and conform to the discourses of evidence that 'make sense' in the context of the broader epistemic community to construct claims that are both believable and stirring (Altheide, 2009).

Language is an artefact of culture, and just as an archaeologist must investigate the context to understand the nature of his finds, so must the analyst look to the broader culture in order to ascertain the context and understand the meaning of claims.

Of course, it should be noted that it is not possible to present an analysis that is itself free of constructions, since as Best (1995:344) reminds us, 'a culture's assumptions are built into its language,' and the analyst too must necessarily use language which always involves an active process of interpretation, construction and reconstruction.²¹ However, presenting alternative constructions draws attention to the fluid nature of language and to the fact that dominant constructions are not inevitable. One is then able to examine the implicit assumptions that are built into particular rhetorical choices that may have once been taken for granted, revealing facets of a cultural climate that made such claims plausible and popular descriptions of reality.

2.6 Therapeutic System of Meaning

Psycho-social idioms like happiness, as well as the expertise that drives them, both draw on and are drawn from a broader symbolic system of meaning. All cultures subscribe to systems of meaning that encompass particular explanatory modes of cause and effect (see chapter 3). Since at least the mid-twentieth century, social theorists had begun to note and describe a profound shift occurring across Anglo-American cultures toward an increasing tendency to imbue life with therapeutic explanations. Although people operate within many, often conflicting, systems of meaning in their daily lives, from those of professional life to religious callings, it is from a cultural ethos dominated by therapeutic understandings that claims about happiness gain much of their meaning and salience.

²¹ The question, for Best, is whether or not the assumptions necessarily brought forth by the researcher contribute to or damage the analysis (1995:346). The value of stepping back and questioning particular definitions is also inherent in the Marxist dialectical project which points to the fact that definitions attached to particular objects and conditions at particular times are not inevitable and are therefore subject to change. Marx wrote: 'A Negro is a Negro. Only under certain conditions does he become a slave. A cotton-spinning machine is a machine for spinning cotton. Only under certain conditions does it become capital. Torn away from these conditions, it is as little capital as gold is itself money, or sugar is the price of sugar' (Marx, 1935:28).

In Ecclestone and Hayes' (2009) study of the rise to dominance of therapeutic understandings in the educational sphere, they argue that 'it is impossible to over-estimate the epochal nature of this shift,' and its pervasive influence across varied sectors of social life, from politics to the very notion of 'what it means to be human' (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2009:123). The authors chart the rise of the therapeutic system of meaning with reference to major theoretical works that have described it over the past half century, from Philip Rieff's diagnosis of the decline of the 'ascetic culture' and the 'triumph of the therapeutic' in the 1960s, to the 'climax of therapeutic culture' at the turn of the twentieth century described by Frank Furedi in 2004 (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2009:122-133).

According to Furedi (2004), this notion of therapy as a cultural phenomenon should not be confused with therapy as a client practitioner relationship. 'A culture becomes therapeutic when this form of thinking expands from informing the relationship between the individual and therapist to shaping public perceptions about a variety of issues' (Furedi, 2004:22). As a seminal work by Bellah et al. (2008:113 [first published 1985]) describes of this ethos in the American context:

Today we are likely to see not only our marriages but also our families, work, community, and society in therapeutic terms. Life's joys and deeper meanings, and its difficulties too, are less often attributed to material conditions and interpreted in traditional moral terms than they were even a generation ago. Now the 'interpersonal' seems to be the key to much of life.

It should be noted that this description of therapy culture is not intended as a representation of the totality of western culture (Furedi, 2004:22). Hewitt points out that 'culture tends to provide multiple vocabularies of motive rather than a single vocabulary' (1998:89). Not only are different spheres of activity ruled by different sets of assumptions (Hewitt, 1998:89), but people also selectively engage with various 'cultural competitors,' so that, as Swidler (2001:15) writes, 'our cultural universe is much wider and more diverse than the culture we fully make our own.' Yet some moral vocabularies undoubtedly exercise a more powerful influence over more domains of life than others at different times. Therapy culture arguably rivals the place older ideologies like religion once occupied in its ability to mediate people's relationship with the world, offering meanings to attribute to increasingly diverse realms of human experience. As Furedi argues, 'Although in competition with other currents, therapeutic culture has acquired a powerful influence over the conduct of individual behaviour. It has no monopoly over the way society gains meaning over life, but it is arguably the most important signifier of meaning for the everyday life of the individual' (Furedi, 2004:22).

2.6.1 *Therapeutic Perception of Social Problems*

The therapeutic paradigm imbues emotional idioms with unprecedented explanatory power. As Furedi observes, 'Since the self is defined through feelings, the state of emotion is often represented as the key determinant of both individual and collective behaviour. Social problems are frequently recast as individual ones that have no direct connection to the social realm' (2004:25). That is, therapy culture's preferential treatment of the internal and the interpersonal encourages a shift in focus of conceptualisations of social problems from the material conditions of society to a preoccupation with how people think, feel, and behave, and their relationships to each other. In this expansiveness it represents what Wainwright (2008:19) observes as a shift in 'the clinical gaze from treatment of the sick to regulation of the well.'

Fitzpatrick (2001:89-92) points out that the adoption of the term 'social exclusion' by New Labour subtly shifted attention from the perennial questions of capitalist society, from material disadvantage and the distribution of resources, toward primarily 'cultural and psychological' explanations and a focus on a 'parity of esteem' rather than of income. As Wainwright (2008:83) describes, this cultural climate increasingly encourages the conceptualisation of social problems in terms of the 'individual's inability to satisfactorily govern his own emotional and mental life,' so that emotional idioms like 'self-esteem,' or indeed happiness, become potent folk-myths which can be 'invoked to explain virtually all social problems.'²²

2.6.2 *The Vulnerable Subject*

The vulnerable subject discussed in the first chapter can be conceived of as emanating from this broader cultural ethos. A cultural ethos is not just about meanings applied to social phenomena, it also offers a distinctive view of what it means to be human. As Hewitt (1998:21) contends in his study of the cultural 'myth' of self-esteem: 'Every culture contains a set of ideas and beliefs about the nature of human beings, what motivates them to act, the way they perceive the world, how their minds work, and the emotions that are natural to them.' That is, the stories cultures tell about themselves, the rationales they attribute to their actions, reveal something of their underlying ethnopsychologies, their 'prevailing ideas about human subjectivity and personhood'

²² Although its existence as a *folk* myth, at least at the present time, remains open to debate. Sointu's (2012) study of consumers of complementary and alternative medicine in search of wellbeing suggests an active and selective engagement with wellbeing discourses amongst the general public.

(Furedi, 2002:16). Cultures are not unanimous, and indeed often differ profoundly, as Hewitt observes, 'in their beliefs about the psychology of human beings' (1998:21). Nor do ideas about personhood 'stand still' through time (Summerfield, 2004:234).

According to Furedi, the statement about human nature offered by contemporary therapeutic culture is distinctive in that it 'tends to regard people's emotional state as peculiarly problematic and at the same time as defining of their identity' (2004:22). This study illustrates how in happiness claimsmaking the outwardly positive focus upon self-realisation and positive human qualities is underwritten by an implicit problematisation of individual subjectivity. As we will see, constructions of happiness as a social problem repeatedly draw on a model of the human being defined by its 'vulnerability' and susceptibility to social contagion. In spite of the ostensibly positive outlook offered by a focus on happiness, it is in keeping with therapy culture's inclination 'not so much towards the realisation of self-fulfilment as the promotion of self-limitation' (Furedi, 2004:21). As Furedi writes:

It posits the self in distinctly fragile and feeble form and insists that the management of life requires the continuous intervention of therapeutic expertise. The elevated concern with the self is underpinned by anxiety and apprehension, rather than a positive vision realising human potential. Therapeutic culture has helped construct a diminished sense of self that characteristically suffers from an emotional deficit and possesses a permanent consciousness of vulnerability (2004:21).

2.7 Depoliticisation and the Decline of Perfectibility

Thus far we have seen how campaigns to transform personal emotions into public concerns succeed in a cultural climate dominated by therapeutic understandings. Yet the rise of therapy culture itself, and thus of the vocabulary of happiness drawn from it, cannot be understood outside of a broader socio-historical context of depoliticisation. Lasch observed in the 1970s, as therapy was making its move from the clinic to informing mainstream thought: 'Having displaced religion as the organizing framework of American culture, the therapeutic outlook threatens to displace politics as well, the last refuge of ideology' (1979:13). According to Lasch, when seemingly harmless pursuits then gaining in popularity like 'getting in touch with feelings' and immersion in the 'wisdom of the East' were elevated to a political programme, it signified the beginning of a retreat from politics (1979:4-5). Since then, these trends have only become further entrenched in the political climate, although therapy culture has not so much displaced politics as it has transformed it (Furedi, 2004:50-51).

The contemporary political climate has been profoundly shaped by the experiences of the past century and a deep disillusionment with ‘big ideas’—meta-narratives that promised to explain societies and which could be wielded to radically change them for the better. The failure of really existing socialism and the rise of ‘no alternative’ narrowed the scope of the political imagination. As Furedi writes, ‘There is no longer room for either the ardent defender of the free market faith, or the robust advocate of revolutionary transformation’ (2004:53). In their place has stepped the liberal democratic consensus—that market society is the only society feasible, and in which improvements are affected through piecemeal democratic reform. In Popper’s (1945:1, 3, 139) rendering, unlike the ‘Utopian social engineering’ and ‘prophetic wisdom’ ostensibly guiding previous political movements toward disaster and totalitarianism, the only ‘methodologically sound’ pathway to shaping history that avoided such risks would be through piecemeal and rational applications of science to the problems of the ‘open society.’

In spite of this consensus, the absence of meaningful alternatives meant that politics risked losing its sense of purpose and meaning and thus its ability to seriously engage the passions of the public (Furedi, 2004:54). Both Daniel Bell and later, Francis Fukuyama, whose names have been prominently associated with theses celebrating the triumph of the liberal democratic consensus, nonetheless lamented its implications for politics. Bell warned that the politics of the middle way ‘is without passion and is deadening’ and offered little to galvanise younger generations (Bell, 1962:404). For Fukuyama (1989:18), the ‘end of history’ would be a ‘very sad time,’ absent of the human virtues once conjured forth by ideological struggles. The intervening decades have shown that, as Furedi (2004:48) points out, ‘It is not simply the “young intellectual” who is turned-off—virtually the entire electorate has become estranged from political life.’

2.7.1 Connecting to a Disengaged Public

With the destruction of old ideologies also came the fragmentation of movements for change into single issue campaigns, further intensifying competition to connect with a public with a limited attention span for new social problems. Politicians too were acutely aware of the impasse created by the failure of middle-way and ‘piecemeal’ change to engage the passions of the electorate. Throughout the western world, these groups began to look for new ways to connect with the public and new forms of legitimisation in the face of dwindling identification with old ideological fissures. The turn toward public emotion represents one important way of circumventing public disengagement (Furedi, 2004:57).

Therapeutic knowledge thrives in a climate of uncertainty, where the rejection of an all-encompassing and universal truth to guide action is celebrated, but which at the same time risks descent into relativism. It thus offers a means of forging agreements and attributing meaning to action not through one person's ultimately fallible beliefs about right and wrong, but through recourse to knowledge of the 'real' nature of human beings, innocent—and perhaps intensely conscious of—human fallibility. In this way it is similar to religious and political ideologies of the past which attempted to give a coherent explanation for people's place in the world and the status quo through recourse to a greater truth 'outside the scope of human deeds' like the will of God or the equality of the law (Arendt, 1958:83). However, it lacks the coherence of such a designation. Instead, the appeal of therapeutic knowledge 'may well be its reluctance to try and answer the hard questions previously reflected on by ideologies, religions and humanist thought' (Furedi, 2004:23).

In a context of depoliticisation, in which the vocabulary available to those who would seek to engage the public has significantly narrowed, therapeutics offers the ability not to give a coherent meaning to life, but rather a morally neutral means of engaging with the broadest possible audience. Rather than appealing to the will of God, claimsmakers appeal to an equally esoteric realm for their legitimacy—to science, to abstract knowledge of the human being. Whatever the social or material realities of individuals, the human sciences possess a unique ability to speak to a deeper human essence precluded from other moral vocabularies. In a context of depoliticisation, external verifications of authority are needed. As Furedi describes, 'Policies are no longer good—they are "evidence-based"'. Policies are rarely generated by a world-view—they are derived from "best practice"' (Furedi, 2004: 54). The 'genius' of this approach, according to Bellah et al. (2008:47), 'is that it enables the individual to think of commitments—from marriage and work to political and religious involvement—as enhancements of the sense of individual well-being rather than as moral imperatives.'

2.7.2 *Emotions 'Made Safe'*

While governments have always been concerned with the management of the public mood, the appeal of the rhetoric of emotion as a policy frame only becomes possible long after the passions that once incited people to act have been tamed. As Furedi (2004) writes: 'Keeping emotions out of politics was dictated by the recognition that in a polarised environment, anger and resentment could provoke instability and social unrest. Today the political situation is radically different. The political passions that were associated with twentieth-century revolutions and social strife appear

exhausted' (Furedi, 2004:47). Health, wellbeing and happiness became politicised long after this 'dramatic transformation' had taken place, after the unchallenged ascendancy of the market effectively restricted the scope of the political imagination (Fitzpatrick, 2001:viii).

It is into this context that happiness claims emerge. However, this should not be understood as a passive cause and effect relationship. Rather, claims about the nature of the world reflect the culture that produced them but they are also the constituent elements of that culture. People draw on broader cultural scripts at the same time as they add new lines. Therefore this study can also be understood as contributing to our understanding of the development of therapy culture and the forms that ideas take in a context of depoliticisation. The theoretical tools necessary to understand the process of this construction are detailed in the next chapter.

3 Constructing Social Problems

Social constructionists understand that our knowledge of the objective world is always mediated by language (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). But any object that is said to be 'socially constructed' in this way is not simply an abstract or chance outgrowth of the social world. As linguistic anthropologists and dramaturgical theorists have highlighted, language, that means by which we assign meaning and, in turn, through which we come to understand our world, is indivisible from both human activity and the context within which that activity takes place (Duranti and Goodwin, 1992).²³ Therefore, a greater understanding of the social world can be gained not by searching for transcendental truths that underlie it in all places and at all times but rather by considering the constructs through which people make sense of that world at a given time. But these constructions are not one-to-one reflections of a particular culture. As Berger and Luckmann (1966:137-138) point out, at any given time people are subject to a profusion of competing definitions of reality. Moreover, such claims to knowledge of the real and objective nature of the world are always 'embodied'; that is, they are forwarded by particular people within particular contexts at particular moments in historical time (Berger and Luckmann, 1966:134). Furthermore, as Foucault notes from a similar perspective, even those claims that are unsuccessful or 'contradictory,' may nonetheless act as descriptors of the dominant line of discussion, giving insight into those claims that succeed (Foucault, 2002).

This perspective, when applied to social problems, reveals that they are not necessarily objective phenomena that have become so pressing that society has been forced to respond. Rather, they are fundamentally *activities* forming a process of social interaction. They are the products of the concerted efforts of individuals who *actively group together disparate phenomena*, characterise them as belonging to a particular type of problem, and attempt to bring that problem to the attention of others (Spector and Kitsuse, 2001:75-78).²⁴ It is these activities that construct and

²³ Although theorists within this paradigm have typically focused upon verbal speech acts, Hilgartner (2000) has applied similar perspectives to texts in his analysis of the performativity inherent in expert advice. The approach to texts utilised here diverges from these uses, but Duranti and Goodwin highlight the importance of context as the dynamic and socially constituted settings within which people's activities (in their words 'talk') exist in a reflexive relationship (1992:2-7).

²⁴ While this definition is primarily derived from Spector and Kitsuse (2001), the phrasing is intended to maintain the 'building' metaphor implicit in 'construction' (Hacking, 1999:49). In this way it also attempts to

actually *constitute* the problem itself as a social reality. That this is so is evidenced by the vast array of conditions that may pose varying dangers to human beings, or that some people may find distressing, but that scarcely find mention in newspaper reports and may never grace the pages of introductory sociology texts purporting to deal with 'social problems'. To say a problem is 'constructed' is therefore to allude to the indispensable role of human interactions in the construction process (Blumer, 1971:301)²⁵—a process made visible, and thus amenable to study, through the remnants of communication it leaves behind.

In order to understand this process as it is implicated in the construction of 'happiness' (and its associated vocabularies) as a social problem, attention must be drawn to these definitional activities, at the level of language, or 'claims', and the individuals, 'claimsmakers,' who forward them and the processes and contexts within which such claims find articulation. Consequently, this research endeavours to systematically delineate not only the constitution of the problem (what the problem 'is' as a series of claims) but also the people from whom claims about its existence have originated and the rhetorical strategies by which these claims are promoted. The success of these claimsmakers in achieving widespread recognition and diffusion of the problem is an important indicator of a particular socio-historical context hospitable to claims that problematise emotion.

This research is guided by different questions than those that take the existence of a problem of happiness in society as their starting point and proceed to a description of its scope, causes, victims and villains, and which offer proposals to ameliorate these conditions. Instead, it endeavours to critically examine the activities of others who have already done so with tremendous success in various spheres of public debate. Thus it asks not why society suddenly became unhappy, but rather why it suddenly became appealing to conceptualise the problems of society in the language of happiness and unhappiness. In order to adequately respond to these questions it is necessary to situate this analysis within the theoretical framework of social problems constructionism, to delineate its conceptual tools that will aid in the ensuing analysis,

avoid the common accusation launched against constructionist sociology of making claims to some 'objective' reality that underlies the (ostensibly erroneous) construction (see Woolgar and Pawluch's [1985] critique of 'ontological gerrymandering'). Rather, the emphasis here is on the 'systematic arrangement of elements' into a whole imputed with a meaning that makes it more than the sum of its parts (Hacking, 1999:49-50).

²⁵ In Blumer's words, 'They have their being fundamentally in this process of collective definition...' (1971:301).

and to highlight the critical importance of context in order to fully grasp the rise to prominence of particular ways of constructing the world at particular times. It is to an explication of this framework and these tools that this chapter is dedicated.

3.1 The Constructionist Approach

It should be noted that, as the variety of sources cited at the outset suggests, the dialectical approach to constructing a history of social phenomena has, and has had, a number of parallels in various disciplines and theoretical traditions. Therefore, it is necessary to explain the particular approach to the study of social problems utilised here, first at the broader theoretical level and then at the level of the particular terminology deployed.

At its most basic, the notion that social phenomena are contingent is derived from Marx's conception that, 'It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness' (Marx, 1994:211). Although sociology has perhaps been most influenced by the formulation set forth by Berger and Luckmann (1966), approaching happiness as a social problem by studying the 'claims' of 'claimsmakers' has the effect of locating this research within the theoretical and methodological tradition of the constructionist perspective as applied to the study of social problems.

This approach can be traced broadly to the pragmatism of George Herbert Mead and his notion that the objective reality of the world is created through social interactions. According to Mead, 'the individual mind can exist only in relation to other minds with shared meanings' (Mead, 1982:5). For Herbert Blumer, a student of Mead, one of the central tenets of this, the symbolic interactionist perspective, is that, 'As human beings we act singly, collectively, and societally on the basis of the meanings which things have for us' (Blumer, 1956:686). Indeed it was Blumer who first identified the need for a sociological approach to social problems that would not search simply for their causes and solutions in the objective world, but instead 'study the process by which society comes to see, to define, and to handle their social problems' (Blumer, 1971:300-301). But the first systematic articulation of a sociology of social problems did not come until several years later with Malcolm Spector and John I. Kitsuse's 1977 *Constructing Social Problems* (2001). Although Spector and Kitsuse do not cite Berger and Luckmann, there are clear parallels in that both perspectives emphasise the defining practices of individuals, the acceptance of which forms the basis of our taken for granted notions of reality. However, the constructionist approach

to social problems has since been developed quite apart from Berger and Luckmann's initial formulation, and may have even predated it, stemming instead from the rise and subsequent decline of labelling theory in the 1960s (Best, 2002:701). Since the late 1970s, the constructionist approach to social problems has produced a considerable body of work along with its own specialised vocabularies and research foci, one of the most recent and accessible explication of which can be found in Best (2008). The key contributions of the latter to the constructionist perspective is the systematic study of the construction of social problems not as merely abstract ideals that emerge from society in some intangible way, but at the more concrete level of what people actually say and do.

This perspective is more fruitful to the study of happiness because it is not simply the word itself that has been reconstituted throughout the ages and which is currently being reconstituted (although this may be the case), but that it has become specifically problematised. It is not simply that an array of books and articles have appeared which promise new ways of understanding and new ways of achieving happiness, but what has been posited is a lack of happiness, variably defined or implied, to which this knowledge should be directed. Moreover, this problem has been institutionalised into a range of policies, at the organisational, national and international levels. That society is faced with a pressing problem of unhappiness has come to be a taken for granted truth by a range of interested parties.

Since this idea that happiness is a social problem has not arisen as if from nowhere, it follows that it is the process by which these notions have come to be taken for granted that must be deconstructed. Importantly however, the degree to which these claims are taken for granted by the general population even to this day must not be overstated. This is the central point of interest about happiness; as will be shown in the ensuing chapters, unlike social movements like the civil rights campaign, claims about happiness have not emerged from disaffected individuals within the general population, organising at the grassroots level, knocking on doors and campaigning to bring about change. Rather, the first claims initially emerged from experts and were taken on by existing groups and think-tanks already organised and in possession of varying degrees of influence. The spread of claims about these putative conditions has followed what Strang and Soule (1998:270) have called a 'broadcast' model of diffusion. That is, rather than spreading via 'contagion' internally within the general population, claims about happiness originated externally and were 'broadcast' into the population largely via nonrelational channels, while a more horizontal contagion model operated within social networks closely connected to and part of the state apparatus (Best, 2001:11; Strang and Soule, 1998:270-271). From this

perspective, key to diffusion via external sources are those nonrelational channels like the mass media and various 'change agents' who 'deliberately seek to foster diffusion' and who may be thought of as analogous to our 'claimsmakers' (detailed below) (Strang and Soule, 1998:271-272; Best, 2001:11). That is, although adopting the rhetoric of social movements, the problematisation of happiness followed similar trends observed in health promotion in which the origins of discourses reside within the state rather than arising in opposition to it (Lupton, 1995:61). Therefore, although the problem of happiness is demonstrably taken for granted by those closely connected with public policy, it remains to be seen whether or not these ideas have successfully permeated the consciousness of the general public, or if they will do so in the future.²⁶

The constructionist perspective of social problems leads us to an understanding of happiness as a social problem by investigating its construction on two levels: first, at the basic level of definitional activities, and second at the point of transmission of these activities to broader audiences. Following Best (1990), we may distinguish these processes as 'primary' and 'secondary' claimsmaking, respectively. That is, primary claims, like those detailed in the previous chapter, may be thought of as existing 'in the background,' at the first level of formulating definitions, often before reaching the public sphere. Recall from above that the construction of a social problem relies upon a process whereby individuals define conditions as problematic, but crucially, they must also seek to convince others of the truth of these claims. Thus, secondary claimsmaking refers to the process of collective definition as it is inevitably shaped by the need to convince others. Moreover, as Hilgartner and Bosk (1988:58-59) describe:

The collective definition of social problems occurs not in some vague location such as society or public opinion but in particular public arenas in which social problems are framed and grow. These arenas include the executive and legislative branches of government, the courts, made-for-TV movies, the cinema, the news media (television news, magazines, newspapers and radio), political campaign organisations, social action groups, direct mail solicitations, books dealing with social issues, the research community, religious organizations, professional societies, and private foundations.

Importantly, the more public the arena, the less isolated are the claims appearing there. Claims inevitably find themselves competing for the 'scarce resource' of public attention amongst not only a cacophony of claims about other social problems, but also with competing definitions of

²⁶ This question lies beyond the scope of this study which seeks to delineate the processes through which claimsmakers construct the problem of happiness in the news media. Its success as a social problem is demonstrated by its widespread institutionalisation, and it is within these institutions that the lay public may first interact with happiness claims.

the problem of happiness in and of itself. It is usually not enough for a claimsmaker to draw attention to what they perceive as a troubling condition, they want something to be done about it. Therefore, it is crucial that they formulate claims that will be persuasive to audiences and that will stir them into action, or at least avoid resistance. Indeed, a great many claims have been forwarded about happiness, but they have not all been successful. Claims are shaped by the process of competition in the various public arenas in which they are articulated. Those claims that gain salience and those that fall away are inexorably connected to the particular people who make them and the particular contexts in which they have appeared, and thus investigating the interplay of primary and secondary claimsmaking, tracing their sources, and analysing their rhetoric offer valuable insights not only into the problem but also into culture itself. The news media offer an ideal starting point from which to identify the rhetoric of problems and the claimsmakers who make them, as advocates from a variety of backgrounds enter onto this public stage, submitting their claims into competition for the attention of the public and policymakers, a point to which we will return in the final section of this chapter.

Once claims enter into the cultural sphere, those that become the authoritative descriptions of reality are most often not decided by some truth intrinsic to themselves. Incidentally, the further expounding of this point also brings forth the response to a potential criticism of the application of the constructionist perspective to happiness. Namely, is it not conceivable that those claims that have gained salience and which have gone on to be the authoritative definitions of the problem have done so because they are the truest? That is, are they not so taken for granted because they have been proven in the objective realm of 'science' and empirical proofs untainted by subjective definition?

This question will be more fully attended to below, but one of the more interesting points about happiness as a problem is that it has not always been an idiom open to scientific investigation. Yet as chapters 5 through 7 will detail, definitions of happiness (and its problematic nature) arose from very particular sectors of society, namely experts and advocacy organisations who relied heavily upon the language of science in their claims. The importance of this fact becomes clear when it is considered that almost every philosopher has had something to say about happiness, and doubtless almost every ordinary person might have their own theory, but not every one of these definitions—indeed not even a small fraction of them—have gone on to become the authoritative descriptions and prescriptions of either the problem or of the sort of happiness for

which society and individuals ought to be striving.²⁷ Happiness itself is a notoriously nebulous and abstract term, and indeed, may even belong among what Gallie (1956) has called 'essentially contested concepts'; that is, concepts frequently mobilised in order to evoke a range of (contingent) values and ideals but whose definitions, upon closer examination, become impossible to isolate. However, as Berger and Luckmann point out, 'power in society includes the power to determine decisive socialization processes and, therefore, the power to *produce* reality. In any case, highly abstract symbolizations (that is, greatly removed from the concrete experience of everyday life) are validated by social rather than empirical support' (1966:137, emphasis in original). That is to say that those definitions that do become authoritative are decided not on the basis of empirical truth (whatever that may be), but *socially*.

This process of collective definition is inexorably connected to those culturally imbued with the authority to create those definitions and the contexts in which they are defined. But even those with such culturally sanctioned authority (for example, experts of various affiliations) must still compete amongst others with similar authority but opposing claims. Thus competition will arise amongst competing problems and competing definitions of a particular problem, and the appeal of any one definition to particular segments of the existing social structure will be decided in terms extrinsic to any abstract notions of objective 'truth.' This is perhaps best explained by Berger and Luckmann's (1966:137) description of the fact that, 'there will always be a social-structural base for competition between rival definitions of reality and that the outcome of the rivalry will be affected, if not always determined outright, by the development of this base.' It is conceivable that definitions of reality could be concocted in complete isolation from the social structure, but once these viewpoints gain a hearing in one or another arena of public discourse, 'it will be largely extra-theoretical interests that will decide the outcome of the rivalry' (Berger and Luckmann, 1966:137). Subsequently, '[d]ifferent social groups will have different affinities with the competing theories and will [...] become "carriers" of the latter' so that for example, a particular theory may appeal to the upper stratum of society and its rival theory may appeal to the lower stratum, 'for reasons far removed from the passions that animated the original inventors of the theories' (Berger and Luckmann, 1966:138). Crucially, the authors continue:

²⁷ Moreover, even the words used to describe the problem are not arbitrary but have arisen over the life course of the problem and its different competing definitions. It is not an unimportant fact that this thesis initially began with an interest in tracing the development of problematised definitions of 'happiness' and began to note a distinct emphasis upon 'wellbeing,' even and perhaps especially by claimsmakers formerly solely mobilising the term 'happiness' in connection with their claims. This is explored in chapter 7.

The competing coteries of experts will then come to attach themselves to the 'carrier' groups and their subsequent fate will depend on the outcome of whatever conflict led these groups to adopt the respective theories. Rival definitions of reality are thus decided upon in the sphere of rival social interests whose rivalry is in turn 'translated' into theoretical terms. Whether the rival experts and their respective supporters are 'sincere' in their subjective relationship to the theories in question is of only secondary interest for a sociological understanding of these processes (Berger and Luckmann, 1966:138).

Whichever theory prevails is therefore decided not upon its intrinsic qualities but rather by its applicability to social interests of the groups and individuals that have taken it on. It follows then, that any properly sociological study of social problems should not therefore seek out the 'real' causes and solutions of some objective reality apart from what we make of it, but should rather seek out their nature as the product of this process of competing definitions and extra-theoretical interests. Moreover, attempting to understand the problem of happiness and wellbeing by joining the cacophony of competing claims, by measuring its supposed parameters and positing its 'real' causes and solutions, is to risk creating the very phenomenon one is purporting to describe.

We turn now to a delineation of these processes and to a more precise development of some of the analytical tools that will aid in the ensuing analysis—namely, claims and the analytical devices used to analyse and comprehend those claims as elements of persuasive arguments, and the claimsmakers who forward them.

3.2 Claims

Although the term 'claim' has been frequently used thus far, it is necessary to situate its definition within a particular theoretical context. It was Spector and Kitsuse's definition of social problems as, 'the activities of individuals or groups making assertions of grievances and claims with respect to some putative conditions' (2001:75) that introduced the vocabulary of claims and claimsmakers into the constructionist lexicon (Best, 2002:702). Put simply, a claim is an argument that a particular troubling condition exists, that it has particular characteristics, and that it needs to be addressed (paraphrased from Best, 2008:338).

As previously mentioned, people are regularly subjected to a multitude of competing claims about the nature of reality. While the constructionism of Berger and Luckmann focused upon the phenomenology of individuals' experience, the interactional and rhetorical—that is, persuasive—nature of construction is a crucial element of the process of making and sharing meanings in

social life (Potter, 1996:13). Perhaps nowhere is this more applicable than in the case of social problems in which it is usually not enough for a claimmaker to name and describe a new issue of concern. Rather, the initial identification is usually followed by the demand that some action be taken, that 'something must be done.'

The list of social problems is potentially endless, but the attention that can be accorded them in various arenas of public discourse is finite. Claims about new social problems do not exist in a vacuum and must of necessity compete with a multitude of additional claimants on the 'scarce resource' of public attention to win a space amongst the commonsense perceptions of the most pressing problems of the day (Hilgartner and Bosk, 1988:53). Not all of these claims succeed; indeed, not even a small fraction of them win out in the 'marketplace of care.' The various public arenas in which claims are enunciated have a limited carrying capacity; there is a limited amount of 'surplus compassion' that people are able to muster for causes beyond their immediate concerns; there are limited minutes in a meeting, core messages in a political campaign, or inches in a newspaper column (Hilgartner and Bosk, 1988:59-60). According to Hilgartner and Bosk: 'It is the discrepancy between the number of potential problems and the size of the public space for addressing them that makes competition among problems so crucial and central to the process of collective definition' (1988:59-60).

Competition necessitates that claimmakers mobilise persuasive rhetoric, arguments that are likely to persuade their target audiences in order to minimise opposition and mobilise maximum concern (Best, 1987:103). The subsequent sections detail the rhetorical strategies typically used by claimmakers as they attempt to gain recognition and support for their claims and which provide a framework for their study. However, it is important for the moment to point out precisely why competition raises the importance of rhetoric as a crucial facet of the claimmaking process and thus as indispensable to the study of social problems and happiness in particular. The constraints of competition in the mass media, and the news media in particular, shape claims in three important ways: they create a need to appeal to broad audiences, to craft compelling narratives, and insofar as it is possible, to avoid controversy and minimise resistance.

First, claimmakers must be aware of their audiences and which claims are likely to be appealing in various mediums.²⁸ Often, the success of a claim depends upon being able to appeal not only to

²⁸ Nichols (2003) reminds that audiences are not passive recipients of messages, and successful claimmakers must be sensitive to their reactions. In this way, construction can be seen to be 'dialogical' as

a niche of dedicated supporters, but also upon successfully gaining a broad base of awareness and support. Thus, a social movement activist giving a speech at a protest rally comprised mainly of supporters will use different rhetoric than an editorial in a major national newspaper catering to a broad demographic. For example, Maurer (2002) has described how animal rights activists seeking to promote vegetarianism typically espouse a moral rationale for their decision not to eat meat. However, when attempting to bring these claims to broader audiences they adopt a 'slow education process' centred on health benefits and gradually move toward a more overtly ideological stance (Maurer, 2002:145).²⁹ Once claims are articulated in a public arena with the aim of convincing and raising awareness and support amongst a more substantial segment of the population, they are often inflected with the need to accommodate and speak convincingly to an accordingly diverse array of viewpoints.

Second, successful claims are often those which have managed to avoid a great deal of opposition. To the degree that a claim is uncontested, it has a greater likelihood of affecting policy. However, this can be especially difficult in practice, and dedicated claimsmakers may attempt several different formulations before successfully drawing widespread attention to their claims. If successful however, 'well-crafted claims sometimes create surprising alliances among people who don't usually agree,' thereby converting potential conflict into consensus (Best, 2008:43). Several studies have underscored the tendency for claims framed in uncontroversial and highly symbolic terms to achieve widespread support and rapid diffusion through various institutions. For example, in a study of abducted children as a social problem, Gentry (1988:422) describes how '[g]iven the media attention on abducted children, which was repeatedly noted in committee hearings, politicians and public relations personnel were presented a valence issue that would meet with acceptance from peers, constituents, and customers ranging from the far left to the far right.' As a result, claims about the extent and epidemic nature of the problem met with little criticism and gained a rapidly growing basis of outspoken support across policymakers, presenting as they did an opportunity for 'any politician seeking to establish himself/herself as a protector of family members' (Fritz and Altheide, 1987:477).

audiences (composed not only of the general public but possibly of other interested parties with claims and counterclaims of their own) respond positively or negatively and claims are revised accordingly.

²⁹ This strategy, it should be noted, produced somewhat dubious results for the movement. Maurer points out that in compromising the moral message in favour of a more broadly agreeable claim based on individual health, claimsmakers were less able to recruit dedicated activists in support of the more drastic measures they desired (for example, the whole scale decommissioning of slaughterhouses) (2002:143).

This point brings forth the importance of 'valence issues' to public debate about new social problems. Borrowed from electoral research, valence issues are crucial to gaining an understanding of the success of claims evoking happiness. The tendency for claims like those pertaining to 'child abuse', 'peace' or 'national strength' to promote consensus and create alliances across parties not normally in agreement make such rhetorical idioms particularly appealing to claimsmakers. According to Nelson (1984:28), valence issues are characterised by their 'lack of specificity and their attempt to reaffirm the ideals of civic life' (emphasis removed). Unlike 'position issues' like abortion or euthanasia which can evoke a fierce and often polarised debate, an abstract ideal of 'freedom' or 'change', 'elicits a single, strong, fairly uniform emotional response and does not have an adversarial quality' (Nelson, 1984:27). Claims about 'happiness' therefore share a great deal in common with similar claims about child abuse and 'victims' rights'; it is difficult to imagine how they could be contested or opposed, since few would argue for depression, defend child abusers or 'blame the victim' (Best, 1999:108). Claimsmakers may not agree on all aspects of the problem and may take ownership and/or lend support for very different reasons, but the widespread agreement that such issues provoke often drives their rapid cultural affirmation. As will become clear throughout the remainder of this study, happiness has permeated the language of an increasingly vast array of social problems and has constructed areas of common ground between surprisingly diverse claimsmakers.

Finally, to the degree that secondary claims are constrained by the limitations of space and the needs of a medium, they must be compelling enough to catch the attention of the intended audience. Nichols (1997:325) describes, with reference to a common strategy of claimsmakers to single out a compelling case as representative of the larger problem: 'This issue suggests that claimsmakers may produce exemplars with two audiences in mind: the general public, and those in positions to formulate and enact policy (e.g., legislatures, regulatory agencies).' However, claims must appear not only compelling enough to warrant a response from the public and those in positions to enact the desired changes, but also, particularly for claimsmakers without direct access to the mass media, they must be compelling enough to warrant reportage by secondary claimsmakers (those who translate primary claims for broader audiences like producers, editors, journalists, documentary filmmakers, and other gatekeepers to large audiences). Claims that conform to the needs of the intended medium stand a greater chance of attracting the attention of those working within it. According to Gans (2004), news workers may accord more attention to stories perceived as relevant to their readership/viewership, easily comprehensible, novel,

emotionally engaging, or dramatic.³⁰ In order to attract attention then, ‘the construction of putative conditions as problems depends not merely on the creation of typifying images but on their successful use in storytelling’ (Nichols, 1997:325, emphasis removed). Successful claims must seek to tell a ‘compelling story’ encompassing not only examples and definitions of the problem and how it ought to be conceived, but also compelling reasons for why audiences, variously composed, should care about this particular problem.

In sum, the need to appeal to broad audiences and to minimise resistance make framing problems as valence issues a particularly appealing strategy for claimsmakers; the need to craft a compelling narrative means that claims across social problems tend to exhibit common strategies such as alleging a worsening situation and emphasising the suffering of vulnerable innocents. These aspects of claims are important as they contribute to an understanding of why happiness defined and described in particular ways became an appealing frame for a wide range of concerns. News media discussions of social problems frequently appear as mere reflections of troubling conditions, though of course vulnerable to error, bias or even external pressures and influence (such as that exerted by, for example, the owners of media conglomerates). However, it is important to recognise that social problems can be fundamentally shaped by far subtler processes that exert a no less powerful influence on how the world is talked about and thus perceived and acted upon by those within it.

3.2.1 The Study of Rhetoric

Claims do not just tell us about reality; they must *convince* us of their reality. Problem claims are thus a form of rhetoric. In order to understand happiness as a social problem, it is crucially important to understand the role that rhetoric and rhetorical choices play in constructing the image of the issue. The importance of rhetoric is evidenced by the fact that it has been the subject of prescriptive, descriptive and interpretive texts throughout the history of western philosophy. For much of this history, its study has been didactic; from Aristotle’s three modes of persuasion (pathos, logos and ethos) to Cicero’s five canons, the focus was on creating students skilled in the

³⁰ Although this study was initially published in 1979, an updated edition appeared in 2004 in which Gans reflects that although there may have been many changes in the intervening years, his observations and interactions with journalists suggest that ‘the processes and considerations that go into deciding what’s news, and the values and assumptions that underlie news judgments, have remained much the same’ (Gans, 2004:vxii).

art of producing discourse (van Dijk, 1997). But it was precisely because they acutely recognised the power of rhetoric and its ability to compel individuals to act or take decisions that classical philosophers developed and evolved rhetoric toward becoming one of the three ancient arts of discourse. Indeed, such an understanding underlies Plato's portrayal of the Socratic critique of the Sophists' rhetorical appeals to emotion and flattery, so that 'if a pastry baker and a doctor had to compete in front of children [...] the doctor would die of starvation' (Plato, 1999:101).

While the creation of discourse remains the domain of contemporary rhetoric, the 'linguistic turn' in philosophy and the social sciences has shifted artefacts of discourse and rhetoric to the centre of analyses. Although this turn is represented by vast and highly variable bodies of work, its core insight has been an emphasis upon the role of language and linguistic structures in ordering and giving meaning to experience. In addition, it has led to a heightened awareness of the 'dynamic interaction of a rhetorical text with its context, that is, how a text responds to, reinforces, or alters the understandings of an audience or the social fabric of the community' (Gill and Whedbee, 1997:159). At its most extreme, this approach can lead to an overly relativist rendering of society, as a one-sided focus upon language in the analysis of social problems can lead to the apparent denial of the existence of the phenomena they describe. Yet at its most fruitful, the study of rhetoric in constructionism can draw attention to the role of language in constructing and even constituting our sense of the world around us, bringing forth an awareness of the fact that our descriptions of reality are not innocent, but affect how we conceive of both it and ourselves (Lupton and Barclay, 1997:4). As Fairclough (1992:41-42) has put it: 'This entails that discourse is in an active relation to reality, that language signifies reality in the sense of *constructing meanings for it*, rather than that discourse is in a passive relation to reality, with language merely referring to objects which are taken to be a given in reality' (emphasis added).

3.2.2 Rhetoric in Constructionism

While considerably less attended to than in constructionism more generally, the study of rhetoric is central to the study of the construction of social problems. For Spector and Kitsuse, definitional activities are not simply important considerations in the quest to understand a social problem, they form its essential composition (Spector and Kitsuse, 2001:75; Schneider 1985:211). That is, what a social problem becomes greatly depends upon how it is conceptualised and defined. In their social existence, social problems *are* a series of claims.

In response to controversies that dominated constructionist thinking about social problems in the 1980s, the role of language in social problems became only further entrenched in the approach (Woolgar and Pawluch, 1985; Ibarra and Kitsuse, 1993). This is perhaps most evident in Ibarra and Kitsuse's (1993) reformulation of the programmatic statements of the paradigm, replacing Spector and Kitsuse's original 'putative conditions' with 'condition-categories' in an attempt to focus the attention of the constructionist researcher more acutely upon 'society's classifications of its own contents—used in practical contexts to generate meaningful descriptions and evaluations of social reality' (Ibarra and Kitsuse, 1993:30). In doing so, they reaffirmed the centrality of 'the symbol-and language-bound character of claims-making, as well as how members' facility with certain discursive strategies—including rhetorical and reasoning idioms—initiate and constitute the social problems process' (Ibarra and Kitsuse, 1993:31). While the possibility and even desirability of a 'strict' or fully 'monist' constructionism which, as Ibarra and Kitsuse suggested, 'never leaves language' (1993:31) has been questioned (Best, 1993; Heap, 1995), the focus upon language nonetheless reaffirms the key strength of the approach, a strength which it has drawn intact from its origins in labelling theory. Namely, 'the independence of meaning from the objects to which it is or may be attached by sentient actors as they create, recreate, and are created by social life' (Schneider, 1985:226).

Clearly, there can be little doubt that there is a real world of objects 'out there' with which human beings undoubtedly interact apart from their idea of it. However, language is the inevitable arbiter of our relationship with that world. Naming reality involves the drawing together of various phenomena under a particular umbrella of meaning. The means by which this is done (and moreover *that* it is done in relation to certain segments of reality at certain times) has consequences for how our reality is perceived.

The focus upon rhetoric and the language-bound character of claimsmaking brings forth a tension, touched upon above, that frequently arises within constructionist studies; namely a certain ambivalence that is often displayed toward the role of science and its ability to 'grasp objective reality more accurately than other belief systems' (Wainwright, 2008:13). This ambiguity is particularly evident in the treating of science (as will be done here) as 'socially constructed' (Best, 2008:107). That is, as a cultural resource utilised by claimsmakers as they construct social problems (Aronson, 1984). Yet through the arbiter of culture, the role of science need not be so ambiguous. The intention is not to refute that science is a superior mode of enquiry, that it possesses a unique ability to penetrate through various layers of reality without, to summarise Bhaskar, ever reaching the 'bottom' (2002:52-55), but to point out that culture mediates the

transition from enquiry to discourse. Indeed, it conditions the very questions we ask and how we set out to find the answers. This is particularly true when claimsmaking, especially in terms of mass media claimsmaking about a new social issue, draws upon science for its rhetorical power.

This understanding becomes all the more significant when we move from the realm of objects and things into the realm of human beings, since unlike atoms or animals, human beings are not simply there to be described, but are conscious of, and exist in a dynamic and dialectical relationship with, the categories by which their reality is divided. It is not denied that many of the phenomena claimsmakers describe may indeed be 'real' at the same time as they are 'constructed' both within the confines of media claimsmaking and in the scientific processes which produce much of the knowledge on which claims are meant to be based. That is to say that the plethora of studies purporting to measure happiness and its various correlates are not simply 'unreal'. But to draw attention to particular phenomena, to draw them together and/or single them out as meaningful objects of scrutiny and study, and to impute them with a hitherto unprecedented significance, is to go some way toward contributing to the creation of new social objects. In addition, the image of the human that underlies and emerges from these descriptions reflects the context within which that description was formed as well as contributes to the ongoing construction of new subjects. As Hacking describes, 'One might have the picture of first there being a kind of human behaviour or condition, and then the knowledge. That is not the case. The kind and the knowledge grow together' (Hacking, 1995:361).³¹³²

Thus, the words used to conceptualise phenomena function as an invitation for audiences to conceive of reality in particular ways and to emphasise some aspects of their experience over others—in short, to adopt the claimsmakers' interpretations themselves. And some invitations are more alluring than others. It is this understanding of the role of language that is most useful

³¹ Further, drawing these new phenomena (statistics, studies, new labels) together under a particular label and campaigning for their acceptance as a significant problem to which society should attend is not an inevitable accomplishment, but rather a historically and culturally specific event. Although it is true that we cannot escape construction, we can deconstruct and in so doing, offer alternate constructions which render the inevitability and pure descriptiveness of the former problematic.

³² This approach to the Sociology of Knowledge was perhaps first, and best, articulated by Marx and Engels in their *German Ideology*. While often misinterpreted as an approach which renders an overly deterministic view of human beings, it is perhaps best encapsulated by Marx's famous phrase in the *Eighteenth Brumaire*: 'Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past' (Marx, 1954:10).

for constructionist analyses of social problems. That is, how actors at various stages go about building the social world in some ways and not others and the rhetoric that they inevitably must use if they wish to draw attention and converts to their particular interpretation.

3.2.3 *Rhetoric in Claimsmaking*

This means that the language that claimsmakers choose to describe the world is not simply a self-evident and straightforward description of a new problem they believe they have uncovered. It may take a number of attempts before claimsmakers develop a 'winning' rhetorical formulation, or until the circumstances of the broader culture or political climate are such that one's claims are liable to gain widespread affirmation. For instance, Kingdon (2003:181, 44) describes how many claimsmakers 'lie in wait' for an opportunity to push their claims, be it a related event, the receptiveness of a particular administration or the prevailing 'mood' in political quarters.

The ensuing chapters will demonstrate that there have been failed attempts to problematise happiness in the past, with claimsmakers variously failing to arouse interest, meeting with immediate opposition and cynicism or failing to develop a concerted claimsmaking effort around the issue. Not only must claims be well-timed, but they must also be arresting and eye-catching, they have to grab and hold attention so that people will care about this problem (and not others) (Best, 2008:46). Claimsmakers must also be sensitive to the reactions of audiences and the emergence of opposition (Nichols, 2003). If opponents have called into question a statistic, that statistic may be dropped or another substituted. A particular argument that has failed to gain attention or which has met with antagonism may be dropped and a more successful claim substituted and given more focus and prominence (Best, 2008:44).

While superficially, the words that are used to describe a problem do not seem important and confront the receiver as a simple description of reality, these activities show that developing claims is both a dynamic and intensely rhetorical procedure. As Best (1987:115) characterises the process:

Claims-making inevitably involves selecting from available arguments, placing the arguments chosen in some sequence, and giving some arguments particular emphasis. These are rhetorical decisions. Moreover, as claims-makers assess the response to their claims, or as they address new audiences, claims may be revised and reconstructed in hopes of making them more effective. In such cases, *even the most ingenuous claim-maker must become conscious of doing rhetorical work* (emphasis added).

Those claims that gain constant repetition and those that fall away or adapt are inevitably impressed with this rhetorical struggle for acceptance. Over time, claims come more and more to reflect cultural values, as claimsmakers learn which values to evoke as warranting attention and action, and which to avoid.

3.2.4 Cultural Resources and Epistemic Cultures

According to Altheide (2009:66), claims appearing in the news media and their tendencies to adopt common rhetorical strategies and to coalesce around particular themes provide 'a window into collective sentiments, preferences, and identity pronouncements about epistemic communities.' Since claimsmakers draw on existing cultural understandings in the process of formulating claims that will be perceived as persuasive by members of those cultures, it follows that those claims that are constantly reaffirmed and which become taken for granted assumptions about the nature of the problem can provide a window into the cultural moment that produced them. Consequently, this study is not just about the problematisation of happiness, but about a culture that found claims about happiness a fitting description of reality at a particular time.

That texts are intended to persuade has been widely examined; whether produced in the natural sciences or printed in the pages of a newsmagazine, they are efforts to convince a particular interpretive community of their contents' importance and veracity (Knorr-Cetina, 1999; Latour 1987). Yet we do not simply believe everything we hear. We evaluate new claims on the basis of criteria that are familiar to us, to our time period and culture—we want to see proof (Best, 2008:16). At the same time, what constitutes convincing 'proof' is not a static consideration. What makes a claim convincing? What sorts of statements are likely to propel a desired audience into action? Why are some conceptualisations of reality readily accepted at one time and place, but not at others?

While theoretically, a claimsmaker can formulate claims in any manner that he or she chooses, every culture and time period presents a repository of images and ideas about how the world works to which a claimsmaker must adhere if his or her claims are to become widely accepted. Claims must 'make sense' according to the categories with which people are used to conceptualising their world. Indeed, even when it comes to some of the most seemingly irrational beliefs about the nature of the material world, people can be shown to take a decidedly rational

stance according to the forms of knowledge and evidence with which they are familiar. Perhaps nowhere is this tendency better illustrated than in the famous example of Evans-Pritchard's Azande.

According to Evans-Pritchard, although the Azande's belief in witchcraft was apparently unhindered by the fact that (in our terms), 'as [they] conceive of them, they clearly cannot exist,' their socially proscribed means of explaining the world nonetheless 'in no way contradicts empirical knowledge of cause and effect' (1976:18, 25). Rather, their social categories provide them with a natural philosophy by which the relations between people and the events that befall them can be explained and their means of responding devised. For the Azande, explaining misfortunes via the idiom of witchcraft embraces a system of values that regulates human conduct (Evans-Pritchard, 1976:18). As he describes in his ethnographic account of the phenomenon:

The world known to the senses is just as real to them as it is to us. [...] They are foreshortening the chain of events, and in a particular social situation are selecting the cause that is socially relevant and neglecting the rest. [...] Besides, death is not only a natural but also a social fact. It is not simply that the heart ceases to beat and the lungs to pump air in an organism, but it is, also, the destruction of a member of a family and kin, of a community and tribe. Death leads to consultation of oracles, magic rites, and revenge. Among the causes of death witchcraft is the only one that has any significance for social behaviour (Evans-Pritchard, 1976:25).

And yet even those who believe in witches do not do so indiscriminately. Even fantastical concepts have rules that hold them together and lend them coherence and functionality. A person who has lied or committed adultery, for example, cannot evade punishment by claiming that he has been bewitched: 'Witchcraft does not make a person tell lies' (Evans-Pritchard, 1976:26).³³ Claims couched in a rhetoric of witches and magic, which locate the aetiology of events in a mystical universe of meaning are therefore more readily accepted by the Azande whose cultural milieu encompasses a complex system in which these categories function and revolve. While these beliefs subsume phenomena that are undoubtedly 'real' in the sense that people really do suffer sickness and death, it is culture that is superimposed over such events and which gives them their social and moral value.

³³ It should be understood that while the example of the Azande is related in the 'ethnographic present', Evans-Pritchard was writing about research conducted in the late 1920s.

The example of the Azande is not as obscure as it initially might seem. New claims arising in contemporary western cultures must also resonate with already existing belief systems which render some conceptualisations of reality plausible and others liable to be rejected out of hand. Referring to the rise of PTSD, Kenny (1996:154) points out that, '[b]oth Zande witchcraft and western traumatic memory therapy deploy a theory of causation within a framework of moral judgements.' Similarly, the medical anthropologist Allan Young has pointed out that contemporary western methods of categorising experience with reference to mental disorder and illness, and in the case of his own research, 'traumatic memory,' involves a similar means of ordering and reordering experience which confers upon individuals, events and memories a particular moral status and meaning. As Young describes:

Individuals 'choose' PTSD for this purpose, to reorganize their life-worlds, because it is a widely known and ready-made construct, it is sanctioned by the highest medical authority, it is said to originate in external circumstance rather than personal flaws or weakness, and (in some situations) it earns compensation (1996:98).

In order to understand the processes that underlie these differences in belief and the manner by which some interpretations of reality are able to gain resonance in particular places and times, Young draws on the notion of the 'epistemic culture' to describe 'what any group of people know in common' (Young, 2009:325-326). This term, while first introduced into science studies by Knorr-Cetina (1999), has a number of parallels from Émile Durkheim's 'collective consciousness,' to the *denkkollektiv* of Ludwik Fleck, Michel Foucault's *episteme*, and Thomas Kuhn's concept of the paradigm. While diverging in their subject matter and focus, the common thread uniting these concepts is an attempt to conceptualise and explain the symbolic categories that a group of people hold in common to varying degrees and through which they may make sense of their world. In Knorr-Cetina's (1999:1) conceptualisation, epistemic cultures are 'those amalgams of arrangements and mechanisms—bonded through affinity, necessity, and historical coincidence—which, in a given field, make up how we know what we know.'³⁴

³⁴ Altheide (2009:73) uses the concept to explain: 'What people regard as evidence is contingent on symbolic processes and meanings that shape, guide, deflect, and construct boundaries.' He suggests that 'documents (i.e., anything that can be retrieved or recorded for subsequent analysis about social meanings) provide a window into collective sentiments, preferences, and identity pronouncements about epistemic communities' (Altheide, 2009:66). This is the conceptualisation that forms one of the methodological starting points for this study. To the degree that claimsmakers are able to successfully draw on cultural resources, they are more likely to be successful. Epistemic cultures/communities point to the variability of evidence and also allude to the fact that some explanations of the world actually mirror the existing structures they are meant to explain.

What makes problems of personal and collective ‘happiness,’ PTSD, or further examples like the ‘susto’ of Latin America, or the ‘Bad Destiny’ of northern Nigeria plausible explanations and categorisations of experience within their respective cultures? As Kenny (1996:156) explains, each has a cultural history and a cultural relevance; they are ‘built upon local cultural understandings about the nature of the self or soul that, in an appropriate context, make diagnosis of one or the other reasonable, though not inevitable.’

These variable temporal and cultural understandings mean that the form a claim takes is very much context-dependent. Claims need to be tailored to these broader cultural understandings, but since claimsmakers themselves are likely to be members of the same culture as their intended audience, when they devise claims that they themselves find persuasive, they are likely to reflect at least some of the taken for granted assumptions of the broader epistemic community (Best, 2008:30). In his study of the media’s influence on perceptions of terrorism post 9/11, Altheide distils the core insight of this approach for claimsmaking:

Evidence is not objectively given, ‘out there,’ to be picked up. Evidence is constituted by social definitions and meanings, which in turn are contextualized by culture, history, ideology, and specific expertise. There is a discourse of evidence, which, above all, requires some shared meanings, perspectives, and criteria. The ‘reason’ that science and religion have trouble ‘talking to one another’ is that they operate from what Kuhn (1970) called different ‘paradigms,’ but there is much more to it. Their cosmologies are different, and the bounds of authority differ. It is apparent when one looks at history that which is evidence for one person—or, more correctly, an epistemic community—does not qualify as evidence for another (2009:77).

In other words, how advocates describe a new social problem, what constitutes convincing evidence and the words they use to characterise its victims and villains very much depend upon already familiar understandings of the nature of human beings, their relationships with the world around them, and their place within it.

In this way, it can be said that, ‘there is no such thing as a new social problem’ (Best, 1999:164). Rather, as Best (1999:164) describes, ‘How advocates describe a new social problem very much depends on how they (and their audiences—the public, the press, and policy-makers) are used to talking about, already familiar problems.’ The cultural repertoire of familiar problems reflects successful claimsmaking in the past, and new claims are likely to draw on these prevailing interpretations of reality. Successful problems—problems that dominate the headlines, which form the focal point of political campaigns and whose core claims come to form the ‘canon’ of what we know about the proper functioning of the world, the human being, and the current

(problematic) state of affairs resonate precisely because they have achieved an effective rhetorical 'fit' with their historical and cultural moment. They also play a reflexive role in shaping that moment as claimsmakers and audiences interact with those new claims, adapting old claims, and in many cases, variously reshaping their life-worlds in accordance with them. This can mean implementing new ideas in their personal lives, in their work, organisations or developing new organisations and policies in response to claims as well as in the socialisation and education of initiates. In drawing out those claims which have gained constant repetition and affirmation, it is possible to gain insight into the cultural resources on which they have drawn and thus to gain insight into the broader historical and cultural moment that makes some claims plausible and appealing, or even thinkable, 'sayable,' and believable.

The claims detailed throughout this thesis implicitly underscore a particular way of making sense of the world and of the nature of human beings which differs in fundamental ways from those that came before it. They both resonate with and represent new articulations and developments of an overarching system of meaning dominated by therapeutic understandings. It is only into such a cultural climate that claims about happiness, thus conceived, emerge and find fertile ground.

3.2.5 Grounds, Warrants and Conclusions

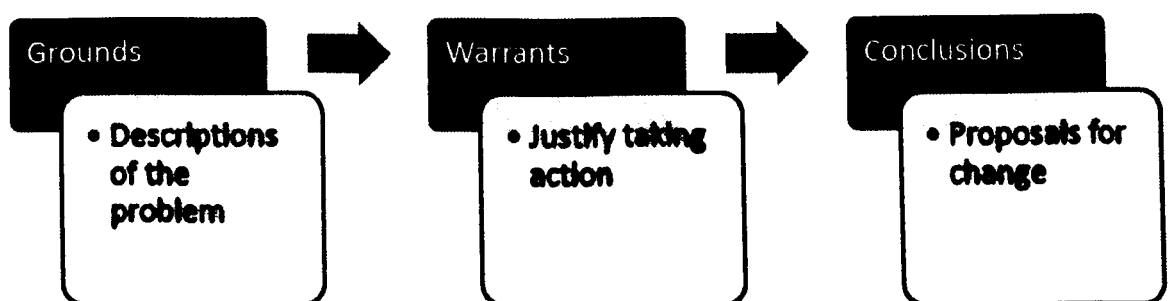
Two important questions guiding this research concern what claims about happiness are and how they come to prevail. Thus far we have established that claims in general adapt to competition with other claims and draw on the cultural resources particular to their corresponding epistemic communities in order to achieve salience, plausibility, and affirmation. Seasoned claimsmakers quickly learn ways to capture attention and mobilise popular support and sympathy, resulting in increasingly polished claims that tend to coalesce around particular themes (Best, 1987:115). In order to ascertain what sort of problem happiness is, it is necessary to identify these underlying patterns in claimsmaking about happiness. As claimsmaking is rhetorical, rhetoric, or the study of persuasion, can be used in their analysis (Best, 1987:102).

While there have been numerous rhetorical analyses of claims, there have been comparatively few attempts to develop an analytically coherent approach to their study. Extending the work of Gusfield (1981) on social problems as forms of rhetoric and ritual, Best (1987) sought to apply the tools of logical theory to the analysis of arguments about social problems using Toulmin's 1958

account of the basic structures of argument to develop a scheme of classification as an analytic device. Toulmin's classification includes the conclusions whose merits one is attempting to establish and the 'grounds,' or facts which are used in support of the desired conclusion (Toulmin, 2003:90; Best, 1987:102). Assuring the legitimacy of the move from grounds to conclusions are 'warrants,' which are not further data but 'rules, principles, inference licenses' which justify and bridge the divide (Toulmin, 2003:91).

In Best's conceptualisation, grounds are 'statements about the nature of the problem,' and can take many forms, although patterns can be observed to exist across many different types of problems (Best, 2008:31). Examples of grounds commonly used in problem claims are giving the problem a new and often 'catchy' name, estimating the problems scope and alleging a 'worsening situation,' statements about the kinds of people affected, and connecting the issue to other familiar problems. Warrants attempt to justify taking action, often drawing on cultural resources to implore audiences to act. They may imply an incongruity between conditions and values (the claimsmaker hopes) audiences cherish. Examples include emphasising the innocence and blamelessness of children, rising medical costs, health benefits, or evoking abstract rights like freedom or equality. Conclusions are statements about what should be done to remedy the problem and can range from vague endorsements of 'change' to detailed proposals for action. Like both grounds and warrants, conclusions are also affected by their socio-historical context. Certain proposals and endorsements of change will be acceptable in some places and times but not at others. The process of moving from grounds to warrants and conclusions is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Ground, Warrants and Conclusions



It is the culture bound character of claimsmaking combined with the competitive nature of the news media that make the structures of argument particularly useful for the analysis of social

problems claims. These are the analytical tools adopted in order to answer what the problem of happiness is and how its claims are promoted, the results of which are detailed in chapter 7. However, claims are not disembodied or abstract social processes. As Nichols (1997:325) notes, 'Narration of new problems [...] is more likely to be effective when there is a symbiotic relationship between different types of claimsmakers.'

3.3 Claimsmakers

Claims have been described and defined first only insofar as it is necessary to understand what it is that '*claimsmakers*' construct. Nonetheless, it is crucial to recognise that individuals and groups always pre-exist claims; texts do not exist in the abstract, people must make them.³⁵ Put simply, '*claimsmakers*' are those individuals or groups who seek to convince others of the existence of a troubling condition that needs to be addressed (Best, 2008:338). Theoretically, nearly anyone can be a claimsmaker; they are those who engage in claimsmaking activities, 'demanding services, filling out forms, lodging complaints, filing lawsuits, calling press conferences, writing letters of protest, passing resolutions, publishing exposés, placing ads in newspapers, supporting or opposing some governmental practice or policy, setting up picket lines or boycotts [...]' (Spector and Kitsuse 2001:79). In their daily lives many people forward a number of social problems claims and may actually participate in the claimsmaking process to varying degrees. Yet without a great deal of effort, it is unlikely that many of these claims will gain salience in the broader culture. It is not enough to simply identify a troubling condition—where, when and by whom claims are made greatly influences whether or not they will gain widespread recognition.³⁶

A great number of violent incidents, potential health threats and new forms of risk are reported daily, but what distinguishes a short-lived problem like the 'freeway violence' of the late 1980s from one that becomes an enduring problem of our times is that while the former might become

³⁵ This understanding is also reflected in the ordering of chapters, in which the examination of the activities of claimsmakers (chapter 6) precedes the discussion of the claims they construct (chapter 7).

³⁶ Although the timing of social problems claims is an issue not dealt with in detail in the present chapter, it should be noted that, as Ungar (1992:484) points out: 'Recognition in public arenas, which is a *sine qua non* of successful social problems, cannot be reduced to claims-making activities, but depends on a conjunction of these and audience receptiveness. Claims-making, after all, can fall on deaf ears or meet bad timing.' This is particularly evident in relation to the announcement of the ONS wellbeing survey which, although many years in the making, was announced during a recession and in a period of unrest leading to a somewhat cynical reception (see chapter 5).

stale and drift out of public focus, the latter is kept alive via the activities of claimsmakers who take the issue on and make it their own (Best, 1999). People need to keep an issue fresh in order to warrant further coverage, they need to make a good and compelling case for continued attention, for doing something about the problem. Some people are in a better position to do this than others; they may have more financial resources, belong to familiar organisations or possess forms of specialised expertise that lend their claims special status. Whether or not a potential social problem is ignored or institutionalised depends greatly upon the activities of claimsmakers, their connections amongst each other, their roles in society and their dedication and ability to keep the problem in the public eye. As previously mentioned, this process works best when there is a symbiotic relationship between different types of claimsmakers. To the degree that this is achieved, a problem has a greater chance of being successful.³⁷

3.3.1 Types of Claimsmakers and the Claimsmaking Process

Throughout the constructionist literature on social problems, a number of distinctions between types of claimsmakers have been variously forwarded. However, the literature lacks a fully developed and generalised typology of claimsmakers. Therefore, the terminologies used hereafter must necessarily bring together a number of sources while ignoring others, but it is not meant as an exhaustive typology generalisable to claimsmaking in all contexts but is nonetheless useful in clarifying many of the roles that claimsmakers play pertinent to the present analysis.

From the types that have been variously proposed and utilised within the literature two bases of definition may be distinguished: claimsmakers as they are defined by their roles in facilitating the claimsmaking process and claimsmakers as they are defined by their more broadly recognised social roles (such as professions, organisational relationships, social status). This distinction allows for a discussion of claimsmakers in terms of both their relationships to each other within the claimsmaking process as well as in terms of their social position and the accompanying limitations and opportunities provided by that status and/or organisation.

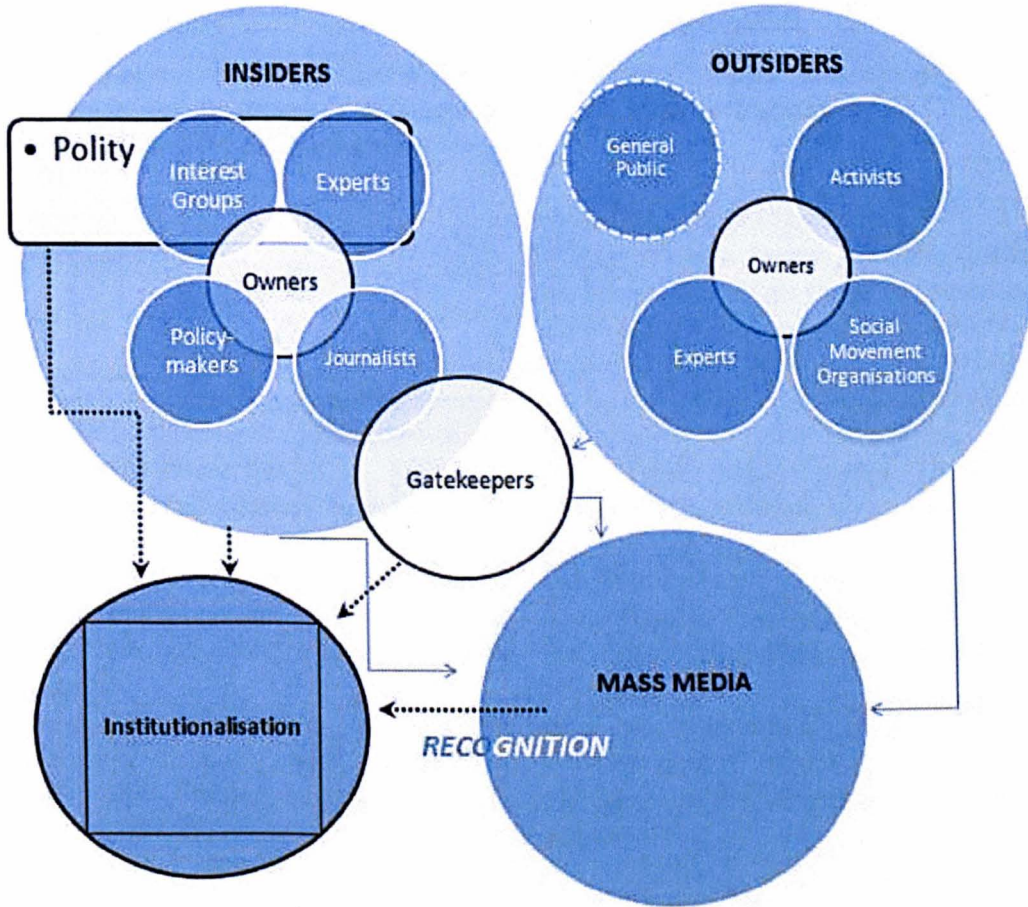
³⁷ According to Hilgartner and Bosk (1988:70), 'The success (or size, or scope) of a social problem is measured by the amount of attention devoted to it in these [public] arenas.' Spector and Kitsuse's definition of successful problems rely upon their 'institutionalization as official categories' (2001:72). A 'successful' social problem is therefore one that makes its way onto the public agenda, whose name and associated terminology become familiar terms, and become the subject of research and public debate, of interventions, and so on.

Table 1. Claimsmakers and roles in the claimsmaking process

Roles in Claimsmaking Process	Claimsmakers (Examples)
Insiders	General Public
Outsiders	Activists
Gatekeepers	Journalists
Mass Media	Celebrities and Public Figures
	Politicians
	Policy Experts
	Experts
	Social Movement Organisations
	Think-Tanks
	Charitable and Other Non-Governmental Organisations
	Commercial Organisations

These two groupings are by no means mutually exclusive. Rather, what might be termed 'processual' roles listed on the left should be understood as overarching functions which various claimsmakers (right) may perform in the process of making and/or adopting claims. These processual roles highlight the connections and relationships between individuals and groups and available opportunities for bridging gaps between disparate factions through which access can sometimes be granted to new public arenas and policy domains. The (simplified) diagram in Figure 2 illustrates some of the relationships and pathways between different types of claimsmakers in the process of gaining recognition for their claims and as those claims become institutionalised into policy. Institutionalisation refers to the 'official recognition' and endorsement of claimsmakers' ideology and terminologies in various realms of public life, and the programmatic and legal changes that occur accordingly (Best, 1999; Weitzer, 2007:458). Of course, the process is not a linear progression toward a foregone conclusion. At any given time claims may exist at various stages in the process, with definitions debated in the media, outcomes disputed, policies enacted, halted, new claims continually proposed and revised, and so on. The focus of the ensuing section is upon the role of claimsmakers as they are defined by their functions in the claimsmaking process.

Figure 2. Claimsmakers in the claimsmaking process



3.3.2 Insiders and Outsiders

The first major distinction shown above is that which exists between 'insider' and 'outsider' claimsmakers. According to Best (1990), insiders are distinguished by their more direct connections to the media and to policymakers.³⁸ Outsiders, by contrast, are characterised by the difficulty they have accessing the realms of public policy and their lack of ready access to the media. Table 2 details the key attributes of insider and outsider claimsmakers.

³⁸ 'Policymakers' should be understood as those in a position to affect the desired institutional changes for which claimsmakers often campaign. While the most frequent targets for action tend to be policymakers in legislative and other governmental bodies, policymaking occurs in a number of institutional settings including public schools, businesses, and other non-governmental organisations. Policymakers can also act as claimsmakers when they attempt to garner support for an adopted policy or course of action.

Table 2. Insider and outsider claimsmakers

Insider Claimsmakers	Outsider Claimsmakers
May be part of the 'polity'—groups regularly consulted and able to influence government decisions (Useem and Zald, 1982 cited in Best, 1990:13).	Outside of the polity; limited access and little influence with policymakers
Organised	Varying degrees of organisation
Ready access to media	Difficult, indirect access to media (achieved, for example, through attracting attention to claims via demonstrations, using social media, appearing on talk shows, giving interviews)
Sometimes able to bypass public awareness of claimsmaking campaigns and attempt to influence policy 'discreetly' May have 'tactical' reasons for conducting public claimsmaking campaigns	Media central to claimsmaking, seen as the best means to raise awareness, increase membership, and access policymakers through public pressure
Use media to attract attention, gain public awareness and acceptance of existence of social problem and pressure policymakers to act against it	Use media to attract attention, gain public awareness and acceptance of existence of social problem and pressure policymakers to act against it
Examples include journalists, experts and professionals charged with conducting research and recommending solutions, government officials, various interest groups including policy institutes and organised lobbying groups	Examples include social movement organisations, moral entrepreneurs, individuals in the general public, experts and academics

(Adapted from Best, 1990:13-15)

The connections available to insider and outsider claimsmakers affect the paths that their claimsmaking activities follow. Insider claimsmakers include organised lobbying groups and policy institutes or 'think-tanks', part of what has been called the 'polity,' comprising 'the set of groups that can routinely influence government decisions and can insure that their interests are normally recognized in the decision making process' (Useem and Zald, 1982:144). By contrast, the more indirect connections between outsiders and the media and policymakers means that it can be more difficult for them to gain recognition for their social problems claims. This is especially true for unorganised members of the general public. Della Porta and Diani (2006:119-121) point out that while recruitment into more radical forms of social action may be better achieved via strong social ties between individuals, gaining widespread support for one's claims often depends on the 'really crucial process of mobilisation, namely the transmission of cognitive messages' via nonrelational channels like the mass media which are able to reach far beyond interpersonal connections. However, for both insiders and outsiders alike, the media are an important tool. Gaining widespread recognition and support in the mass media can help improve the perception

of a problem as a serious issue and can pressure policymakers into taking these claims into consideration.

3.3.3 Owners

'Issue ownership' is a crucial element in the successful construction of a social problem. In order for a series of isolated incidents, a disturbing statistic, or a short-lived 'crime-wave' to become a full-fledged social problem, someone must take the issue on and 'make it their own'. According to Gusfield (1984:10):

The concept of 'ownership of social problems' is derived from the recognition that in the arenas of public opinion and debate all groups do not have equal power, influence, and authority to define the reality of the problem. The ability to create and influence the public definition of a problem is what I refer to as 'ownership.' [...] At any time in a historical period there is a recognition that specific public issues are the legitimate province of specific persons, roles and offices that can command public attention, trust, and influence. They have credibility while others who attempt to capture the public attention do not. Owners can make claims and assertions. They are looked at and reported to by others anxious for definitions and solutions to the problem. They possess authority in the field. Even if opposed by other groups, they are among those who can gain the public ear.

Issue ownership is often understood in the sense of several opposing groups or domains seeking to enforce their own definition of a set of conditions and how they ought to be conceived. For instance, Figert (1996) describes how groups with competing interests struggled for dominion over the definition of PMS, from psychiatrists seeking to assert a medical model to individual women and cultural critics from feminist and gender studies who situated the issue within the realm of stigmatisation and social control. However, ownership need not be so contentious nor must it necessarily lie within the clear-cut boundaries of a particular group who become the recognised 'owners' of the issue. As illustrated in Figure 2 above, the category of owners can incorporate several groups with varying interests who emerge as authorities and command varying degrees of attention. A claim cannot become an influential cultural idiom on its own; people must appropriate its language, apply it, refresh old claims or expand its boundaries to include new ones. The crucial aspect of issue ownership is not so much that one group asserts dominance but that single claims are pressed into compelling issues by the concerted efforts of these groups and individuals.

Many different types of claimsmakers operate within the two spheres of insider and outsider claimsmaking, but not all are in a position to take 'ownership' of a potential new social problem. Individuals in the general public may find it difficult to successfully take ownership of social problems without some degree of affiliation or subsequent organisation. They may lack the resources, knowledge of the bureaucratic process, authority and power to make pronouncements on social conditions and how and why they ought to be altered. Randall and Short (1983:410) describe the role of power as 'the ability to modify the attitudes or behavior of another; it requires both access to relevant resources and the ability to use these resources.' The effectiveness of claims depends greatly upon the degree to which the individual or group who takes ownership of the problem is in possession of resources like money, access to the media, a high level of organisation, commitment, a base of support and adherents, status, knowledge, expertise, skill and legitimacy (Randall and Short, 1983:411).

For instance, using the example of a study of the abolition of the short-handled hoe in California farm work, Schneider (1985:217) describes how '[w]here claims are made, that is, to whom, can constrain the subsequent definitional activities in loosely predictable ways—if one has detailed and current knowledge of the bureaucracy.' In the case of the farm workers, while having succeeded in winning a legal case against farm management, they were not able to draw attention to the hazards of all corporate production and to power differences between workers and management. 'Without the counsel of legal experts,' the author concludes, 'claimants usually do not possess this knowledge,' and that the enlistment of experts both in terms of subject matter and bureaucratic process can 'control and even change the problem' (Schneider, 1985:217). Social movement organisations on the other hand, while the prototypical 'outsider' claimsmakers, are often veterans of the claimsmaking process and may have the resources and dedication necessary to continually reinvent an issue, to keep it in the public eye and to push for change. Claimsmakers who vie against existing parties in possession of a particular problem and its definition can push to take ownership and establish their own definitions through organised opposition and recourse to experts who take on the opposition's cause. To name another example, in contrast to the farmers' case, the campaign to dis-appropriate homosexuality from the hands of the American Psychiatric Association was propelled forward through controversy by the organised opposition of a diverse array of parties including gay activists, gay psychiatrists who formed a 'Gay Psychiatric Association' and an emergent group of sympathetic experts who appeared in the media, courts and academic publications offering their professional opinions on its deinstitutionalisation (Kirk and Kutchins, 2003).

Although the involvement of an influential individual or group can mean the difference between a short-lived potential social problem and one that gains support in various institutional arenas, it does not guarantee success. As with all aspects of the processual roles being discussed at present, to the degree that these functions are taken up by more and more claimsmakers in the claimsmaking process, the claims have an even greater likelihood of gaining widespread and on-going affirmation.

3.3.4 Gatekeepers

The term 'gatekeepers' has been variously used in the social problems constructionist literature but has not been developed upon extensively. It was initially used in the study of communications by the psychologist Kurt Lewin who coined the term in order to explain the means of affecting changes in social norms. Lewin described how the movement of goods, ideas, and individuals passed through various channels whose entrances were 'guarded' at various points by individuals who applied a set of rules or criteria for allowing or halting their passage (Stacks and Salwen, 2009:76). Within the social constructionist literature, the term 'gatekeeper' is often used to describe those who straddle the divide between different realms of communication, particularly those in the mass media who sift through an abundance of primary claims and decide which messages to disseminate to their respective audiences.

Members of the news media are among the most important gatekeepers, since as Best (1990:115) describes, 'simply receiving coverage helps validate a claim as worthy of consideration.' Studies of movements like the anti-war movement, the women's movement and the environmental movement illustrate the struggles through which claimsmakers often pass in their efforts to get their claims reported (Best, 1990:115-116). Claims which take the needs and practices of these (secondary) claimsmakers into account are more likely to gain media coverage and this coverage—that is, the successful passage of claims through these 'gates' is central to gaining affirmation for a social problem claim.³⁹

³⁹ A discussion of primary and secondary claimsmakers was omitted here in the interests of simplification and avoiding a redundant terminology. Mass media claimsmakers, whose job is mainly that of translating primary claims into a suitable format for their medium, are for this reason usually referred to as 'secondary' claimsmakers. This distinction is derived from that which exists between the aforementioned 'primary' and 'secondary' claims but is extended to those who make the claims. That is, secondary claims are those which

However, gatekeepers are not only public relations firms or members of editorial boards. It may also be useful to think of gatekeepers as those who straddle the divide between a number of different institutional or policy domains rather than simply filtering messages between different realms of communication. In this way, gatekeepers may also act as agents of diffusion who foster the transmission of claims through the various channels at their disposal. Their gatekeeping role may therefore be brief and not necessarily definitive of their role in the process. Rather, such claimsmakers may take up the issue with a sort of missionary zeal, becoming owners of the problem and utilising their access to a number of domains to expand its influence. Although less attended to in the literature, the enlistment or appropriation of an issue by a well-connected and dedicated gatekeeper of this sort can be an especially propulsive force in the history of a social problem, fostering diffusion between a number of domains and thus expanding its potential base of support.

3.4 Mass Media and the News

As may be apparent by the number of times the term 'media' has appeared in preceding sections, the mass media are crucial to the successful construction of a social problem. Best (1990:18) states:

The mass media play central roles in contemporary claims-making. Claimants who hope to attract wide notice—and this is especially important for outsider claims-makers—usually turn to the media. Their tactics include demonstrations, press releases, press conferences, and other deliberate efforts to draw coverage. [...] Often claims-makers hope that the media will serve as a channel through which they can transmit their message to a larger audience.

In spite of the on-going fragmentation and proliferation of the mass media, their sheer magnitude and potential scope mean that the media remain central to the claimsmaking process. As Loseke (2003:41) describes, the 'mass' in mass media, 'continues to signify that many people potentially can see or hear claims made in these sites' offering claimsmakers potential access to the largest possible audiences. Media coverage attracts the attention of the public to a cause and confers upon claims a certain degree of credibility. It may also have the effect of causing other, previously unknown individuals to join the movement or take up the issue (Best, 1990:14). Further, as Best

are translated into a medium of mass communication and the agent of this transfusion is therefore referred to as a 'secondary claimsmaker.'

describes, 'Coverage also pressures policymakers, who may feel that they have to respond to media coverage, or who may begin to feel pressed by the movement's members or the general public' (1990:14).

This appeal and potential effectiveness mean that innumerable claimsmakers compete for access to the 'largest possible audience' making the media act as what Hilgartner and Bosk (1988:57) have called a social problems 'marketplace.' Consequently, the media, and particularly the news media, offer an ideal locale in which to study the interplay of various claimsmakers as the issue progresses over time and the accompanying consensuses and controversies that develop. It also offers the opportunity to study the interaction between various claimsmakers who may not normally come into contact in their primary claimsmaking, such as, for instance, a rivalry developing between disparate coteries of experts or organisations regarding how a claim should be addressed. Altheide (2000:289) writes with reference to structuralist analyses of language that, 'the most meaningful communication resonates with deeply held and taken-for-granted meanings and relationships between a symbolic signifier and its referent, or the signified.' Through studying claims that survive, and indeed thrive, in the intense competition of the media marketplace, it is possible to gain a greater understanding of the taken for granted meanings and relationships that exist during the historical and cultural moments that produced them.

The media are crucial for an additional reason pertinent to the study of social problems construction. In a world increasingly mediated by images and representations, the knowledge of the everyday individual is more and more constituted not by direct experiences of reality but by information garnered from various media. As Walter Lippmann wrote in the 1920s, 'The way in which the world is imagined determines at any particular moment what men will do. [...] It determines their effort, their feelings, their hopes [...]' (Lippmann, 1991:26). While people are not unthinking passive pawns of media messages, the media nonetheless colour our interpretation of the sort of world we believe surrounds us. As Altheide (2000:288) puts it, 'it is not coincidental that audiences believe that they are in great danger and that contemporary life is very unsafe, while popular culture and especially network TV newscasts have increased their coverage of crime and danger by more than 600%.' The direct experience of social problems is often confined to a relatively small number of actors, and yet knowledge of them and concern about them often spread far beyond these boundaries. According to Page and Shapiro (1992:340), 'experiences like unemployment, criminal victimization, or being drafted and sent to fight abroad are experienced directly by relatively few' and even those events that are personally felt are often given

contextual meaning and magnitude only through the arbitration of the mass media. The authors continue,

An individual laid off from his or her job may think it a purely personal mishap, unless there is news of rising unemployment in the nation as a whole. [...] Rising prices are noticed at the gasoline pump or the grocery store, but their nationwide significance may be felt only when the media focus on 'inflation' as a nationwide phenomenon. *Thus public opinion often responds not to events or social trends themselves but to reported events.* It makes a good deal of difference which events are reported, which are emphasized, and which are ignored. It also matters what sorts of 'facts' are conveyed and how they are interpreted (Page and Shapiro, 1992:340; emphasis added).

Although it should always be kept in mind that audiences do not necessarily believe everything that they see on television or read in the news, such media remain increasingly important sources of information (Loseke, 2003:41). Indeed, the evaluations of those conditions that are seen to represent important problems for society 'depend more on the coverage [people] have seen on television than on their personal experience' (Loseke, 2003:41). Or, as Bernard Cohen famously put it, the news media 'may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about' (Cohen, 1963:13).

This means that the news media are also an important locale in which to study social problems claims because it is not merely that claimsmakers desire to promote 'awareness'; specifically, claimsmakers want their issue to be perceived as important, as something that should be placed at the top of the public agenda. McCombs (2004:2) describes the central role of the media in this process of agenda-setting: 'While many issues compete for public attention, only a few are successful in doing so, and the news media exert significant influence on our perceptions of what are the most important issues of the day.'

It should be noted that simply appearing in the news media, even to the point of gaining a great deal of coverage and sensationalism is not necessarily sufficient to place a potential social problem at the forefront of the policy agenda and affect long term changes. Nelson (1984) modifies Anthony Down's work on the media's 'issue attention cycle' to understand how a problem with a 'short-attention-span' in the nineteenth century like child abuse has managed to gain a more sustained institutionalised response in the US over the two decades prior to her writing. She points to the 'link between the professional and mass media—where the professional media pump new information to the mass media' in order to 'help explain the mass media's enduring interest' (Nelson, 1984:51). Crucially however, in addition to the efforts of claimsmakers in continuously supplying new information, the rapidity with which the issue found its way onto

the public agenda was also facilitated by its valence character. As Nelson describes, 'The problem was successfully, packaged, promoted, and ultimately perceived by most members of Congress as completely noncontroversial. [...] It is important, therefore, to examine how the valence character of abuse shaped the agenda-setting process' (1984:94). Drawing on the work of the political scientist David Price, Nelson concludes that policymakers have 'the strongest incentives to become involved in issues which have high salience to the general public but low perceived levels of group conflict' (1984:94). The role of the media in agenda-setting can therefore be all the more strengthened when an issue is perceived as highly uncontroversial, allowing such claims to quickly permeate the public agenda.

The mass media therefore play an indispensable role in the construction of a social problem since much of our reality is mediated by our interaction with such technology and consequently affect our perceptions of what are the most pressing issues of the day. Studying the successful problematisation of happiness in these arenas therefore offers an understanding of the progression of the issue over time, of the use of effective and persuasive rhetoric and how it shapes the problem, and offers a window into the culture in which such claims are embedded. The news media offer a useful starting point since reportage implies both a minimal expectation of journalistic standards as well as the newsworthiness of the issues described, simply by virtue of their being reported. The news media are the 'marketplace' in which the interests of parties who might never otherwise associate can suddenly collide and through which can be identified the many characterisations of the issue as it pervades a growing array of domains of public concern from how people raise their children to how they relate to their work. Claimsmakers who emerge as public authorities on the subject and whose expertise becomes more and more in demand as the issue proliferates can also be identified. Thus, although it is understood that in the age of fragmenting, diminishing, and proliferating forms of media technologies, one cannot look only at the print news media in order to understand the construction of a social problem, they nonetheless serve as an important point from which to deduce key claimsmakers who have emerged as public authorities on the issue, and from which to gain an understanding of the key features and progression of the discourse before moving to an examination of the activities and claims of those claimsmakers in other public arenas.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has delineated the insights and conceptual tools utilised in the ensuing analysis. In terms of methodology, these insights guide the research in a number of ways. The general development of news media discussions of happiness are considered (chapter 5) before turning to a detailed analysis of the claimsmakers who have been instrumental in the construction of the problem and the corresponding roles they have played at various stages in the claimsmaking process (chapter 6). It is argued that a symbiotic relationship between claimsmakers of various types contributed to the success of the issue. However, a discussion of the activities of these claimsmakers alone is not sufficient to entirely account for this success. Research was also carried out on the rhetorical strategies utilised in the promotion of claims (chapter 7). This latter phase considers more acutely some of the themes discussed in the context of their historical development in chapter 5, attempting to account for their success as elements of rhetorical arguments intended to persuade. The specific methodology used to gather and analyse the data on which this study is based are detailed in the ensuing chapter.

4 Methodology

In order to approach the research questions detailed at the outset of this thesis, a qualitative media analysis was performed on major UK newspapers. This chapter details this methodology and its theoretical rationale and describes the sampling procedures and approach to data analysis used.

4.1 Qualitative Media Analysis (QMA)

Although referred to by its originator and later adopters by a variety of names including ethnographic content analysis, qualitative document analysis or qualitative content analysis, what will be described hereafter as qualitative media analysis (QMA), as described and developed by Altheide (1987, 1996, 2000) and Altheide et al. (2008), is an approach to studying documents in order to understand culture—or ‘the process and the array of objects, symbols, and meanings that make up social reality shared by members of a society’ (Altheide, 1996:2).⁴⁰ QMA is ‘a method and research orientation that is informed by reflexive methodology in a mass-mediated age’ (Altheide et al., 2008:128). Blending the insights of more traditional objective content analysis with the cultural immersion characteristic of participant observation, it emphasises the interaction of a text with its context and the process of making and applying meanings in social life.

QMA includes insights garnered from a number of intellectual traditions including the symbolic interactionism and constructionist perspectives set forth and developed by Mead and Blumer, Berger and Luckmann, and Alfred Schutz, as well as from various contributions of structuralism and cultural studies (Altheide, 1996:8 Altheide, 2000:289).⁴¹ As Altheide describes, it is a method

⁴⁰ QMA was chosen over other titles because it maintains an emphasis upon the fundamental role of documents, the subject of research, as ‘mediators’ of meanings in social life.

⁴¹ Specifically, according to Altheide (2000), the method draws insights from structuralism’s emphasis upon the context of messages and their resonance with deeply held and taken for granted meanings as well as cultural studies’ attention to the importance of mass-mediated messages in sustaining the status quo, itself drawn from Marxian understandings of the construction of social reality (Altheide, 2000:289). The symbolic interactionist perspective, whose contributions to the understanding of social phenomena birthed the constructionist approach to social problems discussed in the previous chapter, informs QMA by reminding

that emphasises, 'the meaning of an activity, the situation in which it emerges, and the importance of interaction for the communication process' (1996:8). Accordingly it is guided by three core insights: first, it recognises that 'social life consists of a process of communication and interpretation regarding the definition of a situation,' and that the 'symbolic order we join as infants infuses our own view of ourself, others, and our future' (Altheide, 1996:8). Second, communication joins together subject and object, internal and external, fusing them into a reality that is taken for granted. Third, the fact that everything is 'under construction,' even 'our most firmly held beliefs, values and personal commitments' makes the notion of process central to 'reality maintenance' (Altheide, 1996:8).

Thus, as a methodological approach to document analysis it underscores three important concepts: context, process and emergence. A large part of culture consists of documents, from the popular and academic press, to scripts, to articles in newspapers and magazines. In QMA documents are defined as 'any symbolic representation that can be recorded or retrieved for analysis' (1996:2). Much like an archaeologist, the qualitative analyst must grasp the significance of a cultural artefact on the basis of the *context*, 'or the social situations surrounding the document in question' in order to understand its meaning and significance (Altheide, 1996:9). Understanding context is also part of understanding *process*, since one must have some knowledge of the needs of a medium and the process by which texts are created in order to understand their content. For the purposes of this study, this means understanding the values of a medium as well as gaining an understanding of the contexts and processes of interaction between the claimsmakers who produce texts or act as sources of information. Without knowledge of context and process one may place too much emphasis upon assumptions of journalistic bias or attribute undue importance to blocks of text with little attention to the interactions that ultimately produced them. However, as Altheide notes, 'these meanings and patterns seldom appear all at once [...] rather, they *emerge* or become more clear through constant comparison and investigation of documents over a period of time' (1996:10, emphasis in original). It is through understanding and interpretation that meaning is shaped gradually and emerges from the phenomena under study.

Certain elements of quantification have their place in QMA, such as tracking the frequencies of phenomena over time and noting changes and variations in particular categories. However, the

that meaning ultimately depends upon interpretation and 'the impact of any message is its contribution to the actor's definition of the situation' (Altheide, 2000:289).

primary emphasis in QMA is less upon quantification than it is upon 'discovery and description, including [the] search for underlying meanings, patterns, and processes, rather than mere quantity of numerical relationships between two or more variables' (Altheide, 2000:290). It is for this reason that the method is alternatively termed 'ethnographic content analysis' (1996:2). QMA relies upon 'immersion in the subject matter' and carrying out a 'conceptually informed conversation with numerous documents and examples,' utilising protocols to 'tap' documents in various information bases and theoretical sampling methods for 'systematic and constant comparison' (Altheide et al., 2008:127). It is an 'emic' rather than 'etic' approach in that it seeks to describe the 'indigenous' meanings applied by the communicators of a text, while at the same time recognising the 'theory driven nature of content analysis' and the 'analyst's conceptual contributions to the reading of a text' (Krippendorff, 2004:21). The researcher must be open to a diversity of information sources and materials for analysis, tracking discourses as they enter into unexpected domains and be 'flexible in taking into account new concepts that emerge during their involvement with texts' (Krippendorff, 2004:21).

While its focus is on the interpretive and descriptive, 'it remains empirical, meaning that instances of certain meanings and emphases can be identified and held up for demonstration' (Altheide, 2000:290). As Sandelowski (2000:338) summarises, while '[b]oth quantitative and qualitative content analyses entail counting responses and the numbers of participants in each response category [...] in qualitative content analysis, counting is a means to an end, not the end itself' (2000:338). The end result is therefore 'not a quasi-statistical rendering of the data, but rather a description of the patterns or regularities in the data that have, in part, been discovered and then confirmed by counting.' In this way, one moves farther away from the domain of quantitative content analysis and closer to the domain of interpretation, 'in that there is an effort to understand not only the manifest (e.g., the frequencies and means), but also the latent content of the data' (Sandelowski, 2000:338).

4.2 Conducting QMA

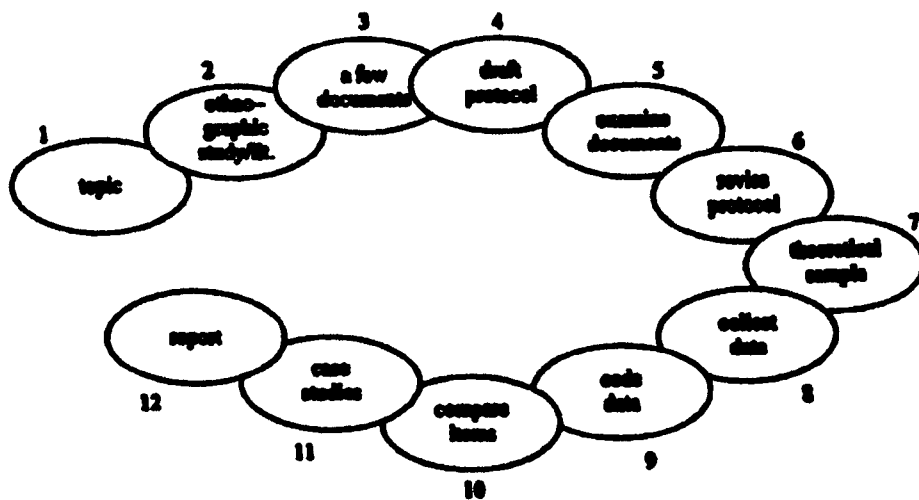
QMA can include as many as twelve steps encompassing several basic stages of analysis. The general stages include finding and gaining access to documents, protocol development and data

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collection, data coding and organisation, data analysis, and reporting results (Altheide, 1996:23). Twelve steps described by Altheide (1996) are illustrated in the figure below.⁴²

Figure 3. The process of QMA



(Reproduced from Altheide, 1996:13)

As the ensuing chapter will detail, this study utilised many of these steps to examine the development of happiness as a social problem, drawing on the study of rhetoric as an analytic device in later stages. However, it must be stressed that in spite of the aforementioned references to 'stages' and 'steps' which imply a linear approach toward a foregone conclusion, the actual process of conducting QMA is intended to be far more fluid. As Leavy and Hesse-Biber (2008:20) describe, QMA is 'an emergent methodology rather than a rigid set of procedures,' with emergence primarily occurring in sampling and analysis. Differing from traditional approaches to objective content analysis, Altheide's approach stresses flexibility and 'is oriented to combining several steps in investigation with an explorer's eye to pursue concepts, data, and other information sources that emerge in the context of the thinking and discovering process of research' (Leavy and Hesse-Biber, 2008:20). Emergent meanings and discoveries informed the direction of the research as happiness discourses were tracked into sometimes surprising new territories. In this way it represents what Altheide (2008:130) has termed a 'dynamic' use of QMA,

⁴² Over the nearly twenty-five years since Altheide (1987) first articulated the method, the 'steps' advocated have varied from publication to publication. However, the core elements remain the same: pursuing a problem, gaining familiarity with the data and the various contextual contributions to its production, theoretical sampling methods, and protocol and category development (Altheide, 2000:291-291; Altheide et al., 2008:130). The more detailed figure was chosen here to illustrate the wide variety of activities involved in the process of conducting QMA.

involving 'tracking discourse' or 'following certain, issues, words, themes, and frames over a period of time, across different, issues, and across different news media.' Tracking discourse requires that '[i]nitial manifest coding incorporates emergent coding and theoretical sampling in order to monitor changes in coverage and emphasis over time and across topics' (Altheide, 2008:130). Therefore it is not a linear process proceeding through predetermined 'steps' without consideration of new avenues brought forth during the research process. As Altheide et al. (2008:128) describe, 'The aim is to be systematic and analytic but not rigid.'

One further point regarding QMA must be examined here. It has been repeatedly asserted thus far that although concepts are allowed and expected to emerge from the data, the researcher is central to QMA. This emphasis upon the role of the researcher has its roots in the 'reflexive turn' within the social sciences, representing a heightened awareness of the fact that research methods can never be entirely separated from research findings and that the process of knowledge is implicated in its product (Altheide et al., 2008:131). As with any form of interpretive analysis, the potential for researcher bias is always present since the researcher must necessarily rely upon his or her own interpretation in deriving conclusions (Bryman, 2008:39-41). This can have consequences for the reliability and validity of the research. This research is an exercise in reconstruction, in which the eye of the social researcher has been central. Nonetheless, all efforts have been made to clearly delineate the research process so that any other researcher may seek to replicate the study. However, the emphasis in QMA is on validity; that is, on the meanings behind the numbers and discovered in the analysis. The resultant data and interpretations are presented in detail throughout this thesis so that they may be replicated, questioned, or enhanced in future research.

4.3 Researching the Problematisation of Happiness

The following sections detail the steps taken in carrying out this research, the results of which are delineated in the remaining chapters of the thesis. As the emphasis is upon context, process and emergence, there is constant comparison and refinement of protocols and sampling strategies, with new avenues opening up throughout the research process. Purposive and theoretical sampling methods were used on the primary data (print news media) with auxiliary materials constantly gathered and analysed opening up new insights, themes and connections. The study was conducted in three phases guided by this study's research questions and following the core tenets of QMA. Insights emerging in the process of data gathering and analysis informed the

progression toward the next phase of data gathering and analysis. For instance, only after 'tracking discourse' via historical exploration and analysis could it have been ascertained that a phase beginning after 2003 was the most important to analyse in-depth.

One of the first steps in QMA involves simply identifying and pursuing a problem to be investigated (Altheide, 1996:23). Initial explorations of the topic did not immediately take the news media as the main focus of the study. Rather, the impetus for the study was a realisation that happiness seemed to be an important subject, appearing with greater frequency in academic writing, the speeches of politicians and of course, on the pages of newspapers. However, it is not enough to know that happiness had become an important subject. What is important is developing a wider understanding of the nature of these discussions, not by joining on-going constructions of its true, or deeper meanings, or of the causes and solutions to unhappiness, variously discovered and defined, but rather through a systematic study of these discussions themselves. It occurred to me that had it not been for these discussions, the notion that happiness was the legitimate domain of expertise and public intervention would not have seemed self-evident. Thus the rise in interest in happiness was pinpointed as the problem to be investigated.

4.4 Phase I: Immersion and 'Tracking Discourse'

Following the identification of a problem to be pursued, Altheide (1996) recommends that the researcher '[b]ecome familiar with the process and context of the information source' and '[e]xplore possible sources (perhaps documents) of information' (Altheide, 1996:24). Since the study of happiness crosses numerous academic disciplines and has become the subject of debate in a variety of media, it was initially necessary to become familiar with a number of contexts before choosing a particular area on which to focus data gathering. An expansive exploratory review was carried out that examined studies of happiness in economics, psychology and sociology, which appeared to have acquired a substantial focus on the subject toward the present. Both historical and recent literature was reviewed. Mass media discussions of happiness were viewed, recorded, and read. Emerging from these preliminary investigations was a realisation that the types of ideas about happiness now gaining currency had appeared at various times in the past and had emerged from seemingly counter-intuitive quarters (for example, ideas about an antithesis between money and prosperity discussed by prominent economists), but had not been successful in passing onto the public agenda until relatively recently. A steady increase

in discussions using the keyword happiness in major newspapers was discerned and which seemed to warrant further exploration and explanation. The more the news media covered stories on happiness, the more dire claims in various quarters seemed to appear and vice versa. Initial investigations revealed an apparent 'feedback' loop in which increased attention accorded the issue in the news media seemed to lead to increased attention in academia, which in turn fed back stories about happiness to the media.

Noting the importance of the news media in agenda setting and in capturing the attention of policymakers, newspapers were taken as the starting point for this research and as a grounding for systematic data gathering and sampling. The news media were taken as the primary source of data, but constant exploration of other data and of other media was also conducted in order to ascertain their interconnections. Therefore, although the news media form the focal point of this study, they are by no means its sole focus.

Following the selection of the information source, the context of the news creation process was also investigated through recourse to studies of the news media and the role of the news in constructing social problems from which emerged an awareness of the importance of rhetoric, which guided the analysis of claims in the final phase of this research.⁴³

Identifying how constructs emerge and evolve was one of the key questions informing this research. Initial explorations revealed discernible shifts in the way that happiness was conceptualised and used in public discourses. As Altheide observes, tracking 'discourses'—that is, the kinds of framing, inclusion, and exclusion of certain points of view—is important because, 'What we call things, the themes and discourse we employ, and how we frame and allude to experience is crucial for what we take for granted and assume to be true' (Altheide, 1996:69). Shifts in meanings and emphases are therefore of critical importance. 'When language changes and new or revised frameworks of meaning become part of the public domain and are routinely used, then social life has been changed, even in a small way' (Altheide, 1996:69).

Thus the first phase of this research involved an exploration, and subsequent narrative description, of historical uses of happiness in news media discourses. This was accomplished by using keyword searches to first explore general uses of the word 'happiness' and then to elucidate connections between emergent themes. Significant trends and changes over time were observed

⁴³ Studies of the news media in particular included Gans (2004), Gitlin (2003), and Altheide (2002, 2006, 2009).

in general uses of happiness providing important insights into how the construct has evolved. However, it only gave a partial answer in that the underlying mechanisms and the people involved in changing these constructs and subtly rearticulating their meanings, as well as the rhetoric that they employed in order to persuade others to accept these meanings were only hinted at, and were thus further explored in the next steps taken by the research.

Archival databases of *The New York Times* (NYT) (via microfilm) and *The Times* (London) were initially utilised due to their availability and the fact they stretch quite far back into the past, with the NYT archive beginning in 1851 and *The Times* in 1785. The former is also considered a global newspaper of record. Keyword searches for 'happiness' were used and articles read while taking extensive 'field notes' describing patterns, frequent collocations, and recurrent tendencies in subject matter. The numerical results of these and additional keyword searches were recorded and their contents investigated. Although phases II and III of this research required systematic sampling techniques that could not be continually repeated and updated, the observations and trends observed in phase I were continually monitored and tables updated accordingly at the beginning of 2012 to reflect the most recent information available.

While the database for *The Times* is fully searchable online, the NYT database operates on a pay per article basis for many articles appearing before 1980. Therefore, historical research using the NYT was conducted using the University of Kent's microfilm holdings which include 1964-1965, and 1973-2001 inclusive. Searches were conducted using the online NYT index and articles were previewed (headline and text containing the keywords were shown) and emergent trends were further explored in the microfilm articles. Due to gaps in the University's holdings, articles from the late 1960s and early 1970s had to be purchased in batches from the NYT archive. Aside from keywords, there were no preconceived categories and themes were allowed to emerge from the data. Thousands of articles were read, and hundreds associated with emergent themes were saved in digital versions which allowed for movement of electronic files between organising folders. Blocks of text relating to collocations or tendencies (for example, the frequent collocation of happiness with other positive rhetorical idioms) were saved on an Excel spread sheet organised by theme and with relevant information recorded including, author, date, source and subject matter. These blocks of text were hyperlinked to the original material for constant comparison with the full text from which they were taken. Articles from different time periods were compared and similarities and differences noted and investigated. These findings were utilised in order to construct a narrative of the development of public discourses using the word happiness over the past century (chapter 5). Broad shifts were discernible and these were described, resulting in a

periodisation of happiness discourses into four phases (including a 'prehistory'). These phases then formed the basis for focusing the sampling methods used in the next steps taken by the research.

For the period spanning the 1980s onward, the 'Nexis' (news) portion of the LexisNexis online archive was used.⁴⁴ Key differences between different time periods were described in field notes and further explored using keyword searches, but analysis was also extended beyond the news media; following initial identification of an important development or recurrent theme in the news media, the research then branched out to other documents including text productions of speeches and other auxiliary documents.

Given the nature of the keyword, searches in the Nexis database produced a large volume of results, and it was subsequently decided to focus the analysis on four major UK newspapers (*The Times*, *The Independent*, *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, and their Sunday editions). These newspapers were chosen for a number of reasons. First, they are considered to represent the 'quality press' and thus carry with them a minimal expectation of reportage on major social issues. Although circulation numbers have declined in recent years, they nonetheless routinely rank among the most widely circulated newspapers in the UK, with online readership likely on the increase.⁴⁵ Finally, they represent a spread of left to right wing viewpoints.⁴⁶ Searches focusing on emergent themes discovered in samples drawn from these newspapers were also investigated in a range of media including newspapers from around the world, popular books, academic writing, policy documents, television shows, magazines, and documentaries.

Later phases of the research utilised the qualitative data analysis programme Nvivo. Altheide warns data analysis programmes 'cannot think and they cannot decide the best way to conceptually integrate your materials' and can potentially encourage researchers to make premature decisions (1996:43). The goal of the first phase of research was exploration and gaining familiarity with the data and subject matter and was therefore kept as broad as possible, while later phases more fully explored emergent discoveries. Having gained a good level of familiarity

⁴⁴ Although expansive, Nexis holdings are relatively sparse for pre-1985 content.

⁴⁵ See yearly Audit Bureau of Circulation reports (*The Guardian*, 2012).

⁴⁶ It was initially expected that commentary and claims would vary depending on the left or right wing reputation of the newspaper. However, little significant variation emerged between claims contained in various publications. For instance, claims coded under the theme 'decoupling wealth from wellbeing' (see chapter 7) were observed as emerging in nearly equal proportions from each newspaper. Half or more of the articles sampled from each newspaper contained affirmative claims relating to this theme.

with happiness discourses, it was decided that a computer programme would be used to organise and analyse newspaper data. Nvivo was chosen because it allows the researcher to easily maintain relationships between extracts of text and their context as well as for making connections and drawing out relationships between cases and codes and with field notes. Many of the procedures accomplished within Nvivo would have been prohibitively time consuming if accomplished by other means, and would lack the clarity and ease with which a researcher is enabled to ask questions of the data. Nonetheless, Nvivo was not the only source of information but served to focus the analysis and elucidate core themes. This choice is consistent with Altheide's suggestion that, 'As the approach becomes more familiar, the researcher may try more sophisticated software programmes, but the basic steps of searching, finding, sorting, and comparing will remain essentially the same' (1996:43).

4.5 Data Gathering and Sampling

Thus far we have seen some of the crucial first steps in carrying out QMA, having identified the problem to be investigated, developed an understanding of the role of the media and the claimsmaking process implicated therein, and 'tracking discourse' through historical time. Tracking changes in discourse is the on-going goal of the investigation, but gaining knowledge of the general trends serves as a starting point from which to develop categories and derive a focus for the more detailed analyses to follow. As Altheide (1996:14) describes:

Prior research and awareness of an activity involved in the production of documents can theoretically inform sampling procedures, whereas constant comparison and discovery may be used to further delineate specific categories, as well as narrative description. In general, this means the situation, settings, styles, images, meanings, and nuances are key topics of attention.

After the historical exploration of concepts was completed and field notes and resultant data were transformed into narrative form, certain changes and themes became clear. There were 'recurring characters' and recurring tropes and images. These would be examined in the next phases of the research. Altheide recommends successive levels of focus and emergent theoretical sampling. Insights from the historical analysis therefore informed the development of criteria for relevance that formed the basis for the creation of a research database, from which samples were derived for further analysis.

4.5.1 *Creating a Research Database*

In order to draw out a sample from the news media, a search was conducted in the Nexis database for articles in *The Times*, *The Independent*, *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph* and their Sunday editions containing the word 'happiness' from 1985 until the end of 2009 the results of which were imported into Nvivo to create a research database. It should be noted that different newspapers have joined the archive at different times, with older publications constantly being indexed. At the time of data gathering, all of the above had been included in full since their 2002 publications. Unsurprisingly, this search produced several thousand potential sources. However, for each year, the articles were sorted by relevance (automatically by Nexis) and the first 200 were screened for applicability to this analysis (applicability is defined below).⁴⁷ This was decided because through a process of trial and error it was discovered that approaching the 200th source listed in the database, the articles gradually became less focused upon happiness and tended to use the term in passing with little significance attributed to its usage. Having ascertained general trends in discourses using the term happiness over the past century and identified the growth in normative and problematised claims about happiness, the Nvivo research database intended to draw out these relevant articles from the broader Nexis database as the subject of further research.

Applicability was decided if an article met any one of the following criteria:

1. A discussion of happiness as the subject of the article
2. Normative claims about the nature of happiness⁴⁸
3. Claims about the nature of happiness as a problem
4. The use of claims about happiness in support of another problem claim

These criteria effectively exclude all articles that mention happiness in passing; for example, articles that talk about events, discussions of experiences (for example, the winner of a sporting event discussing feelings of elation), holidays, responses to good news, weddings, irrelevant film

⁴⁷ Nexis determines relevance by the number of times the keyword(s) appear in the headline and/or full-text of the article in addition to the number of times the terms appear and their proximity to one another (in the case of multiple keyword searches).

⁴⁸ Although the purpose of this analysis is to describe trends in the problematisation of happiness, it was recognised in the exploratory phase that many claimsmakers problematised happiness only implicitly. Thus, articles that contained normative statements about happiness without necessarily making outright social problems claims were ascertained as theoretically important and thus also included.

titles, irrelevant book titles, and other similar incidental mentions. Also excluded were statements which were made in passing that were not intended to be taken normatively. That is, the personal opinions and reflections of various individuals on their own happiness, as for instance in an interview with a celebrity or other public figure.⁴⁹

The resultant sample of 1081 articles drawn from the years 1985-2009 was imported into Nvivo to create a research database of relevant articles.⁵⁰ This database was updated at the beginning of 2011, when the previous year had become available for analysis, creating a database containing a total of 1219 articles. Consequently, the final phase (focusing on claims and their rhetoric) of the study utilises the results of an additional year of material.

Although articles from previous years (1985-2003) remained in the database for comparison and analysis, it was decided that the final two phases of the research would focus upon the most recent period during which discussions of happiness were observed to have reached significant heights. This does not mean that earlier phases were ignored, but simply that data generation would focus on this period with earlier periods representing supplementary material and areas of comparison. Articles in the Nvivo database corresponding to the years 2003-2009 (and later, 2010) were indexed as 'cases.' 765 cases were initially indexed for the years 2003-2009, which grew to 903 following the inclusion of 2010. The following 'attributes' were recorded for each case:

Table 3. Nvivo case attributes

Attribute	Value
Author	<Insert Name>
Claim about happiness/social problem within opening (headline, lead, first paragraph)	Both happiness and problem claim Happiness claim in opening Problem claim in opening None
More than half of article about happiness	Yes No
Page #	<Insert>
Publication	<i>The Daily Telegraph</i> <i>The Sunday Telegraph</i>

⁴⁹ An exception was a column by Craig Taylor in *The Guardian* in which members of the public were asked to comment on whether or not they were happy. Potentially providing insight into the relationship between the general public in happiness claimsmaking, these articles were included.

⁵⁰ This time period reflects the earliest year at which at least one of the major sources used in this study (*The Times*) was included in the database to the most recent completed year.

	<i>The Independent</i> <i>The Independent on Sunday</i> <i>The Times</i> <i>The Sunday Times</i> <i>The Guardian</i> <i>The Observer</i>
Section	<Insert title of section>
Word Count	0-200 201-300 301-400 401-500 501-600 601-700 701-800 801-900 901-1000 1001-1500 1500+
Year	<Insert>

The purpose of recording this information is that it allows for searches to be carried out in Nvivo using any of the above criteria. For example, the prevalence of a particular code across years, excluding shorter articles from searches, confining searches to a particular source, author and so on. It was also utilised for drawing out a sample of relevant material for analysis. That is, although it was desirable for the sample utilised in phase II to generate data on claimsmakers to be sufficiently broad to encompass the diversity of voices making claims about happiness, the rhetorical analysis (phase III) necessitated a focus on articles with more substantial attention attributed to happiness and the attributes above were used to select such articles (detailed below). One of the drawbacks is that these cases and attributes generated a great deal of data, which although potentially interesting and revealing, became overwhelming at times in terms of the data on which to focus. Adhering to the research questions that guided the thesis helped focus the analysis with additional data remaining available for future research.

4.6 Phase II: Claimsmakers

Since the emphasis in qualitative media analysis is upon the types of content presented and the process of generating meanings, a form of theoretical sampling is usually required which attempts to focus the analysis upon emergent themes. That is, a sample of documents is selected based upon an 'emerging understanding of the topic in question' and may later expand to include

additional sources in various media as the primary sample leads the researcher to investigate new areas (Altheide, 1996:33). Further, as Sandelowski describes, 'Data collection in qualitative descriptive studies is typically directed toward discovering the who, what, and where of events or experiences, or their basic nature and shape' (2000:338). While a combination of broad keyword searches were used in the initial exploratory and historical phases of the research, following the identification of an emergent trend toward normative claims and problematisations of happiness (both implicit and explicit), later phases aimed to focus upon these discussions and the claimsmakers implicated in the problematisation of happiness.

Thus the second phase of the research was designed to answer the question 'who says that happiness is a problem?' That is, who are the claimsmakers? The intention was to identify which claimsmakers have emerged as prominent authorities and from what fields and backgrounds claims about happiness tended to emerge. As previously mentioned, it was decided that the focus should be upon the most recent phase identified in the historical research as important as the main time period from which to generate data on claimsmakers. However, recognising that numerous claimsmakers and connections between them may have been active prior to this phase, a comparison was made with the first claims problematising happiness in the UK news media identified in the early 1990s and auxiliary documents were gathered and analysed regarding the activities and connections between various claimsmakers (see chapter 6).

4.6.1 Data Gathering and Sampling

In order to gain a sufficient degree of familiarity with the sources, the sample had to be small enough to be manageable by a single researcher, while keeping in mind that for the present purposes, the level of detail required is moderate. The aim was to identify claimsmakers and track the discourses, activities, and connections between major advocates, rather than an in-depth analysis of their rhetoric (the subject of the final phase). At the time of this phase, the most recent full year available to analyse was 2009. Table 4 shows the total numbers of articles in the Nvivo database for the years 2003-2009.

Table 4. Applicable articles per year 2003-2009

Year	Number of Relevant Articles
2003	81
2004	59
2005	101

2006	164
2007	141
2008	129
2009	90
Total:	765

In accordance with the goals of QMA, the sample must be sufficiently small in order to facilitate a good level of familiarity and to allow for a relatively in-depth analysis. Altheide (1996) suggests a 'general rule of thumb' of about 5-10% of the total population. However, in this case the total population is somewhat ambiguous and may total tens of thousands (for articles simply mentioning the keyword) or be difficult to ascertain by a single researcher (in the case of articles meeting the aforementioned criteria for inclusion in the several thousand results listed by Nexis). A larger proportion of the articles available in the Nvivo database was desirable, and through a process of trial and error, a number closer to 300, or 40% of the 765 articles listed, was judged as manageable for a single researcher.

A stratified quota sample was therefore extracted from the Nvivo database, with 40% of articles selected per year to create a sample of 306 articles. Although an electronic list randomiser was initially considered (and used for the rhetorical analysis), it was decided that the articles would be selected in the order that they initially appeared sorted by relevance in the Nexis database. Recall that Nexis sorts for relevance by the frequency of the keyword in the article and the proximity of the keyword to the headline. Therefore, the sources selected were those which tended to use the word happiness more often and in a more prominent position, but did not necessarily exclude articles that did not have the keyword in the headline (as selecting only those cases in the Nvivo database with the attribute corresponding to 'happiness or problem claims in the headline of an article' would have done). This was intended to focus the analysis on prominent claims about happiness, but also to capture some of the tendency to use normative claims about happiness in reference to other phenomena as well. It had been noted in the exploratory phases that although there were very clear 'owners' of the issue, there was also an astonishing array of claimsmakers who used the rhetoric of happiness to support a diversity of causes, but who did not necessarily focus their claimsmaking on happiness alone. Therefore, although major claimsmakers were indeed the focus, a sample was selected that would not exclude some of the more minor uses of happiness claims. The resultant sample was analysed in a separate Nvivo file, although both the online Nexis database and the full Nvivo database remained important tools for comparison and exploration of emergent themes identified in the sample.

The resultant sample is as follows:

Table 5. Number of articles per year included in 2003-2009 sample

Year	Number of Relevant Articles Included
2003	32
2004	24
2005	40
2006	66
2007	56
2008	52
2009	36
Total Sample Size:	306

Table 6. Sample breakdown by source

Source	Number of Articles in Sample
<i>The Independent</i>	27
<i>The Independent on Sunday</i>	17
<i>The Guardian</i>	70
<i>The Observer</i>	26
<i>The Times</i>	74
<i>The Sunday Times</i>	43
<i>The Daily Telegraph</i>	40
<i>The Sunday Telegraph</i>	9
Total Sample Size:	306

4.6.2 Analysing the Sample

In QMA, *a priori* codes are limited. That is, protocols and categories are informed by a continuous relationship with the data rather than through attempting to fit data to preconceived categories. Consequently, a protocol was developed in order to address one of the key research questions that inform this thesis, and categories were subsequently applied depending upon the capacity in which a claimmaker primarily acted in the sample. However, the purpose of this categorisation is only to gain insight into the general sectors of society from which claimmakers have tended to come and to develop a list from which further theoretical sampling and interpretation of sources could proceed.

Recall that this phase of the research endeavours to elucidate from whom claims about happiness emerge. Correspondingly, the following protocol was developed:

Does the person/organisation make a claim about happiness and/or wellbeing in terms of its:⁵¹

- constitution/definition
- causes /determinants
- proper method of pursuit
- necessary interventions
- significance (or lack thereof)
- role in public/private life
- problematic nature (or lack thereof)

These criteria also include the critical aspects; that is, those who dispute aspects of happiness discourses such as the ability to define happiness and/or wellbeing and whether or not it should play a prominent role in public life. An individual or organisation was recorded if they met any one or more of the above criteria. An answer of 'yes' to the above protocol warranted the inclusion of the individual or organisations as what Nvivo calls 'free nodes' along with information relating to how they were described or cited in the articles (the unit of analysis was each article in its entirety). Journalists were recorded only if they passed judgment on the issue, as many passively reported claims while others explicitly leant support, made recommendations, or raised concerns.

When testing this protocol on a small number of articles it quickly became clear that a strategy of only counting subsequent claims meeting these criteria under the 'node' created for that individual or organisation risked excluding some of the more subtle processes taking place (as well as being nearly impossible as the list quickly grew). Most importantly, it was clear that many individuals and organisations were referred to as important figures or whose research would be used without having necessarily played an active role in problematising that information. Many individuals appeared in connection with the issue because they had conducted research on happiness, but it was others who used their results in support of problem claims. Consequently, it

⁵¹ In the context of articles talking about happiness, claimsmakers were recorded if they made a claim using similar terms like 'contentment', 'joy', or 'bliss.' Some articles about happiness also referenced studies like, for example, the relationship between positive mood and physical health, and in that case, claimsmakers who talked about 'optimism' or 'positive thinking' were also included. For instance, one recorded 'expert' was Laura Kubzansky, a professor of health and social behaviour, who was quoted on the relationship between 'positive thinking' and heart disease (Burne, *The Times*:2005).

was decided that the first time an individual or group met the criteria above in connection with the issue, either commenting directly or indirectly, being mentioned as the source of a claim, or overseeing the creation of claims (in the case of government reports referred to as emerging under the auspices of a particular policymaker), that individual or organisation would be recorded. In this way a list was created which could then become a tool for further investigation in the Nvivo databases (both the sample and the broader database) with resultant totals recorded and contents further investigated. This gave a sense of the importance attributed to particular individuals and groups while an investigation of the contents of these articles and the identities of, and interconnections between, particular claimsmakers elucidated their activities.

This means that the numerical totals listed in Appendices A-C do not reflect the number of articles in which an individual or group made a claim about happiness but rather the number of times their name appeared in articles relevant to the construction of the problem. This was intended to ascertain not only the number of times an individual or organisation directly made claims about the problem, but the importance that he or she came to acquire in the construction of the issue. In this way, major claimsmakers clearly emerged from the data, but so too did individuals and particular forms of knowledge emerge as significant regardless of whether or not the individuals who created that knowledge had actually played a significant role in its dissemination. The importance of this becomes clear in chapter 6.

The resultant conceptualisation of 'claimsmaker' is more consistent with Berger and Luckmann's broader notion of competing definitions of reality than Spector and Kitsuse's (2001) more 'activist' characterisation cited in chapter 3. This is because unlike other social problems which more explicitly focus upon negative conditions, problematisations of happiness are often implicit and therefore important facets of the discourse risk being lost by considering only those who posit a clear-cut problematisation or become dedicated to the issue in and of itself rather than simply mobilising its rhetoric (as many did). In addition, critical appraisals, support, and brief uptake of happiness claims by individuals and groups who are not dedicated to the issue was observed to be significant and indicates some of the success of happiness claims, an observation that also risks being lost by taking a more narrow focus.

Information was subsequently gathered on the identified individuals and organisations from auxiliary materials including their own official websites and publications, relevant books and scholarly articles written by, citing or otherwise referencing the claimsmakers, and archival information gathered from the Nexis database and various historical and print archives. All information utilised was publically available for use without special permission.

4.6.3 Categories

Where possible the manner by which the individual or organisation primarily acted in the sample is the category in which the claimmaker was placed. For instance, a policy adviser who was frequently referenced on the basis of the authority she possessed by virtue of her expertise in economics would be classified as an 'expert: economist'. It must be stressed that attempting to 'pigeonhole' particular actors within particular categories is ultimately of limited utility and meaningfulness. The purpose of categorisation is simply to gain some grasp of the sources of happiness discourses and the range of commentary that has emerged. Prominent categories illustrate a reliance upon a particular type of commentary, but it is in the interpretation of the contents of these categories, of the activities and histories of particular individuals and groups and their relationships to each other that the more fruitful analysis is to be found. Indeed, it was noted that the most prominent claimmakers were characterised by a plurality of roles and that their positioning and diverse connections facilitated the ease with which their claims were heard in a diversity of public arenas.

4.7 Phase III: Rhetoric

As described in the previous chapter, it is the persuasive nature of claimmaking and the intense competition in public arenas for attention to new social problems that make rhetoric so central to the study of social problems. This study is informed by the constructionist approach, which attempts to understand how 'reality comes to be constituted in human interactions and in language, including written text,' but through additional recourse to rhetorical analysis, the focus is drawn more acutely upon 'how messages are delivered, and with what (intended or actual) effects' (Krippendorff, 2004:16). The study of rhetoric is a method of analysing discourse that focuses on the identification of 'structural elements, tropes, styles of argumentation, [and] speech acts' (Krippendorff, 2004:16).

The previous chapter stressed that claims do not emerge as if from nowhere. Therefore it was necessary to identify from whom claims had emerged before embarking on a detailed analysis of claims. Claimmakers pre-exist claims, but they also draw on existing claims in the broader cultural repertoire. New social problems draw on the rhetoric and themes of those that came before as cultural resources. A form of rhetorical analysis utilising the structures of argument (grounds, warrants, and conclusions) is ideally suited to investigating the interplay of cultural

forces and claims about the world. It highlights both the persuasive nature of what may at first appear as simple descriptions of reality as well as how claims, and thus the social existence of the problem itself, can be subtly shaped by discursive processes.

This phase of research therefore endeavoured to elucidate what the problem 'is' as a series of claims. It added further insight into the examination begun in phase I toward answering, 'how do constructs evolve,' but more importantly, it wanted to answer, 'what sort of problem do claimsmakers say that happiness is?' And how did these claims come to prevail? The results are detailed in chapter 7.

4.7.1 Sampling

In order to answer these questions, the focus was again centred on the most recent period of happiness discourses, when talk about happiness had begun a steep incline and reached its greatest heights. This portion of the research necessitated analysis in greater detail than that which preceded it, with all articles sampled needing to be read before coding and with the coding process itself involving a close analysis of each sentence in each article. Consequently, a method of theoretical sampling was applied with a number of needs in mind. First, a relatively small sample of articles was required. A test was carried out seeking to identify claims corresponding to grounds, warrants and conclusions in a sample of five articles. It was found that a single article could take anywhere from one to several hours to complete. Consequently, a sample of between 75 and 100 was deemed viable given the timeline for coding and analysing the results. Second, unlike the analysis of claimsmakers which intended to gain insight into the broad range of claimsmakers utilising happiness claims, the focus of the analysis was more acutely upon the claims themselves and therefore articles with a more substantial focus upon happiness were sought. According to Trumbo (1996:272), 'Journalistic tradition holds that the headline and lead should be written to inform the reader as to what is most important about the story.' Therefore articles were selected if happiness (or an associated keyword) were located in the headline, lead or first paragraph. Finally, slightly larger pieces (greater than 300 words) with more developed commentary were preferred. Therefore, a search of the Nvivo database was conducted for all cases with the following attributes:

1. Claim about happiness/social problem within opening (headline, lead, first paragraph) = Happiness claim in opening
2. More than half of article about happiness = Yes

3. Word Count = >301 words

Cases with these corresponding attributes totalled 506. However, as a small sample was needed, it was judged that 1/5 or 20% of these results would be examined in detail. As each of the articles was equally amenable to study, the 506 articles were stratified by year and 20% were randomly selected per year for inclusion into the sample. The selection was achieved by creating a list of all article titles in each year and entering them into an electronic list randomiser. The 20% quota for each year was then selected from the first results that appeared on each randomised list. This strategy resulted in a sample of 100 articles.⁵²

Table 7. Rhetorical analysis sample

Year	Nvivo Database Population	Relevant Cases	Rhetorical Analysis Sample (20% of Relevant Cases)
2003	81	44	9
2004	59	32	6
2005	101	49	10
2006	164	110	22
2007	141	52	10
2008	129	61	12
2009	90	66	13
2010	138	92	18
Total	903	506	100

4.7.2 *Analysing the Sample*

The resultant sample was read once before coding was initiated. Field notes were taken regarding recurrent grounds, warrants (including rhetorical strategies) and conclusions, and possible problems were anticipated. Since the study of rhetoric in terms of grounds, warrants and conclusions is an analytical device and not a conscious approach taken by claimsmakers, it was often difficult to ascertain precisely when a claim might be considered to belong to any one of these categories. Consequently, it was decided that rather than imposing codes on the data, codes would be generated from the data with analytic categories emerging from the data. It was decided that a catalogue of claims would be created and the results subsequently grouped into

⁵² The resultant round number was a convenient, though unintentional, result. When selecting 20% of articles per year, it was necessary to round up or down for results ending in decimal points, thus producing a total selection of 100 articles rather than 101.2 (20% of 506).

grounds, warrants and conclusions according to the role each claim played in the general construction of the problem that emerged. Claims about the nature of happiness, for example, were grouped under 'grounds,' while rhetorical devices and claims evoking values were grouped under 'warrants,' and proposals for change were grouped under 'conclusions.'

In order to create a catalogue of culturally available claims about happiness, each article was read sentence by sentence. Claims about happiness (and associated problem claims) were coded in Nvivo as 'Tree Nodes' in the form of phrases that encapsulated the claim along with a short description. These phrases were not word for word repetitions of phrases in the articles, but were rather intended to distil the core of the claim being made about the nature of the world. If claims were observed to relate to each other, but demonstrated variations deemed significant, a branch of the tree node was created with the letter V for 'variation' followed by an encapsulating phrase. Criticisms or counterclaims launched against particular claims or made in general were similarly coded as 'C' followed by a phrase encapsulating the criticism or counterclaim.

The resultant catalogue summarises many of the most common themes in major print news media discussions of happiness and confirm observations in previous phases of the study. Not only was the catalogue fruitful data for investigation, but it is likely that many of the most prominent claims identified here would also be observed in similar proportions in different arenas of public debate. Future research might use the results to investigate diffusion, or variations in different spheres of public discourse. For the present purposes, since it was the first time attempted, the claims themselves were explored and their underlying meanings investigated. The results of this analysis are detailed in chapter 7.

4.8 Conclusion

This thesis has relied upon QMA as a method with which to approach discourse analysis through successive levels of discovery and theoretically informed sampling techniques. The approach taken here also utilised analytical tools derived from rhetorical analysis to look more deeply at how claims about happiness were not just descriptive, but also argumentative. It thus allowed for insight into how a social problem can be shaped by the context of a medium as well as the context of a culture and time period. Through a process of constant discovery, comparison and investigation regarding claimsmakers and the claims they actively promote and move across various media, networks, and geographic boundaries, it attempted to give an account of a social

problem as an active process. Meanings were allowed to emerge from the data through constant comparison, theoretical elucidation, observation and counting repetitions, rather than by creating pre-conceived categories.

The study of claimsmakers and claims is central to the study of the construction of a social problem and thus a methodological approach was developed in order to ascertain the involvement and significance of various types of claimsmakers and the claims that they make as they deliberately seek to convince others and to change the world on their behalf. This methodology was designed to ascertain who says that happiness is a problem, how the problem of happiness as a social construct evolved, and how it came to prevail. The final question, referring to the consequences of these constructions can only be ascertained through an investigation of the underlying messages of happiness claims which emerge in the analysis.

5 Changing Uses of Happiness

In recent years it has become impossible to ignore the seemingly exponential growth in interest in happiness across varied sectors of society. It seems that not a day goes by without the announcement of a new happiness based policy or another agency announcing their interest in measuring or promoting happiness. Although it is clear that public talk about happiness is on the rise, it is not clear precisely what, if anything, is distinct about these contemporary discussions. After all, the American Declaration of Independence had famously enshrined the right to pursue happiness well over two centuries ago. Is the newfound interest simply the rediscovery of an age old pursuit? Is it a well-timed refocusing on 'what really matters' as the transient character of the material world is suddenly revealed by an economic crisis?

This chapter begins to shed light on these questions through an examination of the evolution of happiness as a social construct in print news media discussions. It attempts to describe the essential characteristics of trends in usages of happiness and offers points of comparison between the past and present. It shows how happiness has become subtly reformulated from an indistinct rhetorical amplifier toward a highly rationalised, decontextualised, and individualised object, the 'rates' and 'levels' of which can be identified, measured and subject to professional and political interventions.

Happiness has always figured in public discourses, but to what exactly such discussions are referring when evoking the term has remained enduringly vague. It is perhaps precisely as a result of this inherent ambiguity that the enduring appeal of the idiom is to be found. It has the curious ability to appear outwardly straightforward and self-evident, evoking common sense notions that 'everyone wants to be happy,' while at the same time remaining conceptually open and readily amenable to a wide range of issues and agendas. That the power of happiness has come to be more and more mobilised in recent years is attested to by its increased prevalence and centrality in public discourse, a trend which can be observed by a marked increase in the number of articles in the UK news media mentioning the term. The figure and table below display the results of a keyword search of the Nexis archive across four major UK publications revealing that recently

there has been a steady increase in articles containing the word 'happiness,' reaching peaks in 2006 and 2010.⁵³

Figure 4. Newspaper articles containing keyword 'happiness'

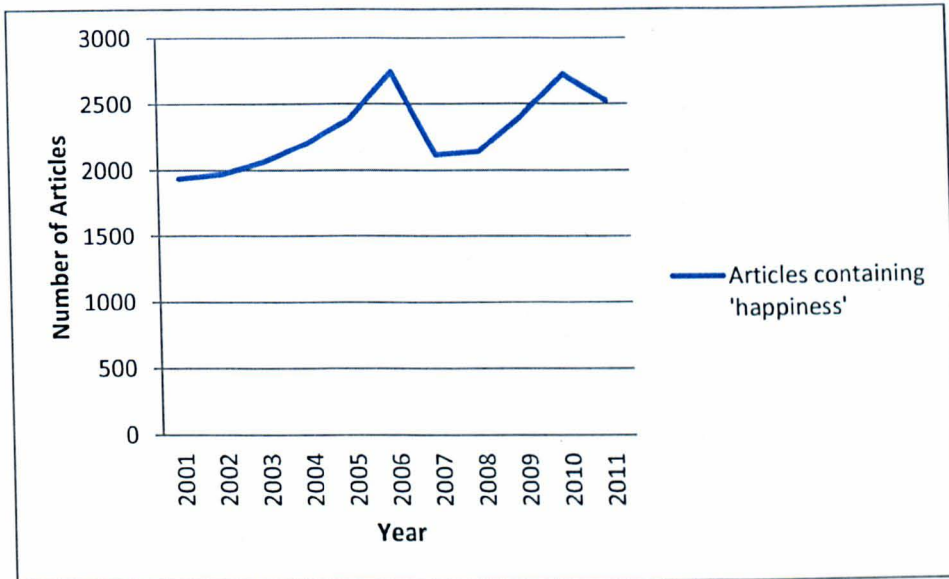


Table 8. Newspaper articles containing keyword 'happiness'

Year	Articles containing 'happiness'
2001	1937
2002	1971
2003	2064
2004	2206
2005	2385
2006	2744
2007	2117
2008	2138
2009	2398
2010	2725
2011	2522

⁵³ As described in the previous chapter, this search and other searches described hereafter (unless otherwise specified) include: *The Times*, *The Independent*, *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph* (and their Sunday Editions). Although this research was initiated in 2008, these figures were updated in 2012 to include the most recent completed years. In the interim, new material had been added to the Nexis database so that all publications used in the study were included in full from at least 2001 onward, whereas at the time of data collection for the major phases of the research, they were only available in full as far back as 2002. The figures were updated here in order to observe the trend line over a longer period of time.

The Nexis database is limited in its inclusions of historical data. Therefore, in order to observe this trend over a longer period of time, the search was confined to the Nexis holdings for *The Times* (including the Sunday edition), one of the most inclusive available (the first full year fully indexed being 1986). Here, the trend is even more striking. Whereas only 142 articles in *The Times* had used the keyword in 1986, that number had reached 1043 at its peak in 2009.

Figure 5. Articles containing keyword 'happiness' in *The Times*

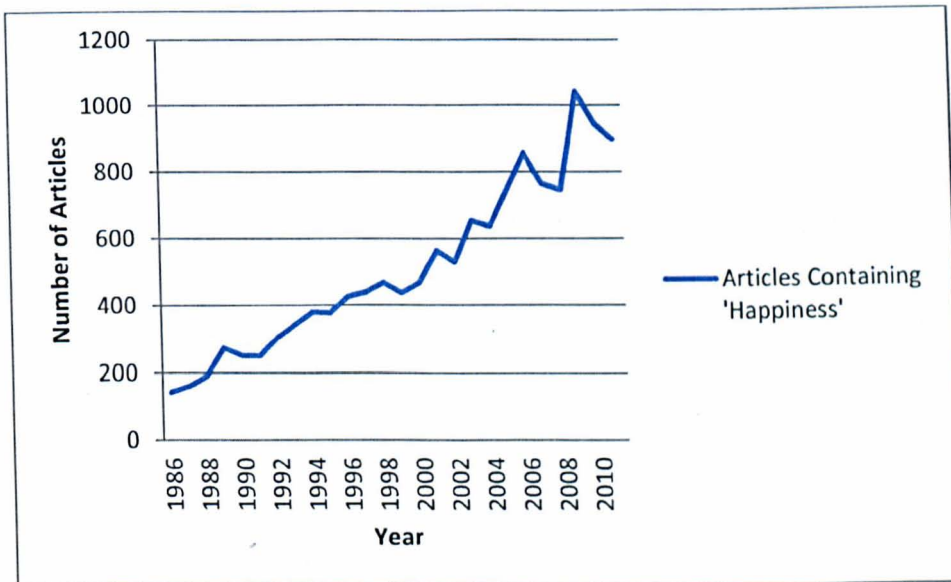


Table 9. Articles containing keyword 'happiness' in *The Times*

Year	Articles Containing 'Happiness'
1986	142
1987	160
1988	191
1989	274
1990	252
1991	251
1992	305
1993	343
1994	379
1995	377
1996	427
1997	440
1998	468
1999	438
2000	468
2001	564
2002	529

2003	653
2004	636
2005	742
2006	856
2007	762
2008	744
2009	1043
2010	945
2011	897

It is clear that happiness has become increasingly prominent toward the present. Yet, increased usage alone does not necessarily imply increased importance. When the contents of these articles are considered, it is clear that the meaning, usage and importance of happiness have not remained constant over time. Rather, the term has evolved linguistically and conceptually becoming both a social problem in itself and an increasingly popular idiom through which to conceptualise other social problems.

5.1. Periodisation

The discussion to follow is divided into four time periods (including a 'prehistory') corresponding to shifts observed in usages of happiness over time. However, it should be noted that these are somewhat ambiguous and the years given are not meant to imply any sort of abrupt discontinuity. Rather, they correspond to three important developments discernible within these time periods: a shift toward a decontextualisation of happiness, the first appearances of problematised discourses, and the present period where happiness has become an influential construct, mobilised for a wide variety of purposes and implicated in a growing number of social issues. These are described briefly below as an overview before turning toward their expansion and description in the remainder of the chapter.

5.1.1. Prehistory

The prehistory refers to the time before happiness began to be attributed particular importance in social commentaries. It characterises an earlier period when happiness was largely an indistinct referent, a rhetorical amplifier with little deeper meaning intended to be placed upon the word itself. Here, happiness was largely descriptive of its context, standing in a symbiotic relationship

with it, simultaneously gaining its meaning from it and lending a positive connotation or general sense of 'good' in turn.

5.1.2. Late 1980s –1993: Decontextualised Happiness

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a shift begins to appear wherein happiness comes to be attributed greater importance in and of itself. Whereas happiness may have been implicated in therapeutically oriented discussions periodically prior to this time, it had largely remained secondary to another primary concern.⁵⁴ Increasingly, happiness is relocated from the peripheries, from its mobilisation as a descriptive element toward a position of centrality. Happiness is talked about as something that individuals must create for themselves or which comes as a result of a personal project in self-realisation, but more importantly, especially in terms of the trend toward decontextualisation, it is at this time that expert discourses on happiness begin to appear. Uses of happiness as something individuals construct, define and pursue for themselves largely apart from others gradually give way in the mid-1990s to a greater frequency of expert testimony on the subject. This professional expertise, which takes happiness as an objective fact and legitimate object of scientific enquiry as its premise, begins to appear in the late 1980s and early 1990s. However, these early claims did not necessarily forward happiness as a problem, but were rather more concerned with its establishment as something objectively identifiable and measureable and whose study legitimately falls under the scope and domain of psychological expertise. That is, it was the idea that happiness could be a science that was initially newsworthy.

5.1.3. 1993 – 2003: The Discovery of a Problem

It is the prior omission of the problematic perspective that marks the years following 1993 as essentially different from the time period preceding it. It is at this point that the first claims appear problematising happiness. Whereas the earliest claimsmakers appearing in the media had been variously connected with psychological professions, new advocates begin to appear who are not necessarily experts themselves, but who nonetheless use expert discourses to validate their

⁵⁴ For example, a 1977 article entitled, 'Survey Finds That Most Children Are Happy at Home but Fear World' reports on the results of a large survey conducted by the Foundation for Child Development which asked children about a range of emotions. In spite of its emphasis in the headline, happiness was subordinated to a concern with 'fear' and television watching (Flaste, *The New York Times*: 1977).

claims. These new claims stemming from various sectors begin to centre not just upon the character of happiness, but upon its character as a social problem. Claimsmakers begin to forward characterisations of modern society as being essentially dominated by a series of paradoxes in which happiness plays a key role. This period sees the beginning of a trend in which more and more expert voices add their claims to a growing discourse which, among other things, corrects public misconceptions about happiness (as disproved by a growing body of research), explains why it is absent, and prescribes solutions for how the situation can or must be ameliorated. As was the case with the earlier appearance of happiness-related professional discourse, the media display a clear penchant for characterisations of happiness that take a more scientific stance: this is something objective, measurable and scientifically verifiable.

5.1.4. 2003 – Present: Happiness as a Social Problem

Although the discourse progresses in much the same way into the present decade, with new advocates appropriating the discourse and forwarding new claims, it is after 2003 that happiness receives a significant boost from certain influential claimsmakers who take ownership of the problem and play a key role in directing and increasing media interest. Happiness also becomes increasingly associated with other social problems. As it becomes implicated in broader narratives, themes of social and environmental degradation dominate. At the same time, the language of happiness begins to transform, incorporating a moral counterclaim for happiness not just as an individual emotion but as a statement about 'well-being' and 'well-doing.'⁵⁵ Although policy proposals had been made to varying extents in the past, happiness as a goal of policy begins to gain in both importance and urgency after 2003. A number of counterclaims are raised concerning micro-issues within the discourse but more fundamental criticisms prove to hold little sway.

⁵⁵ It is also here that one of the key differences between happiness and similar discourses that came before it (for example, self-esteem and positive thinking) is particularly evident. Whereas, for example, self-esteem is vulnerable to the critique that it encourages narcissism, happiness, reconstituted through references to moral philosophy, easily lends itself to moral narratives and further, gains a sense of timelessness and transcendence. Although discussed in this chapter, these observations are more thoroughly explored in chapter 7.

5.2. Prehistory

Uses of happiness predating the contemporary concern, as they are found in the archives of *The Times* and *The New York Times*, reveal that until relatively recently, happiness was rarely a specific entity to which one appealed or referred directly, but rather stood as a more vague rhetorical amplifier, a signifier with an abstract, rather than concrete signified. Its range of meanings demonstrates an extraordinary variability, and it was mobilised in a vast array of contexts and yet rarely appeared as the explicit subject of an article. Instead, it was more often used in passing with little significance intended to be attributed to the idiom itself.

It is commonly found, as one might expect, forming parts of well-wishes, hopes for a new year, venture, or as expressions of relief or joy. In addition, it is often found in tandem with other terms like 'peace,' 'justice,' 'freedom' and 'prosperity.' This mobilisation as part of a group of other positive terms was most often articulated in relation to political themes, especially during times of conflict. For example, in a 1916 article in *The Times* the French Minister of Commerce is quoted as hoping that, 'from the war may spring future generations with more happiness, prosperity, and justice' (*The Times*, 1916a); a statesman declares that 'the happiness and peace of the world' depends on the realisation of the common goals of Britain and its allies (*The Times*, 1916b), and an earlier pronouncement affirms (referring to government ministers), 'they have largely contributed to the material happiness and prosperity of the country and [...] they upheld the interests, prestige, and honour of the Empire' (*The Times*, 1901). In such mentions it is clear that the term was largely peripheral to other concerns, and its invocation appears to have merely strengthened the implied 'goodness' of the subject matter.

The use of the term as a rhetorical amplifier intended to conjure forth positive connotations is particularly clear at mid-century, when it is not uncommon to find happiness connected with words like 'freedom' and 'democracy' in articles dealing with the United States and its allies during the Cold War. One speaker rallies, 'Let us match the danger with equal courage and our equal all-out clear challenge. And let us across the long centuries reaffirm Pericles's great slogan for democracy—Happiness is freedom, and freedom is courage' (*The Times*, 1948). An article from 1953 describes a new report claiming that democratic family structures are the key to satisfaction and happiness and for the development of children with, 'the strength and understanding required to support democracy against dictatorship' (*The New York Times*, 1953). It was also invoked as something intrinsic to our societies, themselves intrinsically good, but threatened by an enemy, as exemplified by an article quoting the Prime Minister as saying, with reference to the

Soviet Union, 'Our way of life is in danger, our happiness and the happiness and future of our children are in danger' (*The Times*, 1951), echoing an earlier example, also from a time of conflict, 'democracy, the very bulwark of their happiness is in danger' (*The Times*, 1916c).

Other uses are indicative of fortuitous or otherwise agreeable arrangements. For example, one might express satisfaction with a fortunate circumstance as, 'If all Volunteer regiments had been at full strength, as some of our friends have had the happiness to be [...]' (*The Times*, 1900a), or, 'They would, he was sure, be guided by a desire to keep before them but one object—namely, the promotion of the welfare, prosperity, and happiness of those among whom they had the happiness to live' (*The Times*, 1900b). Similarly, it was also used to indicate an appropriate matching, success or a hopeful future. The headline of an article describing a 79 year-old woman's decision to enrol in college reads: 'This Student Finds Happiness At 79 and Beyond' (Schoen, *The New York Times*: 1980), and another asks ironically, 'Can a Communist find happiness as research director of Amnesty International?' (Reagan, *The New York Times*: 1978). Happiness did not always refer to an emotional state of mind, but implied things like autonomy, success or an appropriate or harmonious relationship between things. This is also evidenced by plays on words in which inanimate objects are described as 'finding happiness' including soap operas moving to prime time (O'Connor, *The New York Times*: 1980) and 'an \$8000 car' finding happiness on '\$12 tires' (*The New York Times*, 1966).

What is perhaps most notable about these early discussions using the term is that it seldom appeared as the explicit subject of the text, and was instead used in passing with little emphasis placed upon the term itself. Outside of the social context, it held little meaning. To single out a further example, a scheme designed to provide part-time work for pensioners was described as 'an extremely good investment in public happiness' (*The Times*, 1957). Yet, it would be absurd to say that 'public happiness' represented the accomplishment of a particular subjectively defined goal. Rather, it was a rhetorical flare meant to illustrate the proposal's widespread benefit. Happiness, more often than not, was secondary, contributing to the importance of the things it described while nonetheless remaining predominantly peripheral to them. Though it may have been, at least rhetorically, forwarded as some form of ultimate aim, it was not necessarily a state (much less a 'state of mind') that must necessarily result, but rather stood as a more abstract indicator of the positive qualities present in another primary concern.

When it does appear as the subject of an article, it is often a religious commentator attempting to assert the true meaning of happiness as being the result of a moral quest. A Congregationalist minister wonders at the religious emphasis upon suffering and claims instead that happiness is

'the first result of obedience to God' (*The New York Times*, 1899). According to a headline referring to a 'Catholic Daughters' Chaplain' who 'urges constant striving for the Development of the Soul,' 'Moral Living' is the 'Key to Happiness' (*The New York Times*, 1948). As time goes on, these assertions gain a more polemic feel. In 1954 an article relates the Archbishop of Canterbury's explanation for a shortage of nurses, teachers and clergy: 'the reason for the shortage [...] was not that the conditions in those professions were hard—as indeed some of them were—but simply that people had forgotten that it was only in these professions that the real happiness of service could be attained. People were running about seeking happiness and forgetting the conditions that made that happiness' (*The Times*, 1954). Another headline declares that a Reverend 'objects to the creed that all men are endowed with right to pursue [happiness],' forwarding instead the notion that happiness is the 'result of service' (*The New York Times*, 1952). Worshipers at a cathedral are reported as being informed that, 'one of the greatest tragedies of modern man was his misguided quest for happiness' (*The New York Times*, 1961), and another article relates how 'Pope Paul wished the world true peace and true happiness in contrast to mere pleasure and "dolce vita"' (*The New York Times*, 1967). Although these articles focus more intently upon happiness, much in the same manner as the more passive political uses mentioned above, the power inherent in happiness to lend a sense of ultimate good to one's values is particularly clear.

These attempts to lay claim to a 'true' meaning of happiness and to mobilise it in support of particular values have little effect on broader discussions, and assertions such as these are rarely repeated beyond their first articulation. The lack of resonance in the wider culture is particularly palpable in relation to the use of happiness by those associated with the American president Lyndon Johnson in the mid to late 1960s. Toward this time, articles mentioning happiness in the *NYT* begin to display a sense of disillusionment with the products of prosperity. For example, one headline refers to a 'prosperity peril' and relates the warning of an American poet, 'Beware of making happiness and comfort the sole goal' (*The New York Times*, 1956). A few years later, a report describes a psychologist scorning materialist culture, reminding a group of mothers that 'it isn't the things, it's the people that are the core of good family relationships,' (*The New York Times*, 1960).

In spite of these misgivings, the direct appeal to happiness in political discourse appears to have held little sway. That is, while the concern 'not with how much, but how good—not with the quantity of our goods but with the quality of our lives' (Goodwin quoted in Bauer, 1966:xii), discussed in chapter 2, was apparently gaining ground in influential quarters, it appears to have

largely failed to gain resonance as a foundation for engagement with the public at this time. A 1965 front page piece on an announcement made by President Lyndon Johnson during the signing of a health bill reports that, 'he would soon form a White House study group to define United States goals in health, education and "happiness"' with happiness thus singled out in quotations marks (Robertson, *The New York Times*: 1965). In the full speech that Johnson made that day, he had read from Barbara Ward's 'The Rich Nations and the Poor Nations' (1962), pointing out that in spite of greater wealth, American society had failed to present an image of the 'good life' (See Johnson, 1965). The next day, the columnist Russell Baker derided the president's remarks in a satirical commentary in his 'Observer' column, quoting the news item of the previous day and continuing, 'The historic Internal happiness Act of 1966, which the President signed today in a joyful setting at Disneyland, will throw the full weight of the Federal Government behind man's ancient battle against depression, blues, boredom, Sunday-morning letdown, lacklustre marriage and inferiority complex' (Baker, *The New York Times*: 1965). In declaring his candidacy for President, Johnson's Vice President and would-be successor Hubert Humphrey made remarks similar to Johnson's, announcing his intention to pursue a 'politics of happiness' a point that did not go unnoticed in the press (Weaver, *The New York Times*: 1968; see also Reeds, *The New York Times*: 1968).⁵⁶ He was attacked both in editorials (again by Baker, *The New York Times*: 1968)⁵⁷ and by political opponents, with Robert Kennedy quoted as retorting, among other criticisms, 'It is easy to say this is the politics of happiness—but if you see children starving in the Delta of Mississippi and despair on the Indian Reservations then you know that everybody in America is not satisfied' (Herbers, *The New York Times*: 1968). This latter criticism came in spite of the fact that Kennedy had himself made similar claims just over a month earlier.⁵⁸

In 1969, an article appears reporting on a session sponsored by the Center for the Study of Democratic institutions, a think-tank with connections to Johnson's Great Society initiatives, in which the panel participants commented on a 'crisis of affluence': 'the economists made it plain that the notion that wealth would generate public happiness had suffered a rude shock in this country during the past decade' (Raymont, *The New York Times*, 1969). Yet, this article is coloured by a sense of scepticism, with the author pointing out that such statements were uttered before

⁵⁶ The outcome of Humphrey's 'politics of happiness' was disastrous; one biographer attempted to explain away his remarks as mere reflections of his 'bubbly, extemporaneous' personality (Solberg 1984:332-333).

⁵⁷ According to Solberg (1984), this critical reception was widespread in the American press.

⁵⁸ Kennedy proclaimed to a student audience at the University of Kansas that 'the gross national product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education or the joy of their play' (Kennedy, 1968).

a, 'respectful, obviously prosperous audience' (Raymont, *The New York Times*: 1969). Indeed, following Humphrey's unsuccessful campaign, Kennedy's assassination, and the change in administration, the idea of mobilising happiness in connection with a 'crisis of affluence' as a political project disappears.⁵⁹

While a sense of disillusionment in direct connection with happiness had been mobilised in the US, however fleetingly, in the mid to late 1960s, in the UK, happiness seemed to maintain most of its aforementioned qualities throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s. Indeed, an archival search through *The Times* between 1960 and 1985 for 'happiness' and 'prosperity' reveals that when the words appear in close proximity they invariably reinforce each other, appearing as a package of terms that are taken as self-evidently good in much the same way as the aforementioned examples of 'justice' and 'freedom.' Such uses of happiness and prosperity at this time unfailingly take the form of, to cite some typical examples: 'I cannot imagine that any Government, whatever its complexion [...] would wish to prevent us carrying on with a job so vital to the happiness and prosperity of the community at large' (*The Times*, 1963), or quoting a French official, 'of course the Government's duty is to think first of France and the French people, their prosperity, their happiness, the greatness and independence of our country' (*The Times*, 1972). However, a similar search performed over the past decade yields vastly different results, with commentators remarking that, 'ensuring that Britain secures its clear potential for prosperity' will not 'guarantee national happiness' (Duncan, *The Times*: 2008), that, 'the paradox of prosperity' is that 'creating wealth destroys happiness' (Brayfield, *The Times*: 2000), and that 'Western society today values economic prosperity and the quest for eternal youth, rather than our intrinsic goodness or happiness' (Howard, *The Times*: 2006). The table below details the breakdown of articles using the words 'happiness' and 'prosperity' in *The Times* historically and over the past decades. In the 26 years between 1960 and 1985, 67 articles used the terms 'happiness' and 'prosperity' in the same sentence, each time unselfconsciously connected in meaning, reflecting a self-evident good. Over the last 26 years, although a similar number of articles contained the words in the same sentence, over a quarter of those were antithetical usages.

⁵⁹ Even following Easterlin's 1974 paper, often credited with being among the most important early works on happiness (at least within economics), which he included in not just a volume directed at economists but about which he also wrote for a 'wider audience' in the *Public Interest* (Easterlin 1973:4), the idea held little sway and was rarely mentioned in the media in the intervening years (that is, between the 1970s and the early to mid-1990s when the idea began to gain ground in public discourse).

Table 10. 'Happiness' and 'prosperity' in *The Times* 1960-2011⁶⁰

Type	1960-1985	1986-2011
Antithetical	0	15
Mutually Reinforcing	67	53
Total	67	68

This trend is also evident in a broader consideration of sources in the UK news media. Whereas once the words appeared in tandem, they are now more apt to be mobilised as diametrically opposed, lying at opposite ends of a paradox: 'the peculiar paradox of the affluent West – psychologists and economists are perplexed by the fact that our sense of wellbeing has not risen in tandem with prosperity' (Ahuja, *The Times*: 2004). As one column laments,

I do feel people in the west have an advantage: having so much material prosperity, they have already experienced everything our society tells us will bring happiness. They can see, if they have any sense, that at most it gives only short-term pleasure, that genuine happiness must lie elsewhere. Most people in the world haven't had those things, and still imagine that possessions will deliver the satisfaction their promoters assure us they do. But desire is like salty water. The more you drink, the thirstier you become' (Powell, *The Guardian*: 2009).

Clearly something in our conceptions of happiness in the intervening years has changed. These latter examples are part of a trend that has risen up in discussions about happiness, which use the word in a distinctly different manner than before and further, which assert that it constitutes a social problem that requires intervention. The beginnings of these shifts are evident in media discourses in the UK as early as the late 1980s, and while the problematisation of happiness is also evident in media discussions in the US and elsewhere in the world, it is toward an examination of these trends in the UK news media that this study will now focus.

5.3. Late 1980s – 1993: Decontextualised Happiness

Although at this early stage, most uses of happiness are, as in the past, used in passing and secondary to a larger concern, it is at this point that we find the germ of a growing tendency to

⁶⁰ Search performed in Times Digital Archive (1960-1985) and Nexis (1985-2009) for *The Times* (the Sunday Times was not included to maintain comparability) for 'happiness' and 'prosperity' occurring in the same sentence.

consider happiness apart from the social context. Narratives begin to emerge in which happiness is discussed as something that one pursues or creates for oneself, whose pursuit is criticised, and perhaps most importantly in terms of its later development, whose existence is objectively identifiable through scientific means. It is at this point that expert discourses on happiness begin to appear. Central to these claims is that happiness corresponds to a real object which can be measured and described and which falls under the legitimate domain of professional expertise.

The beginnings of a change in the way that happiness is conceptualised as compared with earlier usages is evidenced by a number of articles appearing toward the end of the 1980s and into the 1990s which discuss happiness as a goal in itself and as something whose pursuit is the objective of an individual quest or personal project in self-realisation. Some advocate travel, non-western cultures, or Eastern philosophy as paths to a more balanced or 'true' sense of happiness than is currently on offer. One article describes Buddhism as requiring the cultivation of attributes like 'calmness, insight, generosity, patience' so that 'true happiness can be achieved' (Erricker, *The Guardian*: 1992). Another, entitled, 'Me and My Psyche: Do-it-yourself happiness—Discovering Buddhism and Balance' relates how the author 'had friends who were Buddhists and I admired their calm, positive attitude to life. But I was busy doing all the things you do; working hard, having children, buying a house. Suddenly things seemed out of control. I felt as if my life had no balance' (Doling, *The Guardian*: 1989). Through Buddhism she learns that, 'what happens in my life is down to me. We all create our own happiness' (Doling, *The Guardian*: 1989). Whereas happiness may have once signified or occurred in tandem with words like 'success' and 'prosperity,' gradually these can no longer be trusted to coexist, and may even threaten a happiness that is itself the greater end. An interview with Prince Charles describes the incongruity of the 'public "Action Man"' with the 'private, introspective man' trying to reconcile an outer life of 'material success' with 'inner peace,' and how 'that outer life was not enough for happiness' (Stephen, *The Sunday Times*: 1985). The author explains that the 'implication of what he was saying was clear: that materially affluent conditions by no means necessarily provided happiness' (Stephen, *The Sunday Times*: 1985).

In addition to this changing characterisation of prosperity, there is also a growing tendency for happiness to be relocated from the once primary context of the social world toward an emphasis upon the inner world of the individual and the cultivation of personal happiness. At the same time, a divide begins to be drawn between pleasure and 'true' happiness, in which 'pleasure' becomes implicated in a rejection of materialism and is implicitly associated with amorality and self-indulgence. Another example puts many of these aforementioned themes more overtly, the

author, a philosopher, begins: 'Everyone wants to be happy: it is a psychological impossibility to seek otherwise' and continues:

Some people certainly pursue happiness through what many would call selfish activities: the love of money and material possession, unbridled ambition, the exploitation of other people; self-indulgence in what are generally termed and frequently condemned as the pleasures of the flesh. Whether these bring true happiness, only those who pursue them can tell; it is they, after all, who have to live with themselves. But others seem to find happiness by less obviously grasping means –through devotion to their fellows or to a cause, through self-control and conscientious living, even if this calls for a sacrifice of personal desires (Billington, *The Guardian*: 1989).

While this conceptualisation ends on a community-oriented note, pop culture writers forward happiness as something that a person must necessarily seek for oneself. For example, the journalist Linda Christmas expresses her frustration in a 1990 column with the idea that a woman who searches for adventure through travel is really running away from her troubled relationships at home, stating that relationships are,

a hub [around which a person's life revolves], not necessarily the hub. And that those of us able to recognise the importance of other sources of happiness, being alone, work, or hobbies, be it pigeon-fancying or solo travel, are more balanced than those whose well-being and self-esteem, whose strength and enjoyment of life, depend on the proximity of others (Christmas, *The Independent*: 1990).

Similarly, another journalist writes that it is only through being alone that 'we find out who we really are' and 'come to realise the important lesson that other people simply do not have the power to bestow or remove happiness. We can also learn that the more we pin our hopes for happiness on others, the more miserable we are likely to be' (Hodgkinson, *The Guardian*: 1990).

These individual quests often seek happiness outside of western culture, defined more and more as inhospitable to human happiness. In a series of columns devoted to raising awareness of happiness research and to his own observations of what constitutes happiness and mental health, the family therapist Robyn Skynner often brings up the example of Ladakh, a remote region of northern India bordering Tibet, which he describes as 'an unusually healthy society' (Skynner, *The Guardian*: 1992). According to Skynner, the Ladakhis appeared so happy partly because their family structures are more conducive to happiness and the people are less 'possessive', 'needy', and 'emotionally dependent than we are in industrial society' (Skynner, *The Guardian*: 1992). Even the memory of a journey to a distant culture can serve as a 'consolation' to the monotony of one's everyday life, as one travel writer describes of Tibet: 'Such magnificence is an inexhaustible

source of future daydreams. Not easily erased by the attrition of the workaday world, it remains in the memory, a constant source of happiness and consolation' (Powell, *The Guardian*:1992).

At the same time, happiness also becomes implicated in discussions wherein a number of more peripheral commentators see a rising concern with personal happiness and self-fulfilment as a reflection of an excessively individualist culture. Some claim that happiness as a 'right' is a misconception; for example Lynette Burrows, author and outspoken advocate for children's rights and family values, argues in 1988 that, 'divorce is not about ensuring that children get better parents, but about the parents' right to happiness and self-fulfilment' (Rodwell, *The Times*:1988). In a similar vein, the columnist Melanie Phillips writes in 1993 that 'Family breakdown is the outcome of the great shift towards individualism and higher personal expectations of individual happiness and self-fulfilment. [...] We feel entitled to demand personal happiness because the culture tells us misleadingly that it is there for the taking' (Phillips, *The Observer*: 1993). Happiness, or at least what these critics see as a modern and decidedly misguided conception thereof, is also equated with social and cultural deterioration, as another column by Phillips (on abortion and embryo research) illustrates, 'Absolute values such as right and wrong, good and evil are dismissed as the province of cranks or the religiously devout. The great moral principles of British life are the pursuit of personal happiness and individual self-fulfilment. What chance does a tiny blob of cells have in the face of that?' (Phillips, *The Guardian*: 1990)

In spite of the apparent implication of happiness in problem claims, it remains largely peripheral to other concerns. What these discussions do indicate is a discernible trend toward ambivalence to prosperity, wealth and success. While notions of creating one's 'own happiness' or of a truer happiness that is discovered on a personal quest or through a project in self-realisation begin to fade away, the complicity of western culture in producing widespread discontentment remains an enduring theme. The present tendency to consider happiness apart from the social context and to accord the idiom itself prominence in discussions is perhaps more the result of an emergent scientific discourse which takes its objective reality as its starting point.

5.3.1. The Introduction of Happiness Research

Throughout the 1980s, the results of polls and surveys are sporadically reported. These variously claim that, for example, according to a Gallup Poll, Britain is 'one of the happiest nations in the world' (thanks to the '[home] video revolution') (*The Times*: 1985), or that an unattributed 'Happiness Index' reveals that, 'nine out of ten Britons are content with their lives [...]'. Despite

their worries about money, housing, unemployment, law and order and sex and violence, the British are still, by and large, a happy lot, and the richer they are, the happier they feel' (*The Guardian*: 1987). Another claims that according to 'the research' only 3% of people in the UK are 'very unhappy' (Clancy, *The Times*: 1991).

What is perhaps most interesting about these surveys is that they conspicuously lack the framing typical of those widely reported upon toward the present. For example, the latter excerpt emphasises the small number of people who claimed to be 'very unhappy' and compares the results with a Mori poll conducted a decade earlier, noting that the results had not changed much. By contrast, this lack of change becomes the focus of a problematisation toward the present. A more recent article claims that, 'there is mounting evidence that, beyond a certain point, greater prosperity does not make us feel any better. Over the past 50 years, western standards of living have soared, yet survey after survey shows that Britons and Americans are no happier now than they were half a century ago' (Chakraborty, *The Guardian*: 2009). Although the polls are the same, it is the interpretation that has changed.

Initially, studies that did draw conclusions from the results of happiness studies were met with scepticism. In 1988 the results of a transatlantic survey purporting to measure happiness and create league tables of comparison between nations, careers, and other variables were dismissed with the blasé response of one commentator (regarding the authors of the research), 'How Messrs Inglehart and Rabier reached their conclusions is beyond me' (Stanhope, *The Times*: 1988). Another commentator, concluding a review of a sociological study by Jean Collard and Penny Mansfield on marital happiness, remarks: 'Happiness, particularly shared happiness, is notoriously elusive to language; when that language is further weighed down by the heavy armour of sociology, it is hardly surprising that happiness should remain as a speck in the distance' (Brown, *The Sunday Times*: 1988).

However, an emphasis on the scientific nature of happiness research seems to have been considered more newsworthy, as many such studies are repeated several times across various publications. Journalists reporting on new findings of happiness research also tend to approach the subject in a straightforward way, simply translating the specialist jargon for the everyday reader, as they might do for a new finding in physics or biological science. For example, an article by a science writer in *The Times* begins: 'Advertisers may have been proclaiming confidently what "happiness is", but scientists have, for rather different reasons, been working out a way to measure it' (Wright, *The Times*: 1988). It continues:

Clinical psychologists find an increasing need for measuring happiness. Such a measure is necessary to check the effectiveness of the new psychological therapies being devised as alternatives to treatment for the types of depression for which drugs are prescribed based on benzodiazepines, a cause of anxiety because they are addictive. The new happiness index has been devised by a team working with Professor Michael Argyle, of Oxford University. It has been designed as a substitute for a long-standing technique of psychologists for testing subjects, called the Beck Depression Inventory (Wright, *The Times*: 1988).

Another article on Argyle's 'Oxford Happiness Inventory' reads: 'Questionnaires based on the Oxford Happiness Inventory and the University of Otago affectometer –accepted psychological tools for assessing state of mind–confirmed that Caroline Ponting was a deeply unhappy woman' (Hunt, *The Independent*: 1996). Argyle would become a frequently cited expert in the UK news media, and specific mentions of his inventory appear several times since its initial reportage along with the psychologist's expert commentary on the nature of happiness (see Table below), whereas Collard and Mansfield's less apparently scientific qualitative study of marital happiness receives the critical appraisal mentioned above and is never again mentioned in connection with happiness.

Another similarly treated and oft-repeated notion that emerges at this time is the American psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's 'flow.' The lead of a 1991 article in the 'Living' pages of *The Independent* reads, 'Mark Honigsbaum investigates an American professor's claims to have discovered the secret of achieving human happiness' and describes Csikszentmihalyi's book, *Flow*, then a best-seller in the United States. According to the article, 'flow' is 'a state of deep concentration' comparable to 'the sense of transcendence experienced by Eastern mystics,' whose 'levels' can be measured and identified through the 'electronic beeper method' (Honigsbaum, *The Independent*: 1991). The author mentions that, 'In some ways it could be argued that *Flow* is the ultimate American self-help success book,' but is careful to distance Csikszentmihalyi from any such characterisation, warning readers that 'Csikszentmihalyi does not pretend to offer any easy 10-step guide to Nirvana,' and goes on to describe how the book was rejected by British publishers for being 'either too academic or too "American" for the general reader' (Honigsbaum, *The Independent*: 1991).

Another article describes a 'genetic breakthrough' by the American behavioural geneticist and Professor of Psychology and Psychiatry David T. Lykken, concerning the personalities of twins including a predisposition toward happiness, which concluded that happiness levels correspond more frequently between identical twins than non-identical. The author describes Lykken's work in similarly scientific terms, 'Yet the traits must be in part genetically determined or the separated

identical twins would not show any similarity. Lykken suggests that the genes determining happiness do not simply add or subtract, as is the case with height. In technical terms, they interact with one another' (Sutherland, *The Observer*: 1993).

These scientific claims to the nature of happiness as an objective reality whose study falls under the proper domain of scientific expertise are reported largely unquestioned and become oft-repeated features of happiness discourses. The table below illustrates these three examples and the style of reportage that they received. What is more, three out of the five articles classified as 'critical' were not critical of the idea of a happiness science, but were rather counterclaims from other happiness experts regarding particular facets of the data.

Table 11. Reception of three expert ideas about happiness in Nexis archive⁶¹

Name and Theory	Supportive/Neutral	Critical	Total
Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi – 'Flow'	33	3	36
Michael Argyle – Oxford Happiness Inventory	8	1	9
David Lykken – Genetic basis for happiness	16	1	17
Totals:	57	5	62

Claims such as these form the groundwork for a proliferating body of evidence for the objective reality of happiness as a distinct entity, a psychological fact whose rates and levels can be measured and fine-tuned. However, these early expert claims do not advance happiness as a problem, but are rather more focused upon happiness as, 'far more stable, understandable and universal than most people have ever suspected,' in the words of the psychologist Michael Fordyce quoted in an article describing 'a PC programme with automatic scoring and interpretation for therapists and counsellors to assess their clients' happiness' (Albery, *The Guardian*: 1988). Furthermore, as the decade progresses, it is not only 'advances' in happiness research that receive attention, but also diverse claimsmakers begin to emerge who use this information in support of social problem claims.

⁶¹ Searches were conducted in the Nexis archive for all UK national newspapers for all available time periods. The keywords for each search were 'Csikszentmihalyi' and 'flow', 'Argyle' and 'Oxford Happiness Inventory', and 'Lykken' and 'happiness', respectively. The latter of these is broader since Lykken's genetic studies have been discussed in relation to several different theories and key words (including 'set point' theories and genetics in general).

5.4. 1993 -2003: The Discovery of a Problem

Beginning in 1993 a number of claims appear which use the results of various researches to bolster arguments about social problems. Earlier uses had suggested that the research could or should be, in the words of Skynner, utilised 'to bring about change' (Skynner, *The Guardian*: 1990), or, according to Argyle, in the creation of programmes and training centres. Yet they failed to develop a concerted effort to press these claims into reality. They also fell short of the claim that there is a specific lack of happiness to which this knowledge should be focused.⁶² In fact, initially psychologists like Michael Eysenck emerged with claims that, for example, Australia is among the 'happiest nations' (Hanks, *The Independent*: 1990), and Argyle even travelled to Australia presenting a similar thesis that 'Australians ranked high in the happiness stakes' while at the same time describing his collaboration with Melbourne psychologists in the development of 'happiness training courses' and divulging advice on how to be happy (*Hobart Mercury [Australia]*: 1988). Yet after 1993, advocates begin to forward the idea that not only should the happiness research be used to affect change, but specifically, they propose a problem to which that change should be directed.

5.4.1. The 'Paradox' of Happiness

From the perspective that begins to emerge during this period, happiness is a serious problem facing modern societies. Although this may seem counter intuitive (happiness being an inherently positive idiom), central to these claims is the combination of happiness research with other variables to create various 'paradoxes.' These are usually formulated on the basis of an opposition between some condition of the modern world typically understood as positive and the 'fact' (as derived from scientific research on happiness) that people are either no happier or massively unhappy compared with some point in the past. It is this paradox of happiness, making its first appearance in major UK newspapers in the 1990s, that becomes ubiquitous in claimsmaking toward the present.

⁶² Skynner however, might be considered one of the first, or perhaps the first claimsmaker for happiness as a problem whose solution could be broached through recourse to happiness research. In a 1990 column he describes how, 'Over the past year I have been outlining some recent research into what makes for happiness and mental health in families. The findings are both interesting and useful, and many people will be as puzzled as I was as to why the media and my own profession have neglected this knowledge. Why don't we use this information to bring about change?' (Skynner, *The Guardian*:1990). However, his interests are more narrowly focused upon the issues of family and marital happiness rather than society as a whole.

The centrality and importance attributed to this paradox in present-day claimsmaking is well illustrated by the claims of one of the most outspoken proponents of happiness as a social problem, Richard Layard, the London School of Economics (LSE) economist who is frequently referred to in the media as a 'happiness guru' or Britain's 'happiness tsar.' Chapter 2 excerpted Layard's claims about a 'paradox at the heart of our lives'; he goes on to say:

[...] aren't our lives infinitely more comfortable? Indeed we have more food, more clothes, more cars, bigger houses, more central heating, more foreign holidays, a shorter working week, nicer work and, above all, better health. Yet we are not happier. Despite all the efforts of governments, teachers, doctors and businessmen, human happiness has not improved (Layard, 2005:3-4).

The first appearances of this paradox in UK news media discussions occurs in 1993, emerging from claimsmakers closely associated with UK policy institutes including the New Labour think-tank Demos and the Social Affairs Unit (see chapter 6). Table 12 contains the results of a keyword search for happiness in the Nexis archive in which the first 200 most relevant articles each year were sampled. It illustrates the growth in articles asserting a paradox between prosperity and happiness after its initial introduction in 1993.⁶³

Table 12. Growth in articles asserting a paradox in connection with happiness

Year	Number of articles asserting a paradox in connection with happiness
1992	0
1993	2
1994	3
1995	5
1996	3
1997	6
1998	10
1999	4
2000	11
2001	9
2002	5

⁶³ This search was performed across *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent* and their Sunday editions. Nexis does not have holdings for *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sunday Telegraph* until 2000. In order to maintain comparable numbers after 2000, it was excluded from searches for those time periods.

The condition of the modern world that is often implicated in this paradox takes various forms depending upon the point of view of the advocate and the nature of the discussion and is variously cast as economic growth, increases in personal wealth, increases in individual freedoms, or the consumption of resources. Those aspects of the social world which are mobilised as representative of 'unhappiness' demonstrate a similarly high degree of flexibility, with the results of happiness research often being supplemented or even replaced altogether by additional reference to statistics such as crime rates or mental illness. The earliest articles that forward happiness as a problem most often formulate this paradox in connection with either economic growth or environmental concerns (or a combination of the two). For example, an article describing the objectives of the New Economics Foundation (NEF) relates the organisation's view that,

by focusing on GNP some factors are just not accounted for. Health, individual well-being and collective security are ignored by conventional economic statistics. By using an Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW) the NEF believes it has a pragmatic way of measuring quality of life. [...] In the latest NEF survey, gains in personal income are alleged to have been cancelled out by increasing levels of social and environmental damage (Cusick, *The Independent*: 1995).

The article concludes with a quotation from the organisation's head of social indicators, Alex MacGillivray, who would later write a chapter on the subject in a Demos produced pamphlet in 1998, expressing the aspiration that: 'It may be that in 2020 we will hear news readers leading programmes with government statistics on happiness and satisfaction. The first step has now been taken' (Cusick, *The Independent*: 1995). Another advocate, James Le Fanu (a medical GP), who in the same year as placing an article in *The Times* on the topic had produced a pamphlet in association with the Social Affairs Unit, a right-leaning UK think-tank, claims that, 'Nothing can disguise the gradual slide in the happiness of nations in the West over the past decade. Despite dramatic increases in real wealth, data from the United States show no increase in "happiness"' (Le Fanu, *The Times*: 1993). Le Fanu goes on to describe:

The decline of those two institutions, marriage and the church, are probably significant. Religious faith and religious traditionalism relate positively to SWB, and a British study from 1979 confirmed that marriage was the strongest predictor of SWB even when education, income and occupation were accounted for. The increase in numbers going into higher education does not seem to improve matters nor, paradoxically, does greater racial equality. Data from America shows that despite the great political advances made by blacks since the war, the elite the more educated with higher status have become less happy (Le Fanu, *The Times*: 1993).

Another article, by Jonathan Dimbleby, then president of the Council for the Protection of Rural England, explains:

Statistics tell us that since the war the great majority of the population in Britain and in Europe have been getting better off despite recession. By what measure: car ownership, home ownership, inside lavatories, baths, central heating, double-glazing, holidays abroad? The statistics tell us that, regardless of which party has been in power, most of the people have had a rising standard of living. Measured, that is, in monetary and material terms. So we should now all be very much happier. We have better health, longer lives, and greater prosperity. And yet self-evidently we are very far from happy. Something seems to be missing. Instead of contentment there is anxiety, frustration, irritation. People are out of sorts, out of balance, out of harmony. They feel cheated. When the ecological constraints on growth are at last being recognised, is it gradually dawning on us that there is no causal relationship whatever between material prosperity and human happiness (Dimbleby, *The Guardian*: 1993).

These examples illustrate that happiness claims, and particularly the paradox, are sufficiently permissive to accommodate a wide variety of concerns, crisscrossing traditional political divides. For anyone who wishes to hold up an element of the modern world for critical scrutiny, stagnant or declining happiness levels represent an alluring statistic.

5.4.2. Expanding Domains

In formulating claims about the new problem of happiness, advocates draw on existing concerns about other social problems, expanding their domains to include damage caused to victims' happiness. In this way, the ability of happiness to attach itself to a diversity of causes is revealed. For example, one article draws upon depression as well as concerns about the effects of consumerism claiming that, 'Across the industrialised world there is a rise in clinical depression—and the single best protection against it, psychologists find, is the presence of friends and family solidarity. [...] The consumer society and too much exposure to market relations, it seems, are part of the process of losing us friendships, weakening bonds of kinship and bringing less happiness' (Hutton, *The Guardian*: 1994). Another demonstrates the effortless shift from happiness levels to claims about suicide rates to create an image of deterioration and decline:

Measured by annual growth in per capita incomes, the West is much, much richer than it was 50 or even 20 years ago. But in the US, reported happiness has gone up only fractionally over the post-war period and in Europe reported levels of 'satisfaction with life' are only slightly higher than in the mid -seventies. In some countries, including Britain, they are actually lower. Nor, according to economist Andrew Oswald of Warwick University, is this the end of matter. Rich countries tend to have higher levels of suicide and in the past 20 years the number of male suicides has gone up (Elliott, *The Guardian*: 1997).

Still another boils any concern down to how it affects happiness, linking happiness surveys to studies on laughter and rates of depression:

There is only one indicator that matters - are people happier? It's a question now being asked by researchers around the world. A huge European survey will be published soon - and the results are depressing. In Britain we are four times richer than we were 30 years ago, but no happier. The Italians have become the unhappiest. We laugh less than we did: we used to laugh on average 18 times a day, now it's only six. [...] Depression has increased 10-fold (Toynbee, *The Guardian*: 1998).

In linking expertise about happiness to mental illness, claimsmakers also subtly expand the domain of psychological expertise to encompass both accepted pathologies and hitherto unproblematic states of mind. An article by the neuropsychiatrist Peter Fenwick claims that:

One in 10 people will suffer some mental illness at some time in their lives. The other 90 per cent are, medically speaking, mentally healthy. Yet in practical terms, the fact that these people are not actually mentally ill tells us nothing much about how well they are. It gives no indication of how fulfilling they find their lives, or how successfully they run them. [...] There are plenty of people who tolerate chronic, low-grade unhappiness in their jobs or relationships for years. Few of these people are ever likely to come to the attention of a psychiatrist, but their mental health is well below par. But is there an equivalent of a healthy eating and exercise regime for the body to improve our mental state? I believe there is. We now know enough about how the mind works to make any necessary changes in our lives and in our thinking to achieve a sustained state of what I call mental well-being (Fenwick, *The Independent*: 1996).

This expansion of expertise is also accomplished through the mobilisation of new idioms and an emphasis upon the scientific nature of happiness claims. One article claims that, according to studies, 'People who are miserable and depressed may simply be born with a genetic predisposition not to be happy' and explains, 'Despite its importance to health, "subjective well-being" as it is known to psychologists is an under-researched area' (Dobson, *The Independent*: 1998). Other terminologies that have forwarded are discussed in detail in chapter 7, but include 'social well-being' (McRae, *The Independent*: 1994), 'general well-being' (*The Guardian*, 2007), and 'anhedonia' (Le Fanu, *The Sunday Telegraph*: 2001).⁶⁴

These attempts at renaming have the effect of imbuing the discourse with a sense of technical and scientific expertise, thus expanding domains of expert knowledge and intervention into new

⁶⁴ The latter of these represents a failed attempt to attach a medical label to happiness claims. After relating the 'rewards' of being happy, including having a successful job and marriage, Le Fanu goes on to argue: 'All the more reason, then, that we should have sympathy for, and seek to help, those who lack this capacity for happiness—a condition known as anhedonia, literally "without pleasure"' (Le Fanu, *The Sunday Telegraph*: 2001).

states of mind. Moreover, these conceptualisations circumvent criticisms and misgivings about something as 'notoriously elusive' as the 'language' of happiness (Brown, *The Sunday Times*: 1988), and tie it down as something 'objective.' Happiness becomes, in the words of one advocate, 'a real, objective phenomenon, scientifically verifiable' the causes and cures of which 'can be quantified' (Toynbee, *The Guardian*: 2006).

Additional contributions to the tendency to take for granted the science of happiness are claims asserting its genetic, biological and neurological bases, examples of which grow increasingly prominent in the late 1990s. Some examples include the fact that, 'Buddhists who claim their religion holds the secret of happiness may have been proved right by science: brain scans of the devout have found exceptional activity in the lobes that promote serenity and joy' (Henderson, *The Times*: 2003a), that 'hard' scientific evidence provided by brain scans had located 'the "pleasure" zone of the brain—where happiness appears to be registered—in the left pre-frontal lobe' (Hunt, *The Independent*: 1996), and that happiness is genetically determined: 'People can be born happy, an American study of twins says. The results show that about half the propensity to happiness is inherited, and that over time people tend to hover around a basic level of well-being' (Hawkes, *The Times*: 1996).

Not only is happiness recast as the legitimate domain of psychological expertise, but also it is forwarded as something inherently incomprehensible to the average individual without recourse to such specialised knowledge. A number of articles report that one of the revelations of the happiness research concerns how, for example, 'people are not good at explaining why they feel good or bad' (Lane, *The Guardian*: 1993), and another, appraising a recent conference on 'happiness economics' asks, 'What if individuals do not possess the mental equipment to be rational about why and what they choose? Maybe economists have to wonder what it is that makes us happy after all' (Hutton, *The Guardian*: 1993). According to advocates, if those aspects of social life that correlate with happiness as identified by new discoveries in psychological research are in decline (with marriage and religion figuring most prominently), then people are following a path that, unbeknownst to them, will not lead them to happiness. To Le Fanu, 'as soon as we turn to those factors that determine happiness as revealed in the burgeoning psychological literature on Subjective Well Being, or SWB, the trends are almost all in the wrong direction, suggesting that the malaise in the British psyche can only get worse' (Le Fanu, *The Times*: 1993). Since the average person is 'consistently wrong' in their appraisals of those things that will or will not bring them happiness (MacLeod, *The Independent*: 2005), it follows that, in the words of another advocate, 'If we know quite a lot about what makes people happy, surely it is both

legitimate and possible to nudge society in a direction that will enable more people to do so' (McRae, *The Independent*: 1994).

Through discourses such as these the interest becomes less geared toward questions like 'how does one find happiness?' and more toward 'why is it missing?' More and more, this notion of 'happiness' as an objective construct isolated from the social context is forwarded as self-evidently absent in modern societies. The normal response to the world becomes unhappiness. Even, for example, a criticism of the ability of indices to accurately rate happiness levels takes as self-evident the expectation of unhappiness in the modern world:

The Fabians cite the rather dodgy 'Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare' as an indication that our national sense of wellbeing has stagnated since the 1970s, in spite of generally rising prosperity. I do not really see how you can measure a country's feelgood factor—or, in this case, feelglum factor—in such an objective way. But our own subjective observations suggest that, although nearly all of us are far better off than our grandparents were, few of us seem content with our lot. How could we be? (Morrison, *The Times*: 2003)

Another claimmaker critical of the medicalisation of unhappiness is similar, 'We now know that depression is mostly a perfectly normal response to our experience [...]. Depression can be a consequence of long-term anxiety and fear. Many people live in a stressful and toxic world that some can tolerate better than others' (Midgley, *The Times*: 2007).

The absence of happiness as a self-evident truth is evident throughout the late 1990s, and becomes common parlance toward the present. The reality of these supposed paradoxes is rarely questioned in and of itself. According to the British psychologist Oliver James arguing in an article concerning the possible applications of Csikszentmihalyi's 'flow': 'It is true we are massively unhappy today compared with 1950. But this man's solution sounds like a statement of banal obviousness. It's a bit like saying I have a great idea: a cure for cancer. Yes, so what's the cure? No, that's the idea, a cure for cancer' (Chittenden, *The Sunday Times*: 1997). Toward the present period, the oft-reported claim is that 'survey after survey' indicates growing unhappiness or shows stagnant happiness rates, with questions concerning the validity of such data set aside in favour of questions of what should be done to guide people back to happiness.

5.5. 2003-Present: Happiness as a Social Problem

The impact and influence of the claims described thus far must not be overstated. Prior to 2003, most of these claims, while gaining influence, were relatively marginal. Recall that Figure 4 and Figure 5 at the outset of this chapter showed a marked increase in the number of articles using the term in the mid-2000s, and by 2006, the rising interest in happiness had become difficult to ignore. Into the 2000s, more and more claimsmakers join the crusade to transform happiness into an issue of public concern. Increasingly, the language of happiness begins to be adapted to a growing array of existing and new social problems claims. After 2003, the idea of happiness as a social problem becomes not only more and more prevalent, but the notion that it should be the focus of public policy also becomes more and more accepted.

5.5.1. *Adapting the New Discovery*

It is during this period that the trend toward expanding the domains of familiar problems continues and intensifies. As a frame for claimsmaking, the permissiveness of happiness is revealed in its capacity to lend itself to a variety of causes, even as they promote apparently contradictory aims. For example, armed with the new science of happiness, some cultural crusaders extol the benefits of institutions like marriage, religion and spending time with one's family, while others, using similar data, place the blame for unhappiness on ill-equipped parents and the perils of family life. Articles offer prescriptions for happiness including 'get married' (Henderson, *The Times*, 2003b) and 'cultivate good family relationships' (Kelly, *The Sunday Times*: 2009), and family and marriage are presented as more important than money (Mills, *The Guardian*: 2003). An American author, Gregg Easterbrook, quoted on his recently published, *The Progress Paradox*, explains: 'A fundamental reason that acquiring money does not sync with acquiring happiness might be stated in cool economic terms. Most of what people really want in life—love, friendship, respect, family, standing, fun—is not priced and does not pass through the market' (Sieghart, *The Times*: 2005).

At the same time, other announcements and discussions are ambivalent about family relationships. One article proclaims, 'Married life is the key to happiness but having children can ruin it all, a psychologist claims' (Devlin, *The Daily Telegraph*: 2008). Others point to new studies that find 'no conclusive evidence that having children or being well educated increases happiness' (Elliott, *The Sunday Times*: 2007) or that, 'If you thought that the joys of watching your young ones grow up was one of life's simple pleasures, think again. Parenthood is actually bad for your

mental health, according to the latest research' (Nikkhah, *The Sunday Telegraph*: 2006). An article quotes a British medical doctor describing, 'why parents can't "create" contented children,' relying upon brain scans and other empirical tests to ascertain the happiness levels of classroom children (Brennan, *The Sunday Times*: 2006). Another explains the results of an oft-quoted UNICEF study claiming that British children are the unhappiest in 21 developed nations as the outcome of broken homes and poor parenting (Goodwin, *The Sunday Times*: 2009).

In fact, throughout the decade, as more and more expert and other interested voices join in, and with the continuous reportage of indices, surveys and studies on happiness, the list of things that audiences are told will or will not bring them happiness seems endless. Typical examples include winning the lottery: 'Forget the Lottery –People who had won between \$50,000 and \$1 million in the past year scored only 4 on a five-point happiness scale. Others were 3.8 on average' (Marshall, *The Times*: 2006), or becoming suddenly disabled, 'several studies have conclusively observed that within one year of an individual being rendered para or quadriplegic by an accident, those same individuals rated themselves almost as happy as they were before' (Baylis, *The Times*: 2003a); having too much or too little money, 'new research confirms that money does indeed buy happiness, provided you're not too rich already' (Palmer, *The Sunday Telegraph*: 2002), 'Studies show that once basic needs are met, happiness does not increase' (Woods, *The Sunday Times*: 2006); and 'keeping up with the Joneses': 'For individuals in middle and higher-income groups, other factors, such as comparisons with others, are likely to be just as important as absolute levels of income in determining happiness' (Kelly, *The Sunday Times*: 2009). With so many claims about happiness constantly becoming available, it is little surprising that claimsmakers are able to find something in happiness claims to suit almost any aim.

Many claims concern the nature of work as both contributing to and detracting from happiness. When it comes to unemployment, 'research shows the fact of being out of work affects an individual's wellbeing more than actual loss of income or too much work' (Hogan, *The Observer*: 2007), and a 'clear finding from research on happiness is that unemployment is hugely damaging, outweighed in its effect only by major life events such as a death in the family' (Richards, *The Guardian*: 2005). However, 'work-life balance' and 'sustainability' are also portrayed as having been 'trampled over' by 'the relentless search for a rise in GDP' (Stratton, *The Guardian*: 2010a). According to one source, 'happiness and work-life balance' are necessary to ensure 'a high level of well-being' (Roberts, *The Independent*: 2006). In the words of Layard, not only does wealth fail to produce happiness, but extra income is actually 'polluting' to the experience of others since it causes us to 'make huge sacrifices in our private lives in pursuit of higher income' (Layard, *The*

Independent on Sunday: 2003). Comparing work to smoking, he advocates taxation to 'prevent people from working in a way that is self-defeating' and as a key to promoting a 'sensible work-life balance' (Layard, *The Independent*: 2003). According to Guardian columnist, Polly Toynbee, Layard's 'hedonic treadmill' is 'a phrase that resonates with most of us' (Toynbee, *The Guardian*: 2003). The 'pursuit of money' is not on the list of 'seven key factors now scientifically established to affect happiness' she identifies and only leads to 'more stress, harder work, greater fear of insecurity, chasing elusive gains' (Toynbee, *The Guardian*: 2003).

From very early on, happiness claims are adapted to support existing concerns about the environment and sustainability. Pleasure is subordinated to 'sustainable', morally oriented, happiness, as one headline declares, 'Do you sincerely want to be happy? Then stop all this pleasure-seeking' (Schoch, *The Independent on Sunday*: 2006) (a point to which we will return below). An article describing the development of alternative indicators to GDP points out that 'conventional national accounting doesn't allow for the heavy costs of economic progress, in terms of pollution, depletion of natural resources and so on' (Stewart, *The Observer*: 2009). The announcement that the French government would develop subjective indicators of progress is described by its developers as necessary in order to measure 'wellbeing and environmental sustainability' (Waterfield, *The Daily Telegraph*: 2009). In promoting an attempt to persuade parliament to act faster on climate change, the Bishop of London describes, 'This is an opportunity for people to get off something of a treadmill, to recover a bit of balance,' arguing for a way of life that 'that promises to make "sustainable" not just our energy consumption, but also our wellbeing' (Smyth, *The Times*: 2009).

Even as the financial crisis threatens to make some of the core claims about happiness and wealth ring hollow, claimsmakers are able to adjust accordingly. One article asks why the government ought to be concerned about happiness, given the 'current job losses, financial hardship and local Government cuts' (Clinton, *The Sunday Express*: 2011). The article refers to the response that, 'it is the perfect climate for such an assessment. People know exactly what really matters because much of what they value is about to be taken away from them' (Clinton, *Sunday Express*: 2011). In spite of the difficulties brought on by the failure of GDP to grow at a sufficient rate, the economist Joseph Stiglitz sees the crisis as an endorsement of the need to measure progress in different ways: 'The crisis gives salience to the work [...]. By looking at GDP, you didn't know whether what was going on was sustainable—and it obviously wasn't' (Stewart, *The Observer*: 2009). 'The crisis of the past two years has already overturned great swathes of economic doctrine' the article

concludes, 'many, including Stiglitz and Oswald, believe the time may finally be ripe for the dismal science to let in a bit of happiness' (Stewart, *The Observer*: 2009).

The list of things that will or will not produce happiness is sufficiently permissive to encompass a range of current issues from work-life balance to the financial crisis. It has even been extended as far as political systems and free trade, as one economist, Ruut Veenhoven, relating the results of worldwide surveys states, 'Although personal and political freedom had no impact on the happiness of [Nigerians and Chinese], the opportunity for free trade did relate to higher happiness levels' (Norton, *The Independent*: 2000).

5.5.2. The Problem Lies 'Within'

Whereas 'happiness' may have once indicated good, fortuitous or otherwise agreeable circumstances or turns of events, 'true' happiness is now recast as lying outside of those conditions, as existing necessarily inside the individual rather than the social world. In fact, the more independent one's happiness is from one's circumstances, the more one learns to be happy *in spite of* one's circumstances, the truer and more valuable that happiness is said to be. An early article describing a happiness training course quotes the programme's success story—the previously mentioned 'deeply unhappy woman' as confirmed by neurological tests—concluding, 'More than six months after the course, Ponting is adamant that she is now a happy person. "Nothing in my life has really changed...so the happiness I feel must be coming from within"' (Hunt, *The Independent*: 1996). The cultural historian Richard Schoch, while often appearing in the media as a philosophical counterpoint to the dominance of psychologically oriented understandings of happiness, is similar in his privileging of the inner world of the individual over the outer world of circumstance:

[H]appiness is something you have to work at through life. But working at happiness does not mean you have to transform your circumstances, make a fortune or be a saint. [...] 'Such efforts are wasteful because they squander the opportunity that is always before us: to become, not someone else, but a better version of the person we are.' We are always in the right place, though we do our best to forget it. This theme of accepting our ordinariness appears in many versions of happiness (Woods, *The Sunday Times*: 2006).

Scientific perspectives echo this sentiment, forwarding notions like, 'there is a growing body of scientific research suggesting that happiness is, quite literally, a state of mind. [...] Rather than happiness being something we earn through circumstances, it seems we can work at it in the same way we work our bodies at the gym, reaching beyond our "genetic set point", the

predisposition to happiness (or unhappiness) we were born with' (Hardy, *The Guardian*:2007). Others reason, 'So what determines whether an individual is likely to be happy? Research at the University of Minnesota showed that identical twins raised apart shared the same happiness level, no matter what their circumstances' (Lantin, *The Daily Telegraph*: 2003), and 'More information, more money and more prestige will not make our society happier. [...] For sustained happiness, we need to change the way we perceive the world; the internal, our psychology, matters at least as much as our external circumstances' (Ben-Shahar, *The Guardian*: 2006).

Although there is an emphasis on moral and behavioural definitions of happiness, when it comes to material progress, happiness is a decidedly inward oriented pursuit. Discussions about happiness toward the present continue to indicate a sense of disillusionment, with wealth and prosperity no longer sitting easily alongside talk of happiness. However, while claimsmakers mobilise anti-consumerist or anti-capitalist rhetoric, even quoting Marx to state, for example, 'There is something in Marx's belief that capitalism would be brought down by its own contradictions' (Elliott, *The Guardian*: 1997), criticisms most often take the form of therapeutically oriented critiques targeting the effects that certain expressions of capitalism have upon mental health. For example, Oliver James writes in *The Guardian* in 2003 that, 'the government has ignored another crucial fact: not only are we no happier, we are actually far more prone to mental illness. That advanced capitalism, especially the US variety, is making us ill is not something New Labour wants to think about' (James, *The Guardian*: 2003). Another advocate argues that the market has 'a free rein to describe happiness—the new car, new sofa, new holiday –and to manipulate our insecurities around status. Leave things as they are and the state will increasingly have to pick up the bill for how consumer capitalism effectively produces emotional ill-health – depression, stress, anxiety' and that 'governments can and should intervene' (Bunting, *The Guardian*: 2005).

While locating the causes of malaise in a pathological society, there is nonetheless a tendency to focus upon the vulnerability of the individual in happiness claims. For example, one claimmaker writes, 'It's the entire conspicuous-consumption, celebrity lifestyle ethos that drives the most profitable swaths of our consumer economy. Vast disparities in income, of the kind that free-market capitalism promotes, cause people to be far less satisfied with their lot than they might otherwise be' before commending 'compulsory classes in happiness' aiming to teach pupils to become 'fulfilled' human beings (Orr, *The Independent*: 2006). Another headline asks, 'Money does not bring contentment. So how do you forge a politics where happiness is the priority?' and responds, 'Mori says its research should give the government a reason to dampen down "the

pressures of consumerism and work and promote education that gives a more rounded view of happiness” (Toynbee, *The Guardian*: 2004). Others place the blame on individuals for falling victim to the trappings of modern society, for being too consumerist, ‘keeping up with the Joneses’, having too high expectations, and working too hard out of ‘greed’. One article reports, ‘According to Andrew Oswald, an economist at Warwick University, one explanation is that under capitalism we spend too much time looking over our shoulders at the Joneses’ (Honigsbaum, *The Observer*: 2004). Another reasons:

Much of the prosperity created since 1930 we have spent on useless status-oriented luxuries, bought only to keep up with the Joneses. We have chained ourselves to what psychologists call the ‘hedonistic treadmill’—working obsessively, borrowing heavily and neglecting our families. Little wonder then that since 1950, the proportion of those living in Western countries who are ‘happy’ has, at best, been constant—and in the US has actually fallen—despite large income rises (Halligan, *The Sunday Telegraph*: 2004).

A study is described in which, ‘American students were asked what major consumer items they considered essential to the good life [...]. Then, 16 years later, they were asked again. The number of items they actually owned had gone up in that time (from 3.1 to 5.6) but so had their aspirations [...]. They were still two items short’ (Bedell, *The Observer*: 2006). According to another advocate, unhappiness is caused by ‘another kind of status anxiety: greed, or a kind of acquisitiveness propelled by envy’ (Carpenter, *The Observer*: 2006). To still another, people are unhappy because,

we quickly become addicted to our new possessions. We ratchet up our expectations. [...] Studies show that whether we are happy with our income depends not on how much it is, but on how it compares with that of friends, neighbours or colleagues. The secret of happiness, as I once wrote when I was examining Conrad Black's insatiable greed, is to compare yourself not with those who are more successful than you, but with those who are less (Sieghart, *The Times*: 2005).

In casting these problems in the personalised language of happiness, these apparently anti-capitalist critiques invite equally personalised interventions. An early claim by Oliver James summarises these now pervasive themes:

We have become a wannabe nation, we want what we haven't got—we expect more and feel entitled to it. This is a consequence of advanced capitalism—economic growth means everybody being dissatisfied with what they've got [...]. Therapy can be very useful, it's definitely an anti-capitalist device. The net result of it is to be clearer about how you, with your own personal history, fit in and can best take advantage of the wonderful opportunities that new technology gives (Lacey, *The Independent*: 1998).

5.5.3. Sustainable Happiness

This type of criticism and the interventions it invites lends itself to an implicit critique of change. As one advocate puts it, 'Rising mental illness seems an inescapable consequence of the kind of rapid, disruptive change driven by market capitalism. It's not that people have gone soft so much as that they are profoundly disorientated by the ceaseless discontinuity of change' (Bunting, *The Guardian*: 2004). Calls for 'sustainable' happiness also reinforce the sense of disillusionment with prosperity and the offerings of modern life, with many advocates expressing an implicit desire to 'go back' to a 'simpler' time. This desire is contained in prescriptions to 'simplify your life' as well as by holding up non-Western cultures and less developed countries as examples to be followed. Descriptions of other ways of life include comparisons such as:

What spoke to me about the Africans I met was their joyful resilience. They weren't exactly singing and laughing it off, but they had a quiet confidence that they were not alone in having to deal with their day-to-day struggles. [...] The secret of true and lasting joy is that it is a spiritual matter. The pressure to achieve, and to keep achieving, threatens to rob us of the joy of simply being. The pursuit of happiness is ultimately self-defeating—it is offered as another thing that you can 'win' (Naish, *The Times*: 2003).

Such ideas are evident in earlier periods as well, but through the appropriation of scientific discourses, such discussions gain an empirical edge. The results of various worldwide happiness surveys and indices purport to show that countries like Nigeria (Norton, *The Independent*: 2000), Costa Rica (Seager, *The Guardian*: 2009) or Vanuatu are among the happiest (Thornton, *The Independent*: 2006). In 2006 a wave of articles appeared in the UK news media regarding a 'Happy Planet Index' which placed the island nation of Vanuatu at the top of a list of 'happiest' countries. As a piece in *The Guardian* declares, 'The most deservedly happy place on the planet is the South Pacific island nation of Vanuatu, according to a radical new index published today. The United Kingdom does not even make it into the top 100' (Campbell, *The Guardian*: 2006). In addition to reporting the result, many articles contributed additional rationales. For example, a commentator describes:

If they'd only asked me, I could have given them a thousand reasons why this Melanesian nation of 83 islands and 120 different tribal languages easily qualifies for the top gong. Proud, colourful, cheerful and, above all, untouched by and indifferent to the troubles of the world around them, the ni-Vanuatu, as the islanders are known, enjoy a way of life that has barely changed for 4,000 years (Shears, *The Daily Mail*: 2006).

This author goes on to detail the indicators which allowed Vanuatu, with its 'relatively primitive lifestyle' to far outrank Britain in the happiness stakes:

First, life expectancy. Despite the islanders' poverty, many live to 90 and beyond. [...] Second, wellbeing. In Vanuatu this is a state of mind inspired by self-satisfaction, pride and a continuation of centuries-old cultures that have no room for one of the greatest ills of the Western world—greed. Quite simply, no one bothers keeping up with the Jones's in Vanuatu. Uniquely, they just seem to accept that what you've got is what you've got - and that's all there is to it. Finally, there's no pollution to speak of (Shears, *The Daily Mail*: 2006).

This index would be repeated in mostly uncritical and even celebratory terms 26 times in UK national newspapers. One commentator remarks, "'Poor but happy' is a cliché that has served colonial powers well, but here it seems to be true' (Patterson, *The Independent*: 2006). A reader attests to Vanuatu as a 'Pacific paradise' having lived there as an aid worker. However, he warns that it is 'not the most innocent' and wonders if 'the Happy Planet Index surveyed women as well as men' noting problems with gender discrimination and domestic violence (Morris, *The Guardian*: 2006). In fact, no one in Vanuatu was surveyed at all, a point of which none of the early reports took notice when relating that 'life satisfaction' or 'human well-being' were being accounted for. The only serious criticism came a year later, after the index had been repeated unquestioned over 20 times, pointing out that,

In a press release announcing that Vanuatu had come top of the Happy Planet Index, the NEF declared that the results of its survey were 'surprising, even shocking[...]' Yes, it would be 'surprising, even shocking', but only if the New Economics Foundation's Happiness Index had not been deliberately skewed in favour of countries with low carbon footprints. In that respect, what the survey measures is nothing more than the good opinions of the people paying for it. [...] All its 'satisfaction' scores were bought in from the World Values Survey, an earlier piece of research. The people from the World Values Survey never got round to visiting Vanuatu—and a telephone poll was hardly an option. So presumably the friends of the Friends of the Earth have done what statisticians term 'extrapolation' and what the rest of us call 'making it all up' (Lawson, *The Independent*: 2006).

Yet, in spite of this, the notion of a primitive society, 'spurning the cash economy and instead reviving traditional forms of exchangeable wealth such as pigs, woven grass mats and shell necklaces' while the rest of the world 'indulges in a frenzy of Christmas consumerism' (Squires, *The Daily Telegraph*: 2007) continued to be repeated, even without reference to the initial study (a point to which we will return in chapter 6).

Just as the 'Happy Planet Index' was coloured by underlying assumptions about what ought to constitute a happy life, so too do other indices point to underlying presuppositions. Having decided that various indicators do or do not produce happiness, many indices are formulated that measure the prevalence of these indicators. These indices then prominently allege detriments to happiness regardless of the fact that the populations alleged to be suffering declining happiness

are never consulted. For example, a 2004 report on an International Labour Office (ILO) index describes the organisation's assertion that 'the most important determinant of happiness within countries is not income levels—although there is a link—but income security, measured in terms of income protection and a low level of inequality in pay levels' (Seager, *The Guardian*: 2004). Indicators used to rank countries included union representation, safety at work, income, healthcare, and social security to create a ranking of happiest workforces. Having assessed the policies of countries in these areas, the organisation warns that 'governments need to change course to ensure a more secure, happier workforce' (Seager, *The Guardian*: 2004).

As previously mentioned, a concern with sustainability figures large amongst these underlying presuppositions. In 2009, then French president Nicolas Sarkozy called for a new indicator that 'would look at issues such as environmental protection and work/life balance as well as economic output to rate a country's ability to maintain the "sustainable" happiness of its inhabitants' (Davies, *The Guardian*: 2009). An article whose headline reads, 'Sarkozy's happiness index is worth taking seriously' goes on to detail Sarkozy's fight against the 'dogma' of economic growth, which is described as '[no] longer sustainable. It has to be broadened into a new measure of political success and national achievement that takes account of the quality of ordinary lives and our professed desire to save the planet from environmental disaster' (Lichfield, *The Independent on Sunday*: 2009).

The desire to 'sustain' a present level of development in the face of an uncertain future is particularly evident in the use of happiness paradoxes. Its usage to support environmentalist claims illustrates this well. For example, a piece describes how, 'we have used more goods and services since 1950 than in all the rest of human history. But we still don't seem to be happy' (Monbiot, *The Guardian*: 2000), and another reports, 'Britain is worse at translating its use of natural resources into long and happy lives for its people than two-thirds of its European counterparts, an alternative economics study has revealed. It is also burning up more fossil fuels for less "wellbeing" than it did 40 years ago' (Stevenson, *The Daily Telegraph*: 2007).

There is a tendency to privilege 'sustainable' happiness over happiness that is more fleeting or momentary. Many claimmakers link ephemeral happiness with destructive pleasures. A British psychiatrist describes the difference between 'hedonistic "instant-hit"' happiness that one might get from a 'nice glass of wine' and a more 'intellectually based' 'sustainable happiness' (Clark, *The Sunday Times*: 2005). Another claimmaker warns that, 'riches, success, love, status, fame—we seek because we believe (often wrongly) that they will make us happy,' but 'the effect wears off quickly' (Sieghart, *The Times*: 2005). Instead, the author argues, citing a behavioural psychiatrist,

'love and friendship, or "connectedness" [...] is the most important determinant of happiness. Unlike money, its effect is lasting' (Sieghart, *The Times*: 2005). In this way, not only does happiness become overtly implicated in discussions about social problems like mental illness and work life balance, but also through a more subtle tendency to relate its constitution to implicit concerns about the future, sustainability and moral behaviour.

5.5.4. *The Dramatisation of Happiness*

As chapter 6 will detail, the problematisation of happiness was greatly facilitated by influential advocates who took the issue on and made it their own. One of the most influential of these is the previously mentioned LSE economist and Labour peer, Richard Layard, who took up the issue with an almost missionary zeal in 2003, heavily emphasising claims about a paradox of happiness and epidemic rates of unhappiness and mental illness. The table below illustrates the growth of articles in which Layard's name appears alongside happiness.

Table 13. Growth in articles using keywords 'Layard' and 'happiness'⁶⁵

Year	Number of Articles Mentioning 'Layard' and 'happiness'	Total Number of Articles using the keyword 'happiness'
2002	0	1978
2003	11	2079
2004	6	2207
2005	52	2395
2006	87	2745
2007	33	2126
2008	26	2158
2009	28	2106
2010	21	2725
2011	36	2522

Furthermore, of the 300 articles listed above mentioning Layard's name in connection with happiness, 212 of them mention some form of paradox between happiness and wealth. Layard's claims also feature dramatic and persuasive rhetoric, not only continually repeating a paradox between happiness and prosperity, but also utilising a wide range of tools in support of the cause

⁶⁵ Search performed in Nexis database across *The Times*, *The Independent*, *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph* (and their Sunday Editions).

including building on existing problems, alleging a worsening situation, and emphasising rising healthcare costs of unhappiness. Linking the issue to mental illness as one of the greatest causes of 'misery,' Layard warns that 1 in 4 people will have a 'serious mental illness' in their lifetimes (Layard, *The Independent*: 2003). A column supporting Layard's claims adds that 'unhappiness is an expensive business': 'Mental ill-health is the biggest single cause of incapacity and costs the country an estimated £9bn in lost productivity and benefits' (Bunting, *The Guardian*: 2005). Another, describing her column as, 'an unashamed part of the lobbying effort' in support of Layard, declares a failure to act on Layard's proposals 'a national scandal' (Sieghart, *The Times*: 2006).

Such dramatic claims reverberate throughout discussions on happiness. A 2005 headline declares, 'Unhappiness is "Britain's worst social problem"' (Laurance, *The Independent*: 2005), and many articles allege the existence of an 'epidemic of unhappiness' (Ahuja, *The Times*: 2004; Leith, *The Daily Telegraph*: 2004; Laurance, *The Independent*: 2005; Griffiths, *The Sunday Times*: 2007). According to claimsmakers, 'binge drinking, mental health problems, [and] adolescent suicide' reveal that 'Britain is, at the moment, doing badly in terms of helping its young to achieve wellbeing' (Evans, *The Times*: 2008), or 'by measures such as depression, crime, obesity and alcoholism, we have got very much unhappier' (Bunting, *The Guardian*: 2005). Other evidence of this 'epidemic' includes: 'Ten per cent of British 16 to 24-year-olds suffer from depressive illnesses; milder anxiety affects 3% of five to 15-year-olds' (Griffiths, *The Sunday Times*: 2007), and:

The dramatic increase in the prescription of anti-depressants in the past decade, the recent Mental Health Foundation report suggesting that alcohol abuse is becoming a key form of 'self medication', the disturbing epidemic of self-harming among teenagers - all these signs and many more speak of a society deeply embroiled in a damaging psychodrama that it does not understand (Orr, *The Independent*: 2006).

Cast in such broad and dramatic terms, it is not surprising that the necessity of intervention to ameliorate the epidemic of unhappiness is seldom opposed. Prescriptions abound for how individuals can raise their happiness levels including through meditation, checklist type activities, and changing the way one thinks about desires, since 'Happiness is not getting what you want; it's wanting what you have' (Roberts, *The Observer*: 2006). Far outweighing individual prescriptions are claims urging government intervention. In the words of one report, 'If the debate is getting more urgent, it is also getting more pragmatic. This is happiness not just as a state of mind, but as a policy for government' (Walter, *The Guardian*: 2005). A response to a speech by Layard presses,

What would generate more happiness? Less unemployment; safer communities; more harmonious relationships; and, importantly, much more widely available mental health treatment. Lord Layard rightly emphasised this last in his lectures: an illness which accounts for 50% of all measured disability, but which only receives 12% of NHS funds. The case is made; now for some action (*The Guardian*: 2003).

A final form of dramatisation concerns the characterisation of the claims and claimsmakers themselves. From early on, economists advocating the application of happiness research to policy making are described as representing, for example, a 'radical rethink' 'bubbling away beneath these shibboleths of the political establishment' (Bunting, *The Guardian*: 2001), Layard is presented as a rebel, challenging the 'fundamental principles of his own discipline, including the centrality of GDP' (*The Guardian*: 2003), and 'quietly effecting a revolution in this miserable, materialistic, overworked country' (Jeffries, *The Guardian*: 2008). Layard himself is quoted as saying, 'a revolution is needed' (Laurance, *The Independent*: 2005).

5.5.5. Criticisms and Counterclaims

Very few criticisms deny the importance of focusing on happiness or question the underlying logic of declining or absent happiness. Just as in earlier periods, generalised unhappiness, variously defined, appears to be taken for granted. The very fact that the issue arose seemed to speak to its inevitability. Moreover, while happiness claims are frequently referred to as 'controversial' most criticisms tend to operate within the dominant frame and fail to question its underlying premises. Many criticisms actually reflect the narratives they claim to oppose. For instance, many criticise the new interest in happiness for promoting a fleeting mental state, being too individualised, or being excessively reliant upon psychology. One source asks, 'Is Layard right? Can we legislate for happiness?' and cites a psychologist, Raj Persaud, as arguing that there must be a distinction between pleasure and 'lasting' happiness. In spite of his apparent disagreement, Persaud continues, 'Where I think Layard and I concur is that it's interesting that emotional wellbeing isn't discussed. Sustained wellbeing is not on the national agenda and it should be' (Clark, *The Sunday Times*: 2005). Schoch argues, 'the problem is that the state misunderstands what happiness is' adding, 'when it comes to happiness, all the Government can do is measure levels of comfort and feelings of contentment' (Schoch, *The Independent on Sunday*: 2006). By contrast, he too forwards a claim for sustainable happiness, warning that pleasures are a 'dangerously unreliable basis for happiness' because, 'by their nature they are ephemeral. [...] Surely we want our happiness to be made of sterner stuff' (Schoch, *The Independent on Sunday*: 2006).

Schoch's criticism of a decision by Anthony Seldon, headmaster of Wellington College, to introduce happiness classes is similar: 'The problem is that Wellington is opting to teach happiness through positive psychology which, in my view, can amount to little more than self-help with a veneer of academic respectability' (Schoch, *The Daily Telegraph*: 2006). He counters that 'there is a morality of happiness' that is more likely to be found by 'recovering the great philosophical and religious traditions of happiness' and '[putting] them to work in our lives today' (Schoch, *The Daily Telegraph*: 2006). Yet Seldon's claims reflect similar concerns, pointing out the dangers of ephemeral pleasures like '[c]elebrity, money and possessions' (Robinson, *The Daily Telegraph*: 2006) and emphasising instead the need 'to equip teenagers with an understanding of what makes lives flourish' (Ward, *The Guardian*: 2006).

Claims emphasising the 'moral' or 'philosophical' basis of claims display a penchant for Aristotle's 'eudaimonia,' often translated as 'flourishing,' which claimsmakers urge should not be confused with modern conceptualisations. According to one claimsmaker, 'it means something more subtle. A more literal translation would be something like 'feelings accompanying behaviour consistent with your daimon, or true self' (*The Sunday Times*: 2006). An article quotes a 'British management thinker' stating that eudaimonia is 'not a state of mind or being, it is an activity,' or 'doing your best with what you are best at' (Lewis, *The Times*: 2006). According to AC Grayling, 'Our modern idea of happiness is rather thin. For Aristotle, happiness meant well-doing and wellbeing, flourishing, satisfaction and achievement. It was a very rich notion. Today people think about winning the lottery and sitting on a beach all day' (Hoggard, *The Independent*: 2005). While often framed as antithetical, as will become clearer in chapter 7, moral and philosophical claims are central to the problematisation of happiness.

Disagreements tend to operate within the logic of the problem, taking its reality and severity for granted, but are nonetheless framed as controversies. Differing emphases amongst the claims of Layard and Seldon, frequent collaborators on happiness projects, is even characterised by one article as a 'pluralism of views' that 'needs to be displayed, not hidden away' as young people are given guidance on 'tried and tested ways of thinking and living' (Evans, *The Times*: 2008). A disagreement on whether the problem is best alleviated through CBT or another more effective therapy is characterised as an 'ideological struggle' (Hodson, *The Times*: 2006). Another headline reads, 'Happiness is always a delusion,' and contains an interview with a psychoanalyst who criticises the wealth of happiness books as being, 'the problem rather than the solution' (Jeffries, *The Guardian*: 2006). However, he leaves little doubt that happiness is a serious problem: 'It's

become a preoccupation because there's so much unhappiness. The idea that if you just reiterate the word enough and we'll all cheer up is preposterous' (Jeffries, *The Guardian*: 2006).

The most scathing critiques tend to be found in editorial pieces. For instance, a Unicef report purporting to show that Britain is home to the unhappiest children in the world was repeated widely in the British press following its release in 2007, with various commentators mobilising it in support of their claims. One of the only items to take a more critical stance came from David Aaronovitch. He reiterates some of the reception the report received, quoting the Archbishop of Canterbury's attribution of the results to a 'culture of material competitiveness,' and asks, 'But is this what the studies tell us?' (Aaronovitch, *The Times*: 2009). Looking deeper, he discovers that most of the indicators of wellbeing used in the study, like dual parent families, are not value free. Most statistics purporting to measure wellbeing, he concludes, are 'manipulated toward a predetermined conclusion' (Aaronovitch, *The Times*: 2009).

A piece by Paul Ormerod, an economist, criticizing the paradox of declining happiness points out that, for all the furore made of stagnant happiness levels in spite of economic growth, nothing seems to change happiness levels at all:

Public expenditure, leisure time, crime, gender inequality, income inequality, depression -none of these is correlated with measures of happiness over time. [...] The alternative, of course, is that these data are not telling us anything of any value. At their most basic, recorded levels of happiness cannot change much over time because of how the data are constructed. People are typically asked to rate their happiness on a scale of 1 to 3, with 3 being 'very happy'. So even if you are ecstatically happy, it is not possible to register a higher level (Ormerod, *The Sunday Times*: 2007).⁶⁶

Yet these concerns fail to make a significant impact. The majority of criticism takes the form of light-hearted dismissals or is self-contained in editorials and opinion pieces from names that rarely appear again in connection with the issue. For example, Tim Worstall criticises Oliver James' assertion that in spite of great comparative wealth, '26.4 per cent [of Americans] have suffered mental illness in the past 12 months, six times the prevalence in either Shanghai or Nigeria,' pointing out his failure to take into account growing numbers of mental health professionals and expanding diagnoses, as well as the 'somewhat unkind observation that with a life expectancy of 47 years Nigerians could be too busy dying to get depressed' (Worstall, *The*

⁶⁶ Even this criticism falls short of questioning the importance of the problem of happiness in its entirety. Ormerod suggests that attention should instead be turned toward a more 'serious strand' of happiness research, which points instead to policy conclusions like 'increased support for marriage, reductions in incentives to single parents, and the promotion of religious faith' (Elliott, *The Guardian*: 2007).

Times: 2007). Similarly, Daniel Finkelstein describes a radio discussion in which James ‘went into a long tirade that took in the Iraq war and the evils of shopping, and ended with the startling claim that “in Britain one in every two people is on the verge of mental illness”. Irritated by his windy irrelevance, I replied: “Well, that’s certainly true in this conversation”’ (Finkelstein, *The Times*: 2009).

By the time the nationwide ONS initiative to gauge the public’s ‘wellbeing’ was announced in November of 2010, a political focus on happiness, particularly based upon the prominent claim that money cannot buy it, risked an icy reception. Student riots had gripped Westminster only days before and the country was in the depths of a recession, reeling from a series of deep cuts to government spending. While the *Guardian* reports the announcement noting ‘nervousness in Downing Street’ and stressing it as the implementation of a ‘long-stated ambition’ (Stratton, *The Guardian*: 2010b), tabloid headlines read ‘if you’re happy & you’re loaded, clap your hands’ and wonder: ‘More to life than money? [...] that’s easy to say when you’ve got buckets of the stuff’ (Leckie, *The Sun*: 2010). To some observers, Cameron’s interest in happiness was just a cynical cover for the cuts. Len McCluskey, Unite general secretary, characterised the initiative as ‘another attempt by the coalition to pull the wool over peoples’ eyes’ (Mulholland, *The Guardian*: 2010). Another commentator observes, ‘That we became concerned with emotional prosperity just as the reality of economic austerity became apparent is surely not coincidental’ (Moore, *The Guardian*: 2012). *Guardian* columnist Madeleine Bunting warns that the apparent contradiction between government cuts and a concern with happiness may actually be startlingly consistent: ‘The coincidence of Cameron’s thoughts on happiness with welfare cuts is all of a piece. “Benthamite” did not become a descriptive term for harsh welfare by accident’ (Bunting, *The Guardian*: 2010). However, the majority of commentary defends the importance of happiness to political debate, even while deriding its source. Polly Toynbee writes sharply, ‘David Cameron did not invent happiness,’ lauding the efforts of many who ‘recognised the need to develop a more comprehensive view, rather than focusing solely on GDP’ long before the Coalition came to power. ‘The Cameron talk and walk diverged some time ago,’ she adds, ‘the ONS measurements will chart the unhappiness path he chose’ (Toynbee, *The Guardian*: 2010). Another columnist asserts that the progressive analysis of happiness research focusing on reducing inequality has ‘gone awry’ with the ‘all-purpose term “wellbeing”’ being ‘recast as an individual responsibility’ (Moore, *The Guardian*: 2012).

Yet far from being an idea that arose from the recession, it had been clear from quite early on that happiness would become an object of public policy. Then Prime Minister, Tony Blair’s Cabinet

Office Strategy Unit had produced a paper on 'life satisfaction' as early as 2002; in 2006, David Cameron, then only five months into his term as Conservative leader, affirmed wellbeing as a central political issue, while a host of happiness based proposals were already coming to fruition under Gordon Brown. That one of the more high profile initiatives emerged during the depths of a recession was something of an unfortunate coincidence. Even Layard, vociferous advocate of the disconnect between GDP and happiness, called the announcement 'brave' (Toynbee, *The Guardian*: 2010).

In spite of the apparent unease with the idea of happiness as a public issue, few appear to have been willing to take ownership as critical opponents. Instead, critical perspectives are more apt to emphasise different claims that suit their demands than challenge the idea in its entirety. Happiness, with its fluid nature, subversive undertones and dramatic rhetoric is a far more appealing banner to rally behind than against, leaving claimsmakers little vulnerable to serious opposition. Dedicated opposition offers little to critics, since few would advocate depression, celebrate 'conspicuous consumption,' or argue that GDP is the most important thing in life. Instead, the discourse is populated by claims and counterclaims from those who gain more from forwarding their own rationales for the absence of happiness and prescriptions for how it can be returned.

5.5.6. Rediscovering an Eternal Pursuit

As happiness claims proliferate and become more and more difficult to ignore, commentators begin to take notice and attempt to explain the rising interest. Many appraisals look to history to find the origins of the issue (or, in the case of claimsmakers, to provide support for claims), concluding that it is simply the continuation of an eternal pursuit or the rediscovery of an ideal lost or degraded by modern life. One author writes: 'The hunt for happiness is an ancient human preoccupation, so there is nothing new in all this, but it is being reframed in order to challenge our prevailing political assumptions,' and attributes its rising importance to people's disorientation from 'what constitutes a good life and how to be happy' (Bunting, *The Guardian*: 2005). Another asserts: 'The notion of happiness is hardly new to the world of ideas, and everyone from the Ancient Greeks to the English utilitarian philosophers has found it useful. The reason why today's intellectuals have descended on it, however, is that they suspect that we are not as happy as we should be' (Harkin, *The Guardian*: 2005). Others hark back to John Stuart Mill, or assert that we have 'lost contact with the old and rich traditions of happiness, and we have lost the ability to understand their essentially moral nature' (Mooney, *The Times*: 2006). One review

looks to Epicurus, claiming that he has been ‘mistakenly associated with mindless “epicurean” pleasure-seeking,’ and argues instead that, ‘he taught that all a person requires in order to be happy are the basic necessities of life: food, water, shelter and warmth—plus friendship, freedom and thought. He advocated a simple life [...]’ (*The Sunday Times*: 2005). A reviewer recalls sitting next to a literary agent and wondering at the sudden deluge of happiness books. “But why do you think it is? Why now?” I asked. He shrugged, “Because a lot of people are very unhappy” (Mooney, *The Times*: 2006).

The contemporary interest in happiness acquires a sense of transcendence, an age-old quest rediscovered in response to a general sense of degradation and decline in society. The mere fact that more people were talking about happiness seemed to confirm the problem’s severity. While it is questionable as to whether or not the histories referred to in happiness claims meant the same thing when evoking the ideal, such commentaries may be at least partially correct. As a rhetorical idiom, happiness has always lent a sense of ultimate good to the subject matter to which it referred. But the highly rationalised and decontextualised formulation it acquires toward the present lends the idiom even greater salience. ‘Confirmed’ by both science and history, it lends the ‘goods’ advocated by claimsmakers a sense of certainty as well as offering a seemingly complex, though enticingly simple, answer to a wide range of questions. In laying claim to happiness, advocates are not merely forwarding objective knowledge on the nature of happiness, why it is missing, and how it can be found, but rather, they are drawing on its narrative power in evoking a sense of uncontroversial absolutes, imbuing their view of the world with an ultimate sense of goodness and purpose that is otherwise difficult to find.

This chapter has attempted to answer how uses of happiness have evolved in the print news media over the past century. It has identified subtle shifts in usage and a distinct trend toward its problematisation as well as describing some of the characteristics that this problematisation has acquired. In this way, it places many contemporary developments against a backdrop of historical usage, attempting to lay bare some of the key differences between past and present, providing a foundation for the more detailed analyses to follow.

6 Claimsmaking for Happiness

The preceding chapter has provided a description of how the term 'happiness' has appeared in the news media over the past century. It is clear that over the past two decades a shift has occurred whereby discussions in the UK began to focus upon happiness as a central concern rather than being evoked in a more perfunctory manner peripheral to another primary interest. More importantly, these emergent discourses have increasingly implicated happiness in social problem claims. This chapter details the results of an analysis of a sample of 306 newspaper articles in which individuals and organisations commenting on the issue were identified and investigated. It attempts to answer who the claimsmakers are in the construction of happiness as a social problem and gives additional insight into how constructs evolve and come to prevail. The general composition of the sample is explored followed by a summary of conclusions regarding the model of diffusion followed by the problem. Prominent categories of claimsmakers are then discussed including experts, politicians, journalists and members of the general public. Conclusions are summarised at the close of the chapter.

6.1 Composition of the Sample

In the sample composed of 306 articles, 340 individuals and 89 organisations were identified making claims about the issue (see Appendix A for individuals, Appendix B for organisations). As detailed in chapter 4, an individual or organisation was recorded if they made at least one claim, positive or negative, about happiness, its constitution, importance, definition, role in public life or problematic nature.⁶⁷ Organisations were recorded if claims or commentary emerged from, or in connection with, these groups. Given that these data were derived from a sample and not the entire population of all possible articles, the resultant list cannot be said to be exhaustive. Yet, the objective is not to catalogue every person or organisation that has ever made a statement regarding the issue. Moreover, although there has been a large number of commentators over

⁶⁷ Recall that an engagement with the data led to the decision to adopt a broader conceptualisation of 'claimsmaker' than is reflected in the more activist notion described by Spector and Kitsuse (2001). This conceptualisation was intended to capture those who at some point used happiness claims, commented on the issue, or lent their support or criticism rather than only those who were more actively engaged in its dissemination. For further explanation see chapter 4.

time, very few can be said to be claimsmakers in the more significant sense of being integral to the construction of the problem, a point that will be further expounded in the sections below.

Two preliminary observations emerge from an analysis of the data regarding the general composition of the sample. First, a large number of people and organisations from diverse backgrounds comment on the issue or refer to happiness claims. At the same time, there are relatively few consistently appearing claimsmakers who emerge as prominent authorities. A third point is separate and requires more elaboration, namely that while a great deal of information emerges from the 'expert' category, the most significant commentary emerges from those types of claimsmakers associated with the 'insider' sector of claimsmaking.

6.2 Characteristics of Claimsmakers

Regarding the first of these observations, even in this relatively small sample, perhaps the most significant characteristic is the diversity of claimsmakers that appear. Claimsmakers emerge from a varied milieu, literally from advice columnists to a zoologist. The figure and table below show the types of claimsmakers identified and the corresponding proportions by which they make up the total population of claimsmakers identified in the sample.

Figure 6. Types of individual claimsmakers identified in sample

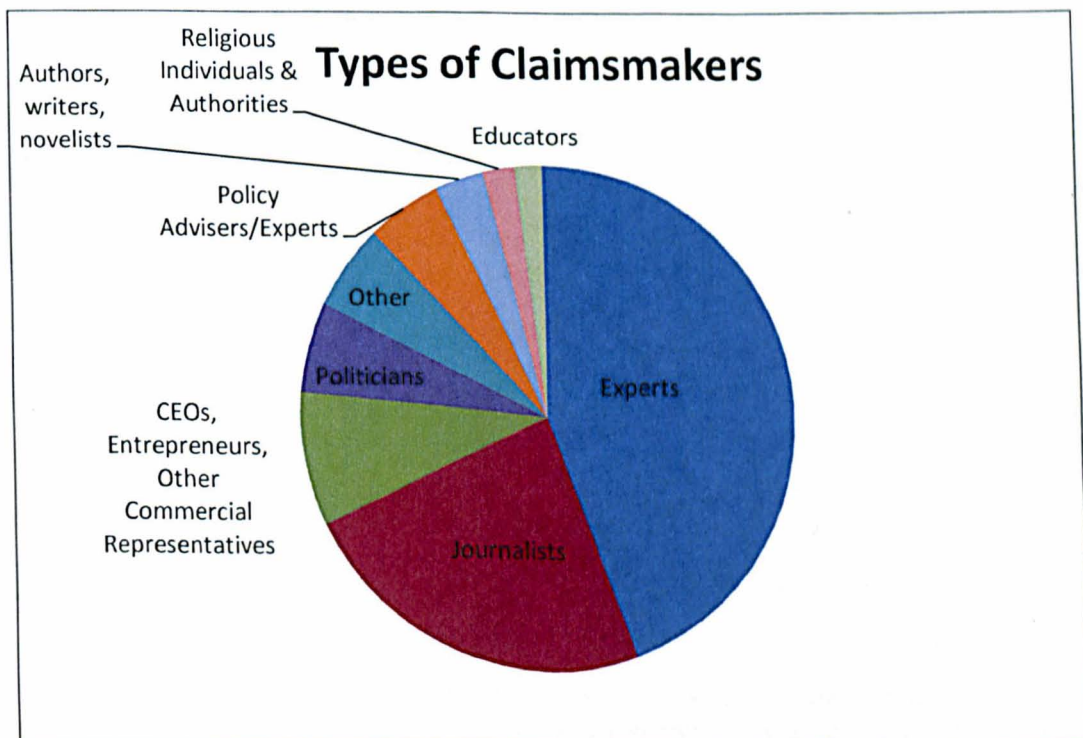


Table 14. Types of individual claimsmakers identified in sample

Category of Claimsmaker	Number of Claimsmakers in Category
Experts	151
Journalists	80
CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Other Commercial Representatives	29
Politicians	20
Other ⁶⁸	19
Policy Advisers/Experts	17
Authors, writers, novelists	11
Religious Individuals & Authorities	7
Educators	6
Total	340

It is clear that the most frequently appearing type of claimsmaker is the 'expert,' followed by journalists and members of the private sector. In addition to individuals as sources of information, it was also observed that claims are often made in connection with organisations or that organisations alone are sometimes cited as the source of a claim. The types of organisations appearing in the sample and the corresponding number of organisations belonging to each category are listed in the figure and table below.

⁶⁸ The category of 'other' contains advice columnists, musicians, representatives of polling agencies, celebrities, and other miscellaneous figures in news and entertainment including a filmmaker, magazine editor and BBC producer.

Figure 7. Types of organisations identified in sample

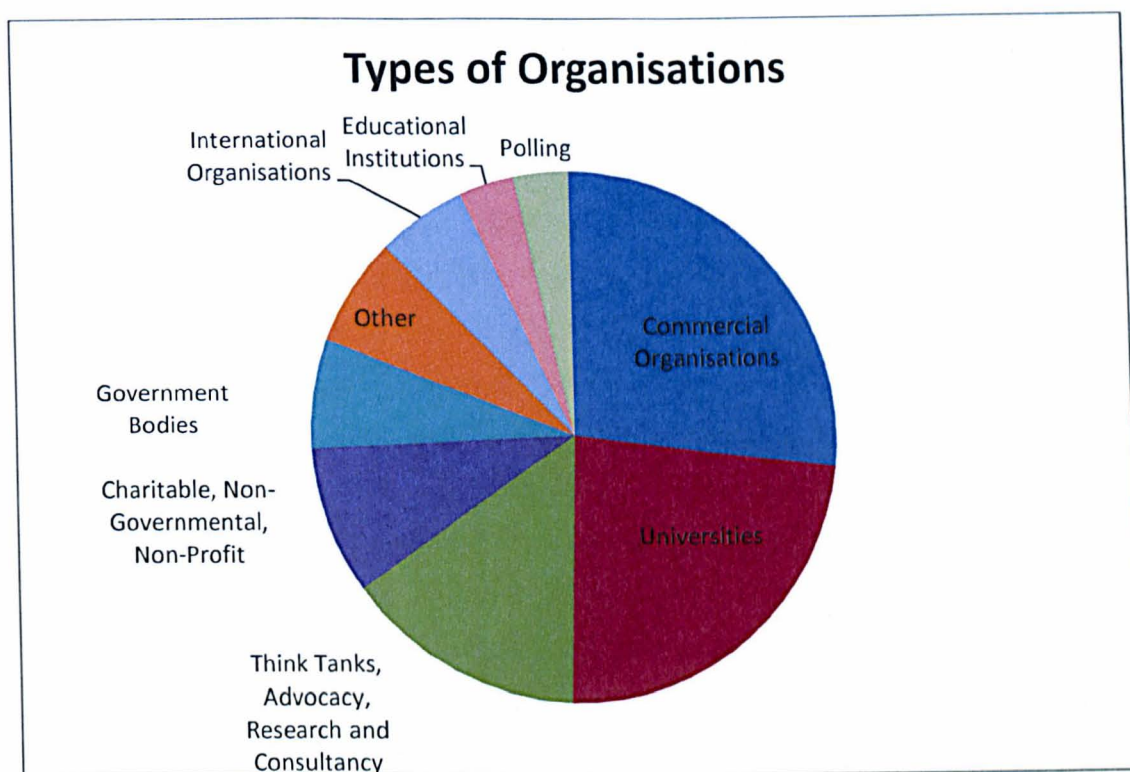


Table 15. Types of organisations identified in sample

Type of Organisation	Number of Organisations in Type
Commercial Organisations	24
Universities	21
Think-tanks, Advocacy, Research and Consultancy	13
Charitable, Non-Governmental, Non-Profit	8
Government Bodies	6
Other	6
International Organisations	5
Educational Institutions	3
Polling	3
Total:	89

These groupings serve to elucidate from which general areas commentary has tended to emerge. However, although it would appear from the above figures that experts and commercial organisations have been leading the problematisation of happiness, as will be shown presently and in ensuing sections, these are not the areas from which the most sustained interest has emerged, producing few groups or individuals who might be termed 'owners' of the issue.

For instance, the type of organisation with the largest number of claimsmakers is the 'commercial' category, but of the 24 organisations identified in the sample, only one appeared more than once.⁶⁹ The majority of claims stemming from these categories are not those of initial problematisers, but emerge after the problem has become institutionalised into company policy and practice. For instance, McDonald's and Disney are cited as examples of companies which have brought in positive psychologists to 'coach' their employees, because as one representative claims, 'the message works' (Reid, *The Times*: 2008). The CEO of Keen Media is quoted as attributing the ability of his company to stay competitively priced by maintaining wage rates for its 'creative staff in Bangkok' at 'one-fifth of London levels' by operating on the 'Bhutanese concept of Gross National Happiness' (Sumner-Smith, *The Daily Telegraph*:2007). Others are life coaching or private consultancy firms which have sprung up around the concept including Happy at Work, The Laughter Network, and iOpener, 'a consultancy that specialises in improving performance by making people happier' (Chynoweth, *The Sunday Times*:2009). Others are more overtly opportunistic in taking hold of the concept as a marketing tool including various happiness polls and a booklet given away by Jacob's (a cream cracker company) on how to increase happiness levels and improve wellbeing (McCade, *The Sunday Times*:2007).⁷⁰ On the other hand, while only three educational institutions appeared as sources of claims, one of these, Wellington College, appears 20 times.

6.2.1 *Lack of Sustained Campaigning*

This leads to the second observation regarding the general composition of the sample, namely the large chasm that exists between the most frequently appearing claimsmakers and other commentators. While a large number of individuals and organisations comment on the issue, many contributing to and affirming its importance, few have embarked on a dedicated campaign, taking it up and making it their own. This is also evidenced in a consideration of the data, wherein

⁶⁹ The company appearing more than once was Hewlett-Packard; in 2007 it reported a '40 per cent increase in sales' after sending its employees on a 'laughter programme' (Frame, *The Daily Telegraph*:2007) and in 2008 was reported as having appointed a 'chief happiness officer' (Corrigan, *The Daily Telegraph*:2008).

⁷⁰ Interestingly, many of these claims are treated with light-hearted scepticism by reporting journalists. For instance, one journalist describes a poll claiming that the "'greatest concentration of very happy people" is in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly' and asks, 'Is this astonishing when the poll was commissioned for Cornwall Enterprise, a regional development agency?' (Barker, *The Independent on Sunday*:2006). Of the collaboration between a cracker company and a behavioural expert the reporting journalist observes wryly, 'if you're unhappy, don't worry. Help is on its way. [...] James suggests that there are five steps to improving our happiness levels. One is to daydream regularly –perhaps about cream crackers' (McCade, *The Sunday Times*:2007).

only 71 of the total 340 individual claimsmakers appear three or more times, 41 twice, and 228 only once. This is also observable when compared with the larger Nvivo database where there is a large chasm separating the most frequently appearing claimsmakers from the remainder and the vast majority of names (295) appear fewer than 5 times. A great deal of expert knowledge has been disseminated about happiness throughout the history of its problematisation, but it appears as though without the activities of the prominent authorities who took up this information, or who initially brought it to the media as fuel for their claims about the existence of the problem, it is unlikely that it would have seen the prominence and success that it has.

Therefore, while a consideration of the prevalence of particular sources of claims is interesting for reasons that will be discussed in more detail in the conclusion to this section, of far more importance is the content of these results, the connections between claimsmakers, and the actual changes that have been affected on their basis. Viewed this way, a very small number of claimsmakers appear to have made a disproportionate impact on gaining recognition for and institutionalising the problem.

6.3 Insiders and Issue Ownership

An interpretation of the data reveals that while most claimsmakers belong to the 'expert' category, prominent authorities who take ownership of this information, refashion it in service of problem claims, and who bring it to the attention of the media tend to emerge from other areas. Many of the most frequently occurring claimsmakers are actually referenced second hand. Throughout the life course of the problem, those who championed the idea of affecting change on the basis of happiness research have tended to belong predominantly to the insider 'polity' stream illustrated and described in chapter 3. This is borne out by a comparison of the early problematisation of the issue with the present period. In both cases, insiders take ownership; however only in the latter does this ownership take the form of a focused campaign. While it has always been knowledge derived from the disciplines of psychology, economics and to a lesser extent, philosophy, that has provided the building blocks with which the problem has been constructed, it is largely not the producers of this knowledge—that is, the people involved in collecting data and carrying out research—who have become its most influential and dedicated proponents.

6.3.1 1993 – 2003: The Discoverers of a Problem

Recall from the previous chapter that ‘the discovery of the problem’ began in the early 1990s when insiders closely connected with policy initially attempted to politicise the results of the then nascent area of happiness research. While prior to the mid-1990s the results of studies had variously appeared in national news publications and had to some extent been appropriated by those with ready access to the media like the psychologist Robin Skynner in his *Guardian* column, these activities largely had little effect on wider discussions, much less policy change. The initial discovery of a problem to which this new knowledge was to be directed however, can be attributed to claimsmakers with closer links to the policy realm—namely, interest groups and think-tanks falling within the ‘polity’ category of insider. For instance, the first mention of a paradox in association with happiness in national UK newspapers came not from the expert from whom the results were borrowed (and indeed the insight is credited simply to ‘one sociologist’ [Le Fanu, *The Times*:1993]), but rather from the physician James Le Fanu, a frequent social commentator who, as noted in the previous chapter, had recently produced a pamphlet for the UK think-tank the Social Affairs Unit.⁷¹⁷² The table below shows the claimsmakers behind the first 10 social problem claims about happiness in UK national newspapers, their position in the claimsmaking process as either insider or outsider (or gatekeeper, in the case of journalists) according to the characteristics listed in Table 3.2., and the nature of the information on which they draw.

Table 16. First claimsmakers problematising happiness 1993-1995

Author of Article and Description	Insider or Outsider	Claim	Source of Information	Own Research
James Le Fanu Physician and frequent social commentator;	Insider	‘Nothing can disguise the gradual slide in the happiness of nations in the West over the past decade. Despite dramatic increases in real wealth, data from the United States	American ‘data’; unnamed sociologist	No

⁷¹ This article is also the first time that the American positive psychologist Ed Diener, now a familiar name in happiness discourses, is mentioned in UK newspapers.

⁷² While Le Fanu is a medical practitioner and thus an ‘expert’ in some respects, the research which he references is not his own. Moreover, he appears to take a brief interest in happiness research, only using it here to bolster an argument about the general deterioration of British society on a number of fronts.

has done work for the right-leaning UK think-tank, the Social Affairs Unit		show no increase in 'happiness'; according to one sociologist, the average American has become less happy since the war' (Le Fanu, <i>The Times</i> :1993).		
Robert Lane (1) American political scientist	Outsider ⁷³	'Studies in advanced economies show, as one would expect, that for every thousand pounds increase in income there is, indeed, an increased sense of well-being—but only for the poorest fifth of the population. Beyond that, there is almost no increase in people's satisfaction with their lives as income levels increase' (Lane, <i>The Guardian</i> :1993).	'studies in advanced economies'	No
Jonathan Dimbleby ⁷⁴ Political Commentator	Insider	'So we should now all be very much happier. We have better health, longer lives, and greater prosperity. And yet self-evidently we are very far from happy' (Dimbleby, <i>The Guardian</i> :1993).	personal observations	N/A
Will Hutton (1) Policy Expert/Advisor	Insider	'Choosing has not led to either happiness or economic welfare, and the more reflective economists have begun to wonder whether economics' famous dodge works. What if individuals do not possess the mental equipment to be rational about why and what they choose?' (Hutton, <i>The Guardian</i> :1993).	recent Happiness Conference at LSE	No
Hamish McRae (1) Journalist (also member of LSE Policy Committee)	Gate-keeper	'In the past 20 years there has been no reported increase in happiness in either Europe or the US. This seems a little odd because this seems to conflict with the general principle that if people get richer, they also tend to become happier or—to	'wealth of work' accumulated over 30 years; Centre for Economic Performance	No

⁷³ Lane is listed as an 'outsider' because his links to policy are unclear. In 1991 he published *The Market Experience* in which he argues 'goods and services—and the income that purchases them—are only intermediate goods, whereas satisfaction or happiness and human development are final goods' (Lane, 1991:3). This has been followed by several publications in a similar vein including the 2001 *Loss of Happiness in Market Democracies*. In the early 1990s, he had been frequently cited by claimsmakers closely connected with policy, particularly by Will Hutton, and is listed in the acknowledgements of various publications produced by think-tanks including the NEF and Demos, but direct connections are difficult to ascertain.

⁷⁴ Dimbleby is also a television and radio presenter and has membership or leadership positions in various environmental lobbying groups including the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) in which capacity the article excerpted above was written.

		employ a more specific title— experience higher social well-being, or SWB' (McRae, <i>The Independent</i> :1994)	at LSE	
Will Hutton (2) Policy Expert/Advisor	Insider	'[...] lifting consumption, either through raising the growth rate or lowering personal income taxes - the economic response of pundits and rightwing Tory backbenchers—will not improve well-being. [...] one index of well-being ranks the principal source of satisfaction as family (especially for men). Financial security follows, and then 'having fun'. Acquisition of goods and services ranks below even one's chance of getting a good job' (Hutton, <i>The Guardian</i> :1994).	Robert Lane (2)	No
Geoff Mulgan Policy Expert/Advisor	Insider	'Since then, however, the link between growth and happiness has been broken. In the UK and the United States, while GDP has doubled over the past 30 years, people's reported happiness levels have remained roughly constant. In some European countries they have fallen, sharply in the cases of Belgium and Ireland' (Mulgan, <i>The Independent</i> :1995).	economists James Tobin, William Nordhaus, World Bank's Herman Daly	No
James Cusick ⁷⁵ Journalist	Gate- keeper	'The head of the NEF's indicators programme, Alex MacGillivray, said: "Now that tranquillity has been given a value, maybe happiness is next." The NEF argues that with concern over the quality of life, the old-style gross national product measurement of monetary flow is misleading and offers no guide to the state of the environment' (Cusick, <i>The Independent</i> :1995).	UK Department of Transport (DoT); NEF's Alex MacGillivray	Author: No NEF and DoT: Unclear
Hamish McRae (2) Journalist (also member of LSE Policy	Gate- keeper	'This LSE work has unearthed some wonderful nuggets of information, such as the fact that there has been little or no rise in reported happiness in Europe or the US during the past 20 years [...]' (McRae, <i>The</i>	LSE economists working in area of happiness	No

⁷⁵ In this case the author of the article is a journalist who is merely reporting on the claims of others and is thus not a claimmaker himself. This differs from the case of Hamish McRae who compiles the primary claims of unnamed economists into a secondary claim for the existence of a problem.

Committee)		<i>Independent:1995).</i>		
Polly Toynbee Journalist and frequent social commentator	Insider/ Gate- keeper	'Running faster up the down escalator, all we get is a more miserable, overworked, sick and anxious workforce. Along with the monthly economic indicators, there should a contentment indicator, reminding us what the money is for. Professor Robert Lane, of Yale, studying quality of life surveys, concludes that apart from among the very poor, there is no correlation between happiness and income' (Toynbee, <i>The Independent:1995</i>).	Robert Lane (3)	No

As the table above shows, the first claimsmakers for happiness as a social problem were not necessarily the experts who are so frequently cited on the subject. Indeed, it is often the case that the science by which these claims are meant to be underpinned is entirely unattributed. It is also not the case that the first claims emerged from a dedicated sector of the general public urging for change, but rather from the 'insider' sector of the claimsmaking process. Although insiders, by definition, have easier access to the mass media, the history of many social problems (for instance, the civil rights movement) has been characterised by grassroots groups using whatever means possible to gain access to the mass media in order to direct public consciousness to their cause. Therefore, it is unlikely that the ownership of the issue observed as stemming from the insider category is merely an artefact of the type of data collected.

6.3.2 2003 - Present: Insiders as Owners

While not everyone who has taken up the problem has been an 'insider,' the prime movers in each phase of the problem have been overwhelmingly of this type. While many of the early claimsmakers described in the table above would go on to use happiness claims in their activities in other areas, they failed to remain dedicated owners of the issue in this public arena, and public claimsmaking about happiness registered little effect throughout the remainder of the decade.

Already by the 1990s, subjective indicators were becoming influential in various arenas, particularly in relation to international development policy. At the same time as the NEF's above endorsement of the DoT's use of the subjective indicator of 'tranquility,' the think-tank was also involved in developing and promoting alternative indicators including the Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW), a UK application of the American index created by the World Bank

economist Herman Daly and the theologian John Cobb (see Daly and Cobb, 1994 [first published in 1989]). The UK ISEW was developed and applied by Tim Jackson and Nic Marks in association with the NEF and the Centre for Environmental Strategy at the University of Surrey, and was later incorporated and modified by the environmental group Friends of the Earth (FoE) (see Jackson and Marks, 1994). As Pupavac (2006:262) observes, central to this concept and others already institutionalised by the early 1990s and exported from the United States, including the Human Development Index (HDI), is the decoupling of material from social progress. Yet this decoupling, in spite of its influence and early institutionalisation in these arenas, did not at that time become a problem with the sort of social recognition it has achieved today. The interest remained largely confined to less public arenas and thus failed to gain recognition as a social problem with a high standing on the public agenda. Among those who maintained an interest was Geoff Mulgan, who as director of the New Labour think-tank Demos produced a publication in 1998 entitled *The Good Life*, which brought together not only a great deal of claims about happiness, but also featured many of the early claimsmakers (several of whom appear in the above table) including, Will Hutton, Alex MacGillivray, the psychologist Michael Argyle, Tim Jackson and Nic Marks (who applied Daly's World Bank index to the UK).

Yet media claimsmaking tapers off until a rash of articles appears in early 2003 describing a December research report on 'Life Satisfaction' produced by the Cabinet Office's Strategy Unit, headed by the then recently appointed director, Geoff Mulgan. The report, authored by Nick Donovan and David Halpern, summarises what it deems 'the state of knowledge and implications for government' of life satisfaction research including many of the ideas that had been prominent in the earlier Demos publication including the familiar paradox, that 'despite large increases in national income (and expenditure) over the last 30 years, levels of life satisfaction have not increased commensurately' (Donovan and Halpern, 2002:2). At the same time, a report entitled, 'UK Real National Income, 1950-1998: Some Grounds for Optimism' was published by the National Institute for Economic and Social Research and authored by the (then) LSE economist Nick Crafts. In spite of the uplifting title, Crafts' optimistic reassessment of the findings of several indices of economic welfare merely provided fuel for a similar claim about a paradox between prosperity and happiness. In a lecture delivered at the Royal Economic Society in London which coincided with the publication of the report, Crafts asserted, 'conventional measures of economic growth understate improvements in average living standards' but, '[d]espite the improvements, recent surveys have shown that we are no happier than our grandparents or great-grandparents' (Hazlewood, *Belfast News Letter*:2002).

Two months later, another LSE economist (and Labour peer), Richard Layard, kicked off what would be the most concerted, dedicated, and ultimately successful claimsmaking effort with a series of lectures given at LSE. Accompanying the series was a lengthy article in the *New Statesmen* in which Layard sets out his claim for the existence of the problem and what should be done about it. Clearly intending to make an impact, Layard begins dramatically, asserting: 'There is a paradox at the heart of our civilization' and detailing how the latest scientific developments not only point to a dire state of affairs, but also how this new 'happiness research' had made it 'entirely practicable to make happiness our goal' (Layard, *New Statesman*: 2003). The memorable phrasing seemed to prove successful, as an influx of publications soon appeared repeating Layard's slogans: 'People are no happier than 50 years ago in spite of being much better off' (Young, *The Times*: 2003), and that 'keeping up with the Joneses' was to blame (Naish, *The Times*: 2003). Headlines shouted, 'We can't get no satisfaction: Despite the massive rise in wealth, self-reported happiness has not increased in Britain' (Dean, *The Guardian*: 2003), and 'Money might make the world go round, but earning it is making us increasingly miserable' (Hutton, *The Observer*: 2003).

Through Layard, claims become increasingly streamlined, with the attention grabbing paradox placed front and centre: 'We make more money, but we're more depressed than ever' (Layard, *The Independent on Sunday*: 2003). Implications and demands are laid out in a plain and easily repeatable format, including 'More spending on psychiatry' (Young, *The Times*: 2003) and 'a shorter working week' (*The Times*: 2003). In 2004, Layard retreated somewhat from the media during which time he wrote his *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science*, an extensive literature review of happiness research from evolutionary psychology to neuroscience. Upon the book's publication in 2005, Layard's promotion of both it, and the ideas it espoused, became even more fervent. In the media, he was described as a radical, challenging mainstream economic orthodoxy. Yet in spite of the ostensibly subversive nature of his stance, his claimsmaking was met with swift affirmation. David Cameron, then shadow education secretary, cited Layard as an influence while describing the Conservative Party's education policy (Clark, *The Sunday Times*: 2005) and the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) launched a document on sustainable development which, after citing Layard, affirms wellbeing as lying 'at the heart of sustainable development' (HM Government, 2005:23). Announcements were made that happiness would appear in the educational curriculum (Seldon, *The Independent*: 2006), and Ed Balls, the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, affirmed that, 'teaching happiness, wellbeing and good manners to secondary school pupils can be done,' before announcing the introduction and expansion of the SEAL programme (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning)

across England and Wales (Linklater, *The Times*:2007). In the health sector, the Secretary of State for Health thanked Layard for ‘raising awareness nationally, in parliament and within the Department of Health about the importance of psychological therapies and mental health’ before announcing a shift in focus toward talking therapies and delivering more ‘focused outcomes’ in health and wellbeing (Hewitt, 2006).

In spite of the fact that a great deal had been going on behind the scenes in terms of a diverse array of groups taking on the idea and developing indicators long before Layard’s public campaigning, it was Layard’s lobbying that put happiness on the public agenda. A number of commentators pointed out that his book seemed to have a profound effect on political discussions (for example, Rentoul, *The Independent*: 2006; Jeffries, *The Guardian*: 2008). It was Layard’s alarmist claims that ‘Unhappiness is “Britain’s worst social problem”’ (Laurance, *The Independent*:2005) that made headline news, and through whom the existence of an epidemic of unhappiness became a taken for granted truth—the only question was how far the interventions would go.

Layard’s mission was to place the issue at the centre of political debate, and it is likely through his influence and missionary stance toward the problem that it saw its most successful incarnation and widespread institutionalisation over the past decade. The table below shows the 10 most frequently appearing claimsmakers in the Nvivo database and illustrates Layard’s prominence.⁷⁶ The accompanying table gives additional details of each claimsmaker.

⁷⁶ David Cameron, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown also figured prominently, but they are more often the targets of claims than the source. Their relationship to the problem constitutes a special case pertaining to the particular role that politicians have played and is described in the relevant section below.

Figure 8. Most frequently appearing individual claimsmakers

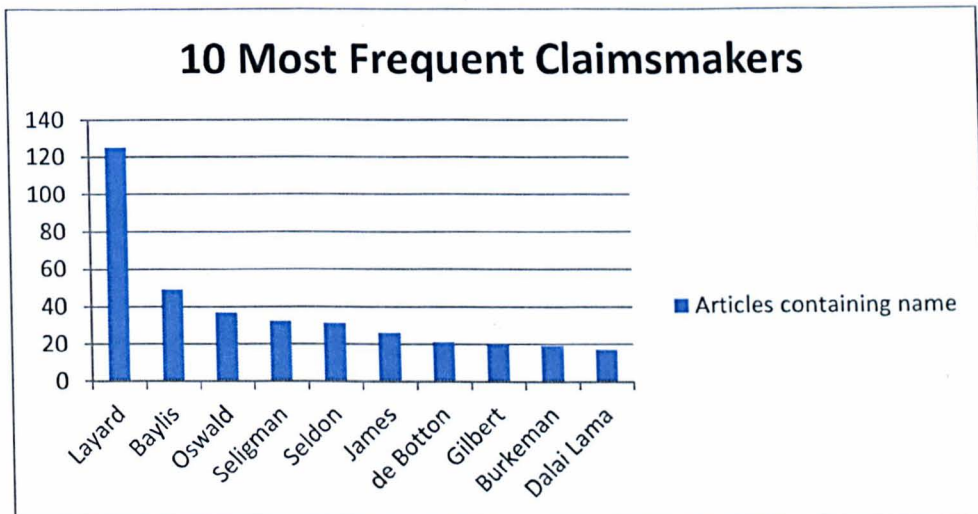


Table 17. Description of 10 most frequently occurring individual claimsmakers in sample

Name	Description	Category	Number of Articles (n= 765)
Richard Layard	Economist at LSE's Centre for Economic Performance (CEP) since 1990 'Happiness economist' and co-founder of 'Action for Happiness' Policy advisor	Expert – Economist	125
Nick Baylis	Positive Psychologist at Cambridge Column in <i>The Times</i> on Happiness as 'Dr Feelgood'	Expert - Psychologist	49
Andrew Oswald	Economist at University of Warwick Began research on happiness in 1990s while Senior Research Fellow at LSE's CEP Has contributed over 200 articles to popular media outlets in addition to broadcast media interviews ⁷⁷	Expert – Economist	37
Martin Seligman	American Psychologist, former head of American Psychological Association	Expert - Psychologist	32

⁷⁷ According to a short bio produced for press release (University of Warwick, 2011).

	Former key critic of 'self-esteem'		
Anthony Seldon	Headmaster of Wellington College Co-founder of 'Action for Happiness' Social and political commentator	Educator	31
Oliver James	Psychologist Journalist; author of popular psychology books Frequent social commentator	Expert - Psychologist	26
Alain de Botton	Pop-Philosopher, writer Entrepreneur; founder of 'The School of Life' (London)	Expert - Philosopher	21
Daniel Gilbert	American Psychologist Author of <i>Stumbling on Happiness</i> (2006)	Expert - Psychologist	20
Oliver Burkeman	Journalist Writer of <i>Guardian</i> column on psychology Author of <i>Help! How to Become Slightly Happier and Get A Bit More Done</i> (2011) and <i>The Antidote: Happiness for People Who Can't Stand Positive Thinking</i> (2012)	Journalist	19
Dalai Lama	Religious Leader Author of <i>The Art of Happiness</i> (1998) and <i>The Art of Happiness at Work</i> (2003) Frequently quoted by others and used as an example of a happy person/happy way of life	Religious Individuals & Authorities	17

In a recent book by David Halpern, the author reminisces about the move of 'subjective well-being' from the 'fringe towards the mainstream' and cites Layard as being a central figure in raising its profile in the academic community (Halpern, 2010:8). Indeed, as founder and director of the Centre for Economic Performance at LSE, he was ideally placed to raise its profile in the discipline of economics and had been drawing partnerships with other universities in an attempt 'link economists with psychologists' on projects dealing with happiness since at least the mid-1990s (McRae, *The Independent*: 1994).⁷⁸ But Layard is not simply an economist who is drawing

⁷⁸ Such activities have been reported favourably by the financial journalist Hamish McRae, who sits on the CEP's policy committee, since 1994 (his articles about the centre's activities are amongst the first problematisations of the issue listed in Table 16).

the public's attention to a problem he has independently discovered. Like the claimsmakers of the early 1990s, the paradox is central to Layard's claims, but it is an idea with which he had been acquainted since at least the early 1980s when he drew on Easterlin in a 1980 paper in the *Economic Journal*.⁷⁹ But more crucially, and also like the claimsmakers of the 1990s, Layard has close ties with public policy and has been moving between various insider organisations since the beginning of his career. He has been particularly influential on New Labour, acting as an adviser to Number 10 in the 1990s and was one of the main architects of the party's unemployment policy when it came to power in 1997. When Layard first began his claimsmaking for happiness as a social problem, he was, among other positions, not only director of the LSE's Centre for Economic Performance, but also a consultant for the Prime Minister's Forward Strategy Unit and a member of the House of Lord's Select Committee on Economic Affairs. Therefore, not only was he well placed to raise the subject's profile and credibility within the discipline of economics, drawing alliances between economists and psychologists, but he was also particularly well placed to diffuse the idea between a number of spheres of public discourse, standing as he did with one foot in the door of several arenas. Moreover, where previous attention to the issue had been sporadic, Layard was one of the first to take up a concerted campaign to bring the issue to the forefront of public debate.

6.4 Conclusions

6.4.1 *Rapid Diffusion, Widespread Affirmation*

The fact that there are many different types of people and organisations from diverse backgrounds commenting on the issue or variously mobilising its claims in support of arguments without necessarily taking it up as dedicated proponents points to its character as a relatively fluid and permissive idiom. While attempts are sometimes made to pin down the term and give it a definition, few actually seek to define it, and there is certainly no one agreed upon definition.⁸⁰ Instead, it seems to act as an attempt to discover and uphold an ultimate good in the face of a diverse array of wrongs—to find a common ground on which claimsmakers hope most people can

⁷⁹ In that article he wrote 'people in the West are not becoming happier, despite economic growth' (Layard, 1980:737).

⁸⁰ 'Happiness' is usually used unselfconsciously with the expectation that people will intuitively grasp its meaning and importance. However, definitions and redefinitions are frequently forwarded as claims, particularly as discourses progress toward the present. This is examined in chapter 7.

agree. So, for example, problems in the workplace can be construed as problems of happiness and unhappiness and thus remedied through recourse to taxation to discourage the 'long hours culture,' or through the hiring of a 'chief happiness advisor' or contracting a happiness consultancy. In this way, the language of happiness can be appropriated to suit a wide array of claims, linking diverse concerns from depression, mental illness, and suicide, to family breakdown, poverty, and crime.⁸¹ Claimsmakers who want to be seen to be doing something about an issue can find the language of happiness appealing because almost any issue seems to be reducible to this lowest common denominator. As David Halpern writes:

[I]t's worth asking what are we [sic] trying to maximize if it's *not* well-being. Various candidates have been proposed [...]. But, as Layard has argued, when pressed on these other alternatives, people tend to refer back to some notion of increasing well-being as a major part of the justification for their alternative objective, even if it is not reducible to it. What we surely can all agree on, is that if we could increase subjective well-being with other things remaining constant—such as freedom—then we should (Halpern, 2010:16).

But more importantly, in locating the problem within individuals it sidesteps any necessity to identify a concrete victimiser. In this way, the term is appealing for its ability to appear controversial while at the same time fostering consensus, since there is no one to object to being singled out for blame. Claimsmakers speaking to a growing disillusionment with the present system can name themselves radicals questioning orthodoxy without singling out a concrete opposition against which they rebel. In this way, impersonal aggressors like 'capitalism,' 'economic growth,' or 'competition,' become abstract symbols of anything that is wrong. This communication of social problems in such nebulous terms, far from being an analytical weakness, is actually further fuel for its widespread affirmation and rapid diffusion. In naming only victims, these claims evoke a rhetoric of vulnerability in which the vulnerable suffer from a harm for which the responsibility is unclear, and thus there can be condemnation without offending any distinct constituency (Furedi, 2008). In framing claims in the language of happiness, claimsmakers are presented with an apparently radical but ultimately uncontroversial rhetoric which can be applied to a diverse array of issues.

⁸¹ Sometimes these issues are even included all in the same breath, as one article questioning the link between happiness and GDP illustrates, 'Yet public policy across the west remains committed to increasing incomes. Emulating the American model is what it's all supposed to be about, even though America's 30% lead over Europe in GDP per head comes at a price—a longer working year, more double jobbing, higher levels of crime and family breakdown' (Elliott, *The Guardian*:2005).

These factors also point to the valence character of the concept. Recall that claims framed in abstract terms like 'equality' and 'safety' are appealing for their uncontroversial character and tendency to foster consensus. Although the controversial nature of claims is frequently emphasised, happiness shares a great deal more in common with 'child abuse' or 'victims' rights' than position issues like abortion or euthanasia. While the latter evoke fierce and often polarised debate, it is difficult to imagine how the former could be opposed without appearing to 'blame the victim' or defend child abusers. Advocates may not agree on particular aspects of the problem, but the importance of the issue itself tends to receive widespread affirmation.

Moreover, after the problem has already gained a great deal of recognition, many claimsmakers simply want to be seen to be doing something about the problem. Therefore, in spite of the proliferation of claims, the comparative scarcity of sustained claimsmaking points to the fact that over time, these are not further claims about a problem, but rather indicators of its success and on-going institutionalisation.

6.4.2 *Top-Down Model of Diffusion*

A final conclusion that can be drawn from the above results regards the manner by which the problem was diffused. The most influential and dedicated claimsmakers were observed to operate primarily within the insider domain of the claimsmaking process. While expertise is indeed prominent, this knowledge has been used to underpin a problematisation of happiness that did not initially emerge from these experts themselves. Just as was observed in previous phases of the problem, the people who have taken hold of this knowledge and attempted to problematise it have been insiders closely connected with policy. In addition, there are two forms of diffusion at work: a broadcast model through which claims originating outside of the general population are broadcast into it via the mass media and a contagion model operating within interpersonal and professional networks.

6.4.3 *Establishment Networks*

Given that the core claim of each of the initial claimsmakers is essentially the same, it is unlikely that the sudden appearance in the UK news media in the 1990s of a problematisation of happiness can be attributed to a simple case of simultaneous discovery by each party. While the exact locus at which each may have initially learned of the idea is difficult to ascertain, the diffusion of ideas was likely facilitated at least in part by the fact that many of these claimsmakers

belong to what might be termed 'policy communities' constituted by both formal and informal networks of social ties.

Similar to the notion of the 'polity,' the idea of a policy community incorporates what some researchers within the social problems constructionist paradigm have highlighted as the importance of 'interpersonal relationships and communications' in the process of claims diffusion (Sacco and Ismaili, 2001:31). Sacco and Ismaili point to the importance of the 'policy community' described initially by Pross (1986) as including 'all actors or potential actors with a direct interest in the particular policy field, along with those who attempt to influence it—government agencies, pressure groups, media people, and individuals, including academics, consultants and other "experts"' (2001:30). The connections between individuals within these communities may be confined to a single nation or transcend national boundaries, as 'physicians, therapists, policymakers, and members of policing and social service systems in the two nations are linked by a variety of personal associations that emerge from workshops and conferences, service on association committees, and various collaborative undertakings' (Sacco and Ismaili, 2001:32).⁸²

Within such communities, actors may share numerous connections and linkages of varying closeness and formality, with some even approaching a degree of recognisable group identity although they may share no official organisation or common manifesto, and indeed may even regard each other as adversaries. Such establishment networks are typical of the insider claimsmaking process, and have even been described as a 'form of action' characteristic of the insider brand of pressure group (albeit not necessarily a concerted one) (Connolly and Smith, 2003). In Connolly and Smith's typology, 'informal contact and influence' are listed as one of the primary means of gaining support for claims employed by insiders, in which individuals move back and forth between ministerial and civil servant positions to membership and/or leadership in various related organisations (2003:95).

In other words, since the inception of the problem the major claimsmakers have operated within an interconnected area of society, in which individuals move between governmental and non-governmental organisations, attend the same workshops and generally 'cross each other's paths' on a regular basis. The significance of these ties has also been demonstrated in similar cases of

⁸² While the authors are primarily concerned with the issue of diffusion between the United States and Canada, they note that the sharing of a common language can make the 'interpersonal dimensions of the diffusion process particularly significant' as English speaking academics tend to draw on much of the same academic literature and the population at large, to a certain degree, shares much of the same mass media (Sacco and Ismaili, 2001:31).

social problems construction. For instance, in describing the case of the diffusion of claims about Satanism from the US to the UK, Best (2001:6) describes how '[m]ost of the major players in the construction of American social problems—social movement activists, government officials, the reporters, editors, and producers of mass media, and the various academic and professional experts—not only had counterparts in Britain, but they were in contact with those counterparts.' For example, 'several American advocates visited Britain and, in workshops, press interviews, and other venues, outlined how the problem was being constructed in the United States' (Best, 2001:6). The problematisation of happiness is therefore similar to many social problems (including the fact that much of the expertise on which these claims are based originated in the United States, a fact that will be expanded upon below), since in many ways its history is bound up with the people who possess these ideas moving from group to group, taking on new interests and subordinating this one, and rehashing the claim in new and more favourable conditions.

Contagion within networks allowed for the spread of the idea between people with close ties to, and an interest in, public policy. It was also broadcast into the population in a 'top down' manner—that is, it did not come from ordinary people who identified and used the terminology of 'happiness' or 'wellbeing' to describe a troubling condition discovered in the course of their daily lives. Rather, it emerged from individuals and groups in the upper echelons of society with a great deal of resources at their disposal including access to and familiarity with the media, a high level of organisation, status, and influence.

However, these points cannot be understood without considering additional major categories of claimsmaker identified in the sample, the symbiotic relationships between which have fostered the success of claims about happiness. These include the expertise that has existed as the backdrop to problem claims and whose proliferation and concerted dissemination fuels and provides constant renewal, the politicians who affirm it and take on its significance as central to their activities, journalists, and members of the general public. These are the subject of the next sections.

6.5 Experts

Thus far we have seen that a great many diverse claimsmakers have affirmed the existence of the problem, commented on it and/or institutionalised its claims into policy. The role that insiders have played in broadcasting the problem into the population via the media and pressing it onto

the public agenda has also been examined. The present section will consider the role of expertise in terms of its cultural affirmation and the growing tendency to draw upon it in a diversity of claimsmaking efforts. It will also consider the activities of particular expert claimsmakers and their roles in the construction of the problem.

6.5.1 *Expertise as a Cultural Resource*

The rise and growing deference to expertise in modern societies can be understood in the context of a number of broad historical shifts which have leant professional knowledge considerable purchase in contemporary culture. Numerous theorists have examined the way that therapeutic knowledge in particular has thrived in the climate of uncertainty fostered by post-industrial societies characterised by the on-going erosion of communal bonds and traditional ways of knowing (Rieff, 1966; Sennett, 1977; Lasch, 1979; Nolan, 1998; Chriss, 1999; Furedi, 2004). Drawing on Durkheim's description of the shift from mechanical to organic solidarity, Chriss (1999:4) describes how the social solidarity once ensured by face-to-face interaction is threatened 'as the urban metropolis becomes characterised by anonymity, heterogeneity, and temporal and spatial distancing between members.' In her writings on the crisis of authority, Hannah Arendt observed that historically, ruling systems had sought their legitimation in 'something outside the range of human deeds,' be it the law of nature, the command of God or 'ancient customs sanctified by tradition' (Arendt, 1958:83). Berger (1966) identified the decline of group solidarity and increasing plurality of beliefs as a threat to the stability of old ideologies like religion to legitimate existing social structures by locating, 'human phenomena within a cosmic frame of reference,' thus confronting individuals with the threat of anomie (Berger, 1966:35).

As ties to the past and with others become increasingly tenuous, traditional forms of authority begin to offer little to the individual in terms of legitimating existing social structures, much less guidance in the conduct of everyday life. In Furedi's (2009:14) words, 'Uncertainty about the world encouraged the birth of the social sciences, leading to the expansion of the empire of the expert. In such circumstances, a society that was all too conscious of the limits of lay knowledge was more than ready to defer to the claims of expertise.' According to Chriss (1999:5), it was this 'perception of a lack of guidance and insight among the average citizen' that set the stage for the 'encroachment of "experts" into virtually all walks of life.' An ideology, he continues, 'that serves the economic interests of therapists and others in the helping professions especially well' (Chriss, 1999:5).

In other words, expertise has become a cultural resource with considerable purchase. It is fertile ground for the rise of what Berger and Berger (1983:38) have called the 'knowledge class.' According to the authors,

these are the people who derive their livelihood from production, distribution, and administration of public knowledge. They are not just the so-called intellectuals, who may be seen as an upper crust in this new stratum. Rather, the expanding 'knowledge industry' (as the economist Fritz Machlup has called it) contains large numbers of people who could by no reasonable criterion be called intellectuals: the vast educational system, the therapeutic-'helping' complex, sizable portions of government bureaucracy, the media and publishing industries, and others. What these all have in common is that bodies of symbolic knowledge [...] are to be applied to indoctrinate ('educate'), inspire ('help'), and plan for other people (Berger and Berger, 1983:38).

Members of the knowledge class typically believe that they have access to special understandings that are beyond the grasp of everyday people and that this knowledge should be used to educate and assist those who do not possess it (Loseke and Cahill, 1984:296). In addition, this knowledge is in some ways a literal commodity, marketed and sold to a broad range of interested sectors of society.

The value of such expertise in this climate is attested to by the prominence it is increasingly accorded in contemporary claimsmaking activities. A wide range of claimsmakers, from grassroots activists to policy insiders increasingly rely on expertise to frame their claims (Best, 2008). For example, Lee (2001) describes how debates like abortion, which had been previously grounded in a moral framework, have begun to shift toward a reliance upon medical language and psychiatric categories buttressed by the accounts of experts who lay claim to specialised knowledge of women's psychological responses to abortion. Religious groups have found it easier to adopt a therapeutic dialogue with potential converts, so that pamphlets distributed on a University campus prominently feature phrases like, 'Do you seek happiness?'⁸³ A fact which the former Archbishop of Canterbury once acknowledged with his observation that, 'Christ the Saviour' was becoming 'Christ the Counsellor' (Gledhill, *The Times*:2000).

As Bauman (1997:178) describes, this is the age of 'experts in "identity problems," or personality healers, of marriage guides, of writers of "how to assert yourself" books; it is the era of the counselling boom.' But what is interesting about the materialisation of these trends in happiness discourses is that claimsmakers are nearly as likely as Bauman to dismiss the early 90s self-help

⁸³ From a poster/pamphlet distributed by The City Church Canterbury, based in Canterbury, Kent in 2009.

boom as mere 'fluff.' While such therapeutic expertise is indeed central to claims about happiness, the claim to a firmer grounding in hard science, biology and mathematical calculation is one that is self-consciously asserted and re-asserted to an extent perhaps not seen in the therapeutic discourses of the past. Economists and psychologists alike avow the problem's grounding in numbers and neuroscience and even philosophers and philosophy are drawn upon not simply for uplifting sound bites but rather to lay claim to a sophisticated theoretical framework, for a grounding not in 'spouting off' one person's ideas, as the psychologist Sonja Lyubomirsky scoffed in an interview, but in Utilitarianism or Aristotelian ethics.⁸⁴

The types and relative proportions of expert claimsmakers identified in the sample are illustrated by the figure and table below.

Figure 9. Types of expert claimsmakers identified in sample

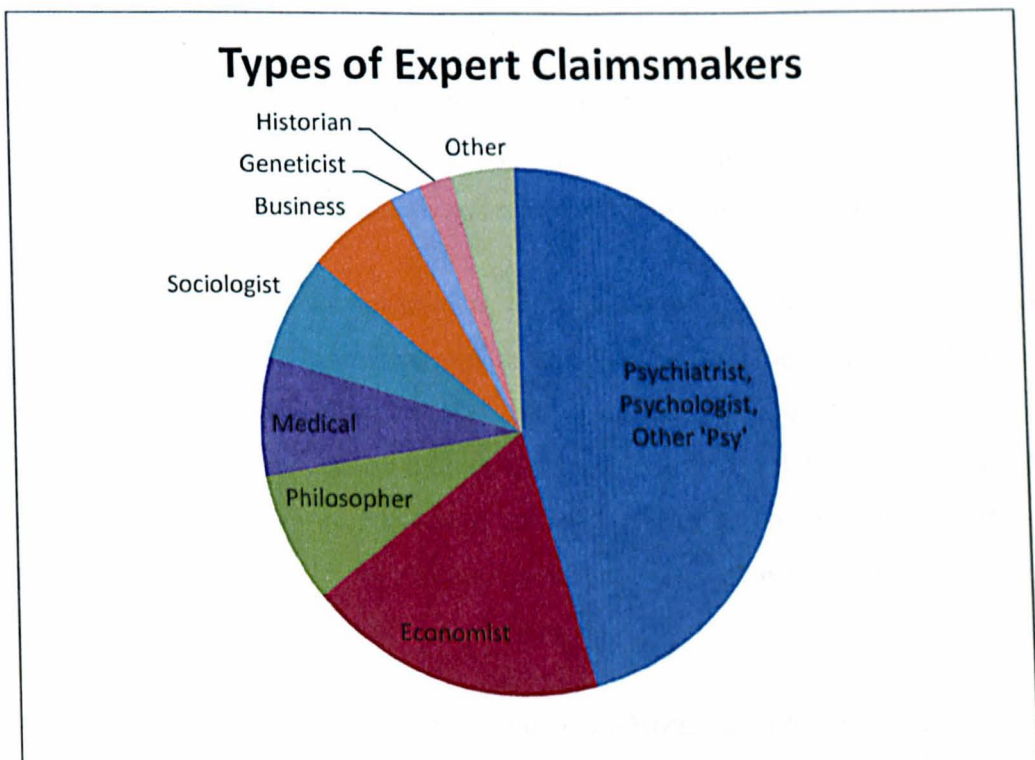


Table 18. Types of expert claimsmakers identified in sample

Type of Expert	Number of Experts in Type
Psychiatrist, Psychologist, Other 'Psy' ⁸⁵	69

⁸⁴ Quoted by Ehrenreich (2009:148) from an interview in *Elle* magazine.

⁸⁵ Also includes one neuroscientist.

Economist	28
Philosopher	12
Medical	11
Sociologist	10
Business	9
Geneticist	3
Historian	3
Other ⁸⁶	6
Total	151

6.5.2 *The Role of Expertise in Happiness Claims*

As noted previously, it is to the category of 'expert' that the majority of claimsmakers identified in the sample belong. However, as before, it is important to note that only 38 of 151 experts appeared three or more times, 20 appeared twice and 93 only once (see Appendix C). In this area as well the same finding is repeated wherein there is a large number of people who have conducted studies or at some point lent their expert opinion on the issue, but there are a comparatively small number of recognisable authorities on the subject who are 'looked at and reported to by others anxious for definitions and solutions to the problem' (Gusfield, 1984:10).

The majority of this expertise does not seem to come to the media in the hands of the experts who initially produced it, but is more often referenced by others in order to bolster their claims about problems to which they believe society ought to turn its attention. While it could be the case that much of the evidence cited as support for claims may be of a dubious nature, very little of it is challenged in a serious way. Moreover, through constant repetition, many expert claims appear to lose their connection to the original research evolving to become the truth of what is known about the problem, according to claimsmakers.

This is particularly evident in the continuous influx of statistics, new polls, surveys and small to large-scale population studies which purport to reveal or confirm various facets of the problem. For instance, among frequent reports about the happiest cities, towns and countries in the world is the example mentioned in the previous chapter of the NEF's choice of Vanuatu as the 'happiest place on earth'. This claim was cited numerous times in the UK media and over time, even lost its connection with the original creators of the index. In fact, so far had the claim travelled that it was even referenced by one of the participants of a Channel 4 reality television show entitled, *Meet*

⁸⁶ Includes two parenting advisers, two educationalists, a nutritionist, and a zoologist.

the Natives, in which several indigenous people of Vanuatu travelled to the UK in order to educate Britons about the 'simple life.' The 'tribesman,' clad in a grass skirt, informed audiences on several occasions throughout the show that Vanuatu is the 'happiest place on earth' followed by 'it's a fact' and 'it's been proven' (*Meet the Natives*, 2007).

A more widely cited example is a York University study which purported to show that, 'British children are among the unhappiest and unhealthiest in Europe' (Clark, *The Daily Mail*: 2006). As the previous chapter pointed out, it is a claim whose foregone conclusion, apparent in its equal weighting of factors like having eaten a 'poor breakfast' and 'child abuse,' was only remarked on once in an editorial (Aaronovitch, *The Times*: 2009). Unicef took hold of the study and widely publicised the findings, an effort whose success is attested to by the fact that by 2010, it had become so frequently cited that its truth became a self-evident point to be called upon by a range of interested parties. It was frequently cited in the Children's Society's 2007 Good Childhood Inquiry and has been influential in claims regarding the need for interventions from children's playgrounds to educational policy. In the words of one commentator, 'all recent studies show that Britain's children are the unhappiest and poorest in Europe' (Deech, *The Observer*, 2009), and another, after claiming that public places had become 'hostile' and 'left free for bullies and gangs,' points out that the resultant 'anxiety had contributed to making Britain's children the unhappiest in Europe' (Marrin, *The Sunday Times*:2010). It was echoed in a speech by David Cameron in 2007 (Cameron, 2007) and rehashed in an article by deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg, where recalling the 2007 headlines, he reminds readers that Britain has 'some of the unhappiest and unhealthiest children in the developed world' (Clegg, *The Daily Mail*:2010).

The same is true of the happiness paradox which, as we have seen, has been central to successful claims problematising happiness. While it is frequently called the 'Easterlin Paradox,' Easterlin himself actually played little part in the widespread dissemination of his 1970s research. The vast majority of the economist's appearance in happiness discourses is second-hand, with claimsmakers taking hold of this paradox and making it central to their claims. As chapter 2 described, the ideas underlying this 'paradox' have existed as 'grumblings' within the political establishment for several decades. Evidence that promised to quantify this underlying sense of malaise may have appeared especially appealing to claimsmakers within this sphere. In their hands, a science of happiness opposed to prosperity appears to have gained a new life.

Indeed, as chapter 7 will describe in the context of 'warrants' for promoting claims, 'science' is central to claims about happiness. Claims are littered with phrases like, 'we have proof' and 'we now know' and are frequently prefaced by, 'study after study' and 'research shows.' Statistics

feature prominently, as one piece claims, 'despite the fact that we're richer, safer and healthier than ever before [...] stress problems are through the roof, our level of trust in others has dropped from 60 per cent to 30 per cent in the past 50 years [...]' (*The Observer*, 2008). But the scientific expertise on which the problem is meant to be based is often asserted in more unequivocal terms. One article states: 'Levels of [happiness] can be measured, charted and compared' and makes a point to emphasise that its source of expertise, who it describes as a 'leading light in the happiness industry,' is 'no pop psychologist,' but a 'credible academic and writer' (Smith, *The Times*:2006). The expert to which the author is referring, Richard Reeves (then director of Demos), goes on to state emphatically of the 'flourishing new science': 'Happiness is a serious subject, and people are starting to see it as such. [...] But what's different is that we can start to prove it, measure it. We can identify what the ingredients of happiness are' (Smith, *The Times*:2006).

This claim to science is one that is self-consciously disassociated from the self-help genre of the past. One claimmaker speaks disparagingly of self-help books stating, 'Some self-help books are simply practitioner-led. [...] A practitioner tells you "I think it would be good if you did this or that" and if there's evidence to back it up that's fine, but other times they're just saying it off the top of their heads' (Marsh, *The Times*:2009). By contrast, the author's own book (although sold in the same 'Mind, Body, Spirit' section of bookstores), 'is based solely on empirical studies' (Marsh, *The Times*: 2009). Similarly, the US release of Lyubomirsky's (2007) *The How of Happiness* was subtitled, 'A scientific approach to getting the life you want,' while others are entitled, *The Happiness Hypothesis* (Haidt, 2006) and *Happiness: The Science Behind Your Smile* (Nettle, 2005).

In addition to the prominence of the 'hard science' offered by economics and psychology, expertise from the fields of history and philosophy are also present. However, much of this knowledge appears as confirmation of the claims emerging from the two more prominent disciplines. For instance, one article alleges, 'According to Owen Flanagan, professor of philosophy at Duke University in North Carolina, Buddhists appear to be able to stimulate the left prefrontal lobe—an area just behind the forehead—which may be why they can generate positive emotions and a feeling of well-being' (Connor, *The Independent*:2003a). Another article describes the conclusion arrived at by a philosopher: 'We believe that our happiness lies in satisfying our desires. Yet, as McMahon shows, modern scientific research reveals that we exaggerate the fulfilment we will derive from anticipated pleasures' (Green, *The Independent*:2006). Other times, the use of philosophy and the entry of philosophers into claimmaking represent an attempt to challenge what they see as an overly psychological, and thus individualised, conceptualisation of

happiness. For instance, the author of one critical book entitled *Against Happiness* is quoted as stating, 'The happy man is a hollow man' (Burkeman, *The Guardian*:2009) and another claimmaker argues, 'True happiness is more than feeling good. Pupils need to learn about morality—not positive psychology' (Schoch, *The Daily Telegraph*: 2006).

As the previous chapter has noted, these criticisms apparently fail to take into account that this sort of philosophy is actually central to claimmaking about happiness from all sides. Claimmakers frequently attempt to ground their claims not only in the science of the brain but also in the 'rediscovery' of historical and philosophical traditions. The American psychologist and founder of the discipline of positive psychology, Martin Seligman argues in one article that, 'there are no short cuts to happiness. Enhancing joy, rapture and contentment depends on our cultivating optimistic personality traits and Aristotelian virtues such as wisdom, justice, love and humanity' (Honigsbaum, *The Observer*:2004). Layard happily champions the economics of happiness alongside psychology (from evolutionary to neuroscience) and frequent references to philosophy, particularly utilitarianism. One article even describes him as a 'brilliant utilitarian economist' (Hari, *The Independent*:2006) and another claims that Layard is 'reclaiming an Englishman's birthright—the intellectual heritage of utilitarianism handed down by Jeremy Bentham' (Jeffries, *The Guardian*:2008). At the same time the commitment to science is unequivocal. When asked by an interviewer, 'What is this thing called happiness?' Layard responds by drawing a graph and explaining: 'Happiness is inversely related to income at higher levels of income [sic] because of the declining marginal utility of getting richer' (Jeffries, *The Guardian*:2008). According to another claimmaker, 'We took some ideas from ancient philosophy and married them to the new scientific study of happiness. Aristotle never had the benefit of the seven point scale (used to measure life satisfaction)' (Evans, *The Times*:2008).

The prominence of science in claims about happiness is also noted in the American context by Barbara Ehrenreich who observes, 'Positive psychologists are usually careful to distance themselves from pop versions of positive thinking' (Ehrenreich, 2009:148). According to Ehrenreich, unlike the colleagues they disavow, they do not promise riches and actually have a 'contempt for wealth' (Ehrenreich, 2009:148). Nonetheless, as she astutely points out, they are 'quick to borrow from the playbook of their cousins in the coaching and motivation businesses' publishing mass-market books with 'you' and 'your' in the title, 'a tell-tale sign of the self-help genre,' going into life-coaching businesses and selling their speaking services for exorbitant fees (Ehrenreich, 2009:148-149). Like the claimmaking efforts described throughout this analysis, Ehrenreich also notes the tendency for claimmakers (although she does not use the term) to

blend sturdy sounding equations with anecdote and references to philosophers and religious texts while simultaneously emphasising their roles as dispassionate gatekeepers for the new science of happiness.

While many claims may originate within the realm of professional knowledge, mainly from the areas of economics, psychology and philosophy, very few of these claimsmakers become prominent and recognisable authorities on the issue. Much expert knowledge gains a new life in the hands of claimsmakers who take ownership of the issue and utilise new research to refresh and give continuous support for their claims about the existence of the problem and the need for swift action. In addition, the knowledge of the specialist is self-consciously asserted and happiness is set apart from 'pop-psychology' as a *discipline* whose proper understanding lies firmly beyond the grasp of the (uninitiated) everyday individual.

6.5.3 *Experts as Owners*

Although most experts who appear in the sample are not dedicated campaigners for the issue in the news media, it should not be understood that experts are passive in the claimsmaking process. As the issue began to gain more and more recognition, many became frequently appearing names in happiness discourses, some taking ownership of the issue and becoming self-proclaimed happiness experts. However, although their claim to specialised knowledge is emphasised in the course of making claims, a closer examination reveals that the most prominent experts have actually had limited involvement in the research they champion in the public sphere, acting instead as gatekeepers for the dissemination of happiness claims made in the academic sphere. In addition, they tend to be characterised by a plurality of roles, have close ties with policy and relatively easy access to the media. These observations are illustrated by the example of the most frequently appearing expert claimsmakers in the Nvivo database for each of the most prominent types of expertise, Richard Layard (economist), Nick Baylis (psychologist) and Alain de Botton (philosopher).

Although Richard Layard's role in claimsmaking about the problem has already been discussed in considerable detail, it is worthwhile to single out one further element of his contribution to the construction of the problem. In Layard's claimsmaking, expertise plays a pivotal role and his authority in making statements about society and how it ought to be changed appears to depend a great deal upon these claims to specialist knowledge, both his own and that of the discipline he represents. He is frequently introduced as a 'highly respected' (King, *The Independent*:2006) and

'distinguished economist' (Pick, *The Guardian*:2005) as well as a 'leading figure' in 'happiness economics' (*The Observer*:2008). However, his activities are characterised by a channelling of disparate phenomena and researches from various disciplines toward a claim for the existence of a social problem. Indeed, the vast majority of the research to which he draws the attention of the public and policymakers is not of his own making and much of it does not originate in economics. Nonetheless, as the problem gained more recognition, demand for Layard's expertise grew and he was increasingly called upon to give his expert testimony on the subject. Moreover, his main mission appears to have been to act as a champion dedicated to the diffusion of this information into the public sphere. Much of the success of the problem was likely fuelled by the persuasive nature of these claims to preferential access to knowledge of the subject and the truth that it purported to represent.

Similarly, the psychologist Nick Baylis has regularly figured in news media discussions on happiness since 2000 and had a weekly column in *The Times* writing under the by-line, 'Dr Feelgood on the Science of Happiness.' There, he reported on new research carried out in the field of positive emotion, dispensing advice and appealing for personal and social change on its basis. His first columns emphasise the scientific nature of the study of 'lives going well,' referencing the seal of approval of 'Britain's pre-eminent body of scientists' and research carried out by 'the world's best-respected happiness psychologists' (Baylis, *The Times*:2003b). On the basis of this expertise, he informs readers that, 'the absence of sadness is not a sufficient criterion for happiness, just as the absence of illness is not a sufficient criterion for health,' and that positive psychology, with the 'international array of Nobel Laureates' behind it, could furnish readers with the 'skills and strategies' and '[p]ractical know-how' that are 'definitely needed' (Baylis, *The Times*:2003b).

The express purpose of Baylis' columns was to 'change the way we think and behave' on the basis of what he habitually underscores as the empirical nature of the 'science of happiness' (Baylis, *The Times*:2005). Baylis has been an affiliated lecturer at Cambridge since 2001 and is often billed as the 'first lecturer in positive psychology' in the UK (Hogan, *The Observer*:2007). Like Layard, his expertise is continually emphasised, but his claimsmaking activities are typified by a dedication to the dissemination of the claims of others and of the discipline of positive psychology as a whole. In the academic sphere, his publications are relatively limited, being confined mostly to interview

research carried out in the late 1990s which was initially published on a website intended for popular consumption rather than academic publication.⁸⁷

Nonetheless, his campaigning for the acceptance of happiness as a science and for integrating its conclusions into institutions and individual lives has been tireless. In addition to his claimsmaking for popular audiences, he has demonstrated a dedication to raising the issue's profile among the academic community as well. In 2003, he and neuropsychologist Felicia Huppert organised a two-day conference at the Royal Society arguing for the necessity of a science of wellbeing that would integrate psychology, neurobiology and social science and have far reaching implications in terms of social change (Huppert and Baylis, 2004). Their express purpose was not only to attract the interest of UK researchers to what had, until then, been a predominantly American focus, but also that of, 'Our society's scientists, educators, citizens and leaders [who] would all benefit greatly from knowing how individuals and communities can thrive and flourish' (Huppert et al., 2004:1331).

As a frequently appearing campaigner for the issue in a number of arenas, Baylis established himself as an 'expert on the life well-lived' (*The Belfast Telegraph*, 2007) and like Layard, found his expertise more and more in demand. Much of the (American) research that appeared in his Dr Feelgood column would eventually make its way into the curriculum of Wellington College, one of the first educational institutions to adopt 'happiness classes,' which he was invited to design in 2006.⁸⁸ The same year, he also co-founded, again with Huppert, the Cambridge Well-Being Institute (WBI), whose goals were to 'promote the highest quality research in the science of wellbeing and to integrate this research into evidence-based practice' (Huppert, 2006-2008). The institute has also been influential in a number of important developments including providing

⁸⁷ The results of this research were published on a website entitled '*younglives.com*' (Baylis, 2004). While his columns emphasise the hard science of wellbeing research, it appears as though his involvement in research has been, from the outset, intended more for popular consumption than academic peer-review. In a brief in *Marketing Week* appealing for private sponsorship for the research project that would culminate in *younglives.com*, Baylis promises prospective sponsors 'exclusive rights to the findings for several months' and the publication of an 'easy to read book' as the outcome of the study (Marketing Week, 1998).

⁸⁸ Many less frequently appearing expert claimsmakers appear as studies cited in Baylis' column. For instance, he cites research on twins to inform readers that, 'around 50 per cent of our characteristic level of happiness is inherited' (Baylis, *The Times*: 2003c) and concludes, 'learning to live regularly in the upper end of your happiness set-range is where skill and know-how can pay dividends' (Baylis, *The Times*:2003c). In another, he cites the work of American-based psychologists Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and George Vaillant to claim that 'by persevering with some promising strategies, life can feel very much better as we grow older' (Baylis, *The Times*:2003d). Others include research on social networks, sleep deprivation and nutrition. Many of these studies, including those on nutrition, would later feature in the Wellington College curriculum.

major input into the UK government's 2008 Foresight Project on Mental Capital and Well-being, designing a wellbeing module for use as part of the European Society Survey and developing school based wellbeing programmes for implementation in both the public and private sectors. Moreover, the WBI offers another hub for members of the polity who have been influential in the construction of the problem throughout its history. A review of some of the authors of reports and members of the WBI's advisory board reveals a number of familiar claimsmakers including Nic Marks, Richard Layard and Martin Seligman (Huppert, 2006-2008).

Finally, the philosopher Alain de Botton took ownership of the issue as it began to rise to the forefront of public discussions. De Botton occupies a number of social niches in—he is a writer, entrepreneur and television presenter in addition to being a populariser of philosophy. However, the decision to classify de Botton as an expert is derived from the fact that much of this activity is driven by laying claim to specialised knowledge of a particular discipline. He is frequently described as a 'philosopher', and often more specifically a 'philosopher of happiness' (Sands, *The Daily Telegraph*:2001), a 'pop philosopher' (Aitch, *The Guardian*:2007) or even a 'literary philosopher' (*The Guardian*:2000).

Like Layard and Baylis, de Botton's claimsmaking is characterised by the bringing together of a vast array of expert claims. Also like Layard and Baylis, key to his claims is an implicit scepticism toward progress. In his *Status Anxiety* (2004), he draws on a range of sources, from philosophers like Aristotle, Rousseau and Marx to considering the 'psychology behind the way we decide what is enough' to a variety of charts and graphs illustrating now familiar claims like: 'We are tempted to believe that certain achievements and possessions will guarantee us an enduring satisfaction. [...] we are not reminded that soon after reaching the summit we will be called down again into fresh lowlands of anxiety and desire' (de Botton, 2004:45;207). In his *Architecture of Happiness* (2006), de Botton describes himself as pursuing the same themes of 'what makes us happy and why' a 'vital question in a world so chaotic' (Dyckhoff, *The Times*:2006), asserting that 'bad architecture is as much a failure of psychology as of design' (de Botton, 2006:248).

Although his interest in architecture is mostly descriptive and philosophical, he was named an honorary fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) in 2009 in recognition of his contributions to architecture 'in its broadest sense: its promotion, administration and outreach' (RIBA, 2009). His expertise was also put to use when many of the claims in his 2006 book formed the basis of *Living Architecture*, an organisation which commissioned the building of several modern houses available to the general public for holiday rentals, for which he currently serves as creative director.

In addition, de Botton has easy access to several different types of media with which he is able to disseminate claims and raise the profile of the issue. Unlike outsider claimsmakers, he does not have to battle for recognition; he frequently writes for major British newspapers and had a regular column in *The Independent* in the late 1990s, is the author of several books written for popular audiences and presented a documentary series, *Philosophy: A Guide to Happiness* (2000) on Channel 4.

In each of the above examples, claimsmakers highlight their expertise and appear to gain a great deal of recognition (both for the issue and for themselves) across numerous public arenas on that basis. Moreover, each has access to a variety of media in order to disseminate claims and were therefore able to act as gatekeepers and raise the issue's profile amongst the general public. Where happiness had not typically been understood as a domain of expert knowledge, such claimsmakers made a conscious effort to set it apart from the realm of everyday experience, thus justifying their pronouncements and providing a basis for the objective legitimacy of their claims. In doing so, they also created a demand for their expertise in interventions that followed the issue's acceptance.

6.5.4 Expertise as a Commodity

In their claimsmaking efforts, many claimsmakers trade on their expertise, but some do so in a more literal way. In this sense, two of the above claimsmakers are also particularly exemplary of this tendency when one considers their claimsmaking activities in the commercial sphere. The founding of a number of commercial enterprises is of benefit not only to the individual claimsmakers (that is, monetarily) but also provides additional platforms through which they can spread their message and develop and maintain networks of those invested in keeping the issue alive.

For example, in addition to his claimsmaking in the media and work with organisations, Baylis has been involved in a number of commercial endeavours including authoring popular books and offering a series of workshops in positive psychology. His personal website offers 'tailor-made' 'insight-lectures' and 'skills-training' for businesses, workshops on 'applying the skills of well-being in your everyday life' and even a 'six-day Practitioner's Diploma' in 'Teaching the Skills of Well-being' for schoolteachers, healthcare professionals and parents (Baylis, 2010).

De Botton is similar in that, in addition to *Living Architecture*, he was a founding member of the London-based *School of Life*, offering a 'variety of programmes on how to live wisely and well' to businesses and the general public (School of Life, 2012). Via day and weekend workshops, corporate events, 'sermons' and a 'bibliotherapy' service offering, 'the perfect way for you to discover those amazing but often elusive works of literature to illuminate and even change your life' (The School of Life, 2012), the School of Life also provides a potential outlet for the dissemination of claims as well as a site in which prominent claimsmakers may 'cross each other's paths.' A review of the official website's offerings reveals an index of some of the most prominent claimsmakers in the informal 'happiness movement,' including Richard Layard and Oliver James, along with others like Mark Vernon (a co-founder of the organisation and author of a book entitled *Wellbeing*). In addition, sermons and blurbs for sessions are littered with the frequent repetition of familiar phrases within happiness discourses including 'hedonistic treadmill,' and 'increasing wealth hasn't made us happier' (School of Life, 2012).

Martin Seligman, who inaugurated the discipline of positive psychology and who has been among its most dedicated proponents, is apparently not immune to the lucrative draw of the coaching and lecture circuit. Ehrenreich (2009:149) observes that in addition to authoring a number of popular books, Seligman went into life-coaching, founded a for-profit website offering monthly exercises with a 'money back guarantee' and offered 'coaching by conference call to hundreds of people at a time for \$2000 each.'

This is in addition to the life coaching, workshops and business management courses offered by the scores of those newly trained in the science of happiness. For instance, a former computer programmer, Alexander Kjerulf, describes himself on his personal website as 'one of the world's leading experts on happiness at work' and offers speaking and consulting services to companies like Daimler Chrysler and Statoil (Kjerulf, 2012). Another life coach's personal website features prominently the banner, 'The UK's Leading Happiness Expert' and offers happiness coaching to 'Olympic athletes, celebrities, business professionals, working mums and corporations' through 'easy-to-follow techniques that are coupled with ancient wisdom and modern philosophies' (Watson, 2011).⁸⁹ A 'Laughter Network' offers corporate events, happiness workshops, regular 'laughter yoga' sessions and training in areas like 'laughter facilitation skills' and 'advanced laughter' (Laughter Network, 2010).

⁸⁹ As of August 2012, this website has been modified. An archived version of the page as it appeared in 2011 is provided in the reference list.

Not only does this type of claimsmaking foster diffusion amongst the large crowds who participate in the various seminars and 'sermons' (as School of Life calls them), but also it reveals a degree of personal investment in the issue's success. Should the interest in happiness and wellbeing become 'old news,' the demand for the services and expertise of these individuals would similarly decline. Moreover, the on-going training of new therapists, life coaches and counsellors in the new science of happiness ensures the on-going institutionalisation of claims as certified students spread the message to the institutions with which they subsequently become involved. This manufacture of specialist knowledge also creates new areas for individuals to trade in expertise, as graduates can enter into life coaching, begin their own businesses, author popular books, and deliver commercial seminars and workshops. For instance, according to the University of Pennsylvania, graduates of its Masters in Applied Positive Psychology (MAPP)—the first of its kind—are drawn from a variety of fields of employment (being a programme composed of an unusually high number of mature students) and have gone on to apply their knowledge in institutions like elementary and secondary schools, or to change professions and become, 'consultants, coaches, and motivational speakers' (Feldman, *The Pennsylvania Gazette*:2010). Still others 'are working to incorporate the principles of positive psychology into law, business, education, medicine, politics, engineering, the arts, even the military' (Feldman, *The Pennsylvania Gazette*:2010).

Such activities further contribute to the creation of a new 'knowledge class' springing up around happiness, whose members believe they have special access to knowledge not available to others and whose goal it is to assist and educate. Nonetheless, while it is important to understand that expertise is not simply a passive project seized upon by opportunistic claimsmakers in other spheres, it is also not simply a cynical money-making scheme. Undoubtedly, many claimsmakers see themselves as making a positive contribution to society. Moreover, affecting policy has become increasingly central to the expert project as academics and organisations must continually demonstrate the relevance and impact of their activities. The ability to be seen to be making a positive difference means that happiness plays an increasingly prominent role in the activities of many individuals and organisations for whom claimsmaking becomes 'just another day at the office' (Hilgartner and Bosk, 1988:57).

6.5.5 Dissemination as Project: Akumal and the Positive Psychology Network

As previously noted, many commentators have speculated that the interest in happiness arose as a testament to the severity of the problem of unhappiness in society. However, it is important to

understand that the diffusion of positive psychology was a project consciously promoted by the discipline's founders. Following his election as president of the American Psychological Association (APA) in 1998, the American psychologist Martin Seligman began formulating the concept of a 'Positive Psychology Network' whose success would be measured by the expansiveness and diversity of the sub-discipline's diffusion (Seligman, 1999). From its inception, positive psychology was not simply a disinterested scientific pursuit, but aimed to press claims into the service of affecting change in a multiplicity of arenas of modern life, from the founding of undergraduate and graduate programmes at major universities to the managing of individual lives and the steering of public policy.

In a 1999 review detailing the proceedings and future prospects of the field, Seligman identifies the areas of intended influence as comprising three 'nodes': 'Positive Subjective Experience, The Positive Individual, and the Positive Community' (Seligman, 1998). Associated taskforces would be involved not only in isolating key questions for research and securing funding, but also in the 'dissemination of such knowledge' in order to affect a 'major contribution to human well-being' on par with the success of modern medicine in its 'advocacy of healthy physical conditions' (Seligman, 1998). It would also aim to 'produce and organize research findings that would help parents, teachers, reporters, and leaders create and participate in effective and healthy schools, families, workplaces, neighborhoods, and even perhaps nations' (Seligman, 1998). Meetings would be organised around taskforces and individuals would be responsible for seeking out and entering into areas that could benefit from interventions on the basis of positive psychology including, 'education, social policy, urban planning, and law' (Seligman, 1998).

Achieving Seligman's vision involved the creation of a 'formal network' which also included the enlistment of 'Junior Scientists' from across the world. Early in 1998, a request was sent to 'fifty of the individuals we consider the leaders of world social science' for nominations of 'young, rising academics' with 'leadership qualities (future department chairs)' (Seligman, 1998). The resultant group of nominees were invited to Akumal, Mexico to meet with the 'senior scholars including Seligman, Csikszentmihalyi and Raymond Fowler (then CEO of the American Psychological Association) to 'brainstorm about the major intellectual issues' in positive psychology and 'become the nucleus of its future' (Seligman, 1998).

Among those 'young, rising academics' enlisted to the cause was Nick Baylis, whose PhD examiner had been George Vaillant, a member of the network's Steering Committee. According to an interview with Baylis in *The Observer*, Vaillant had subsequently become his 'mentor' and catalyst for involvement in the Positive Psychology Network (Hogan, *The Observer*: 2007). Baylis would

become a regular attendee at the Mexico meetings after 2001, which would heavily inform the early development of the discipline and which helped solidify the ties between experts in the area, with the network itself eventually forming the basis of the Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania (Linley et al, 2006:4).⁹⁰ Recurring annually for several years following, the meetings and associated summits would host young academics, researchers, doctoral students, and even high school teachers not just from the United States, but in later years, from across the world including the US, Canada, Britain, France, Germany and Japan.

Many of these young academics would found the first degree programmes and positive psychology centres abroad. Appendix D details the attendees of Akumal I-IV (1999-2002) and their subsequent appearances in the UK news media.⁹¹ The vast majority of the initial contributors were based in the United States, except for Baylis who was drawn in from Britain via his connection to the American Vaillant. Of 72 contributors, 22 have since appeared in major national newspapers in the UK, and half of those were cited by Baylis in his Dr Feelgood column.

However, Baylis is only one example of a dedicated agent of diffusion who played a key role in facilitating the spread of the American based positive psychology into the UK. A review of the participants in the network's early proceedings also reveals authorities who have become prominent and influential of their own accord, including Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Ed Diener and of course, Martin Seligman. Csikszentmihalyi's book, *Flow*, had been a best seller in the 1990s and was championed by Geoff Mulgan in his first claims introducing the paradox of prosperity to the UK in 1995 (Mulgan, *The Independent*: 1995). Seligman has been heavily involved in a number of UK initiatives and was present at the aforementioned Royal Society conference in 2003, which was organised by Baylis and Huppert, both of the Positive Psychology Network and who were co-directors of a plan to raise the profile of positive psychology in the UK entitled, 'the UK Initiative for Positive Lives' (University of Pennsylvania, 2007).⁹² He has been personally involved in a

⁹⁰ The Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania maintains a place at the nucleus of the diffusion project, with projects spanning the globe including developing secondary school curriculum in Australia (Geelong Grammar School), providing resilience training to US soldiers, and offering the first Applied Masters in Positive Psychology, in which students '[l]earn to apply the principles and tools of positive psychology to any professional domain (including psychology, education, life coaching, research, health, and business' (Penn LPS, 2012). It continues to maintain an email listserv whose recipients are in the thousands.

⁹¹ Drawn from conference archives (University of Pennsylvania, 2011).

⁹² This initiative was outlined by Baylis and Huppert in 2001 and included proposals to begin a nationwide longitudinal study of young people leading 'exceptionally positive lives' and the creation of a weekly magazine which would, 'convey in an accessible and attractive way the best peer-reviewed evidence on High-Achievement and Well-Being from around the world' in order to 'inform and inspire a broad range of

number of projects in the UK, including supporting (and appearing in) a BBC documentary entitled *The Happiness Formula*, has worked with local governments in Scotland, South Tyneside and Manchester on various initiatives intended to raise local citizens' happiness, and has been particularly influential in the field of education having been one of the main architects of the happiness curriculum at Wellington College, an initiative which helped launch happiness into the school curriculum across the UK. In 2010, Wellington College's headmaster Anthony Seldon described Seligman as having visited top-level officials in the new UK coalition government and expressed optimism that Prime Minister David Cameron would extend his Big Society initiatives to include 'positive health,' 'positive education,' 'positive policing' and 'positive employment' (Seldon, *The Independent*:2010). Other 'node' contributors and 'junior scientists' for the Positive Psychology Network have included Sonja Lyubomirsky and Jonathan Haidt, both of whom have appeared regularly in the UK media as experts on happiness and in promoting their books written for popular audiences.

In conclusion, expertise is a valuable cultural resource that is continuously called upon by claimsmakers from a variety of arenas of public life, a point which will become clearer with the additional example of the involvement of politicians in claims-making. It is also a resource in a more literal sense in that many experts gain a great deal from championing the problem and providing the means by which it can be remedied. As Best (1999:68) points out, promoting a new social problem offers experts a number of benefits including 'a fresh, neglected topic for study, opportunities to receive research funding and publish results, the chance to exhibit one's knowledge regarding a visible issue.' They find themselves courted by the press, by social movements and consulted and supported by governments. Over time, they become increasingly important as they affirm and reaffirm the problem, 'track progress toward controlling it, and offer more refined ways to think about [it]' (Best, 1999:68). But they also give reason for their existence. It is important to understand that much of the scientific evidence that has formed the foundation on which the problem has been built was self-consciously promoted by the experts who were dedicated to expanding the recognition and influence of their new discipline. In this way they reflect what Lasch (1979) has observed of the new professionals, who

did not emerge, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in response to clearly defined social needs. Instead, the new professions themselves invented many of the needs they claimed to satisfy. They played on public fears of disorder and disease,

young adults and educators comprising a target weekly readership of over 500,000 from Britain alone' (University of Pennsylvania, 2007).

adopted a deliberately mystifying jargon, ridiculed popular traditions of self-help as backward and unscientific, and in this way created or intensified [...] a demand for their own services (Lasch, 1979:228).

6.6 Politicians

Politicians have, consciously or unconsciously, increasingly appealed to experts for answers to questions that may have once been consigned to the realm of ideology or political debate. As Hilgartner (2000:146) writes, 'governments find expert advice to be an indispensable resource for formulating and justifying policy and, more subtly, for removing some issues from the political domain by transforming them into technical questions.' As the ability of political ideologies of the past to solve our problems has been increasingly called into question, contemporary political life has been characterised more and more by the on-going consignment of moral and political questions to the domain of expertise (Lasch, 1979:79; Furedi, 2009). This is particularly true in the case of the contemporary promotion of the ideal of 'health,' since in the absence of old legitimisers and unifying ideologies, the body emerges as the lowest common denominator through which to connect with the public. As Fitzpatrick (2001:viii) observes:

To an unprecedented degree, health became politicised at a time when the world of politics was itself undergoing a dramatic transformation. The end of the Cold War marked an end to the polarisations between East and West, labour and capital, left and right, that had dominated society for 150 years. The unchallenged ascendancy of the market meant that the scope for politics was increasingly restricted. Collective solutions to social problems had been discredited and there was a general disillusionment with 'grand narratives.'

Thus, the project of expertise finds fertile ground in the political arena. Indeed, much of the prominence of policymakers in happiness discourses is derived from their being targeted by claimsmakers and from the widespread commentary and scrutiny that their responses to claims evoke. For this reason, when a potential social problem is on the ascent, the reactions of policymakers can mean the difference between a short-lived problem and one of a more enduring quality (Best, 1999). For instance, in the early days of the MMR controversy, then Prime Minister Tony Blair's refusal to acknowledge whether or not his infant son had been vaccinated fuelled suspicions that the vaccine may have been unsafe (Leach and Fairhead, 2007). However, increasingly, and especially with regard to health risks, the reactions of politicians have been in the affirmative. While politicians often frame their stances toward particular health issues in terms that imply a great deal of controversy and conflict, claims revolving around health promotion can sometimes offer politicians the opportunity to appear to adopt a strong stance on

an issue without arousing a great deal of opposition (Burgess, 2009). In a climate increasingly receptive to claims about health risks (but perhaps wary of scare-mongering) and health promotion, a valence issue like 'happiness,' with all of its individual and political connotations, presents politicians with an appealing rhetoric with which to be associated.

As early as the 1990s, Csikszentmihalyi's ideas on 'flow' were described as having been taken up by New Labour as well as having been adopted abroad by policymakers in the US, Austria and Sweden (Chittenden, *The Sunday Times*:1997). However, at that early stage claimsmaking lacked both an orientation toward more clear-cut policy proposals and a firm base of dedicated proponents. By contrast, the response to the more dedicated claimsmaking of recent years was one of swift uptake and promotion across the political divide in spite of claims to controversy espoused by both sides.

Although, as will be shown below, happiness claims were already being institutionalised across numerous government departments, David Cameron was resolute in his vocalisation of support. In a speech given at a Google Zeitgeist conference in 2006, he 'urged the government to focus on happiness,' saying, 'We have to remember what makes people happy, as well as what makes stock markets rise' (Burkeman, *The Guardian*:2006). In a speech in 2007, Blair appeared to challenge Cameron's happiness proposals, saying, 'It's a lot easier to say happiness is more important than money if money is not a problem' (Brown, *The Independent*:2007). However, the reporting journalist observed that the pair seemed nonetheless to be reading from the same script, with Blair claiming, 'People want to be in control, in their time spent in leisure, in their family time, and in their work. A job is not enough,' seeming to echo Cameron's, 'It's time we admitted that there's more to life than money' (Brown, *The Independent*: 2007).

In spite of the apparent agreement, the controversial nature of the idea was continually underscored. One commentator asks, 'Why has Labour at the highest level said so little about [happiness]? [...] Yet they must. The real danger David Cameron poses to a Labour party grown grey in government is not youth, but optimism' (Ashley, *The Guardian*: 2006). Another accuses government leaders of paying lip-service to the issue but, 'denying the hard policies it implies' (Toynbee, *The Guardian*: 2006).

However, from the outset, the issue has been closely associated with policymakers. While David Cameron's announcement in November 2010 of an initiative to create a national wellbeing index made headline news, since the early 2000s, the UK government has been keen to incorporate happiness claims. Blair's Strategy Unit had produced the previously mentioned report on life

satisfaction in 2002 with the Conservatives following suit, producing a paper soon after which considered following Bhutan's lead in promoting 'Gross National Happiness' over wealth (Halpern, 2010:8). But even before these steps had been taken, happiness rhetoric had already shown a demonstrable effect on politicians; hinting at the future primacy of the issue, Blair wrote in the introduction of the Government's Sustainable Development Strategy, published in 1999: 'Money isn't everything. But in the past, governments have seemed to forget this. Success has been measured by economic growth—GDP—alone. Delivering the best quality of life for us all means more than concentrating on economic growth' (Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 1999).

Since then, happiness rhetoric has permeated the language of, and provided supporting evidence for, a host of policy initiatives. For example, in 2005, New Labour oversaw the introduction and later expansion of therapeutic curriculum incorporating happiness claims, aiming to promote the 'emotional health and well-being of all who learn and work in schools' (Department for Education and Skills, 2007:4). In 2008, the government commissioned a Foresight Report on 'Mental Capital and Wellbeing' that summarised the latest findings from 'neuroscience, psychology and psychiatry, economics, genetics, social sciences, learning, development and systems analysis' and proposed targeted interventions to promote the 'positive mental health and wellbeing' and 'flourishing' of children, workers, older people, and 'key front-line professions' including teachers and doctors (Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project, 2008: 4, 23). An employment White Paper produced in 2009 by the Department for Work and Pensions justifies its commitment to 'increasing the number of people in work' on the grounds that '[w]ork improves the physical and mental health and well-being of individuals and their families,' and later, 'we know that work is generally good for people whether they are disabled or not. Work promotes better physical and mental health, increases happiness and life satisfaction, and improves financial security' (Department for Work and Pensions, 2009: 52, 68). Similarly, a 2010 green paper jointly produced by the Department of Health, the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit begins, 'Everyone's health, happiness and achievements in life will depend heavily on their experience before birth and during their first years,' and later reasons, 'So, for both the baby's happiness and wellbeing, and in terms of the broader economy, it makes sense to invest in the earliest years of life' (Department of Health, 2010: 6, 12). Moreover, according to one report, it was New Labour that set the ball rolling for the national wellbeing index in 2009 when Layard was contracted by the Office for National Statistics to develop it (Toynbee, *The Guardian*: 2010).

Given that the problem was initially 'discovered' within groups closely connected with policy and transmitted in a top down and relational way, it is little surprising that it met with near immediate institutionalisation, even before it had become a widely recognised issue on the public agenda. In the present political climate, politicians bereft of political ideology have increasingly turned to the sphere of health as platforms for debate. When big ideas are viewed with suspicion, science becomes the default position for authoritative statements and 'evidence based' policies (as opposed to ideologically based) have become increasingly in demand. As a source for Downing Street remarked following the announcement of the new wellbeing index, 'Next time we have a comprehensive spending review, let's not just guess what effect various policies will have on people's wellbeing. Let's actually know' (Hutchison, *The Daily Telegraph*:2010). Politicians were quick to affirm the existence of happiness as a social problem and to publically introduce initiatives on its behalf. True to the nature of valence issues, the ability of happiness to cross the party divide, minimise controversy and promote consensus drove its rapid affirmation.

6.7 Journalists and Media Gatekeepers

Lau (2012) suggests that it is important to consider whether or not a problem is constructed 'by' or 'through' the medium of the news. The former refers to portrayals that directly result from the 'characteristics of news-making,' while the latter refers to an 'epistemically false discourse that has achieved hegemony as a result of other extra-discursive factors' (Lau, 2012: 3). Although this concern with instances in which the construction 'does not accord with the underlying reality' (Lau, 2012: 3) misses out on the crucial role played by meaning attribution and the systematic arrangements of parts in the construction of social problems, it nonetheless does highlight an important distinction. The claims discussed thus far exemplify a process of reality construction via claimsmakers *through* the medium of the news, but there are also elements of construction *by* the news at play. In addition to the importance of competition stressed in chapter 3 (which culminates in the analysis detailed in chapter 7), certain characteristics of news-making made it more likely that the claimsmakers detailed thus far were able to gain an audience for their claims. In particular, the tendency to rely on official sources and to focus on affirmative commentary over critical has fostered the expansion and proliferation of the problem in the news media. In addition, some journalists play a more active role, not simply reporting on or translating expert claims for mass consumption but taking a more dedicated interest in the problem, explicitly lending their support for happiness based initiatives or becoming experts in their own right.

6.7.1 *Reliance on Official Sources*

It has already been noted that access to the media is inclined toward 'skilful sources versus inept ones' (Sandman, 1999:275). Official sources already possess an acute awareness of, and established contacts with, the news media, and are skilled in making both themselves and their claims readily accessible to journalists. As Gans (2004:81) writes: 'Sources and journalists [...] must have access to each other before information can become news.' And access is not even, but hierarchical. 'The economically and politically powerful can obtain easy access to, and are sought out by, journalists; those who lack power are harder to reach by journalists and are generally not sought out until their activities produce social or moral disorder news' (Gans, 2004:81). The fact that this was a problem discovered initially by elites means that little organisation or 'social or moral disorder' were necessary in order for claims to gain a hearing.

In a study of environmental risk reportage, Sandman (1999:275) notes, '[Reporters] use more predictably opinionated sources, industry and experts on the "safe" side, only using activists and citizens on the "risky" side when they need them.' However, in follow up stories seeking balanced points of view, journalists tend to look to other constituencies, including citizens and advocacy groups to provide competing claims (Sandman, 1999:280). Thus, if happiness had initially been a banner behind which grassroots groups were organising, significant claims would likely have arisen from these parties at some point during the major phases of the problem's construction. In happiness claimsmaking however, the sources of problem claims tend to be dominated by policy insiders and experts, with the general public appearing as the subjects of claims about whom assumptions and assertions are being made. When claims do appear from the lay public it is most often in the form of responses to questions about personal happiness after the problem has already gained a foothold. Being almost entirely insider led, there was little competition for access to the media amongst claimants with differing points of view, and the path toward problematisation and eventual institutionalisation was little impeded.

6.7.2 *Bias Toward Affirmative Claimsmaking*

There is also a bias toward sources that affirm the problem over those that are critical. Competition for journalistic attention is tougher for those seeking to reassure the public about the lack of severity of a social problem than it is for those seeking to alarm or raise awareness (Sandman, 1999:275). Journalists also tend to present expert opinions uncritically. Even if he or she has reasons to doubt the credibility of claims, there is an obligation to report the 'facts' as

attributable to the sources (Lau, 2012:15). Moreover, competition with other media outlets means that the very possibility a claim may be true makes overstating it less risky than neglecting the issue altogether (Lau, 2012:15).

Lau (2012:13) points to the massive proliferation of mental disorders and the consequent exponential expansion of the numbers of people said to be suffering from them as an example of a discourse that, for reasons dealing with the characteristics of news-making, takes on the appearance of an undisputed truth. According to Lau, 'To claim that what has conventionally been regarded as indulgence (in shopping or whatever) constitutes "pathology" constitutes news; on the contrary, to critique this claim normally does not' (Lau, 2012:14). The idea that happiness is an expert discipline, or that money does not produce happiness, is newsworthy because it is (at least according to claimsmakers) contrary to popular belief, whereas to challenge this notion is not. While the 'discourse's claims-makers can and do (since motivation is not lacking on their part) regularly make claims; in contrast, editors are unlikely to publish critiques (if available) every time the discourse makes a claim' (Lau, 2012:14). In addition, critics tend not to be stakeholders in the issue and journalists, even if aware of them, are not obliged to report their views. As Lau writes, for journalists seeking expert opinions, 'members and institutions of the therapeutic profession possess the automatic right of discourse on the matter,' whereas critics do not (2012:14). Critics that are sufficiently motivated are often limited to submitting commentaries to the op-ed pages of newspapers or to publishing in a medium with a more narrow audience, thus producing a 'lop-sided battle' (Lau, 2012:14). The nature of the problem as a valence issue intensifies this tendency toward affirmative claimsmaking, as claimsmakers are far more likely to take on and affirm its rhetoric than to unite in opposition.

6.7.3 Journalists as Claimsmakers

That 80 of the 340 individual claimsmakers identified in the sample are journalists should not be taken to suggest that journalists play a leading role in the problematisation of happiness, but rather reflects the medium from which the data were collected.⁹³ Nonetheless, the manner by which claims are translated for wider audiences has important consequences, and some

⁹³ Journalists were only identified as claimsmakers if they packaged claims in an overtly supportive or negative way, offered criticism or encouragement or otherwise communicated the issue in a manner that revealed their own opinions or views.

journalists play a role in problematisation that surpasses even the passive or gatekeeping role occupied by most journalists.⁹⁴

In investigating the contents of journalistic claims, it is clear that the vast majority do not question the validity of the data on which claims are based, tending instead to transmit them as value-free facts, even if the usage of these facts is sometimes viewed with suspicion. For example, an article with the headline, 'The government knows how to make you happy' describes the Cabinet Office Strategy Unit's report on life satisfaction as 'dripping with intriguing facts,' but dismisses the government's interest as 'spooky' (Nicholson, *The Daily Telegraph*: 2003). Another writes, 'It clearly makes sense to study and to try to understand the roots of human contentment, and Seldon should be congratulated for pursuing such an innovative policy at Wellington,' but concludes that some of the implications of Layard's book on happiness 'can lead too easily to paternalistic assumptions being made on voters' behalf' (Rentoul, *The Independent*: 2006). However, most reportage is less measured; one journalist relates the claims of several happiness experts and concludes by advising, 'the good news is that although your happiness quotient may be influenced by your genes and upbringing, it can be changed for the better. Helping people to cope with life events and with stress, to feel more in control and to develop their self-esteem improves their happiness' (Lantin, *The Daily Telegraph*: 2003:16). Another introduces a 'Body & Soul' special feature on happiness inspired by an upcoming conference on 'the science of feeling good' with statements like 'the time is right' and describes the research as an 'exciting new field,' 'groundbreaking,' and the conference as featuring a 'list of dazzling speakers' (Ahuja, *The Times*: 2003).

As with earlier phases of the problem, many journalists do write critical pieces on the issue. In fact, some of the most targeted criticism is found in editorials and articles by columnists. However, these claimsmakers tend not to take up a dedicated opposition to the issue. By contrast, journalists who offer support often do become more dedicated proponents, some even taking up the issue in other spheres and becoming experts themselves.

Utilising the completed Nvivo database for the years spanning 2003 to 2010 and containing 903 articles, it is clear that the vast majority come from authors who produced less than 3 other articles in the database. Excluding letters to the editor and those for which no author was listed,

⁹⁴ An example of a more 'passive' claimsmaking role is Lesley Garner who periodically uses happiness claims in her 'Lifeclass' column when responding to advice-seekers.

only 26 authors produced more than 4 articles, and only 12 produced more than 5.⁹⁵ The table below lists the 10 most frequently appearing authors of articles catalogued in the Nvivo database.

Table 19. 10 Most frequent authors of newspaper articles

Author of Article	Number of Articles Authored in Database
Nick Baylis	28
Oliver Burkeman	19
Craig Taylor	15
John Naish	8
Lesley Garner	7
Stuart Jeffries	7
Polly Toynbee	6
John Elliott	6
Madeleine Bunting	5
Alain de Botton	5

The wide chasm separating the most frequently appearing authors and the remainder is due to the fact that, as the issue was on the ascent, a number of journalists began dedicated columns on the subject. The most prolific is the psychologist Nick Baylis, who, as we have already seen, had a regular column devoted to the subject in *The Times*. However, the next most frequent writer was the journalist Oliver Burkeman, who, although not a psychologist, also began a regular column on the topic in *The Guardian* in 2006 as happiness discussions were first reaching their apex. Entitled 'This column will change your life,' it promised to 'scout the frontiers of the happiness and productivity movements, test their theories and report back' (Burkeman, *The Guardian*: 2006). Since then, the column has reviewed diverse life enhancement techniques emerging from the 'happiness industry,' from the quasi-magical positive thinking advocated by the writers of *The Secret* to what he sees as the more serious insights offered from the burgeoning science of happiness. These efforts would culminate in the publication of two books on the subject. The first, entitled *Help!: How to Become Slightly Happier and Get A Bit More Done* (2011), takes a stab at 'self-help gurus' and those who make a living 'dispensing tips and techniques for a more satisfying life' which he measures against the more academic 'happiness studies' based on 'rigorous experiments designed to pinpoint the sources of human fulfilment' (Burkeman, 2011:2). The second book, entitled *The Antidote: Happiness for People Who Can't Stand Positive Thinking* (2012), takes a more philosophical bent, advocating a 'negative path to happiness' the roots of

⁹⁵ 49 articles did not list an author and 18 were letters to the editor.

which he finds in ancient Greece, Rome and Buddhism. Burkeman's column represents another regular platform, by this time one among many, through which happiness claims were given a regular hearing—and endorsement—in the news media. In addition, his uptake of the issue as the subject of two publications lends the journalist a sort of expert status in his own right.

Like Burkeman, the health journalist John Naish also took an interest in happiness in the news media, frequently focusing on the issue in Body & Soul features in *The Times*.⁹⁶ His *Enough* (2009) contains a chapter entitled 'Enough Happiness,' which although apparently critical of the happiness imperative and some of its major claimsmakers including Layard, nonetheless echoes much of the discourse's most prominent claims. Rather than being critical of the interest in happiness, as the title might suggest, Naish's concern is with the sort of happiness promoted by traditional self-help and advice industries and which comes from the pursuit of wealth and consumption of commodities. Concluding the chapter by pointing to happiness research showing money is not associated with increased happiness, he writes, 'The next step in our species' social evolution is to embrace the happiness paradox, to nurture our appreciation for the satisfactions we have, rather than burning everything up in the all-consuming pursuit of the unattainable' (Naish, 2009:201).

One further journalist, Polly Toynbee, is worth singling out for going beyond the more passive usage and relay of happiness claims by most journalists. From very early on, Toynbee's columns have been outspoken in their support of happiness claims, consciously using her influence to further the happiness agenda. When Layard first initiated his lobbying effort to put happiness on the public agenda, Toynbee advocated his proposals in a column whose headline proclaimed, 'The evidence is clear: our wellbeing depends on cooperation and the public good, not personal enrichment' (Toynbee, *The Guardian*: 2003). There, she describes Layard as one of the 'wizards of economics' who has 'broken ranks' with the economics profession and calls his work 'startling' (Toynbee, *The Guardian*: 2003). Perceiving that New Labour was not taking the proposals hinted at in their report on life satisfaction seriously enough, Toynbee presses, 'These ideas take time to drip into the body politic. As ever, New Labour is a hotbed of thinktank optimism when talking among its own kind, but afraid to whisper more visionary ideas in public' (Toynbee, *The Guardian*: 2004). When Layard was in plans to launch Action for Happiness, her column urged readers to

⁹⁶ Although Craig Taylor is the third most frequent author of articles, this is largely due to a regular column appearing in *The Guardian* relaying the responses of people from all walks of life to the question 'are you happy?'

'sign up to a project where the best evidence will be collected to press for policies that make people happiest' (Toynbee, *The Guardian*: 2010).

As media gatekeepers, securing the contact, interest, and support of journalists can be a crucial element in the successful dissemination of claims about new social problems. The support and attention of journalists offered happiness claims a platform and in many cases ensured that happiness research would continue to gain a hearing, contributing to a symbiotic relationship between the creators and dispensers of specialist knowledge. Moreover, the interest of many journalists becomes more and more entrenched as they lend their support, publish books on the topic, and become stakeholders themselves.

6.8 Members of the Public

When members of the general public have entered into claimsmaking about happiness it is predominately as their subject rather than their source. The public are referred to en masse and as the victims of the new problem, as being unaware or unable to find, increase or maximise their happiness. Since the problem first appeared in the UK, claims and questions have been posed like, 'What if individuals do not possess the mental equipment to be rational about why and what they choose?' (Hutton, *The Guardian*: 1993). It is claimed that we are 'not very good at determining just what experience will actually increase our happiness,' and that we've 'got it all wrong' (Clark, *The Sunday Times*: 2005). According to claimsmakers, although '[e]veryone wants to be happy' most of us simply 'don't know how to do it' (O'Connor, *The Daily Telegraph*: 2009). People are described as amateurs when it comes to happiness, as 'hamsters on a treadmill' (Clark, *The Sunday Times*: 2005), thinking it 'can be achieved by buying more' (Jonze, *The Guardian*: 2008). 'You have to decide to be happy [...]. Barring seriously depressed people, most westerners have plenty to be happy about, but they choose to focus on things they haven't got,' says Paul Jenner, author of a book entitled *Teach Yourself Happiness* (Hardy, *The Guardian*: 2007).

Lay people sometimes appear as the subjects of interventions and as examples of success stories. Reports on an experiment to 'make Slough happy,' filmed as a BBC documentary series, detail the transformations of unhappy residents who were taught the skills of happiness. One article details an experiment in which children's happiness levels were measured using various methods including EEG scans and the reasons for their happiness or unhappiness speculated upon. 'He has definitely not inherited his happiness,' concludes one of the experts; 'He's a very sporty boy [...].

Exercise results in the release of endorphins which contribute to a feeling of happiness' (Brennan, *The Sunday Times*: 2006).

Although no single unaffiliated member of the general public appears in the sample more than once, 21 of the 306 articles sampled included commentary from the general public. The majority of these were the result of journalists asking people what made them happy and contained reflections on the simple joys in life. Although responses varied greatly, a common theme is a rejection of materialism as a basis for happiness. A *Guardian* column in which people from various walks of life were asked to comment included statements like, 'My wise grandfather said the secret to happiness is not to do what you like but to like what you do. I like what I do' (Taylor, *The Guardian*: 2007), and 'I am the happiest person I know, mostly because of where I live [Covent Garden]' (Taylor, *The Guardian*: 2006). One respondent, a climate change campaigner, reflects on time spent living in Costa Rica and adds, 'Happiness doesn't seem to be related to the GDP or to consuming more. People living simpler lives get on with it. It's less complicated' (Taylor, *The Guardian*: 2008).

Yet missing from happiness discourses, particularly early on, is a more significant contingent of activists and forms of grassroots campaigning. While it might be argued that this is simply an artefact of the type of data collected, as stated in chapter 3, gaining access to the media has been increasingly central to activists' projects for recognition. Therefore, if claims had begun or been seriously propagated by grassroots organisations it is likely that they would have played a larger role in claimsmaking about the issue. While the environmental groups FoE and the NEF (the latter of which was described as a 'fringe economic organisation' in 1995 [Cusick, *The Independent*: 1995]) do appear in claimsmaking on the topic, the history of these groups has been characterised by the move from outsider activism to insider lobbying (Connolly and Smith, 2003). In 2011 a 'movement' called 'Action for Happiness' was launched in the UK, whose rhetoric and mode of organisation mimics grassroots campaigning. The group's website describes its mission as 'bringing together people from all walks of life who want to play a part in creating a happier society for everyone' and invites viewers to 'Join the movement. Be the change' (Action for Happiness, 2012). In spite of the rhetoric, the 'movement' was founded by Richard Layard, Anthony Seldon and Geoff Mulgan, three claimsmakers who have been integral to the construction of the problem from within insider circles.

Many outsider claimsmakers appear to have taken hold of the discourse via the entrepreneurial stream. For instance, a number of individuals have founded websites including thankgod.com (geared around gratitude) and 'The Bank of Happiness,' the latter of which is based in Estonia and

was founded by a communications director who had become 'disillusioned' with her job and began work with NGOs (Ahuja, *The Times*:2009). Another entrepreneur is described as having 'realised just how unhappy she was in her job,' which she quit to study psychology, going on to found iOpener, the previously mentioned 'consultancy that specialises in improving performance by making people happier' (Chynoweth, *The Sunday Times*: 2009).

It is clear that, at least initially, happiness was not a term that people were using at the grassroots level to characterise their situations and their campaigns for social change. Instead, the issue represents a reversal of what might be assumed to be the typical path followed by campaigns around new social problems, moving instead from the top of society and seeking to enlist the recognition and involvement of everyday people.

6.9 Summary and Conclusions

A number of important conclusions regarding the construction of happiness as a social problem can be drawn through consideration of the preceding discussion as a whole. While many people draw on the rhetoric of happiness, very few can be termed 'owners' in the more significant sense of being integral to the construction of the issue. The large number of claimsmakers points to its expansive and steadily growing reach as well as indicates its on-going institutionalisation, but it was initiated from within a small nucleus of dedicated insider claimsmakers who enacted a concerted campaign to push the issue to the forefront of the public agenda. Diffusion was fostered in a top-down way, beginning with claimsmakers who were already in possession of the resources necessary to facilitate the dissemination of their claims, a process which culminated in the creation of an apparently 'activist' movement seeking to enlist members of the general public to the cause at the grassroots level. This recalls an important aspect of social problems discussed in chapter 3, wherein the 'effectiveness of claims depends greatly upon the degree to which the individual or group who takes ownership of the problem is in possession of resources like money, access to the media, a high level of organisation, commitment, a base of support and adherents, status, knowledge, expertise, skill and legitimacy' (Randall and Short, 1983:411).

While many commentators have assumed that the rise of positive psychology attests to an objective need for its knowledge in western societies, its dissemination and academic legitimacy was a project self-consciously promoted by the founders of the discipline. The diffusion of claims about happiness was also fostered through a symbiotic relationship between experts, journalists,

lobbyists, and politicians, the latter of whom increasingly rely on expertise to inform their political projects. The affirmation of politicians represented the stamp of approval for the notion of happiness as a social problem, but happiness discourses had been incorporated into policy long before the issue had become a recognisable feature of public discourse. In this way, campaigns about happiness likely represented an 'extra-theoretical' impetus, since institutionalisation did not need to progress through the usual outsider-insider channels typical of the claimsmaking process for many social problems. The nature of the problem as one that tends to inspire consensus over opposition coupled with a political climate that places an increasing premium on the abstract virtue of 'health' and attempts to connect with the public at the individual level likely fuels this desire.

Some characteristics of news-making have also facilitated the spread of claims affirming the existence and importance of the problem since there is a tendency to favour both official and uncritical sources. The fact that critics tend not to be stakeholders coupled with the apparently positive character of the issue meant that advocates met little in the way of serious opposition since there was little incentive to unite against happiness. The enlistment of media gatekeepers as stakeholders in the issue also ensured that new claims were able to gain a hearing.

Finally, some categories of claimsmaker tend to figure prominently in campaigns for the recognition of social problems including political activists, social movement organisations and the grassroots organising of members of the general public. These groups are conspicuous by their absence and although there is evidence that members of the general public tend to agree on many of the core claims being made, particularly an ambivalence toward wealth, it is clear that 'happiness' was not a term that people were using at the grassroots level to conceptualise their problems and to press for change.

7 The Rhetoric of Happiness

The previous chapter has considered the diverse array of claimsmakers who have contributed to the public image of happiness as a social problem. Yet, the success of the problem in national newspapers cannot be explained solely through a description of the attributes and activities of missionary claimsmakers who sought to spread the message. As Best (1987:102) observes in a seminal work on the study of rhetoric in claimsmaking: 'While the success of claims-making may well depend, in part, on the constellation of interests and resources held by various constituencies in the process, the way claims are articulated also affects whether they persuade and move the audiences to which they are addressed.'

Taking the most recent period detailed in chapter 5 (2003 – Present)⁹⁷ as its starting point, the third and final phase of this study details the results of a rhetorical analysis of a sample comprising 100 articles and seeks to describe what the problem 'is' as a series of persuasive arguments about the nature of the world and how it should be changed. In doing so, it offers answers to the remaining questions that guide this research: What sort of problem do claimsmakers say that happiness is? How do constructs evolve and how do they come to prevail? It also gives insight into the potential consequences of particular constructions and their emergent meanings. Since meanings are drawn from the broader culture, these constructions cannot be understood outside of the social and historical context that renders these claims both believable and powerful statements about the social world. The relative speed with which claims were affirmed and institutionalised into policy not only indicates the success of the problem, but such affirmations also indicate that claims had achieved a successful 'fit' with the broader culture. In this way, the study of the problematisation of happiness and wellbeing becomes the study of culture, as claims become increasingly inflected with the baggage of latent preoccupations extant in British culture, artefacts of which become evident in those claims that are increasingly reiterated, reaffirmed and restated.

The analysis to follow begins with a consideration of a broader tendency toward implicit problematisation before moving to the grounds, or 'statements about the nature of problem'

⁹⁷ At the time of data collection, 'present' included 2010 as the most recent completed year from which to draw a sample.

(Best, 2008:33), identified in the rhetoric sample. Although grounds can also encompass a number of rhetorical devices, for the purposes of clarity, these and other strategies for promoting claims are considered under the second section, or ‘warrants’ for taking action. Finally, conclusions or proposals for change advocated by claimsmakers are described. Although a large number of claims about the problem have been forwarded, the main types of grounds, warrants and conclusions into which claims were observed to fall are examined with an emphasis upon those claims continually repeated, and their contestations and development over time. Emergent meanings are examined throughout and conclusions regarding the construction of the problem summarised toward the close of the chapter.

7.1 Grounds

Put simply, grounds are the basic facts, or in Toulmin’s account, the ‘data,’ that establish the basis for the conclusions that follow (Toulmin, 2003:90). In social problem claims, they form the foundation for the existence of a problem on which can be constructed more elaborate statements about what—and why—action should be taken. As discussed in chapter 3, different cultures will find different types of statements persuasive and will differ in the types of, and degree to which, particular claims are accepted.

Eleven types of grounds were identified in the sample (all grounds are listed in Appendix E).⁹⁸ These can be described as falling into three general groupings: naming the problem and defining its keywords (although the two do not necessarily co-exist), identifying the causes of unhappiness, and statements about victims. Aspects of these grounds are frequently combined to form a successful ‘rhetorical recipe,’ which although a commonly observed trope observed across many social problems (Best, 2008), takes on a somewhat idiosyncratic form in happiness claims.

In addition, there is a general tendency in claimsmaking to problematise happiness only implicitly. When viewing the most common types of claims, this general tendency emerges as significant, as it is clear that ‘unhappiness’ is only one of myriad other claims. Thus, while many grounds do explicitly make problem claims, this tendency to problematise claims in a more subtle, implicit,

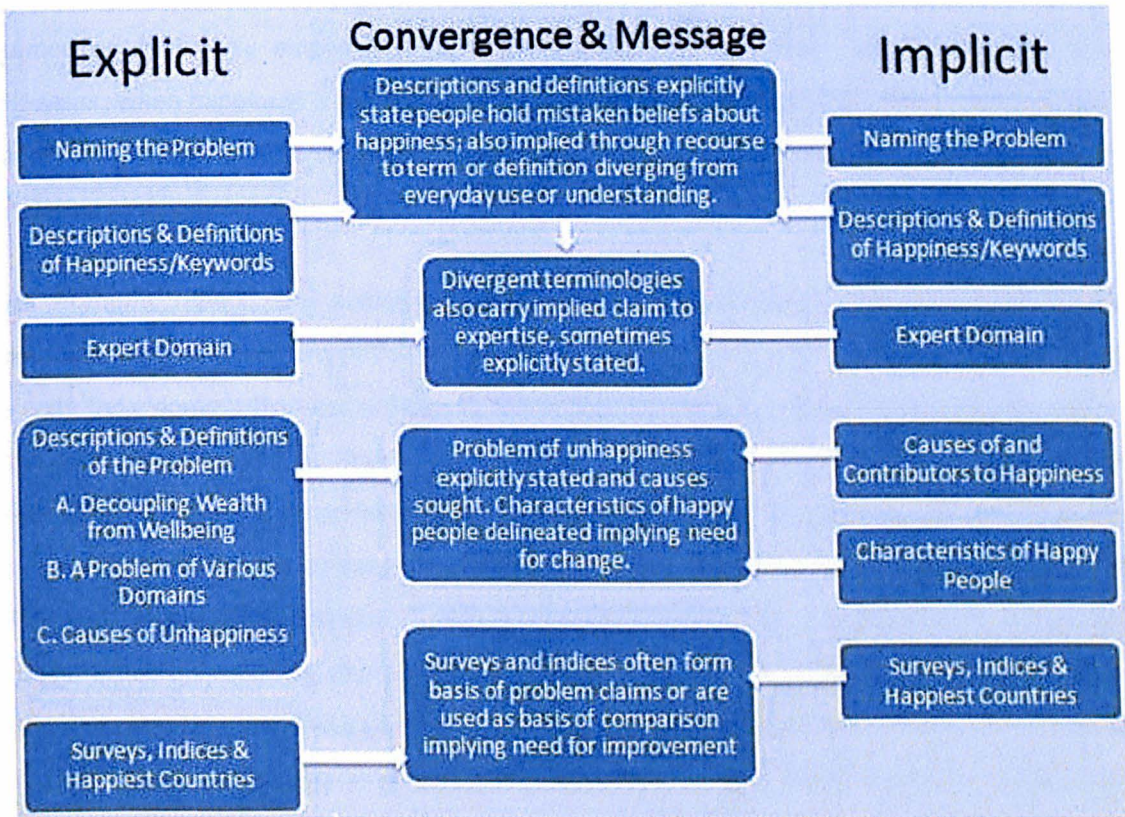
⁹⁸ As these were the most numerous, and form the heart of the problem, they are listed in full in Appendix E. The types of claims identified are: 1) terminology and naming, 2) descriptions and definitions of happiness, 3) decoupling wealth from wellbeing, 4) causes of unhappiness, 5) causes of and contributors to happiness, 6) characteristics of happy people, 7) surveys, indices and happiest countries, 8) claims about children, 9) education, 10) work and leisure, and 11) claims about women.

manner is one of the most significant forms of problematisation. This overarching tendency is described before moving to a consideration of the major types of grounds identified in the sample.

7.1.1 Explicit and Implicit Problematisation

Happiness and wellbeing are often explicitly forwarded as problems. People are not happy or not happy enough, have become much unhappier, or are not as happy as might be expected given conditions of economic growth or changes in other social or economic variables. It is often claimed that people or society at large are mistaken in their pursuits and that happiness is best pursued by other means or ought to replace other aims as the ultimate goal of activity. Thus, incorrect understandings of happiness and misplaced priorities constitute a social problem solvable through the pursuit of various evidence-based paths to happiness.

At the same time, many happiness claims are mobilised in service of more implicit problem claims. Happiness also comes to be bound up in the rhetoric of a range of other social problems without explicitly positing the existence of a happiness deficit. While the distinction reflects more of a continuum than a clear-cut division, it nonetheless highlights the fact that while claimsmaking about happiness frequently appears positive, there is often an implied deficit that 'lurks' beneath. The figure below illustrates the ways in which claims about happiness were implicitly and explicitly forwarded as problems.

Figure 10. Explicit and implicit problematisation⁹⁹

While explicit problematisations drive much of the drama and perceived direness of the need for interventions, it is the implicit manifestation of the problem that has become the most pervasive. That is, it is more often the case that happiness is affirmed and adopted across a range of institutions and in relation to a range of issues without explicitly positing a lack of happiness. Indeed, a 2010 review of the evidence on wellbeing which informed the *Healthy Lives, Healthy People* White Paper (2010a) states that the UK is 'in line with the average of other European countries' in terms of life satisfaction and is 'around the average of similar countries for levels of wellbeing, on par with France and Germany' (Department of Health, 2010a:13). Nonetheless, emphasis is placed on the importance of 'improving health and wellbeing' throughout the resultant White Paper (Department of Health, 2010b).

⁹⁹ 'Characteristics of happy people' and 'causes of and contributors to happiness' might also be considered implicit conclusions as well as grounds. While these are presented as value-free 'facts' about happiness, they can, at the same time, function as implicit injunctions to act in ways identified as conducive to happiness. Moreover, the implication is that behaviours and conditions which have not been scientifically proven contributors to happiness are deviant. For instance, many of the 'scientifically proven' causes of happiness are specifically posed against wealth and material advancement, the pursuit of which is therefore identified as a deviation from an implied ideal.

The apparently positive imagery evoked by the rhetoric of happiness and the appearance of refocusing aims from remedying negatives to improving life and optimising experience is something frequently emphasised by organisations and institutions who have taken it on. However, when happiness is affirmed as an important goal followed by commitments to promote and intervene, an implicit statement is being made about the psychology of the populations in question as being *de facto* problematic.

For example, reports and policy documents continually underscore that, as a report jointly commissioned by Local Government Improvement and Development and the National Mental Health Development Unit and written by the NEF puts it, 'Wellbeing and health mean more than the absence of problems or illness,' and that a 'shift in focus from what can go wrong in people's lives to what makes them go well' is needed (Aked et al., 2010:10). Indeed, this emphasis upon positive interventions is evident from the inauguration of positive psychology in 2000, when Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000:5) wrote of the new sub-discipline: '[Psychology] concentrates on repairing damage within a disease model of human functioning. This almost exclusive attention to pathology neglects the fulfilled individual and the thriving community. The aim of positive psychology is to begin to catalyze a change in the focus of psychology from preoccupation only with repairing the worst things in life to also building positive qualities.' Although couched in positive rhetoric, the implied deficit is clear. If a person is a 'fulfilled individual' in a 'thriving community' then presumably they do not need the 'attention of psychology.' What is implied is that functioning *requires* intervention.

Whether implicitly or explicitly stated as a problem, the image that emerges is nonetheless the same. Through the language of happiness and wellbeing, the line between illness and wellness become increasingly blurred and risk and the need for intervention are democratised. The latent message is that everyone is potentially ill and the need for expert guidance is a universal one, regardless of the presence or absence of illness or infirmity.

7.2 Rhetorical Idioms: Giving the Problem a Name

The first grounds identified in the sample refer to attempts to give the problem a name. Identifying a set of conditions and merging them under the umbrella of a new and often 'catchy' label can mark the turning point whereby incidents come to be seen as incidences of larger issues.

At the same time, as Best (1987:104) points out: 'Identifying the topic under discussion limits what can be said; a definition makes some issues relevant, while relegating others out of bounds.'

Before moving to a consideration of the particular idioms used throughout claimsmaking on happiness, it is important to note the rhetorical significance of particular terminological choices. Ibarra and Kitsuse describe 'rhetorical idioms' as 'moral vocabularies' which, 'furnish participants with value-laden themes and narrative formulae capable of endowing claims with memorably expressed significance. Each rhetorical idiom encourages participants to structure their claims along particular lines and not others [...]' (Ibarra and Kitsuse, 2003:27). Further, what makes each rhetorical idiom distinctive is 'their capacity to clarify and evoke the ethos implicit in the claim' (Ibarra and Kitsuse, 2003:27). Viewed this way, a tendency observed in claimsmaking about happiness to oscillate between terms, and to distance oneself from one idiom in preference for another, is less the result of a discovery or an attempt at precision than it is a rhetorical strategy.

It is important to note however, that naming and defining are quite different things (Best, 2008:32). As Ibarra and Kitsuse further describe, 'Claims-making activities are directed at problematizing specific condition-categories; rhetorical idioms are the distinctive ways in which their problematic status is elaborated. They are not mainly concerned, however, with documenting the existence or magnitude of the condition-categories. Instead, their domain is that of moral reasoning' (Ibarra and Kitsuse, 2003:27 emphasis removed). That is, the importance of an idiom is not its contents, but what it has the capacity to *imply*.

Whichever rhetorical idiom a claimsmaker chooses to frame his or her claims has consequences for the form that claim takes and the imagery it evokes. As we will see, different rhetorical idioms have a capacity to evoke particular imageries and to place claims within a particular moral universe. In addition, they each possess a number of rhetorical offerings as well as their own sets of disadvantages. This may explain the fact that, while many claimsmakers state an explicit preference for one term over another, a range of idioms continue to be used in claimsmaking on the topic, and most of them interchangeably.

As we have seen in previous chapters, the identification of a paradox of prosperity has proved to be a particularly appealing rhetorical device with which to frame one's claims, and yet it is by no means the most widespread name given to the problem. Claimsmakers mobilise an arsenal of claims of which the paradox represents only one, albeit the most prominent and successful, rhetorical weapon among many. Yet the paradox is a negative statement, and while happiness claims often immediately move toward assertions about negative conditions, it is behind the

banner of a positive vision for society that claimsmakers seem most willing to unite. For instance, the homepage of *Action for Happiness* states in large bold letters amid brightly coloured graphics that it is a movement for ‘positive social change’ (Action for Happiness, 2012). It is this positive framework for claimsmaking, which only implicitly problematises through a commitment to intervention and the adoption of normative definitions and expert sanctioned prescriptions, that has proven the most successful. However, there has been no unanimous agreement about precisely which idiom best acts as a vehicle for such claims. Whether one chooses happiness or wellbeing, and which sort of wellbeing (general, social, psychological, subjective—to name some frequently observed modifiers), and which meanings one should attach, has seen considerable variation throughout claimsmaking on the topic.

Throughout the history of the problem, a number of terms have been mobilised. Less successful claims have included alleging that the UK is in the midst of a ‘social recession’ that the ‘politics of wellbeing’ will set right (Bunting, *The Guardian*: 2007) and that society has become increasingly ‘brittle’ (Bennett, *The Observer*: 2009). The table below lists the various terminologies for happiness identified in the sample and the number of articles in which they appeared.

Table 20. Terminologies Identified in sample

Term	# Articles
Happiness	100
Wellbeing ¹⁰⁰	50
Life satisfaction	11
Flourishing	6
Eudaimonia	3
Hedonics	2
Quality of Life	1

As will be examined in more detail below, over time the term ‘happiness’ begins to experience a backlash. Yet interestingly, the migration from happiness to other idioms is frequently instigated by prominent claimsmakers themselves. For instance, many claimsmakers who use the term happiness find themselves vulnerable to the charge that one can feel good without necessarily being engaged in commendable activities. One counterclaimant argues that: ‘The working assumption is that happiness is sustained good feeling,’ and goes on to describe how a society blindly seeking to increase the happiness of a majority would nonetheless be ‘morally bankrupt’

¹⁰⁰ All searches and comparisons have been carried out using both hyphenated and non-hyphenated spellings.

(Vernon, *The Guardian*:2006). Yet, few claimsmakers actually champion the pursuit of pleasure alone. Anthony Seldon's statement on the issue in *The Times* illustrates an awareness of this charge: 'There's too much emphasis on happiness, I think. I'm interested in the meaningful or virtuous life, what the Greeks called eudaimonia' (Evans, *The Times*: 2008). Here, Seldon avoids the term happiness preferring instead an idiom that points not just to emotion, but, in his words, the 'meaningful or virtuous life.'¹⁰¹ Using the term happiness may confine his claims to the limited domain of positive affect, but he clearly wishes to reach beyond the boundaries of a limited concern with the individual experience of good feeling and thus he couches his claims in the rhetoric of a more expansive idiom.

As the ensuing sections will illustrate, by framing claims through one idiom rather than another, claimsmakers are able to overcome the limitations and criticisms of particular idioms and to evoke and emphasise particular imageries over others.

7.2.1 *The Rhetoric of Happiness*

The first dedicated claimsmakers placed the rhetoric of happiness at the forefront of their campaigns for change. Although the word wellbeing has been used alongside happiness throughout claimsmaking on the issue, it was through the idiom of happiness that many claimsmakers initially framed their claims and it was under this banner that many rallied. *Amazon*, the online bookseller, lists a mere 266 books with happiness in the title published in the year 2000; by 2010 that number had reached 2000. By comparison, only 133 books contained wellbeing in the title in 2000, which increased to a modest 289 by 2010. *Amazon's* listing for the keyword 'happiness' also includes the publications by prominent claimsmakers like Martin Seligman and Richard Layard who chose to title their books *Authentic Happiness* and *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science*, respectively. Richard Layard's series of Lionel Robbins Memorial lectures in 2003 all prominently featured the term happiness as did the title of his lengthy essay in the *New Statesman* published at the same time. Happiness has also appeared in large bolded

¹⁰¹ At least here, Seldon avoids delineating of precisely what such a life might consist. However, Seldon's stress on the moral basis of claims demonstrates both his awareness of the criticism of shallowness and his desire to stipulate the conditions of happiness' pursuit. In another interview he states: 'Celebrity, money and possessions are too often the touchstones for teenagers, yet these are not where happiness lies [...] the kind of happiness that comes from too much food, booze, drugs or television quickly wears off' (Shilling, *The Times*:2006). By framing claims through a more diffuse and morally infused idiom, Seldon both evades the criticism of shallowness while at the same time avoiding a term which might limit his scope and preclude him also making claims about the kinds of behaviours necessary to cultivate the sort of happiness he has in mind.

letters on the covers of some of the most well-known news magazines in the UK and the world, as the examples below illustrate.¹⁰²

Figure 11. Magazine covers featuring happiness



In addition, policy documents and research reports churned out by think-tanks have all featured the idiom of happiness prominently and there is little sign that this trend is on the wane, even as wellbeing shows signs of gaining prominence (see next section). Its prominence in these discussions attests to the fact that the rhetoric of happiness offers a great deal to would-be claimsmakers, but it is also plagued by shortcomings which have been targeted by critics as well as by the claimsmakers themselves.

7.2.1.1 Broad Appeal

The previous chapter showed that, regardless of the idiom used, happiness is a valence issue one of the key benefits of which is the ability to transcend traditional political boundaries. However, the idiom 'happiness' in particular has the advantage of widespread familiarity, evoking a sense of ultimate 'goods' and resonating with commonsense notions that 'everyone wants to be happy.'

As one claimmaker begins in an article promoting the subject: 'It is so obvious that happiness is what we want that very few people bother to say it. So when, last week, Professor Richard Layard

¹⁰² The term wellbeing has not appeared on the covers of these magazines, although other aspects of the problem have, including 'progress and its perils' (*The Economist*, 2009) and the 'joy of growing old' which focused on happiness throughout the life course (*The Economist*, 2010).

of the London School of Economics strayed from the confines of economics and declared in a series of lectures that happiness is what counts, he found himself receiving unexpected attention. It was a breath of fresh air' (Hutton, *The Observer*: 2003). Seligman claims that the decision to title his 2002 publication 'Authentic Happiness' was based on his publisher's view that 'happiness' would resonate more with the public than 'positive psychology' (Seligman, 2011:Chapter 1). Similarly, another author, Adam Phillips, has claimed that the decision to subtitle his 2005 book 'Maps of Happiness' was at the behest of a publisher with similar motivations (Jeffries, *The Guardian*: 2006). Indeed, in spite of much of the effort amongst some claimsmakers to shift their emphasis away from happiness in recent years, happiness continues to be used alongside an eclectic range of idioms. For instance, one article begins by proclaiming that, 'Happiness (or in academic-speak, 'subjective wellbeing') matters' (Le Fanu, *The Sunday Telegraph*: 2011). Journalists even sometimes override claimsmakers' attempts to use different idioms. For instance, one journalist, describing an interview with the economist Alan Krueger in which, 'He preferred to speak about 'subjective wellbeing' [...]because "happiness sounds a bit frivolous,"' concludes, 'Oh for goodness' sake, Professor, cheer up' (Harford, *The Sunday Times*:2009).

For many claimsmakers, the popular resonance of happiness presents it as an appealing metaphor through which to express a range of concerns. As chapter 6 showed, the history of the problem is characterised by a growing and diverse array of claimsmakers adopting its rhetoric. For instance, it is not only the Conservative leader David Cameron who states that, 'so much of our modern globalised consumer culture ultimately seems unsatisfying' and that it is time we focused on 'what makes people happy' (Kettle and Wintour, *The Guardian*:2006). Similar claims have been forwarded on the far left. The headline of an article by the Marxist thinker Nina Power reads, 'Happiness has been consumed by capitalism' followed by the lead: 'We have been coerced into thinking about quality of life in terms of possessions—it's time to rediscover those things we value' (Power, *The Guardian Unlimited*:2011).¹⁰³ Indeed, even banking slogans and anarchist graffiti have unintentionally echoed one another. In 2005, Citibank Greece published a press release declaring their new philosophy to be, 'Η ευτυχία γράφεται με ε όχι με €' ('Happiness is written with an E not €'), citing research carried out by the company showing that people valued more highly their quality of life and preferred to focus on the people and things that made them happy (Citibank, 2005). Several years later, and apparently innocent of its usage in the banking

¹⁰³ Interestingly, in the body of the article, Power actually rejects Cameron's use of the word happiness, which she assumes is associated with consumerism. But actually, both Cameron's speech and Power's column forward the claim that money and wealth do not produce happiness.

sector, the same slogan would find its way into anarchist graffiti scrawled across walls in central Athens as the country spiralled into financial crisis.

7.2.1.2 Happiness as Warrant

This broad appeal means that happiness is not only the name of a problem which represents the exclusive focus of claimsmakers, but is also a rhetorical warrant for a range of other issues. That is, for many claimsmakers, happiness answers the question, 'Why should people care about my problem?' In promoting a focus on happiness, Layard puts it tellingly: 'Everyone is concerned with avoiding poverty, ill health, conflict and enslavement. But these things are nothing but versions of unhappiness. So what we're all really concerned with, although we might be afraid of the simplicity of the term, is happiness' (Simons, *The Times*:2010). Its ability to promote consensus and minimise opposition along with a conceptual ambiguity that is coupled with an elicitation of ultimate goods make it an appealing idiom to a diversity of groups. Like the rhetoric of rights, happiness is a value that most people can endorse, even in areas where there might otherwise be disagreement (Best, 2008:36).

Much of the appeal of the rhetoric of happiness lies in its ability to translate potentially contentious political issues into a language with which it is difficult to disagree. Thus, although it may at first appear as though the affirmation of happiness as a key concern of policymakers represents a moment of the unprecedented politicisation of emotion, a period during which passion and ultimate purpose are being reasserted in public life, the use of happiness as a warrant for claimsmaking actually reveals that the opposite has occurred. Paradoxically, happiness is an appealing frame for claimsmaking from a range of perspectives precisely for its capacity to depoliticise issues through the construction of consensus.

This depoliticisation is affected in three ways. First, reduced to a 'core' essence of 'mutual understanding' complicating phenomena that lead to polarisation in the first place are backgrounded in a way that makes it difficult to conceive of how issues might be debated (Zizek, 2010:6). Both the process and outcomes of this depoliticisation are illustrated well by an anecdote related by Zizek (2010:5-6):

During a public debate at the New York Public Library a few years ago, Bernard-Henri Levy made a pathetic case for liberal tolerance [...], while I made a similarly pathetic case for communism [...]. The irony of the situation was that, the case having been stated in [...] abstract terms, we could not but agree with each other. Levy, a hard-line liberal anti-communist proponent of the free market, ironically remarked that, in this sense, even he was for communism...This sense of mutual understanding was proof that

we were both knee-deep in ideology: 'ideology' is precisely such a reduction to the simplified 'essence' that conveniently forgets the 'background noise' which provides the density of its actual meaning.

This 'background noise' refers to the actual structures of society that underpin debate; for Žižek, it is the 'violence that sustains the public face of law and order' (Žižek, 2011:5). This glossing over of complexity, according to Žižek, is 'the very core of utopian dreaming' (Žižek, 2011:6).

The second form of depoliticisation affected through couching claims in a rhetoric of happiness is similar. Through the enlistment of scientific proof of the benefits or injuriousness of particular phenomena to happiness, political issues are transformed into apolitical technical questions that can be outsourced to technicians as opposed to being open to negotiation or debate. As Gusfield (1984:28) describes: 'Science, scientific pronouncements, technical programs, and technologies appear as supports to authority, and counterauthority, by giving to a program or policy the cast of being validated in nature, grounded in a neutral process by a method that ensures both certainty and accuracy.' Issues no longer appear as political matters open to debate; the knowledge seems to speak for itself, compelling society to act.

Third, issues are depoliticised through conceptions that highlight not 'institutional arrangements of social and political organisation' but images of 'good people and bad people, villains and victims' (Gusfield, 1996:27). Advocates can thus claim to be speaking on behalf of society as a whole, to be acting on behalf of the public good against unambiguous evils whose existence and characterisation as such are universally affirmed (Gusfield, 1996:25).

These issues continually reappear and are further explored in the sections that follow. What is important to note for the moment however, is that the widespread use of happiness as a warrant for claimsmaking about social problems—as a means of compelling assent—has the effect of constructing issues in one-sided terms. The field of disagreement is narrowed, and it becomes difficult to conceive of issues in ways opposed to the dominant frame. Few would accept, for example, the idea of stagnating growth if it means difficulty finding a job or a declining standard of living, but everyone can agree that 'money can't buy happiness.'

7.2.1.3 Utopia and History

Many of the advantages of a rhetoric of happiness, detailed thus far, apply equally to claims utilising the related idiom 'wellbeing,' since the latter also evokes vague but agreeable

conceptions of goodness and 'being well.' However, happiness has two unique rhetorical offerings that are perhaps not offered by idioms of a more recent coinage like 'subjective wellbeing.'

First, as the warrants section will describe in more detail, a rhetoric of happiness evokes a sense of ultimate goals, a rediscovery 'what really matters.' Indeed, many claimsmakers evoke a positive notion of utopia in their claims, placing their hope in happiness to bring a sense of purpose back into politics. In the quotation that opened the first chapter, Layard evoked the 'noble philosophy of the Enlightenment' and articulates a vision in which 'every human being wants to be happy, and everybody counts equally' (Layard, *The Guardian*: 2009). An editorial (*The Guardian*, 2003) similarly asserts: 'But what better time to resurrect important utilitarian principles in an age in which retribution retains a higher priority than rehabilitation in penal affairs, in which fundamental liberties have rarely been so severely curtailed, and in which modern neuroscience can demonstrate that Bentham was right?'

One article describes a two day forum on happiness held in France in which proceedings opened with a talk by an environmentalist and a historian on the topic of utopia. 'The big problem in our societies is that the spirit of Utopia is diminishing,' the reporting journalist quotes one of the speakers as having lamented (Sage, *The Times*: 2010). For one commentator, happiness seems to offer a grand vision for society in place of, 'the Gradgrind managerialism and target-toting' of previous political projects (Bunting, *The Guardian*:2007). Another editorial reasons, 'Why do those nice things keep slipping through our fingers, despite the affluence and freedom of our societies? As old narratives about class or religion or race subside, this narrative about happiness as the ultimate goal for our society gains in clarity' (Walter, *The Guardian*:2005).

Second, happiness has a history. The quotable phrases of the American Declaration of Independence act as a potent reminder that it once played a significant role in the rhetoric of revolutions past. The rhetoric of happiness offers claimsmakers the ability to evoke a revolutionary spirit and a sense of bringing purpose and meaning to political questions that can seem dry and 'out of touch' with everyday experience. Although reducing social issues to the lowest common denominator, connecting with people at the level of the individual body and mind, it does so while evoking an ethos of large-scale social change. It thus resonates with prevalent and seemingly countercultural ideals of social change as a corollary of individual change, or the 'be the change' mentality echoed everywhere from the American President Barack Obama, to refrigerator magnets distributed by Oxfam, and placards at protest marches. An early use of the concept by Oliver James illustrates this smooth transition from macro-level structural critique to changes at the individual level:

We have become a wannabe nation, we want what we haven't got—we expect more and feel entitled to it. This is a consequence of advanced capitalism—economic growth means everybody being dissatisfied with what they've got. [...] Therapy can be very useful, it's definitely an anti-capitalist device. The net result of it is to be clearer about how you, with your own personal history, fit in and can best take advantage of the wonderful opportunities that new technology gives' (Lacey, *The Independent*: 1998).

These uses of history and radicalism reflect warrants that are frequently drawn upon by claimsmakers and will be discussed in the context of their significance as such in the relevant section below. However, these themes also contribute to the attractiveness of a rhetoric of happiness in that they represent an attempt to connect with a fragmented and disengaged public. They also resonate with an implicit worldview about the possibilities of social change and an underlying image of the human being defined by its vulnerability to social contagion. While happiness as a rhetorical idiom evokes a sense of grand visions for the future, it is appealing not because it actually offers the possibility of radically changing the world, but because it represents one of the few ways by which interested parties can forge connections with a fragmented public defined by a fragile sense of personhood.

7.2.1.4 *The Decline of the Rhetoric of Happiness*

Ironically, it is precisely those things that give happiness its appeal that also contain some of its crucial disadvantages. For all the attempts to place happiness in a moral and communal universe (see definitions and descriptions below), it ultimately evokes a sense of the individualism that claimsmakers attempt to use it to criticise. For instance, one claimsmaker argues: 'Positive emotions rarely survive the events that prompted them; nor do we want to feel good all the time. A life of unremitting cheerfulness is one of delusion, for it refuses to acknowledge normal ups and downs. By emphasising pleasure, the psychologists turn happiness into something self-regarding: mere accumulation of pleasure and avoidance of pain' (Schoch, *The Daily Telegraph*:2006). Yet a great deal of effort is actually expended in setting happiness apart from connotations of hedonism and mere 'pleasure seeking.' There is no identifiable faction of claimsmakers dedicated to the promotion of the hedonistic pursuit of pleasure. One claimsmaker attempts to dispel such 'misconceptions' about positive psychology stating: 'In the US, perhaps, there is still a greater emphasis on individual growth—qualities such as optimism or personal success. [...] But in the UK, the focus is really on the social context. There's a far greater interest in wellbeing and communities' (Wilson, *The Observer*:2010). Happiness conjures forth images of momentary pleasures, which for many claimsmakers is not enough.

Moreover, the common sense nature of happiness means not only that everyone can agree, but also that many people have their own ideas about its meaning and importance. This gives rise to a certain degree of unease about professional and political powers making pronouncements on such intimate aspects of life. Although much of the claim to expertise is affirmed, one type of criticism observed in the sample was not a fully articulated critique but rather scepticism about the notion that happiness should be the site of professional and political pronouncements. “‘I’m from the Government and I’m here to make you happy.’ Now that is scary,” one commentator writes (Whyte, *The Times*: 2006). As we will see below, once the issue of happiness had gained a foothold, using idioms more removed from everyday usage represented an attempt to circumvent this problem.

Like many successful social problems, happiness begins to fall victim to its popularity. As more and more people join the crusade and media attention reaches critical mass, a backlash can be observed. An author laments, ‘The idea that if you just reiterate the word enough and we’ll all cheer up is preposterous’ (Jeffries, *The Guardian*: 2006). ‘Happiness: Enough Already’ a headline in *Newsweek* magazine reads (Begley, *Newsweek*: 2008). Best (1999:45) observes that: ‘Every news story runs its course; when there are no remaining facts to uncover or angles to explore, once there is nothing left to say, interest in the topic seems to die down; what once seemed novel becomes “old news,” boring; and coverage shifts to a different topic.’ But one of the crucial advantages of issue ownership is that claimsmakers can refresh old claims, reinvigorate them by presenting new angles, expand the domain of the issue or link it to current events, and keep it in the public eye. The rhetoric of happiness, with its grand vision but individual appeal, radical connotations, and historical resonance continues to make it an appealing idiom and it continues to be used in claimsmaking around the issue. Nonetheless, where happiness falls short and begins to sound stale, new idioms come to the fore.

7.2.2 The Rhetoric of Wellbeing and Associated Idioms

As happiness begins to lose its novelty, there is a discernible tendency to emphasise additional idioms like wellbeing, eudaimonia, and flourishing. Many claimsmakers who had formerly championed happiness even begin to expressly reject it in favour of one or a selection of the above, the most common being wellbeing. In many ways the rhetoric of wellbeing offers many of the same advantages as the rhetoric of happiness, but it has the capacity to extend beyond happiness on many fronts. These advantages are clear when one examines the usage of wellbeing and its frequent corollaries, eudaimonia and flourishing, in happiness discourses. The crucial

offerings of recourse to these additional terminologies is their ability to expand the domain of the problem to encompass more expansive spheres of human experience (while nonetheless privileging subjectivity) and their reinforcement of the claim to expertise.

The following data give an overview of the frequencies with which happiness and wellbeing have appeared in major newspapers over the past decade. A trend toward increased usage of the term wellbeing was first noted in the sample for articles published in 2006 and 2007; over half of the articles in those years also contained reference to wellbeing (11 of 22 and 6 of 10, respectively). In 2010, 13 of the 18 articles sampled (72%) also featured wellbeing alongside happiness. This upward trend is confirmed through a search of the larger Nvivo research database for instances of the keyword wellbeing in a ten year period, the results of which are detailed in Table 21. There is a clear increase in the number of times the word wellbeing appears, from an average of 0.65 times per article in 2001 to 1.62 times per article in 2010.¹⁰⁴

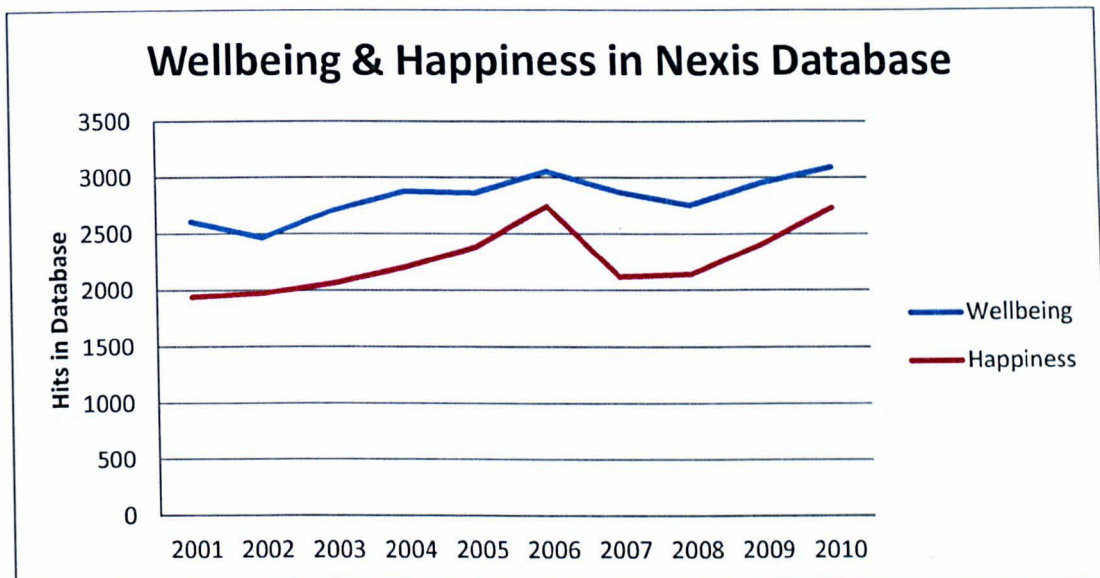
Table 21. Occurrences of wellbeing in full research database

Year	Total Number of Times 'Wellbeing' Appears	Total Number of Articles in Database	Average Number of Appearances Per Article
2001	13	20	0.65
2002	11	23	0.48
2003	70	81	0.86
2004	45	59	0.76
2005	59	101	0.58
2006	103	164	0.63
2007	113	141	0.8
2008	118	129	0.91
2009	112	90	1.24
2010	223	138	1.62

However, the rise of wellbeing does not accompany a corresponding tapering off of happiness. In spite of the above described increase, happiness still appeared an average of 6.75 times per article in 2010. Moreover, both terms continue to show increases in usage in the Nexis database toward the present with neither tapering off in favour of the other, as illustrated in Figure 12.

¹⁰⁴ As with all searches relating to the keyword wellbeing, searches included 'well being,' 'well-being,' and 'wellbeing.'

Figure 12. Articles containing wellbeing compared to happiness in Nexis database 2001-2010

Table 22. Articles containing wellbeing compared to happiness in Nexis database 2001-2010¹⁰⁵

Year	Wellbeing	Happiness
2001	2603	1937
2002	2464	1971
2003	2708	2064
2004	2877	2206
2005	2861	2385
2006	3050	2744
2007	2873	2120
2008	2755	2142
2009	2949	2406
2010	3086	2730

¹⁰⁵ Note that the quantitatively greater number of articles containing the keyword wellbeing may not necessarily be due to a greater emphasis on that keyword in claimsmaking. Many newspapers include 'Wellbeing' sections which contain articles on a variety of themes that may not be related to the discourses here examined. In addition, the hyphenation of one of the search terms allows for the possibility of a greater number of false positives since phrases like 'as well as being' are inadvertently included by Nexis in the results. Nonetheless, in spite of the false positives, the overall trends are similar for both terms.

7.2.2.1 Complementary Uses

Considering the content of these articles, it is clear that when happiness and wellbeing occur together, most of the uses are mutually reinforcing without much attention given to their precise definitions or differences. Shifts to wellbeing also seem to represent an attempt to avoid repetition. This is also true when considering general uses of these terms in the Nexis database which were not included amongst the social problems claims copied to the Nvivo research database. For instance, one author, reflecting on her daughter, asks, 'Who else could love her so unflinchingly, or be as devoted to her wellbeing and happiness?' (Fine, *The Daily Telegraph*:2001). Another article wonders if urbanisation has added to 'the sum of human happiness and wellbeing' (*The Daily Telegraph*:2004). In this way, although wellbeing clearly refers to something broader than happiness, the use of both terms appears to act as a means for many authors to emphasise (or question) the goodness of various phenomena.

This is also true when considering articles featuring problem claims. The vast majority of uses of the two terms together use them in the same mutually reinforcing way and as a means of avoiding repetition. An article from 2001 explains that economists are finally able to talk about 'happiness' because 'they now have reliable data on people's sense of well-being and life satisfaction going back 30 years' (Bunting, *The Guardian*:2001). Another article claims that: 'Economies grow, GDP swells, but once above abject poverty, it makes no difference to citizens' well-being. What is all this extra money for if it is now proved beyond doubt not to deliver greater happiness, nationally or individually?' (Toynbee, *The Guardian*:2003). Another alludes to a shared neurological basis, describing a study in which: 'Members of the group, who meditated for 14 hours over an eight-week period, exhibited a dramatic increase in levels of activity in the prefrontal cortex, the region of the brain that is most commonly associated with wellbeing and happiness' (Marsh, *The Times*:2004). Again, the words are used interchangeably both for emphasis and as a means of avoiding repetition.

7.2.2.2 Wellbeing and Expanding Domains

An examination of articles containing both of the keywords reveals that there is no debate between clearly defined factions of claimsmakers who hold to happiness versus those who posit wellbeing as a superior concept. Rather, while most uses of happiness and wellbeing in articles are complementary, toward the present, claimsmakers have begun to downplay or even disavow an interest in happiness as they attempt to refresh claims and expand the purview of problematisations beyond individual affect and underscore the expert authority on which claims

rest. Nonetheless, the tendency toward individualisation of problems and the privileging of subjective experience over material conditions is retained.

Where happiness tends to connote a narrow concern with individual psychology, in spite of a conscious effort by claimsmakers to assert the contrary, wellbeing intervenes to bridge the divide. At its core, wellbeing alludes to a state of 'being good' or 'being well,' but its referents are potentially far more variable than those implied by happiness. One can speak of the economic wellbeing of society, but less of economic or material 'happiness.'¹⁰⁶ Thus, as we will see below, although wellbeing is frequently forwarded as preferable to happiness as a more robust concept, it actually supersedes the latter in its imprecision. Rhetorically, it is thus a potentially more fruitful idiom since it possesses the capacity to expand the domains over which claimsmakers can assert legitimate purview—from macro concerns of national or community wellbeing to the individual body and mind. Even with its ability to deal with macro level themes more comfortably than the idiom of happiness, the rhetoric of wellbeing nonetheless retains the focus on the individual as the central concern.

7.2.2.3 *Wealth and the Rhetoric of Wellbeing*

In attempting to locate and describe a split between uses of happiness and wellbeing, it was discovered that the first antithetical uses were not between wellbeing defined differently from happiness, but occurred rather in the process of positing a contradiction between *material* wellbeing and happiness. Increasingly, objective material wellbeing is downplayed in favour of an essentially inward-oriented conceptualisation. For example, in 2002, Richard Murphy, an accountant and writer is quoted as advising, 'If you can keep people at a point of reasonable satisfaction, there isn't a lot of evidence to suggest that material wellbeing adds to happiness' (MacErlean, *The Observer*: 2002). Another claimmaker states that the 'fundamental disappointment of modern life' is 'the discovery that satisfaction of our desires for comfort, safety and material well-being do not reliably lead to personal well-being' (Connor, *The Independent*: 2003b). Again and again, like happiness, wellbeing is isolated from material reference points.

¹⁰⁶ Although it should be noted that at one time it was possible to use happiness in such a manner. As chapter 5 illustrated, the content of happiness is highly variable and once referred to success or prosperity. Duncan (2007:87) has also pointed this out, noting that: 'This etymological background helps to explain how T.R. Malthus, writing in the 1790s, was able to describe a nation as "happy" at those times when it is able to feed its whole populace.'

As a rhetorical idiom, wellbeing becomes another vehicle for the privileging of subjective experience over the objective material conditions of life and one the core claims of happiness as a social problem—that happiness is entirely different from, and even antithetical to, material and economic wellbeing. The World Bank's *Voices of the Poor* report illustrates the subtlety that is often involved in this decoupling (Narayan et al., 2000). As Pupavac (2008:185) observes, although the report conceptualises wellbeing as, 'material well-being, physical well-being, social well-being, security, and freedom of choice and action,' the contribution of these factors to 'states of mind as well as body, in personal psychological experiences of well-being' is foregrounded. Indeed, the report 'champions the idea that the goal of development should not be wealth but well-being,' and repeatedly downplays the significance of material prosperity in favour of the 'non-material aspects of well-being' (Pupavac, 2008:185).

Pupavac's conclusion with regard to the institutionalisation of wellbeing in development policy, that, 'the contemporary outlook essentially seeks to improve people's sense of well-being in the absence of material transformation by reforming the subjectivity of populations [...]' (Pupavac, 2005:163), is therefore equally amenable to the UK context. Although the rhetoric of wellbeing evokes a more inclusive ethos and possesses the capacity to overcome the charge of a narrow focus upon individual good feeling, it is also an essentially individualising concept. Reduced to its individual and subjective components, it becomes possible to speak of promoting wellbeing apart from the material conditions of people's lives. This separation is central to the use of wellbeing as a rhetorical idiom.

7.2.2.4 *Expanding and Renewing: Wellbeing, Eudaimonia and Flourishing*

At the same time that it maintains a focus upon the individual, the rhetoric of wellbeing nonetheless does offer a rhetorical escape from the 'dead end' of pure subjectivity. The advantage lies in its capacity to expand the purview of the problem to include a range of aspects of everyday life, extending the scope beyond what an individual's perceived contentment can bring. Including greater expanses of phenomena under the umbrella of the problem allows claimsmakers to continually assert the importance of their claims, maximising the people who might be affected and the potential base of support and interest. Whereas many claims using happiness indices are confined to statements about 'stagnant' rates of happiness, many articles using the term wellbeing are able to assert not only stasis, but a sense of decline and deterioration. As one article claims, 'young people's wellbeing has declined over time, reflected in an increase in mental health problems, drug use and suicide' (Ward, *The Guardian*:2007). By

including more phenomena as part of the problem, claimsmakers can assert that the situation is deteriorating, therefore warranting continued attention. In this way, new idioms maintain an interest in the problem, overcoming the propensity for claims to seem 'stale' and boring over time.

The use of 'flourishing' and 'eudaimonia' as complementary idioms also illustrates these trends toward expansiveness and novelty. Flourishing materialises early on in the sample. At first glance it appears simply to emphasise the capabilities that happiness is claimed to unlock and is often used without further elaboration. One article explains, 'happiness is a powerful ally in the prevention and remedy of physical and psychological problems, as well as better enabling us to thrive and flourish on all major fronts' (*The Times*: 2003). Another article describing positive psychology explains: 'It turned the traditional discipline on its head by focusing on how people flourish rather than how they become depressed' (Hoggard, *The Independent on Sunday*: 2005).

While claimsmakers maintain a concern with the feelings of individuals, the rise of the idioms flourishing, eudaimonia and wellbeing demonstrate an increasing concern with behaviour and activity and a mounting rejection of individual feeling as the sole basis for claimsmaking. For instance, Charles Handy, a British 'management thinker,' explains his preference for the Aristotelian concept of 'eudaimonia' over 'happiness' thus: 'It is usually translated as happiness, but that is a bad translation. It is not a state of mind or being, it is an activity. It is better translated as flourishing—doing your best with what you are best at' (Lewis, *The Times*: 2006). 'Our modern idea of happiness is rather thin,' says another claimsmaker also drawing on Aristotle; happiness is about 'well-doing and wellbeing, flourishing, satisfaction and achievement' (Hoggard, *The Independent on Sunday*:2005).¹⁰⁷

Although not all claimsmakers specifically point to Aristotle, and indeed may not even be well-acquainted with that literature, the origins of terms like 'flourishing' are nonetheless clear. While the conventional translation of the Greek *εὐδαιμονία* used by Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* had been 'happiness,' by the late nineteenth century English writers had begun to argue that the contemporary meanings attached to 'happiness' would not do justice to Aristotle's conceptualisation. Hence, the moral philosopher Henry Sidgwick charged other English writers of his time with misleading readers by translating eudaimonia into a concept 'consisting of mere

¹⁰⁷ It is interesting to note that it was precisely Aristotelian ideas of perfection as 'being' that the Enlightenment was overcoming. Hence the revolutionary force of Hegel's privileging of 'becoming.' The former sees perfection as static whereas the latter posits a continual advancement.

“Pleasures” or “Enjoyments”” (Sidgwick, 1981:92). Another translator, W.D. Ross, also observes that ‘happiness’ is an unsuitable translation, pointing to Aristotle’s insistence that *εὐδαιμονία* is a kind of activity’ and suggesting ‘well-being’ as a ‘more non-committal translation’ (Ross, 1959:186). Cooper (1975:85) substituted ‘flourishing’ for ‘happiness’ in his translation, arguing that ‘flourishing implies the possession and use of one’s mature powers over, at any rate, a considerable period of time, during which, moreover, the future looks bright’ and is a term ‘fit to bear the weight of Aristotle’s treatment of *εὐδαιμονία* as the fulfilment of the natural capacities of the human species.’¹⁰⁸

Whether translated as flourishing, wellbeing or maintained in the original (anglicised) Greek as eudaimonia, the popularity of this concept is evidenced by its swift affirmation and pervasive influence across academic, public and policy arenas. The affinity of Aristotle’s conceptualisation with present discourses is also clear in the oft-cited fact that he rejected wealth as one of the core aims of a good life. Indeed, the concept had been institutionalised into international development policy, most notably through the influence of the Nobel Prize winning economist Amartya Sen, long before the media debate to place happiness on the public and political agenda materialised in the UK.

Sen’s approach questions ‘GNP or technical progress or industrialisation’ as the ‘defining characteristics of development’ advocating instead the development of human capabilities and ‘well-being,’ the conceptualisation of which is partly influenced by Martha Nussbaum’s discussion of ‘the Aristotelian account of the human good’ and human ‘flourishing’ (Sen, 2001:285, 73, 24). The first United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report published in 1990, on which Sen worked, draws on Aristotle while discussing the inadequacy of ‘GNP’ as the sole measure of wealth and goes on to say that, ‘Aristotle argued for seeing “the difference between a good political arrangement and a bad one” in terms of its successes and failures in facilitating people’s ability to lead “flourishing lives”’ (UNDP, 1990:9). The 20th anniversary edition of the Report, published in 2010, which acknowledges a debt to Sen for providing concepts that

¹⁰⁸ There is moreover, a conscious drive to differentiate eudaimonia from happiness in claims-making which uses the term. Six out of eight articles in the full research database using the term eudaimonia point out that happiness is a poor translation and differentiate it from our ‘modern hedonistic concept’ (Stratton, *The Guardian*:2010a). The very first article ‘stub’ in Wikipedia for ‘eudaimonia’ begun in February 2003 contained only one line which pointed out that many prefer ‘spiritual wellbeing’ as opposed to happiness as a translation.

would inform 20 years of reports, defines wellbeing as ‘flourishing’ and stresses that income as ‘an inadequate measure of the full array of human flourishing’ (UNDP, 2010:iv, 22, 23).¹⁰⁹

Flourishing, with its ancient roots and connotations which spread beyond the realm of human affect to the more encompassing notion of the ‘good life’ has also been particularly influential in the arena of academic debate. A Scopus search of scholarly journals shows a steady increase in articles in major academic journals featuring the term ‘eudaimonia’ over the past decade. In 2001, a mere 5 full-length articles in that database contained the word; by 2011 the number had climbed to 87.¹¹⁰ In a frequently cited 2001 review of the already burgeoning literature on wellbeing, Ryan and Deci distinguish between two discernible strands of research, the first pertaining to what they call ‘hedonism,’ or the ‘view that wellbeing consists of pleasure or happiness,’ and a second pertaining to ‘eudaimonism’ or the ‘view that wellbeing consists of more than just happiness’ and which expands further to a concern with ‘fulfilling or realizing one’s daimon or true nature’ (Ryan and Deci, 2001:143). Seven years later, the *Journal of Happiness Studies* produced a special issue on the two approaches introduced by Deci and Ryan (2008) who argue that the hedonic version of wellbeing had been receiving, until that point, undue attention in the literature. According to the authors, this emphasis upon ‘subjective wellbeing’ (the core construct of the hedonic perspective) as discerned from self-report studies of satisfaction leaves open the possibility that although people may report being happy or ‘positively affected and satisfied,’ this ‘does not necessarily mean that they are psychologically well’ (Deci and Ryan, 2008:2). By contrast, the eudaimonic perspective moves beyond ‘just’ happiness to subsume a wider range of human affect and activity into a broadened understanding of ‘well-being and human flourishing’ (Deci and Ryan, 2008:2, 9).

Following this special issue of the journal, Oprah Winfrey’s magazine ‘O’ carried an article which asked readers to ‘[p]icture happiness’ before going on to point out that the ‘peaceful soul sitting in a field of daisies’ they might have envisioned may be less significant than what ‘researchers now believe’ to be more important—namely ‘eudaimonic well-being’ or ‘striving toward excellence based on one’s unique talents and potential,’ which ‘Aristotle considered [...] to be the noblest goal in life’ (LeBlanc, 2008). A psychologist interviewed for the article, Richard J. Davidson,

¹⁰⁹ Note also that in the latter report, the term ‘flourishing’ was used without explicit reference to Aristotle.

¹¹⁰ Google Scholar shows a similar increase across its far broader database from 328 articles in 2001 to 1170 articles in 2011. However, Scopus is a less inclusive but more reliable database, searches of which can be confined to only peer-reviewed journals.

further elaborated that eudaimonic wellbeing is 'more robust and satisfying than hedonic happiness' adding that it 'engages different parts of the brain' (LeBlanc, 2008).

The trend toward greater expansiveness is expressed in the increasing tendency for claimsmakers to dictate a preference for the rhetoric of wellbeing and its corollaries, flourishing and eudaimonia, which they use to evoke a sense of moral and conceptual depth. This is perhaps best illustrated by Seligman's decision to name his latest book on the topic '*Flourish*' (2011). There, reflecting on the issue, he writes, 'my original view was closest to Aristotle's—that everything we do is done in order to make us happy—but I actually detest the word happiness, which is so overused that it has become almost meaningless' (Seligman, 2011: Chapter 1).

This trend toward expansiveness is also reflected in claimsmaking using the idiom happiness, as more dedicated claimsmakers move from simply delineating the behaviours that studies have revealed to be conducive to happiness to consciously stressing the moral character of their claims. As Seldon, defending Wellington School's decision to teach lessons in happiness, stresses, 'The lessons will, I believe, be highly moral. The pupils will learn how to look after their bodies well and how not to abuse them. A healthy body is far more likely to lead to a happier mind than one which has been abused with bad food, drink, cigarettes and drugs' (Seldon, *The Independent*:2006).

This attempt to dictate moral contents will be discussed in more detail below, but for the moment it is important to note that as claims expand and take on the heavy weight of extant cultural concerns about healthy behaviours and healthy lifestyles, these conceptualisations begin to diverge more and more from those of laypeople when they are canvassed for opinion. For instance, one article points out that of 3000 respondents to an online survey, a majority defined happiness in terms quite different from the experts and policy thinkers who had recently gathered at a forum to discuss the role of happiness and wellbeing in politics (Sage, *The Times*: 2010). Respondents talked 'about the concept in individual rather than social terms. Few defined happiness as a land of equality and solidarity. Many defined it as a smile from their children or a kiss from their partners' (Sage, *The Times*: 2010). A focus on wellbeing can circumvent this problem, comfortably accommodating claims about a healthy body as well as a healthy mind.

In addition to the ability of idioms like eudaimonia, flourishing and wellbeing to claim ancient roots which lend them a transcendent quality, their advantage lies precisely in their ability to reach beyond what Ryan and Deci above felt the need to repeat in both of their reviews, '*just happiness*' (Ryan and Deci, 2001:143; Deci and Ryan, 2008:2, emphasis added). While happiness

retains a number of rhetorical offerings, these concepts expand the domain of attention beyond happiness to behaviours, interpersonal relationships, beliefs and activities. The special edition of the *Journal of Happiness Studies*, which contained reflections on the importance of eudaimonia, provided operationalisations of the concept which included, for example, personal growth, autonomy, self-acceptance, purpose in life, environmental mastery, and positive relationships (Ryff and Singer, 2008:20-23). Another article in the edition conceptualised it as including the pursuit of: '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,' behaving autonomously, being mindful, and 'behaving in ways that satisfy basic psychological needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy' (Ryan et al, 2008:139).

Seligman's new theory of wellbeing, which he details in his aforementioned *Flourish*, also demonstrates the more expansive domain of the idiom wellbeing. Table 23 is a reproduction of a similar table contained in that publication and demonstrates the enlarged scope of claims offered by the rhetoric of wellbeing.

Table 23. 'Authentic Happiness' versus 'Well-Being Theory'¹¹¹

Authentic Happiness Theory	Well-Being Theory
Topic: happiness	Topic: well-being
Measure: life satisfaction	Measures: positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and accomplishment
Goal: increase life satisfaction	Goal: increase flourishing by increasing positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships and accomplishment

Via the idioms of flourishing, eudaimonia and wellbeing, the expansion of focus is clear. There is a rejection of the subjective perception of happiness as the sole focus of claimsmaking, although the subjective component remains significant. Claimsmakers are able to expand their claims beyond the domain of psychological feelings of wellness to encompass more and more aspects of individual and social life. It becomes not enough to feel good (or to think one feels good) as this does not necessarily mean that one is mentally or morally well.

¹¹¹ Adapted from Seligman (2011:Chapter 1).

7.2.2.5 Wellbeing and Expert Authority

Finally, the shift to different rhetorical idioms overcomes the previously mentioned tendency for happiness claims to seem to overstep the boundaries of expert or government authority by furnishing claimsmakers with terms more removed from common parlance. The table below shows the modifiers of wellbeing identified in the sample. Once identified in the sample, a search was carried out across the Nvivo research database, the results of which are also shown.

Table 24. Modifiers of wellbeing in research database

Keyword	Number of Articles in Nvivo Database Containing	Number of Articles in Sample Containing
GWB or general wellbeing	34	10
SWB or subjective wellbeing	29	4
emotional wellbeing	18	4
science of wellbeing	15	3
mental wellbeing	12	3
personal wellbeing	12	4
human wellbeing	8	1
economic wellbeing	5	1
psychological wellbeing	5	2
social wellbeing	3	2
collective wellbeing	2	1
societal wellbeing	2	1

The most common idiom on the above list, general wellbeing (frequently abbreviated to GWB) appeared only once in the database prior to its usage by David Cameron at a Google Zeitgeist conference in 2006, but spread quickly throughout discussions thereafter. In the since oft-quoted speech, Cameron states: 'It's time we admitted that there's more to life than money, and it's time we focused not just on GDP, but on GWB—general well-being' (*The Guardian*, 2006). Aside from representing a crucial turning point for the problem, marking its affirmation and ascent into policy, Cameron's comparison of GDP to GWB gives the latter a technical character at the same time as it speaks to values with which most people can agree.¹¹² GDP can seem impersonal and cold, but, as Cameron puts it, 'Well-being can't be measured by money or traded in markets.

¹¹² It also, of course, represents a 'catchy' play on words, in much the same way that 'Gross National Happiness,' although making little logical sense, represents a memorable way of communicating the need for governments to track happiness (Bates, 2009).

[...]It's about the beauty of our surroundings, the quality of our culture, and above all the strength of our relationships' (*The Guardian*, 2006). GWB, if not measurable in money, ostensibly nonetheless measurable in its own terms, seems more personal and connects with people's everyday sensibilities about the important things in life. At the same time, it gives a technical flavour to what might otherwise seem a trespassing, particularly by a Conservative minister, into the personal lives of the electorate.

As claimsmakers themselves seem to be well aware, the term 'happiness' is vulnerable to the charge of being 'gimmicky,' shallow and devoid of content. Many of the criticisms launched at the happiness crusade have not been detailed attacks, but somewhat flippant rejections, for instance referring to 'happiness classes' as 'Labour's latest gimmick' (Griffiths, *The Sunday Times*:2007), or jokingly describing a 'Shangri-La primary school report' from the 'Office for Happiness in Education (OfHed)' which concludes by formally subjecting the school to a 'Notice to Cheer Up' (Harcombe, *The Guardian*:2008). The use of less 'frivolous' sounding idioms can overcome some of these shortcomings, lending the crusade a more scientific veneer. As rallying cries for a movement, these idioms fall flat. But they are not intended to be universal terms that everyone should adopt. Rather, as rhetorical idioms they function to evoke an implicit ethos—that this is something that matters, but also something that requires know-how and technical expertise.

Yet, it is likely that without the initial championing of the rhetoric of happiness, these idioms would not have been so successful at permeating the public agenda. In spite of attempts by some claimsmakers to distance themselves from it, happiness continues to resonate. One observer comments: '[David Cameron] now claims that the Government should aim to increase not GDP (gross domestic product) but GWB (general wellbeing), or happiness, as those who do not talk in TLAs (three-letter acronyms) might put it' (Whyte, *The Times*:2006). Another writes, 'politicians aren't so gloomy about the prospect of knowing what makes us happy—but substitute "happy" with the compound noun "wellbeing"' (Stratton, *The Guardian*:2010a).

7.2.3 Naming as Expansion and Adaptation

Happiness has the benefit of popular resonance, history, and novelty. Yet where novelty begins to subside, new idioms breathe new life into the issue, expanding the scope of the problem and fueling perceptions that things are getting worse, warranting continued attention. New idioms also expand the purview of claims beyond the narrow confines of good feeling to encompass healthy bodies and healthy behaviours as well as the healthy mind. Through recourse to

additional idioms with their origins in Greek philosophy or academic debate, the sense of being validated by both history and science are maintained. In all of the idioms discussed above, the drive toward the individualisation of social problems through recourse to emotional rhetoric is the same.

It is justifiable to consider these idioms as part of a single, identifiable problematisation, which I have termed the 'problematisation of happiness.' While not always placing happiness at the forefront, there is nonetheless a clearly discernible problematisation of hitherto unproblematic areas of social and emotional life, the development of which has not been decided on an abstract or asocial stage, and which was not simply presented to the public in finished form, but whose shape, scope and essential composition were (and continue to be) decided in public arenas through the process of social interaction.

7.3 Giving Meaning to Idioms

In naming the problem, claimsmakers often avoid precise definitions preferring instead to draw on the power of particular idioms to impute claims with a positive air or to speak to common sense understandings, even if these diverge from the definitions the claimsmaker has in mind.¹¹³ However, a large part of claimsmaking is indeed devoted to descriptions of precisely the sort of happiness for which people should be striving and corresponding prescriptions for how it is best pursued. This section therefore deals with those grounds that reflect claimsmakers' attempts to impute idioms with content and meaning. It should be noted that unless otherwise specified, none of these descriptions and definitions were explicitly tacked to a particular idiom as claimsmakers routinely move between many in their claims.

Figure 10 at the outset illustrates how many grounds appearing to simply state the 'facts' about the issue also have the tendency to implicitly problematise. This is the case with many of the descriptions and definitions of happiness described below which often function as implicit forms of problematisation, even as they appear as value free descriptions of scientific 'facts.' Three themes are identifiable in definitions and descriptions of happiness: moral definitions,

¹¹³ One commentator astutely warns that, 'most of the happiness gurus don't mean what you mean by happiness at all. They want you to be the right sort of happy' (Finkelstein, *The Times*:2009).

expectations, and expert authority. These are mutually reinforcing, as expertise is often appealed to for the authority to make pronouncements about the 'true' meaning of happiness.

7.3.1 Moral Definitions

As previously noted, claimsmakers are keen to avoid the charge that their claims are shallow, 'gimmicky' or devoid of content. While moral definitions are often framed as criticisms of the happiness crusade, few of the definitions and descriptions of happiness describe it purely in terms of pleasure. Although it is true that many of the prescriptions for how to be happier do seem to confine themselves to making people feel good, when claimsmakers are conscious of the meanings of their idioms, definitions almost universally draw on moral themes. These claims have also drawn few counter claims and experienced little contestation. Table 25 shows types of moral definitions and examples identified in the sample and the corresponding number of articles in which each type of claim appeared.¹¹⁴

Table 25. Moral definitions and descriptions of keywords

Claim	Example	# of Articles
People confuse happiness with pleasure ¹¹⁵	'A woman may define happiness as the right to buy more handbags and shoes than could contain the Third World debt, then look in the mirror and wonder why her frown lines are deepening. Success, affluence and retail therapy may offer the brief buzz of apparent happiness but there is a vast gulf between the moment of feeling happy and being happy -or living happily -for a lifetime.' (Mooney, <i>The Times</i> :2006)	13
Happiness is moral; doing and being good	'Dr Seligman, at the heart of his philosophy, identifies three ways in which people try to pursue happiness. The first is the Pleasant Life, which centres on the pursuit of sensual pleasures from good food to wild partying and is considered shallow and destructive. The second is the Good life, which focuses on commitment to work and family and trying to be responsible in life. This self-evidently, is far preferable to the first, but still is	13

¹¹⁴ This table contains those claims which appeared in 5 or more articles in the sample. Additional grounds that fit this theme are 'happiness is not a right' (4%), 'happiness is not individual but societal' (4%), happiness is 'composed of three elements: feeling good, being engaged in life, and having purpose and direction' (1%), and that 'inner and outer happiness are different things (1%).

¹¹⁵ Although this is similar to the claim that 'happiness is not about pleasure' below, claims coded here were specifically framed as being counter to what they describe as the dominant beliefs in society. It is a variation of the claim that people are frequently wrong about happiness (see Appendix E).

	<p>susceptible to being subsumed by the demands of work in the manner that so dogged 20th-century middle-class family life. The third is the Meaningful Life, which focuses on altruism and good works - doing things selflessly for others. This is the way to true fulfillment, says Dr Seligman.' (Orr, <i>The Independent</i>:2006)</p>	
Happiness is not a feeling	<p>'...as moral beings, our happiness is not just about 'feeling good but being good'. What is required, says Schoch, is 'big fish thinking' about the quality of our lives as a whole.' (Botros, <i>The Guardian</i>:2006)</p>	12
Happiness is not a goal but a by-product	<p>'On average, people are happier the more they care about other people's happiness and the less they care about their own. In this sense, happiness is a by-product of focusing on the happiness of others. Relationships are central to this in our increasingly atomised society. But we also need to exercise our bodies: we were not constructed simply to sit around. Attending to the world about us means savouring whatever comes our way and living more in the present than the future or the past.' (Layard, <i>The Sunday Times</i>:2010)</p>	11
Happiness is about meaning	<p>"Having a sense of meaning and purpose in life, which most religions promote, very much enhances your emotional wellbeing," said Professor Leslie Francis, a specialist in the psychology of religion, at the University of Warwick. "Just being out there to make money is not a sense of purpose." (Devlin, <i>The Times</i>:2010)</p>	9
Happiness is 'flourishing' (eudaimonia)	<p>'Aristotle knew that individual satisfaction was not purely about feeding appetite, but something more fleeting and indefinable, "a very pretty thing to feel, but very dry to talk about". He called it eudaemonia, usually translated as "happiness", or "good fortune", but a closer definition might be "human flourishing", the idea that the most profound gratification lies in liberty, to find your own route and satisfactions without interference from outside.' (Macintyre, <i>The Times</i>:2010).</p>	6
Happiness is not about pleasure	<p>'At Wellington college, Ian Morris, who co-wrote <i>The Skills of Wellbeing</i>, the school's happiness manual with Cambridge University's Nick Baylis, Britain's first lecturer in positive psychology, says that what makes people happy aren't transient pleasures: junk food, television, computer games, but 'a life well lived.'" (Griffiths, <i>The Sunday Times</i>:2007)</p>	6
Happiness about 'good life', life well-lived	<p>'Mention of ancient philosophy highlights a further problem. Seneca and others argued that the way to happiness, and indeed the aim of politics, was the cultivation of a good life. Now, the good life is one of those areas where policy-makers and social scientists alike fear to tread: who is to say what a good life is, in these pluralistic days? But consumerism has its own conception of the good life, if one with diminishing returns</p>	5

	for happiness. And the good life is the necessary debate.' (Vernon, <i>The Guardian</i> :2006)	
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As the overlap between examples demonstrates, all of these claims are variations on a core theme: Happiness is not about pleasure; it is about what people do. One cannot be happy while engaging in 'deviant' behaviours, even if they may feel pleasurable.

Although this has been labelled as a 'moral' theme, these claims are primarily focused upon the management of behaviour through the inculcation of correct values. Consumerism, for example, is frequently cast as a weakness of moral character. The meaningful life for which one is supposed to quest is not open to debate or for individuals to discover for themselves, but rather one aimed at a foregone conclusion. One claimmaker puts it: 'The new science tells us what makes people happy. Pets do. Marriage does -it's apparently worth the equivalent of an extra £70,000' a year. Same with volunteering or community involvement: the happiness equivalent of a doubling in income' (Milburn, *The Sunday Times*:2006). Another states: 'Although, it's hard to detect a link between growth and overall levels of wellbeing, the evidence is that stable family life, being married, financial security, health, having religious faith and feelings of living in a cohesive community where people can be trusted, all contribute to happiness' (Elliott, *The Guardian*:2007). A recent textbook describes the aims of this crusade well, describing itself as giving consideration to 'what makes people happy, and how we can potentially nudge them to be happier' (Cartwright, 2011).

Through these definitions and descriptions of what 'true' happiness is, claimmakers explicitly allege or imply a problem of incorrect understandings that lead to bad behaviours. As we will see in the conclusions section, this frequently leads to a focus on 'changing cultures' and modifying beliefs and behaviours as remedies to the problem.

7.3.2 Definitions as Claims to Expertise

Just as the use of particular terminologies acts as an implicit appeal to authority, so too do particular definitions of happiness act as implicit claims to expertise. Table 26 shows the five most

common descriptions and definitions of happiness underscoring a scientific basis drawn from the claims listed in Appendix E.¹¹⁶

Table 26. Descriptions and definitions implying expert authority

Claim	# Articles
Happiness is not something everyday people understand/People frequently wrong	19
Happiness can be measured	8
C – Happiness can't be measured	6
Happiness is 'U-shaped' throughout the life course (young and old are happy, middle aged are less happy)	7
Happiness can/must be taught	6
V – Happiness is a skill	6
C – Happiness can't be taught	1
C – Teaching happiness detracts from experience of happiness	1
Happiness is not the absence of sadness	3

As with moral definitions, many of these claims imply the existence of a problem in the ostensible divergence between everyday understandings of happiness and those 'discovered' to be true by science. Indeed, that happiness is not something everyday people understand was a claim explicitly stated in nearly 1 out of every 5 articles sampled. This claim, that people are mistaken when it comes to what will or will not make them happy, also forms the foundations on which conclusions for intervention are based. It becomes a gateway into the lives of those who are not ill and who might not otherwise see themselves as in need of the help of a professional. Although no particular constituency is pointed to as the target of blame, everyone is a potential victim.

The measurability of happiness is set forth in many grounds as the basis for a claim to its existence as a scientific object. Claimsmakers stress that happiness is a science because it can be reliably measured. One commentator alleges, 'It's easy to define sadness. But happiness is also measurable, not only by neuroscience, but by asking people how they feel' (Riddell, *The Observer*:2006). Of course, measurability also allows claimsmakers to assert the existence of a paradox of prosperity, since 'rates' of happiness can be aggregated and compared across time. Layard insists that, 'not only can happiness be defined and measured scientifically, but that fairly precise fluctuations can be observed in happiness relative to income' (Aaronovitch, *The Times*:2009).

¹¹⁶ V=Variations, C=Criticisms, N=Negative form of claim

Given its necessity as the basis of many problem claims, it is interesting how little measurability is explicitly insisted upon. Almost as many times as the explicit claim is forwarded, commentators express reservations. One responds to the claim that happiness can be ‘objectively quantified by measuring electrical activity in the brain,’ by saying: ‘This is without a doubt the scariest idea I have read for many years. If Cameron is going to carry on talking of gross domestic happiness, he would be well advised to distance himself from this horrifying vision of a Happy New World’ (Marrin, *The Sunday Times*:2006). Rather than explicitly forwarding this claim, many claimsmakers take measurability for granted. Few claimsmakers encounter opposition when forwarding variations of the paradox of prosperity (see next section), which nonetheless rely on the possibility of measuring happiness.¹¹⁷

These claims are often delineated as part of a list of ‘facts’ about what scientists now know about happiness. Setting out happiness as a scientific object is an important ground; it gives claimsmakers license to make normative statements about the activities that have been, in a sense, ‘clinically proven’ to induce happiness.

7.3.3 Happiness and Expectations

Definitions and descriptions often implicitly problematise rising expectations. The most common of these are that happiness adapts to changes and new things (15% of articles sampled), claims that social gains are equivalent, or even more valuable than, monetary gains (14%), and that happiness should not rely on external circumstances (9%). The claim that happiness comes from ‘within’ seems to contradict the strong drive to define happiness as something that necessarily lies outside of the mind through the pursuit of moral behaviours. However, this claim is most often articulated in relation to wealth and material possessions, and the two claims are rarely juxtaposed. When the claim is that happiness should come from within and not from material possessions, it meets little contestation.

¹¹⁷ From early on, conclusions have focused on the need to create measures and indices of happiness and wellbeing as alternative indicators of progress. That a claim to measurability was affirmed is evidenced by the fact that, even before the UK Office for National Statistics (ONS) announced its first major initiative to monitor wellbeing by adding questions on the subject to the existing British household survey in 2010, Defra had included wellbeing measures in their sustainable indicators set as early as 2007.

7.3.4 Meanings as Implicit Problematisations

It has been shown that various rhetorical idioms and the meanings attributed them function to both implicitly and explicitly problematise new areas of social life. Happiness is different from many other social problems whose problematic nature is explicit, and many claims about happiness are presented as positive reorientations of social issues toward human strengths rather than weaknesses or value-free facts about the state of scientific knowledge on the subject. Yet these claims implicitly render problematic ever broadening domains of everyday life and commonsense understandings of what it is to be happy and well. Happiness becomes not the absence of sadness, nor wellbeing the absence of illness. Illness becomes the default position.

7.4 Defining the Problem

Mobilising particular terminologies and subtly redefining their contents implicitly problematises happiness by setting it forth as an elusive state and object of specialised knowledge. However, the construction of the problem by no means ends here. These idioms and their new meanings form the foundations on which are built explicit problem claims.

7.4.1 A Successful 'Rhetorical Recipe'

The 'basic rhetorical recipe' observed by Best (1999; Best 2008:31-33) as existing across the construction of many social problems—moving from a 'typifying example' presented as characteristic of a new issue with an often 'catchy' name followed by statistics implying its pervasiveness and scope—seems inappropriate for a problem like 'happiness.' Claimsmakers frequently frame their claims in positive language and the deficits to which they point are often implicit. Unlike new crime problems, happiness is not straightforwardly problematic. The relatively 'un-newsworthy' experience of individual contentment does not seem to lend itself easily to a broader problem of unhappiness in society. Nonetheless, a successful rhetorical recipe is indeed evident in happiness claims.

This 'rhetorical recipe' consists of alleging a paradox between happiness and another variable (usually indicative of prosperity) a claimsmaker wishes to problematise.¹¹⁸ The divergence between the two indicators is then described as being contrary to expectations, that happiness and the chosen indicator should have increased in step. In many claims, this paradox is enhanced with reference to large, often frightening statistics about other social problems painting a picture of generalised social decline. This strategy can be summarised as follows:

1. A statement about social/economic data usually indicative of prosperity
2. A statement about declining, or more often, 'stagnant' happiness figures
3. Reference to other social problems; dramatisation and imagery of decline

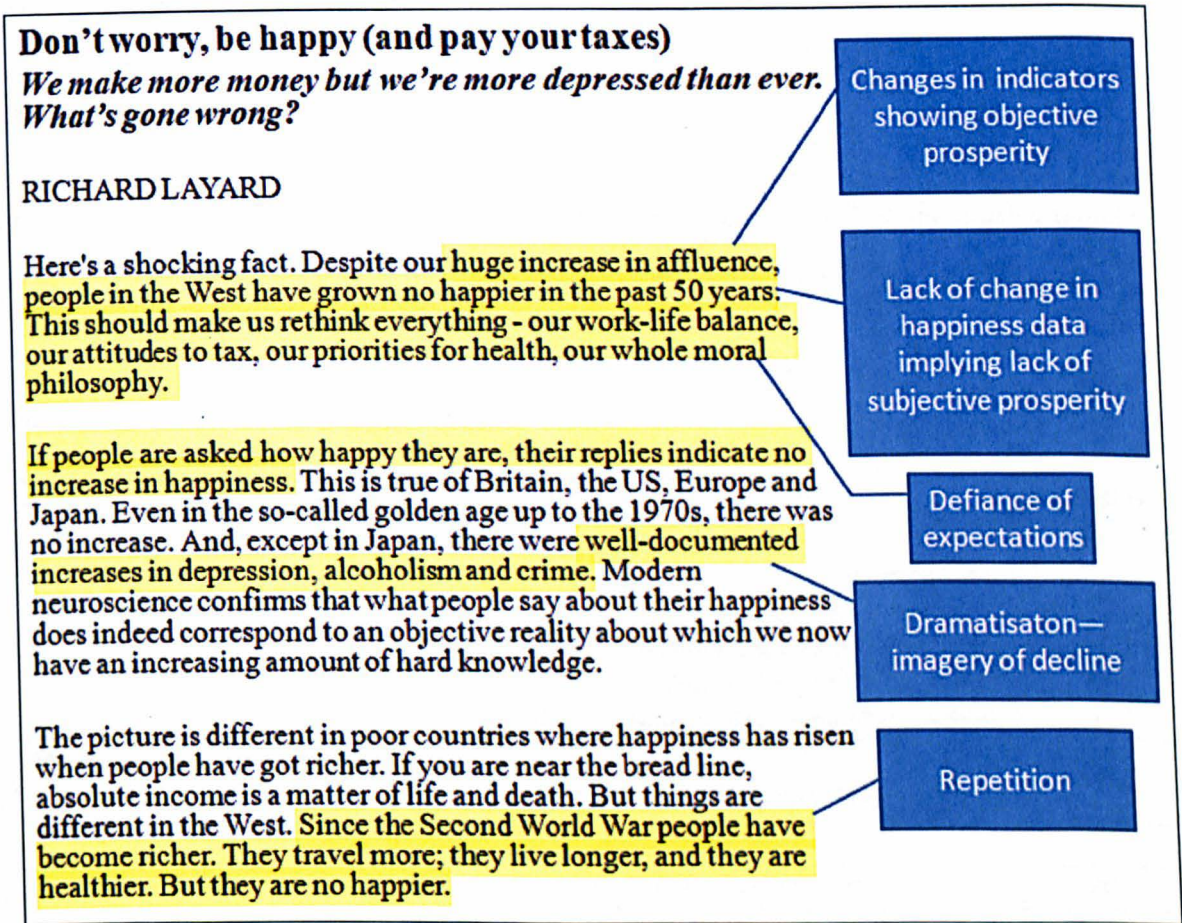
In his analysis of framing processes in problem claims, Entman (1993:52) describes: 'Framing essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described' (emphasis removed). According to Entman, salience means 'making a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful or memorable to audiences' (1993:53). The salience of particular claims can be elevated through repetition, placement within a text or 'by associating them with culturally familiar symbols' (Entman, 1993:53). Of 29 articles in the sample employing this strategy, 8 placed it in the headline or lead, and a further 5 within the first three paragraphs.

The example below illustrates this strategy for gaining maximum salience. It is an excerpt from an article to which an entire page was devoted in *The Independent on Sunday* on 9 March, 2003.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Happiness rates are sometimes substituted with statistics about other social problems as indicators of unhappiness.

¹¹⁹ This figure is a representation of that found in the Nexis database for the purposes of illustration and is not an exact reproduction of the article as it originally appeared in print form. The content of the text is unchanged.

Figure 13. Paradox as rhetorical strategy



Although not highlighted in the above figure, note that there is also an appeal to the authority of neuroscience to further justify claims on the topic. Including the headline, the paradox is repeated four times in these opening lines alone.

It is significant that the problem identified by claimsmakers is precisely that *nothing* has changed. In spite of the additional statistics which support a sense of generalised social decay, the core claim about happiness is a problematisation not of sudden dramatic falls in happiness rates, but of continuity across time. By definition then, it is not a problem that had become so pressing that professional and political powers were forced into action. Happiness researchers, in the creation of the raw data on which much of subsequent claimsmaking is based, had to actively seek out populations, ask them to focus upon their emotions and transform them into numerical estimates, which could then be compared across populations and generations. In problematising these results, decisions are made about which phenomena to draw out for comparison—most often economic growth, consumerism or increases in personal income. In doing so, they also avoided comparisons with other factors, since presumably every social change or government

intervention, for better or worse, from the time that chronological comparisons of happiness rates begin, must also have failed to affect happiness levels as well.

7.4.2 The Problem of Wealth

By far, the most common explicit claim is the problem of wealth. 56% of the articles sampled problematised wealth in relation to happiness taking the form of 23 different claims. The table below shows five of the most common of these grounds.

Table 27. Grounds problematising wealth

Claim	# Articles
Paradox	29
<i>Common variations:</i>	
V – ‘Richer....but not happier’	16
V – In spite of income increases and happiness	15
V – Between wealth and mental illness rates	5
C – No correlation between happiness and anything	1
Money/wealth doesn’t buy happiness	27
N – Money does buy happiness	1
Materialism/commodity acquisition does not produce happiness	24
No increase in happiness beyond certain income/level of development	20
Income growth does not make people happy/happier	19

The paradox is the most common of these claims and, as chapter 5 illustrates, is easily exploited by claimsmakers with various objectives. This reflects that once the claim became culturally available, claimsmakers not only repeated it, but adapted the successful formulation to suit their aims. It is also seldom questioned, and the criticism that there does not appear to be a correlation between happiness and anything, is seldom repeated.¹²⁰

7.4.3 Causes of Unhappiness

In addition to claims that problematise wealth in relation to happiness, a further 31 general causes of unhappiness are identified by claimsmakers. The five most common of these are listed in the table below.

¹²⁰ This argument, articulated by Helen Johns and Paul Ormerod, appears once in the sample and in only 4 articles in the Nvivo database.

Table 28. Grounds identifying causes of unhappiness

Claim	# Articles
Social comparison or 'keeping up with the Joneses' cause of unhappiness	23
Advertising and television make people unhappy	19
Expectations and aspirations are cause of unhappiness	16
V – Striving to succeed cause of unhappiness	1
'Hedonic treadmill' cause of unhappiness/People stuck in a 'rate race'	15
Capitalism and/or consumerism cause of unhappiness	11

To many claimsmakers, 'capitalist culture' and the 'pressures of consumerism' lie at the heart of the problem. However, the focus is not on these broader structures, but rather the subjective experience of the individual victim. 'Vast disparities in income, of the kind that free-market capitalism promotes, cause people to be far less satisfied with their lot than they might otherwise be' (Orr, *The Independent*:2006), one claimsmaker describes. Rather than being a critique of institutional arrangements, it is essentially a critique of the individual. As one claimsmaker puts it, 'we' are the problem:

At the heart of our non-stop, acquisitive, greedy capitalist culture is the message: consume, consume, consume. We judge people by what they have, rather than what we [sic] are, and we allow ourselves to define our own sense of self by the amount of money we earn, the power we might have in our jobs and the level of materialism we surround ourselves with. It is no longer I think, therefore I am: now it is I have, and that's what I am (Boycott, *The Sunday Times*:2009).

Although inequality is also singled out, it is viewed as essentially a problem of expectations. As one article describes, 'Mori confirms that it is how people feel about the pecking-order that affects their happiness. Overestimating how much happiness more money will buy, people climb on a hedonic treadmill going nowhere' (Toynbee, *The Guardian*:2004). Another explains that people in rich countries are not happier than poorer ones because, 'They are trying to keep up with the Joneses. [...] The effort devoted to it is a total waste in terms of the satisfaction generated' (Layard, *The Times*:2005). Inequality is condemned primarily on the grounds that it makes those who have less covetous and unhappy. A desire for attainment beyond 'basic needs' is problematised as causing unhappiness. Human aspiration becomes a 'hedonic treadmill' of increasing wants that trap victims in a perpetual 'rat race.'

7.5 Victims

Claimsmakers not only construct conditions, they also construct people. Loseke (2003:120) observes that claims constructing harmful condition-categories 'often simultaneously construct the types of *people* who inhabit those categories' (emphasis in original). Just as we do not directly experience every social problem of which we are aware, we do not know, and indeed cannot know, even a small fraction of the people who are meant to be affected by them. This means that there is also a 'social problems claims-making process of rhetorically producing people-type categories' (Loseke, 2003:121). This exercise in 'people production' often takes the form of a melodrama of 'victims and villains' (Best, 1995). The 'villains' implicated in the problematisation of happiness tend to be indistinct; they are our neighbours (the 'Joneses'), abstract forces like 'society,' and 'the pressures of consumerism'—and they are also 'us.' Nonetheless, claims tend to display a disproportionate emphasis on the unhappiness of victims. Categories like children, and indeed 'everyone,' are assumed to be, by definition, vulnerable.

7.5.1 Children

34% of articles sampled pointed to children as victims. Here, the distinction between implicit and explicit problematisations becomes particularly significant. The most common explicit problem claims refer to wellbeing in decline and rises in mental illness (13%), the influence of parenting and parenting styles on childhood happiness (8%), and the effects of childhood experience on future happiness (7%). Claims are often dramatised with reference to other social problems like teenage drinking, teenage pregnancy, and mental illness rates. It is explicitly claimed that, 'Affluent, child-centred Britain is rearing the unhappiest generation in modern history' (Riddell, *The Observer*: 2006).

Childhood is also implicitly problematised through the consideration of children as 'by definition [...] self-evident candidates' for 'vulnerable' status (Frankenberg et al., 2000:589). It is assumed that happiness is not a default state, but requires bolstering, intervention and special know-how. This is too important to be left to parents. 'Schools should be helping children to develop skills and techniques for dealing with the world and increasing their own wellbeing,' one claimmaker is quoted as saying (Baker, *The Independent*: 2006). According to Layard, 'Learning hard things takes an enormous amount of practise. [...] How can we expect people to learn to be happy without massive amounts of practice and repetition? I believe that it can only be done by the schools' (McCartney, *The Sunday Telegraph*: 2007).

Claims construct ways to “think” and to “feel” about people-categories’ (Loseke, 1993:125). Claims draw on existing ideas of children as by definition vulnerable while at the same time connecting to the ease with which contemporary audiences connect to claims about child victims (Best, 1990). It is little surprising then that happiness claims focusing on children were some of the first to be institutionalised.

7.5.2 *Everyone*

The use of the collective pronoun ‘we’ signifies not only that claims apply to everyone, but that everyone is a potential victim. At the same time, ‘we’ are the problem—for lacking the moral fortitude to avoid social comparison, for desiring too much. The vast majority of articles in the sample conceptualised the problem in these inclusive terms, referring to the fact that ‘we are no happier in spite of increases in wealth’ and that ‘our happiness’ depends on various phenomena. As Gusfield (1996) describes in his study of rhetoric in the construction of alcohol problems, in seeking consensus, problems can be framed not as political issues reflecting differing interests and points of view, but rather as *social* problems with a ‘united societal consensus’ that affirms them (Gusfield, 1996:25). ‘There is no room for a diversity of views; no contest of meanings. In the sense used in literary criticism, the “voice” of the writer is that of the abstract authoritative “society”’ (Gusfield, 1996:25).

Through the use of the ‘regal or editorial “we”’ (Gusfield, 1976:21), advocates also claim to stand on equal footing with their audiences. Having established their competence to report on reality through appeals to scientific expertise, claimsmakers then turn to relating the facts in a manner that avoids claims to superior judgment. The claimsmaker seems to say, ‘I will give you, the reader, all the knowledge and factual information that I have. We will reason together and achieve a consensus through fact and reason. You, as a rational person, cannot but reach the same conclusion as I’ (Gusfield, 1976:22). Claimsmakers are therefore relating knowledge about everyone—about human beings in general—themselves included. Although morality is frequently evoked, such pronouncements are made not on the basis of judgements or opinion, but on the ‘true’ nature of human beings, verified in the abstract.

Like children, people are defined by their *de facto* vulnerability and propensity to succumb to threats to emotional health. Without the intervention of enlightened parties to, for example, ‘dampen down the pressures of consumption’ (Toynbee, *The Guardian*: 2004) people are portrayed as vulnerable to fall ill to contaminating social forces.

The villains may be social structures and institutions, but these are vague and impersonal, and the focus remains on victims. Problems are reduced to individual bad lifestyle choices; people want too much, have the wrong ideas about happiness and are seeking it in the wrong ways. Vulnerability underpins this view of subjectivity. Only a certain type of person, or 'people-type category,' is liable to be harmed by the pursuit of wealth, the weight of expectations and the pace of change. It is a view that considers people more liable to be damaged than do damage when confronted with adversity.

7.6 Warrants and Rhetorical Strategies

Warrants are ways of promoting claims. They justify drawing conclusions from the grounds. All claims implicitly evoke the values of the broader culture, but it is in the warrants that 'values most often come into play' (Best, 1987:109). The promotion of happiness claims was achieved through two overarching strategies. The first pertains to the results of attempts to make claims stand out in the context of intense competition in the news media. The second pertains more acutely to the cultural resources on which claims draw, encompassing two themes—an emphasis on academic rigor, and 'revolutionary break/historical return.'

7.6.1 *Associated Evils, Costs and Benefits, Melodrama and Metaphors*

Claimsmakers promote the significance of happiness in a number of ways. The most common strategy is to attach the new problem to a host of already accepted social ills. If people already care about one social problem, they are more likely to affirm the significance of a new one to which it is claimed to relate. The capacity of happiness to act as warrant in claimsmaking about a variety of issues makes it difficult to decipher exactly which issue is 'piggybacking' on the other. However, the important point is that through the language of happiness, a host of extant social ills are promised to be remedied. Social problems referenced in the sample include depression and other mental illnesses (26%), stress (14%), work-life balance (10%), self-esteem (7%), bullying (5%) and the recession (5%). Metaphors also draw on the cultural currency of addiction (5%).

The prevalence of these problems reflects both happiness claimsmakers connecting the new problem to old concerns as well as claimsmakers initially concerned with other issues 'riding the wave' of the new interest in happiness. When the economic crisis hit, for example, many advocates claimed to have been vindicated. Launching a major new report on happiness, French

President Nicolas Sarkozy is described as making 'no secret of his target: the rapacious Anglo-Saxon neo-liberals who hoovered up multimillion-dollar bonuses while bringing the world economy to its knees' (Stewart, *The Observer*: 2009). A review of a new book entitled, *You Are Really Rich, You Just Don't Know It Yet* is described as, 'Shrewdly tapping into the mood of recessionary re-evaluation that has seen many of us question what's truly important' by sending out 'a team of researchers [to ask] a thousand British people what made them happy' (Woods, *The Daily Telegraph*:2009).

These strategies have the effect of personalising and simplifying claims, imbuing complex processes with an individualised 'anthropogenic' character. Large scale problems like the capitalist economy in crisis, for example, can thus be conceived as resulting from an 'addiction' to economic growth or a misguided quest for happiness through money. One claimsmaker alludes to the banking crisis and inner city violence as stemming from a misplaced value on materialism as a source of happiness:

In tackling this problem, you must not only address the actions of those chasing the money, but also the mindset that drives them. A role model who diverts someone from becoming a ruthless, money-oriented drug dealer has done well. But unless the underlying values towards money are challenged, the person may simply become an equally ruthless banker or mortgage broker. That is why role models who use material success as the means for gaining young people's attention are taking a real risk (Ryder, *The Observer*: 2009).

Warrants also stress the health (13% of the sample) and economic (7%) benefits of happiness. Somewhat paradoxically given the tendency to disparage GDP, it is often argued that countries will be more economically competitive and workers more productive if nations and firms take on the conclusions of happiness research. While seemingly contradictory, these claims can be understood as attempting to 'cast a broad net,' connecting to the widest possible audience of potentially interested parties. To those for whom economic growth is an alien and abstract concept, a promise to prioritise personal values and emotions might seem appealing. At the same time, through a promise to raise productivity, claims can be made appealing to those for whom growth and maintaining competitiveness are a fact of life and necessity for survival.

A third of articles sampled utilised warrants emphasising 'severity,' the 'suffering of victims,' and alleged a 'worsening situation.' As we saw in chapter 5, linking happiness to other social problems, they construct an image of an increasingly dire situation warranting attention.

Happiness lends itself easily to 'piggybacking' between social issues, since nearly any issue seems reducible to this lowest common denominator. Moreover, existing concerns can be mobilised toward a common goal. By conceptualising a range of issues as essentially problems of happiness, claimsmakers are able to unite on common ground, speak to audiences on a personal level, and offer enticingly simple solutions to highly complex problems.

7.6.2 *Emphasis on Academic Rigor*

It has already been shown how recourse to particular terminologies has the effect of setting happiness apart as an expert domain. The appeal to expert authority also acts as a rhetorical warrant, as a basis for 'truth' that compels action. 41% of articles were observed as emphasising the academic rigor of happiness claims. There were three methods of accomplishing this:

1. Emphasis on academic credentials of claimsmakers and/or scientists and researchers on whose research they draw
2. Stress on the weight of evidence, number of studies or 'hard' scientific basis of claims
3. Use of scientific language and jargon

The table below shows keywords and phrases coded as warrants promoting the scientific basis of claims.

Table 29. Warrants promoting expertise

Examples	Academic Credentials	Weight of Evidence	Scientific Language
Keywords & Phrases	'eminent' 'leading' 'world's best respected' 'renowned' 'leading expert on happiness' 'leading happiness economist' 'leading neuroscientist' 'wizards of economics' 'prestigious scientific institution' 'world's top psychologist'	'serious science' 'hard scientific evidence' 'new science' 'ground-breaking' 'science as hard as rocks' 'serious scientific research' 'science of happiness' 'new scientific movement'	'hedonic calculus' 'hedonics' 'psychological wellbeing' 'subjective wellbeing' 'eudaimonic wellbeing' 'eudaimonia' 'general wellbeing' 'thalamus and medial prefrontal cortex (Brodmann's area 9)'
Extracts	'The Royal Society, arguably Britain's pre-eminent body of scientists, will host in November its first-ever meeting on The Science of Well-Being - bringing together an	'For doubters, he offers a wealth of hard scientific evidence. Neuroscience has backed up social and psychological surveys:	'But what is this thing called happiness? [...] "Happiness is inversely related to income at higher levels of income because of the

	<p>international array of Nobel Laureates and other distinguished researchers to pool their understanding of "lives going well" (<i>The Times</i>: 2003).</p> <p>'With scientific erudition enlivened by acerbic wit, he addresses the search for happiness more tangentially - using recent discoveries about the ways that the human brain imagines its own future to consider why we get so much wrong, causing ourselves so much dissatisfaction and pain' (Mooney, <i>The Times</i>: 2006).</p> <p>'This is a question, at least, on the minds of the world's foremost psychologists who last week took a well-earned holiday from dysfunction, misery and mental torment and were to be seen pouring into London for a special conference focusing on that selfish minority of individuals who go around making the rest of us feel inadequate by leading fulfilled and useful lives' (Hogan, <i>The Observer</i>: 2003).</p>	<p>brain scans now prove that people's reported happiness levels are remarkably accurate, as easy to measure as decibels of noise' (Toynbee, <i>The Guardian</i>: 2003).</p> <p>"'We're only interested in serious science," he says. "If it didn't have science behind it, we would be no more credible than TV self-help gurus"' (Sample, <i>The Guardian</i>: 2003).</p> <p>"'Theoretical claims are often disputed; but there's a good deal of academic debate," she says. "It's important to distinguish between positive psychology as a rigorous scientific discipline and self-help materials which serve a different purpose"' (Wilson, <i>The Observer</i>: 2010).</p>	<p>declining marginal utility of getting richer," says Layard. "Let me show you." He draws a graph: on the X axis is income per head, on the Y axis is average happiness. A curve ascends boldly and then tails off ignominiously' (Jeffries, <i>The Guardian</i>: 2008).</p> <p>'[...] economists have increasingly been shifting towards the use of so-called "biomarkers" [...] instead of relying solely on surveys asking people how they feel about their lives. But he insists it would be foolish of economists to ignore reports of how happy people are, citing the economist Alan Blinder's comment that, 'if molecules could talk, would physicists refuse to listen?' (Stewart, <i>The Observer</i>: 2009)</p>
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Typically, clarity and the ability to cast difficult ideas in a language anyone can understand are assets to claimsmakers seeking to gain popular support. However, as McCloskey (1998) describes in her study of the rhetoric of economics, once an idea gains currency, obscurity is actually an asset. But it is a matter of style over substance. The above excerpt from an interview with Layard illustrates this well (Jeffries, *The Guardian*: 2008). Although the interviewer asks him to define happiness, he gives a jargon-laden response which actually refers to a paradox of happiness and does not answer the question at all.

These rhetorical strategies reaffirm claims that happiness is not something that the everyday person understands. As warrants, they appeal to incontrovertible truths to compel assent. The appeal to scientific warrants means that the 'moral' behaviours claimsmakers dictate as

constituents of happiness are forwarded not as opinions on how to live that are open to debate, but as technical questions with technical solutions. They are not matters of ideology, but scientific truths that compel action.

7.6.3 Revolutionary Break/Historical Return

The most frequently observed warrants invoking values can be conceptualised as falling into an overarching theme emphasising happiness as a ‘revolutionary break,’ as well as an ‘historical return.’ That is, claimsmakers paradoxically evoke a rhetoric of radicalism coupled with an affirmation of values (real or imagined) drawn from the past. Table 30 illustrates this dichotomy.

Table 30. Revolutionary Break/Historical Return

	Revolutionary Break	Historical Return
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes happiness as a radical break from previous practices/beliefs/values • Rhetoric of radicalism; anti-capitalist or anti-consumerist themes dominate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appeals to non-western cultures • Draws on values of the past as opposed to ‘degraded’ contemporary notions: Classical Greece, Declaration of Independence, earlier phases of (capitalist) society
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘total rethink of society’s goals’ (James, <i>The Guardian</i>:2003). • ‘There is nothing more radical than trying to be happy’ (Hutton, <i>The Observer</i>:2003) • ‘Placing happiness as the focus of our attentions turns the world on its head’ (Hutton, <i>The Observer</i>:2003) • ‘Layard is quietly effecting a revolution in this miserable, materialistic, overworked country’ (Jeffries, <i>The Guardian</i>:2008). • ‘At the heart of our non-stop, acquisitive, greedy capitalist culture is the message: consume, consume, consume’ (Boycott, <i>The Sunday Times</i>:2009) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Aristotle talked about “eudaimonia” –happiness as human flourishing and purpose to life - rather than the modern hedonistic concept’ (Stratton, <i>The Guardian</i>:2010a) • ‘We need to restate the point of politics—which is to make people happy’ (Owen, <i>The Times</i>:2003) • ‘Bloated by the luxuries of living in a rich democracy, we have lost sight of the small things that are the root of happiness, and the truth that happiness is rooted within us, not in objects’ (Frostrup, <i>The Observer</i>:2004)

It is claimed that new ideas of happiness reveal traditionally affirmed societal goals as ill-conceived, and promoting happiness is represented as a radical break with the past. At the same time, happiness is articulated as a return to a previous era viewed as less degraded, more virtuous, and pure. As we have seen through the use of ‘flourishing’ and eudaimonia above,

ancient Greece is frequently evoked, but so too are non-western cultures, which are seen as living time capsules for pre-capitalist values.¹²¹

The widespread use of this rhetorical warrant as support for happiness claims, with its seemingly contradictory tendency to combine both a revolutionary vision with a longing for the past, reveals an underlying conservative, or perhaps more precisely, 'presentist' impulse. As Lasch (1979:7) observes, the therapeutic climate desires not 'salvation' or 'the restoration of a golden age,' but rather 'the feeling, the *momentary* illusion of personal well-being, health, and psychic security' (emphasis added). The revolutionary vision articulated is not a future-oriented one, but an attempt to sustain the present moment by drawing on the values of the past. Its claim to radicalism is precisely its 'reaction' to change and its attempt to push back against historical movement (Furedi, 1992:203). This is reflected in the tendency, described in chapter 5, for happiness to be promoted as a necessarily 'sustainable' and enduring state, with advancement denigrated as 'fleeting' and progress as futile (see chapter 5). Movement is perceived as damaging to the fragile psyche of the individual and cast as a 'hedonic treadmill' and relentless 'rat race.' The impulse to sustain the present is evidenced by the usage of the past not as an analytical tool oriented toward the future, but as a place to turn for predetermined answers society's problems (Furedi, 1992:202-203). As Mannheim (1993:296-297) writes:

For progressive thought, everything derives its meaning in the last analysis from something either above or beyond itself, from a future utopia or from its relation to a transcendent norm. The conservative, however, sees all the significance of a thing in what lies behind it, either its temporal past or its evolutionary germ. Where the progressive uses the future to interpret things, the conservative uses the past [...].

The use of this warrant also echoes the observation made by Ben-Ami (2012) and Pupavac (2010) that a tendency to play down the benefits of material wealth and progress reflects a 'romantic' critique of society that nonetheless underscores many of its core values including the centrality of the market. Indeed, as the conclusions of such claims reveal, the 'revolution' that claimsmakers evoke is a modest and ultimately conservative one.

¹²¹ We have already seen the example of Vanuatu, but Bhutan also serves as a commonly upheld example of a pre-capitalist Buddhist 'utopia.' Stories about its entry into modernity are lamented upon. For instance, a 2009 headline reads: 'How the happy kingdom in the clouds lost its smile; Bhutan has made its people's happiness a national priority. But a spate of suicides suggests it is struggling to cope with the modern world' (Buncombe, *The Independent*: 2009).

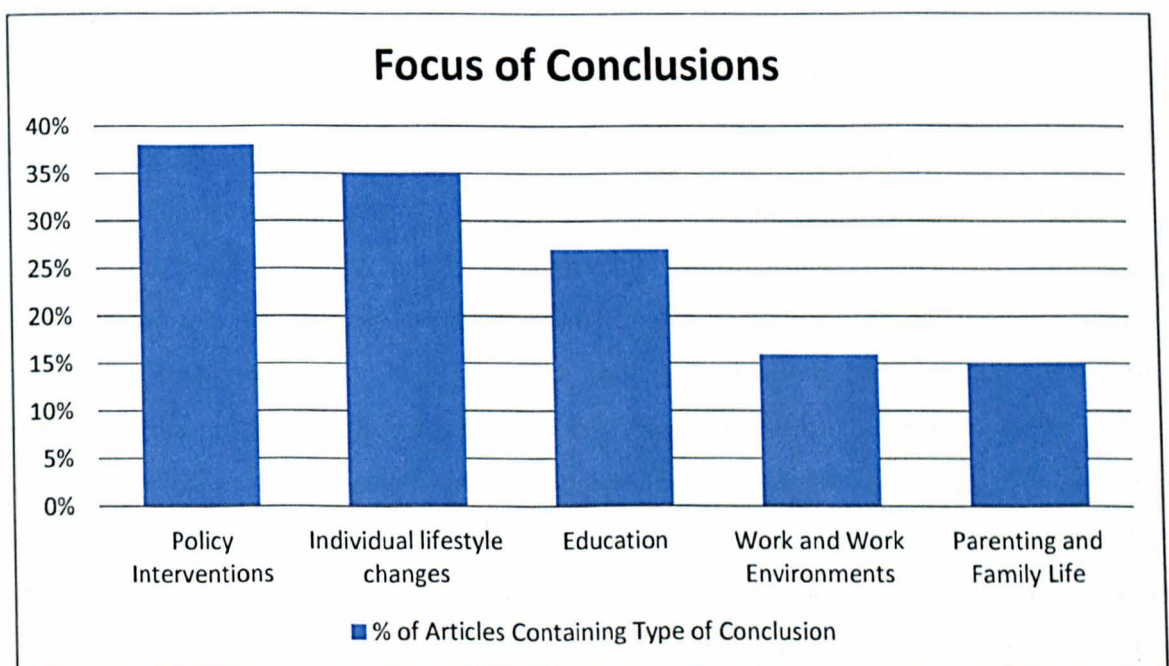
7.7 Conclusions

Recall that conclusions offer solutions to the problem. Initially, conclusions sought modest changes. Claimsmakers sought to change beliefs about happiness and to set it forth as a scientific object. Over time and as claims for interpretive change were affirmed, proposals become increasingly detailed and expansive in their conclusions.

According to Best (2008:39): 'The nature of the conclusions is shaped by the grounds and warrants. If a claim's grounds have depicted a condition that causes terrible suffering, and the warrants speak to humanitarian concerns about the need to alleviate suffering, then the conclusions are likely to focus on ways to help the afflicted.' It should not be surprising then that problems characterised in subjective terms invite subjective conclusions.

Conclusions in the sample were observed to fall into five main categories: policy interventions (38%), individual lifestyle changes (35%), education (27%), work and work environments (16%) and parenting and family life (15%). These categories and the proportion of articles containing each type of conclusion are illustrated in the figure below.

Figure 14. Focus of rhetorical conclusions



Within each category, conclusions tend to coalesce around changes at the individual level. The table below shows the five most common claims identified within each type of conclusion.

Table 31. Most common claims within categories of conclusions

Policy Interventions	Individual Lifestyle Changes	Education	Work and Work environments	Parenting and Family Life
Happiness should be the goal of policy	Re-examine negative thoughts and beliefs	Education should teach happiness skills	More attention and resources to improving work-life balance	Change parenting styles
Happiness indicators should complement economic indicators	Take care of physical body	Educate to insulate against bad effects of advertising and television	Employers should seek to promote happiness	Encourage marriage/discourage divorce
Shift focus away from economic growth and monetary indicators	Shift focus to experiences (rather than material acquisition)	Happiness should be an indicator of educational success	People should learn to enjoy their work	Parenting classes
More attention and spending on mental health and illness	Shift focus to non-material values	People (in general) should be taught happiness	Seek more leisure and less work	Spend more time with family (instead of work)
Limits or bans on advertising	Lower expectations	Education should teach correct views of happiness/happiness inducing ideologies	Companies should offer employees non-monetary incentives	Lower expectations of children

Proposals for change sought in happiness claims focus predominantly on changing beliefs and behaviours. Objective conditions of the social world are often singled out as villains in the grounds and warrants, but the focus of conclusions is on victims, on subjective change, shifting attention, and changing thought patterns and beliefs. While much is made of the deleterious effects of wealth and economic growth, none of the conclusions advocate putting an end to the latter. Rather, conclusions focus almost exclusively on shifting attention away from economic and other objective indicators toward subjective conceptualisations of prosperity. Although communal and structural themes are expressed, the focus is primarily on individual subjectivity and lifestyle, with the 'moral' basis of claims, emphasised in the grounds, surfacing in conclusions as prescriptions for how people should think and behave, stipulating behaviours like volunteering and maintaining a healthy body.

Grounds characterise many problems as being caused by wanting 'too much.' Conclusions thus advocate lowering expectations as a path to happiness. Audiences are told that happiness adapts,

and they will not be any happier if they acquire the objects of their desires. Conclusions therefore focus heavily on shifting from objective material values to subjective values. The path to happiness is said to lie not in increased material acquisition, but in harmoniously attenuating oneself to what one already has.

The non-adversarial nature of claims and their non-structural focus mean that conclusions were very quickly ratified. Educational programmes were rolled out almost immediately. In 2010, the ONS announced the creation of a UK National Wellbeing Index, in the works for some time. Like many successful problems before it, like stalking or hate crimes, there are now policies in effect and records being kept (Best, 1990:63). To paraphrase Best (1990:63) with regard to problems that have traversed a similar path, regardless of whether the media continues to focus on the issue, it has made a crucial transition, it is now an object of social policy.

7.8 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has attempted to give insight into how the problem of happiness has evolved and come to prevail. There is little doubt that without the activities of claimsmakers who kept the problem in the public eye, these claims would not have been so successful. At the same time, there are particular aspects of how the problem itself was constructed that made it particularly likely to succeed, to be picked up and spread by others, and to become a popular way of making sense of the world amongst claimsmakers from a diversity of backgrounds. In addition to its valence character, happiness has a history, a 'radical' utopian ring, and seems to offer a positive banner behind which to rally. Where happiness falls short as a rhetorical idiom, new idioms come to the fore, expanding the domain of the problem, but continuing to draw on happiness for its salience and narrative power. Not only is it a permissive discourse, it also provides an easily exploitable framework for claimsmaking. Nearly any claimmaker looking to draw attention to an undesirable phenomenon can point to its rise and a relentlessly 'stagnant' happiness rate and assert the existence of a 'paradox.' Through an insistence upon science, these claims gain a sense of truth that transcends political opinion.

But these constructions also have consequences. It is not inevitable that people should be understood or understand themselves in particular ways, but at particular times, some conceptualisations of the human subject will prevail over others. Claimsmakers overwhelmingly draw on vulnerability as a cultural resource—ideas of a human subject defined by its vulnerability

and inability to cope with the demands and pressures of the surrounding world. Illness becomes conceptualised as a normal response to a 'sick' state of civilisation. It struck few as odd to believe that expert advice was needed on how to achieve wellbeing; the prevailing and continually repeated assumption was that happiness is not something people simply have or acquire on their own in the course of their daily lives, but which requires work, attention, and specialist knowledge.

Numerous constraints cause claimsmakers to structure and promote their claims in the ways described above. Advocates believe that their problem is pressing, more pressing than others, and wish to keep it in the spotlight. Politicians must 'explain and justify their actions; that is, they must convince others that their policies are wise and appropriate' (Best, 2008:212). It helps to conceive of issues in simplistic and melodramatic terms, as problems of vague and impersonal villains and victims who suffer or struggle to cope. But in a depoliticised climate, emotional idioms like 'happiness' possess a unique rhetorical sway. Through a language that focuses on individual bodies and minds and through recourse to knowledge of the true nature of human beings, it bypasses areas of potential divisiveness and fosters consensus amongst parties who might not otherwise agree. The 'finger of blame,' pointed in vague directions, thus avoids offending any particular constituency, but it also turns back upon 'us'—the collective, undifferentiated whole of 'society'—as being to blame for social ills. Just as the language of social exclusion turned the focus away from heavily politicised questions regarding material resources and how society should be run toward a focus on 'a parity of esteem' (Fitzpatrick, 2001), happiness turns attention toward subjective equality and affirms lowering expectations as a radical alternative to quests for material advancement. These ideas are communicated in universal terms and affirmed across the political spectrum. Questions about the larger purposes toward which society should be directed are cast not as falling within the realm of ideology or debate, but as technical questions that can be outsourced to experts. Reduced to the lowest common denominator, almost any issue can be said to be remediable through changes at the level of individual, thought, behaviour and lifestyle, and through the inculcation of the correct values and beliefs about what constitutes happiness.

8 Happiness: A Master Frame for Claimsmaking

In approaching the rise of happiness from a constructionist orientation to social problems, this study aimed to ask different sets of questions than those which might begin by taking the existence and severity of the problem as their starting point. Instead of seeking out its causes and solutions, it considered such approaches themselves as 'claims' forwarded by 'claimsmakers,' forming the focal point of investigation. In doing so, it sought to show how the rise of the problem of happiness in news media discussions cannot be considered outside of the activities of those for whom such a conceptualisation became an appealing way of making sense of the world at a particular time. This chapter concludes this study by briefly reviewing some of the answers to core research questions and considers the success of the problem in the context of a 'master-frame' for claimsmaking (Snow and Benford, 1992). The success of this master frame is illustrated by a number of diverse examples of the institutionalisation of happiness claims. It then moves to a consideration of the contribution made to current understandings of social problems and a consideration of potential areas of future research.

8.1 The Construction of Happiness as a Social Problem

Recall that the key questions guiding this research concerned who claimsmakers are, what sort of problem they claim happiness is, and how constructs evolve and come to prevail. It also questioned some of the consequences of constructing the world in this particular way. The rise of happiness to the forefront of public debate has followed a path that is somewhat counterintuitive at first glance. Unlike familiar issues of the past like the civil rights campaign or the 'Occupy' movements that swept across the world in 2011, happiness did not emerge from those groups one might imagine as typical instigators of campaigns for change, with individuals and community groups organising at the grassroots level and campaigning to bring their grievances to light. There was no mass movement on the ground, at least initially, which characterised its demands primarily in the language of happiness. Rather, happiness was diffused in a 'top down' way, originating within the state rather than arising in opposition to it, spreading within establishment networks where it became an increasingly popular idiom through which to communicate with the public about a range of concerns. The first claimsmakers and owners of the issue were well-connected members of the polity already in possession of crucial resources like easy access to the

media, organisation, status, expertise, and legitimacy. Well placed for claims to gain a hearing, a symbiotic relationship developed between the instigators of happiness science, who consciously sought to spread its influence, and these 'problematisers' who took ownership of that information and pressed it in service of problem claims. Over time, more and more claimsmakers joined the crusade, becoming personally invested in the problem, both literally and figuratively, and in whose interest it was to refresh claims and keep the issue in the public eye.

Through the activities of claimsmakers, happiness evolved from something on the periphery to becoming a central focus of public discourses. It became not a vague rhetorical amplifier pointing toward self-evident goods, but something highly rationalised, increasingly set apart both from the material world and the everyday understanding of the uninitiated. A clear demand for information on how to be happy does not seem to have been present from the start, and in fact, early claimsmakers sought to spread their knowledge without positing a deficit toward which this new information should be directed. However, over time, the claim was increasingly underscored that people do not possess the know-how not only to avoid mental illness, but also, to find happiness and achieve wellbeing. By positing a new area of deficits, claimsmakers constructed a vision of the social world in which everyone is by definition ill and in need of expert guidance, creating a demand for new forms of expertise.

However, these activities would not have been so successful had claimsmakers chosen to rally around an idea that bore little relationship to the plausibility structures of contemporary UK society. At a certain point, it became plausible, and indeed compelling, for claimsmakers to conceptualise problems in the language of happiness and unhappiness and as being essentially reducible to the inability of individuals to satisfactorily manage their personal and emotional lives (Wainwright, 2008:83). Central to this was a conceptualisation of wealth as not a progressive tool for social change, but as inconsequential at best, and at worst, as fundamentally damaging to the human psyche. Once entering onto a public stage, such claims, regardless of their validity in other arenas of debate, became powerful rhetorical tools in campaigns about social problems, losing their connections to the original research contexts that produced them, and evolving to form the truth about the nature of the material world and the relationship of human beings to it. Claims about a 'paradox' between wealth and happiness and ideas of a 'sustainable' happiness set apart from the material world were conceptualised as 'radical' and 'revolutionary,' in ways that would have seemed alien to progressive movements of the past which had historically seen wealth as potentially providing the solutions to problems that had long plagued human societies.

Happiness became a popular idiom not because it was an analytical tool capable of making sense of the world and giving a coherent meaning to life, but because it offered a morally neutral means of connecting with the broadest possible audience in a depoliticised climate. As political movements of the past have fragmented into single issue campaigns, competition on the public stage for attention to new social problems became increasingly intense. As a rhetorical warrant in claimsmaking, happiness offers an appealingly simple and broadly relatable answer to the question: Why should audiences care about my particular problem? Why should people feel compelled to act? Thus, its widespread use and quick permeation of the public agenda points not only to its ascendancy as an issue in and of itself, but also to its existence as a 'master-frame' for claimsmaking more generally.

8.2 Happiness as a Master Frame

The widespread use of happiness to communicate a range of desires suggests the existence of a master frame. Like the rhetoric of rights, or indeed, the rhetoric of vulnerability on which happiness claims draw, such master frames do not necessarily emerge organically from a particular set of circumstances but rather precede characterisations of new social problems and act as resources drawn from the broader cultural repertoire (Furedi, 2007:242). A master frame denotes a broad orientation that can be adopted by diverse movements as they draw on culturally available symbols to make sense of, and draw attention to, their campaigns for change. As Benford and Snow (2000:618) suggest, the more elastic and inclusive the rhetoric, the greater its propensity to evolve into a widely used 'master frame.'

Though drawn from social movements theory, the concept helps to elucidate how particular rhetorical idioms become pervasive devices for making sense of a range of social ills. Best (1999) points to the extensive evocation of an 'ideology of victimization' and of conceptualisations of new crimes in terms of 'random violence' as possessing particular rhetorical offerings, including a focus on victims and a democratisation of risk, that lead them to become widely used master frames for subsequent movements. These become widely evoked significations, even by groups that may otherwise be opposed. Famously, both sides of the highly polarised abortion debate evoke the broadly agreeable rhetoric of 'rights' to frame their demands. Similarly, Williams and Williams (2003) describe how the 'fathers' rights movement' draws on the rhetoric of 'equal rights,' a broadly accepted element of the 'lingua franca' of American political discourse, to

ironically oppose positions taken by many women's groups, and even to attack feminists and women generally.

The concept of a master frame was initially developed as a counter to the tendency to consider the ideologies of particular movements as 'given,' and arising 'almost immanently from the events and objects with which they are associated' (Snow and Benford, 1992:136). The use of the term 'frame' rather than 'ideology' connotes an active engagement with reality construction as a 'process-derived phenomenon' that implies 'agency and contention' (Snow and Benford, 1992:136). Certain characteristics of happiness made it particularly likely to become not necessarily an analytical tool applied to understand the world in the abstract, but rather as a widely used master frame mobilised in the contentious 'politics of signification' (Hall, 2006:137).

As Benford and Snow describe, while some master frames represent 'closed' or 'rigid' formulations, others are more syntactically flexible. These 'elaborated master frames' offer more inclusive, universalistic, systems of meaning that allow 'numerous aggrieved groups to tap into [them] and elaborate their grievances in terms of its basic problem-solving schema' (1992:140). Complete with its own tropes and an easily exploitable 'paradox,' happiness leant itself easily to almost any issue, reducing its components to a core concern with individual happiness and unhappiness and situating issues on a common ground on which most people can agree. This flexibility speaks to its existence as an elaborated master frame, conceptually open and permissive to new groups seeking to draw on its achieved salience to gain resonance for their own social problem claims.

But a flexible syntax is not enough; however inclusive a master frame may be, this alone does not mean that it will achieve salience or be effective in compelling people to act. Crucially, resonance depends upon its ability to satisfy any one of three interrelated factors: empirical plausibility, a familiarity at the level of personal experience, and 'narrative fidelity'—that is, striking 'a responsive chord in that it rings true with extant beliefs, myths, folktales [...]' (Benford and Snow, 1992:141). Happiness claims draw on science as a cultural resource with a unique ability to confer legitimacy in ways that might have once been achieved through appeals to religion or political ideologies. They also speak to audiences at the lowest common denominator of the individual experience of happiness and unhappiness, even promising to focus on these salient factors to the exclusion of other phenomena, like economic growth, that can seem remote and disconnected from individual experience. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, happiness resonates with the extant 'beliefs, myths, folktales' of modern British society. Throughout this study the cultural resources on which claims draw have been held up for scrutiny, but the most significant of these

are taken for granted assumptions about the nature of the human subject and an ambivalence toward progress and social change. The satisfaction of these three criteria of resonance lends happiness considerable potency as a master frame.

The degree to which happiness, conceived in the ways described throughout this study, will be successful in permeating the public consciousness in the same way that idioms like 'self-esteem' have done in the past remains to be seen and investigated in future research. However, it is certain that for an astonishing variety of claimsmakers, happiness, with its empirical basis, positive valence and ability to connect with people at the individual level, represented an appealing master frame with which to make sense of and communicate a variety of concerns. Once added to the existing stock of frames by influential owners of the issue who actively sought to facilitate its diffusion, it became a culturally available framework for other claimsmakers seeking to refresh old claims or gain recognition for new ones, and it is likely that it will continue to represent this broad appeal as a master frame for claimsmaking in the future.

If the goal of claimsmaking is to affect change, then the salience of happiness as a master frame for claimsmaking is evidenced by the diversity of organisations that have affirmed its significance and institutionalised its claims into policy and practice, even if for contradictory reasons. For example, echoing similar developments in the UK and France, the UN has recently endorsed the need to track happiness, introducing a new indicator focusing on wellbeing 'rather than economic productivity' (UN News Centre, 2012). The UN Secretary General indicted the use of GDP as an indicator of 'so-called progress' and advocated 'a new economic paradigm' in which the constituents of 'gross global happiness'—social, economic and environmental wellbeing—would be realised as equally contributing to 'true' progress (UN News Centre, 2012). At the same time, the institutionalisation of happiness claims, including this core problematisation of wealth, is almost as enthusiastically accomplished in the private sector as it is in public policy. Major corporations are steadily affirming the importance of attending to the happiness and wellbeing of their employees, introducing 'wellbeing days,' laughter and meditation seminars, and hiring or consulting positive and behavioural psychologists. While these interventions frequently stress the lack of relationship between money and happiness, almost all are justified on the grounds of increasing productivity and profitability. For example, after ASDA employed positive psychologists and introduced a 'Colleague Wellbeing' programme, former 'Head of People' David Smith was quoted as attributing the company's increased profitability to these non-monetary routes to promoting staff engagement (Stewart, 2012:30-31). A jobs website called Careerbliss.com even gives a 'Leap Award' for companies that do the most to increase employee happiness, and

frequently stresses non-monetary aspects of workplace happiness in media reports and press releases (see for example, Smith, Forbes:2011; CareerBliss, 2011a; CareerBliss, 2011b; CareerBliss 2011c).¹²²

We have seen throughout this thesis numerous examples of institutionalisation of happiness claims. Across the board, organisations like banks, charities, international organisations and non-governmental organisations have institutionalised happiness into their rhetoric and practice. Even groups with widely opposing interests have unintentionally advocated the same claims for very different reasons. That happiness claims could be used so readily to explain and solve seemingly every problem, from global inequalities to disruption in the classroom, speaks to its development as a culturally salient master frame for claimsmaking rather than a coherent scientific framework for making sense of the world.

8.3 Contributions and Ways Forward

This section concludes this study by assessing its contribution to current sociological understandings of the problematisation of happiness. These contributions answer neglected questions, but in so doing, have opened up additional avenues representing important areas that must be explored or considered in future research.

This research has attempted to contribute to sociological understandings on a number of fronts. First, it has attempted to provide a more systematic account of the rise, changing meanings, and popularity of happiness in current public debates than has been forwarded in sociological accounts toward the present. It has offered a conceptualisation of the construction of happiness not only in abstract terms but as a problematisation mediated through the activities of claimsmakers and existing within a socio-historical context on which claims draw and with which they resonate. It also suggests that happiness has been added to the existing 'cultural stock of frames' (Entman, 1993), which can be drawn upon by a diversity of claimsmakers in the on-going

¹²² In fact, nearly every major brand name has a corporate initiative in place designed to attend to the emotional health, wellbeing and happiness of its employees, from Coca Cola's sponsorship of initiatives designed to 'nurture the well-being in mind, body and soul' of young people as part of a broader 'health and wellbeing' initiative (The Coca Cola Company, 2011:72), to British Telecom, which introduced a 'Work Fit' programme designed to 'encourage personal responsibility for well-being, lifestyle, mindsets and behaviours' and strives to promote better health amongst employees by encouraging 'small lifestyle changes' (World Economic Forum, 2011).

construction of meanings in social life. In future assessments of the usage and institutionalisation of happiness claims, it will be important to consider not simply whether or not they offer a sufficient account of the actual functioning of the world, but also their rhetorical appeal as a means of connecting with a disengaged and fragmented public. Importantly however, it has considered the development of these claims in only one, albeit significant, arena of public discourse. This raises questions about how, once established, claims evolved across additional public arenas. Diffusion occurs in myriad ways, and may occur in different ways in different channels of communication and via different actors. The problematisations detailed hitherto may or may not change, may or may not be affirmed, as claims pass into different arenas of social action. Thus, future research may seek to consider how claims change, evolve, are incorporated or resisted, as they pass into other realms of communication, are distilled into internet 'memes,' debated in the comments sections of popular news websites, or encountered in any one of the myriad public and private policy interventions that have developed out of the initial claimsmaking efforts detailed throughout this research.

Second, it contributes to understandings within the constructionist orientation toward social problems by offering a case study in the rhetorical construction of a social problem in the news media, a context of intense struggle for recognition and acceptance between competing definitions of reality. A theoretical synthesis was offered between rhetoric, a traditionally neglected area in social problems research, and a dynamic consideration of the construction process as accomplished by social actors occupying particular societal niches that lend them unique opportunities for diffusion and support. A fusion of this theoretical framework with a conceptually informed methodology was attempted which produced an account of happiness as a broadly appealing master frame for claimsmaking easily exploitable by a diverse array of claimsmakers.

However, in taking a broader focus, it may have neglected a more directed study of the use of happiness in the context of a particular claimsmaker or claimsmaking organisation or a particular policy framework. While useful as a starting point in that it illustrates the broad appeal of happiness claims and points to the development of happiness as a master frame, future research should seek to investigate the adoption of this frame in the claimsmaking, policy, and/or practice of particular individuals or groups and assess the advantages or disadvantages of conceiving of social reality in this particular way. This is significant not only on the micro-level of assessing the efficacy of particular policies or courses of action, but also on a more macro-level of the implications that particular constructions have for human action. As emphasised toward the

outset, claims are not just words. How people conceptualise and come to understand the world and the problems that face them has implications for how that world is created and re-created in the course of social life. The limitations and possibilities of human action are not preordained but are inexorably bound with historical struggles that are not simply ideal, but become 'real' and material, as truth claims come true in practice. Thus it is necessary to investigate the effects of this particular construction of reality as it is manifested not only in ideal, but material terms, and its implications for limiting or expanding the scope of human action.

As claims spread and become culturally available frameworks for making sense of the world and of campaigns for change, it becomes increasingly necessary to consider the implications of the usage of happiness claims by diverse groups, including and perhaps especially, more 'grassroots' social movements. In spite of its countercultural appeal and tendency to be couched in a rhetoric of radicalism, its origins within the state apparatus means that its usage by movements arising in opposition to the state may have dubious effects. However, this is not the only outcome possible, and history offers numerous examples of struggles to 'dis-articulate' 'certain key terms from their previous couplings, and their extrapolation to new meanings' (Hall, 2006:145). However, this can only be done with an awareness of some of the implicit contents of contemporary constructions of happiness and their implications for campaigns for social change, including a tendency to depoliticise issues through the construction of consensus and to deflect attention from the material world onto the inner life-world of the (vulnerable) individual.

Finally, rather than criticising the veracity of any one happiness claim, this study has attempted to point to its existence as a way of talking about the world that becomes particularly appealing within a particular socio-historical context. While criticism is undoubtedly useful, there is a clear cultural trend, a sort of 'family resemblance,' developing between conceptualisations of social problems toward the present in which emotional idioms are continuously becoming prominent ways of making sense of social issues. It is here that attention needs to be focused. In his 1999 study of the 'myth' of self-esteem, Hewitt remarks that the reason for its salience lies in the 'current ascendancy of feelings and emotional well-being in the culture as a whole' (1999:96). In much the same way as happiness, the popularity of self-esteem had acquired a 'free-floating character' that could attach itself to any issue (Furedi, 2004:155). Yet as self-esteem was questioned as an all-purpose idiom through which to understand life, new emotional idioms came to the fore which performed similar functions. Indeed, Martin Seligman had been a key critic of self-esteem, dedicating a chapter to the topic in 1995 in which he pointed to its usage as an all-purpose explanatory model for almost any social problem and characterised it as 'self-

contradictory' and 'puffery' (Seligman, 2007:28). Only three years later he would similarly posit positive psychology as offering the answers to a variety of social ills.

As Furedi observed in 2003, 'If the concept of self-esteem did not exist, other ideas that posit the condition of fragile subjectivity and connect it to a wider network of social problems would have emerged' (Furedi, 2003). The results of this research point to happiness as another step in this ongoing cultural impulse to explain the world through the prism of personal and emotional deficits. The propensity to conceptualise social ills in this way indicates the presence of a much deeper rooted cultural ethos with which emotional idioms resonate. Until this base is challenged, emotional idioms will continually arise as powerful ways of making sense of the world and ultimately, of reifying and sustaining the current state of affairs as normal, natural and inevitable.

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Appendix A. Individual Claimsmakers

Type and name of claimsmaker identified in sample	Number of articles in sample containing name (n=306)	Number of articles in database containing name (n=765)
Experts: Economist - Richard Layard	81	125
Politicians - David Cameron	37	61
Experts: Psychologist - Martin Seligman	25	32
Experts: Economist - Andrew Oswald	25	37
Politicians - Tony Blair	25	48
Other: General Public	21	n/a
Politicians - Gordon Brown	18	37
Educators - Anthony Seldon	18	31
Experts: Psychologist - Nick Baylis	15	49
Experts: Historian - Richard Schoch	13	14
Experts: Psychologist - Daniel Gilbert	13	20
Experts: Psychologist - Oliver James	13	26
Experts: Economist - David Blanchflower	9	14
Experts: Philosopher - Darrin McMahon	8	10
Experts: Psychologist - Sonja Lyubomirsky	8	9
Experts: Psychologist - Tal Ben-Shahar	8	9
Experts: Sociologist - Ruut Veenhoven	8	12
Religious Individuals & Authorities - Dalai Lama	8	17
Experts: Economist - Richard Easterlin	7	10
Experts: Philosopher - Alain de Botton	7	21
Experts: Psychologist - Ed Diener	7	11
Educators - Ian Morris	6	8
Experts: Psychologist - Daniel Kahneman	6	10
Experts: Psychologist - Jonathan Haidt	6	10
Experts: Psychologist - Richard Stevens	6	10
Experts: Psychologist (pop) - Paul Martin (behavioural geneticist)	6	10
Experts: Sociologist - Frank Furedi	6	7
Politicians - Ed Balls	6	15
Politicians - Nicolas Sarkozy (France)	6	15
Experts: Economist - Joseph Stiglitz	5	11
Journalist - Eric Weiner	5	7
Journalist - Oliver Burkeman	5	19
Journalist - Polly Toynbee	5	7
Policy Advisers/Experts- Geoff Mulgan	5	9

Authors, writers, novelists - Fay Weldon ('What Makes Women Happy')	4	8
Experts: Economist - Nattavudh (Nick) Powdthavee	4	4
Experts: Geneticist (behavioural) - David Lykken	4	5
Experts: Historian - Avner Offer	4	4
Experts: Philosopher - AC Grayling	4	6
Experts: Psychologist - Felicia Huppert	4	6
Experts: Psychologist - Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi	4	6
Policy Advisers/Experts - David Halpern	4	4
Experts: Business (academic) - Betsey Stevenson	3	4
Experts: Business (academic) - Justin Wolfers	3	4
Experts: Economist - Amartya Sen	3	4
Experts: Economist - Dimitris Ballas	3	4
Experts: Philosopher - Owen Flanagan	3	4
Experts: Psychoanalyst - Adam Phillips	3	4
Experts: Psychologist - Daniel Goleman	3	5
Experts: Psychologist - Dorothy Rowe	3	5
Experts: Psychologist - Michael Argyle	3	4
Experts: Psychologist - Robert Holden	3	5
Experts: Psychologist (neuroscience) - Richard Davidson	3	4
Journalist - Daniel Finkelstein	3	3
Journalist - David Aaronovitch	3	3
Journalist - Gregg Easterbrook	3	3
Journalist - Joan Bakewell	3	4
Journalist - Lewis Smith	3	3
Journalist - Melanie Reid	3	3
Journalist - Richard Morrison	3	6
Journalist - Roger Highfield	3	3
Journalist - Simon Jenkins	3	5
Journalist - Stuart Jeffries	3	7
Other: Advice Columnist - Lesley Garner	3	9
Other: Advice Columnist - Virginia Ironside	3	5
Policy Advisers/Experts - Richard Reeves	3	8
Policy Advisers/Experts - Will Hutton	3	8
Politicians - Alan Milburn	3	6
Politicians - John Prescott	3	5
Religious Individuals & Authorities - Jonathan Sacks	3	4
Religious Individuals & Authorities - Rowan Williams	3	4
Authors, writers, novelists - Alexander McCall Smith	2	2
Authors, writers, novelists - Ian McEwan	2	3
Authors, writers, novelists - Jilly Cooper	2	2
CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Other Commercial Representatives - Alex Kjerulf ('chief happiness officer')	2	2
CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Other Commercial Representatives - Siobhan Freegard (founder of netmums.com)	2	2

Educators - Donald MacLeod	2	3
Experts: Business (academic) - Michael Norton (Harvard Business School)	2	2
Experts: Economist - Bruno Frey	2	3
Experts: Economist - Helen Johns	2	2
Experts: Economist - Luisa Corrado	2	2
Experts: Economist - Paul Ormerod	2	3
Experts: Economist - Richard Thaler	2	3
Experts: Medical - British Medical Journal (authors referred to but unnamed)	2	n/a
Experts: Philosopher - Eric G. Wilson	2	3
Experts: Philosopher - Simon Blackburn	2	3
Experts: Psychiatrist - William Fry (benefits of laughter)	2	3
Experts: Psychologist - Barbara Fredrickson	2	5
Experts: Psychologist - Elizabeth Dunn (UBC)	2	2
Experts: Psychologist - Julie Norem	2	3
Experts: Psychologist - Linda Blair	2	5
Experts: Psychologist - Michael McCullough	2	2
Experts: Psychologist - Norbert Schwarz	2	2
Experts: Psychologist - Robert Emmons	2	2
Experts: Psychologist - Tim Bates	2	2
Experts: Sociologist - Barbara Ehrenreich	2	3
Experts: Sociologist - Nicholas Christakis	2	4
Journalist - Anjana Ahuja	2	4
Journalist - Carly Chynoweth	2	2
Journalist - Kate Muir	2	3
Journalist - Madeleine Bunting	2	4
Journalist - Mark Easton (BBC Home Affairs editor)	2	5
Journalist - Minette Marrin	2	3
Journalist - Simon Caulkin	2	2
Journalist - Stefanie Marsh	2	2
Other: Miscellaneous News & Entertainment - Mike Leigh (film director)	2	3
Policy Advisers/Experts - James Harkin (social commentator)	2	2
Policy Advisers/Experts - Nic Marks (NEF)	2	5
Politicians - Alan Johnson	2	3
Politicians - Ann Widdecombe	2	2
Politicians (local) - John Evans	2	2
Religious Individuals & Authorities - Matthieu Ricard (academic turned Buddhist monk)	2	4
Authors, writers, novelists - Anthony Daniels (social commentator)	1	1
Authors, writers, novelists - Benjamin Zephaniah	1	2
Authors, writers, novelists - Ferdinand Mount (social commentator)	1	2
Authors, writers, novelists - Jennifer Niesslein	1	1

Authors, writers, novelists - Justin Cartwright	1	1
Authors, writers, novelists - Natasha Walter (also broadcaster)	1	1
Authors, writers, novelists - Paul Jenner ('Teach Yourself Happiness')	1	1
CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Other Commercial Representatives - Alexandra Watson ('happiness coach')	1	1
CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Other Commercial Representatives - Bruce Stanley (life coach with Embody a 'creativity Commercial')	1	1
CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Other Commercial Representatives - Carl Bendelow (tourism)	1	1
CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Other Commercial Representatives - Carole Ann Rice (life coach)	1	1
CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Other Commercial Representatives - Charles Dunstone	1	1
CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Other Commercial Representatives - David Keen	1	1
CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Other Commercial Representatives - Fiona Harrold (life coach)	1	2
CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Other Commercial Representatives - James Montier	1	7
CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Other Commercial Representatives - Jessica Pryce-Jones (psychologist)	1	1
CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Other Commercial Representatives - John Castagnini (founder of thankodi.com)	1	1
CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Other Commercial Representatives - Karl Staib ('Work Happy Now')	1	1
CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Other Commercial Representatives - Kate Reardon (founder of toptips.com)	1	1
CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Other Commercial Representatives - Lech Kaminski	1	1
CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Other Commercial Representatives - Luke Johnson	1	1
CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Other Commercial Representatives - Madan Kataria (Indian medical dr, founder of 'laughter yoga')	1	3
CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Other Commercial Representatives - Marc Woods (motivational speaker)	1	1
CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Other Commercial Representatives - Neil Wilson	1	1
CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Other Commercial Representatives - Nic Sale	1	1
CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Other Commercial Representatives - Nina Grunfeld	1	1
CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Other Commercial Representatives - Paul Mullan	1	1
CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Other Commercial Representatives - Rainer Nolvak	1	1

CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Other Commercial Representatives - Rebecca Jordan	1	1
CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Other Commercial Representatives - Robin Graham	1	1
CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Other Commercial Representatives - Saira Khan	1	1
CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Other Commercial Representatives - Stefan Wills	1	1
CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Other Commercial Representatives - Steve James (founder of London Buddhist Centre)	1	1
CEOs, Entrepreneurs, Other Commercial Representatives - Tiina Urm (Bank of Happiness)	1	1
Educators - Francis Gilbert	1	1
Educators - Kevin Harcombe	1	1
Educators - Neil Hawkes	1	1
Experts: Economist - Angel Gurría (OECD secretary general)	1	1
Experts: Parenting Adviser - Jan Stimpson	1	1
Experts: Parenting Adviser - Manuela Benini	1	1
Experts: Business (academic) - Alex Edmans (finance professor)	1	1
Experts: Business (academic) - Howard Stevenson (Harvard Business School)	1	1
Experts: Business (academic) - Laura Nash (harvard business school prof)	1	1
Experts: Business (academic) - Melanie Bartlett (prof of 'Public Management' at UCL)	1	1
Experts: Business (financial) - Jasmine Birtles	1	1
Experts: Business (management writer) - David Bolchover	1	1
Experts: Economist - Ada Ferrer-i-Carbonell	1	1
Experts: Economist - Alan Krueger	1	1
Experts: Economist - Alois Stutzer	1	2
Experts: Economist - Andrew Clark	1	3
Experts: Economist - Dan Ariely	1	1
Experts: Economist - David Bell	1	2
Experts: Economist - Nick Crafts	1	1
Experts: Economist - Paul Dolan	1	1
Experts: Economist - Paul Frijters	1	2
Experts: Economist - Peter Clinch (environmental)	1	1
Experts: Economist - Stephen King	1	2
Experts: Economist - Susana Ferreira	1	1
Experts: Economist - Vani Borooah	1	1
Experts: Economist - Yannis Georgellis	1	1
Experts: Educationalist - Philip Beadle	1	1
Experts: Educationalist - Sue Hallam	1	1
Experts: Geneticist - Steve Jones	1	2

Experts: Geneticist (behavioural) - James Fowler	1	3
Experts: Historian - Daniel Pick	1	1
Experts: Medical - Allan Colver	1	1
Experts: Medical - Hilary Tindle	1	1
Experts: Medical - James Le Fanu	1	1
Experts: Medical - Karol Sikora	1	2
Experts: Medical - Laura Kubzansky	1	1
Experts: Medical - Liz Miller	1	1
Experts: Medical - Michael Babyak	1	1
Experts: Medical - Michael Marmot	1	2
Experts: Medical - Michael Fitzpatrick	1	1
Experts: Medical - Robert Winston (fertility expert)	1	4
Experts: Neuroscientist - Michelle de Haan (inst of child health, UCL)	1	1
Experts: Nutritionist - Alison Duker	1	1
Experts: Philosopher - Julian Baggini	1	4
Experts: Philosopher - Mary Warnock	1	3
Experts: Philosopher - Robert Smith	1	1
Experts: Philosopher - Tim Le Bon	1	1
Experts: Philosopher (ethicist) - Richard Holloway (also former bishop)	1	1
Experts: Philosopher (pop) - Jamie Whyte	1	1
Experts: Psychiatrist - Brendan Kelly	1	1
Experts: Psychiatrist - Judy Dunn	1	1
Experts: Psychiatrist - Raj Persaud	1	1
Experts: Psychiatrist - Stephan Collishaw	1	1
Experts: Psychiatrist - Steven Wolin	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Adrian Furnham	1	2
Experts: Psychologist - Adrian White	1	3
Experts: Psychologist - Airi Kivi (Bank of Happiness)	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Andrew G. Marshall	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Andrew Steptoe	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Auke Tellegen	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Ben Williams ('corporate psychology')	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Carol Craig (Centre for Confidence and Wellbeing, Glasgow)	1	2
Experts: Psychologist - Deborah Danner	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Helen Street	1	2
Experts: Psychologist - Judi, James	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Karen Pine	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Laura King	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Lynne Friedli (consultant, WHO)	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Nicky Page (Centre for Applied Positive Psychology)	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Paul Gilbert	1	1

Experts: Psychologist - Richard Tunney (uni nottingham)	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Richard Wiseman	1	2
Experts: Psychologist - Robert Biswas-Diener	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Rod Martin	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Sarah Pressman	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Sheldon Cohen	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Sophie Rowan	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Stephen Joseph	1	2
Experts: Psychologist - Ziyad Marar ('The Happiness Paradox')	1	1
Experts: Psychologist (child) - Hugh Foot	1	1
Experts: Psychologist (evolutionary) - Daniel Nettle	1	2
Experts: Psychologist (evolutionary) - Randolph Nesse	1	2
Experts: Psychologist (pop) - Edward de Bono	1	3
Experts: Psychotherapist - Elizabeth Meakins	1	1
Experts: Psychotherapist - Phillip Hodson (also 'agony uncle')	1	3
Experts: Psychotherapist - Richard O'Connor	1	1
Experts: Psychotherapist (child) - Lisa Miller	1	1
Experts: Psychotherapist (child) - Margaret Rustin	1	1
Experts: Psychologist (pop) - Larry Culliford	1	1
Experts: Social Statistician - Mark Tranmer	1	2
Experts: Sociologist - Gerard Mermet	1	1
Experts: Sociologist - Glenn Firebaugh	1	2
Experts: Sociologist - Henrik Dahl	1	1
Experts: Sociologist - Laura Tach (graduate student)	1	2
Experts: Sociologist - Peter Gundelach	1	1
Experts: Zoologist - Desmond Morris	1	1
Journalist - Adam Nicholson	1	1
Journalist - Alexander Waugh (reviewer)	1	1
Journalist - Barbara Lantin	1	1
Journalist - Barry Turner	1	1
Journalist - Brenda Power	1	2
Journalist - Cassandra Jardine	1	2
Journalist - Catherine Bennett	1	2
Journalist - Christopher Howse	1	1
Journalist - Deborah Ross	1	2
Journalist - Elizabeth Day	1	1
Journalist - Ella Stimson	1	2
Journalist - Evan Davis (BBC presenter)	1	1
Journalist - Frances Farrer	1	1
Journalist - Gabriel Rozenberg	1	1
Journalist - Gaby Wood	1	1
Journalist - George Monbiot (environmentalist)	1	1
Journalist - George Webster	1	1

Journalist - Geraldine Bedell	1	1
Journalist - Gerry McCarthy	1	1
Journalist - Hannah Betts	1	2
Journalist - Heather Stewart	1	1
Journalist - Hollie Smith	1	1
Journalist - Howard Jacobson	1	1
Journalist - Ian Johns	1	1
Journalist - Jenny McCartney	1	2
Journalist - Jerome Burne	1	1
Journalist - Jim Holt	1	1
Journalist - Johann Hari	1	2
Journalist - John Rentoul (political commentator)	1	2
Journalist - Julie Evans	1	1
Journalist - Katy Guest	1	1
Journalist - Liz Hoggard	1	1
Journalist - Lorna Frame	1	1
Journalist - Magnus Linklater	1	2
Journalist - Mark Honigsbaum	1	1
Journalist - Mark Vernon	1	2
Journalist - Mary Ann Sieghart	1	2
Journalist - Matthew Norman	1	1
Journalist - Michael Bywater	1	1
Journalist - Michael Henderson	1	2
Journalist - Neil Lyndon	1	1
Journalist - Nick Cohen	1	2
Journalist - Noel Edmonds	1	6
Journalist - Pat Kane	1	2
Journalist - Rabbi Lionel Blue	1	1
Journalist - Rupert Christiansen (opera critic)	1	1
Journalist - Sally Brampton	1	2
Journalist - Sarah Sands	1	2
Journalist - Shane Watson	1	2
Journalist - Sophie Davies	1	1
Journalist - Tamsin Blanchard	1	1
Journalist - Tim Harford	1	3
Journalist - Tim Lott	1	4
Journalist - Tishani Doshi	1	1
Journalist - Tracy Corrigan	1	1
Journalist - Will Storr	1	1
Journalist - William Keegan	1	1
Journalist - Yasmin Alibhai-Brown (social commentator)	1	1
Journalist - Sian Lloyd	1	1
Other: Celebrities and Public Figures - Kylie Minogue	1	1
Other: Celebrities and Public Figures - Michael Winner	1	2
Other: Celebrities and Public Figures - Paul Sykes	1	1

Other: Literary Critic - Terry Eagleton ('The Meaning of Life')	1	1
Other: Miscellaneous News and Entertainment - Merryn Somerset Webb (editor, Moneyweek)	1	2
Other: Miscellaneous News & Entertainment - David Lynch (film maker)	1	2
Other: Miscellaneous News & Entertainment - Joanna Woolf (BBC producer)	1	1
Other: Miscellaneous News and Entertainment - Barbara Gunnell (editor, New Statesman)	1	4
Other: Miscellaneous News and Entertainment - Nigel Planer (comedian)	1	1
Other: Musician - Paul Robertson (concert violinist and academic)	1	1
Other: Musician (academic) - Ian Cross	1	1
Other: Professional Body (rep) - Jackie Wood (Institute of Qualified Professional Secretaries)	1	1
Other: Research & Polling (Rep) - Ben Page (chairman of Ipsos Mori)	1	2
Other: Research & Polling (Rep) - Simon Bradley	1	1
Other: Vocational Accreditation Body (Rep) - Chris Humphries (City & Guilds)	1	2
Policy Advisers/Experts - Finbarr Brereton (social policy researcher)	1	1
Policy Advisers/Experts - James Wilsdon	1	1
Policy Advisers/Experts - Matthew Taylor	1	2
Policy Advisers/Experts - Paul Barker (senior research analyst at Young Foundation)	1	1
Policy Advisers/Experts - Ron Coleman (GPI Atlantic founder)	1	1
Policy Advisers/Experts - Sheila Lawlor	1	1
Policy Advisers/Experts - Simon Parker (Demos)	1	1
Policy Advisers/Experts (commercial) - Irwin Stelzer	1	2
Policy Advisers/Experts (commercial) - Martin Hayward (chairman of Henley Centre)	1	1
Policy Advisers/Experts (commercial) - Michelle Harrison (Henley centre)	1	1
Policy Advisers/Experts (political scientist) - Charles Murray	1	1
Politicians - Alistair Burt	1	1
Politicians - Andy Reed	1	1
Politicians - Birger Riis-Jorgensen (Denmark)	1	1
Politicians - Caroline Spellman	1	1
Politicians - Gary Streeter	1	1
Politicians - John Hutton	1	2
Politicians - Phil Woolas	1	1
Politicians - Steve Webb	1	1
Politicians (local) - Diane Wood	1	1
Politicians (local) - Irene Lucas	1	1

Religious Individuals & Authorities - Paul Seto (director of the Buddhist Society)	1	1
Religious Individuals & Authorities - Philip Waller	1	1
Religious Individuals & Authorities - Robert Ellsberg	1	1

Total: 340

Appendix B. Claimsmaking Organisations

Type and name of organisation identified in sample	Number of articles in sample containing name (n=306)
Charitable, Non-Governmental, Non-Profit - Bank of Happiness	1
Charitable, Non-Governmental, Non-Profit - Bhutan Society	1
Charitable, Non-Governmental, Non-Profit - Children's Society	4
Charitable, Non-Governmental, Non-Profit - Comic Relief	1
Charitable, Non-Governmental, Non-Profit - David Lynch Foundation	1
Charitable, Non-Governmental, Non-Profit - Nuffield Foundation	1
Charitable, Non-Governmental, Non-Profit - Royal Society	5
Charitable, Non-Governmental, Non-Profit - Wellcome Trust	1
Commercial Organisations - Bacs	1
Commercial Organisations - Badenoch & Clark	1
Commercial Organisations - Barclays Wealth ('private bank')	1
Commercial Organisations - Cornwall Enterprise	1
Commercial Organisations - Disney	1
Commercial Organisations - Dresdner Kleinwort Wasserstein	1
Commercial Organisations - Ecclesiastical Insurance Group	1
Commercial Organisations - Embody	1
Commercial Organisations - Halifax General	1
Commercial Organisations - Happy at Work	1
Commercial Organisations - Hewlett-Packard	2
Commercial Organisations - iOpener	1
Commercial Organisations - ISR (consultancy firm)	1
Commercial Organisations - Jacob's (cream crackers)	1
Commercial Organisations - Keen Media	1
Commercial Organisations - Life Clubs	1
Commercial Organisations - McDonald's	1
Commercial Organisations - Measurability	1
Commercial Organisations - netmums.com	1
Commercial Organisations - Pearn Kandola	1
Commercial Organisations - Pinpoint	1
Commercial Organisations - The Laughter Network	1
Commercial Organisations - Toptips.com (advice website)	1
Commercial Organisations - Uswitch.com	1
Educational Institutions - Ashridge Business School	1
Educational Institutions - Geelong Grammar School (Australia)	1
Educational Institutions - Wellington College	20
Government Bodies - Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	7

Government Bodies - Economic and Social Research Council	2
Government Bodies - IDEa (Improvement & Development Agency)	1
Government Bodies - Office of National Statistics	3
Government Bodies (local service) - City of London Police	1
Government Bodies (local) - South Tyneside council	2
International Organisations - European Union (eurobarometer)	2
International Organisations - Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions	2
International Organisations - OECD	3
International Organisations - UNICEF	8
International Organisations - World Health Organisation	2
Other: News and Entertainment - BBC	26
Other: News and Entertainment - New Scientist	2
Other: Professional Body - Institute of Qualified Professional Secretaries	1
Other: Social Movement Organisations - Friends of the Earth	2
Other: Tourism - Wonderful Copenhagen tourist board	1
Other: Vocational Accreditation Body - City & Guilds	2
Polling - GfK NOP	1
Polling - MORI	3
Polling - YouGov	2
Think Tanks, Advocacy, Research and Consultancy - Centre for Confidence and Wellbeing (Glasgow)	1
Think Tanks, Advocacy, Research and Consultancy - DEMOS	4
Think Tanks, Advocacy, Research and Consultancy - Economist Intelligence Unit	3
Think Tanks, Advocacy, Research and Consultancy - Fabian Society	1
Think Tanks, Advocacy, Research and Consultancy - GPI Atlantic	1
Think Tanks, Advocacy, Research and Consultancy - Henley Centre	3
Think Tanks, Advocacy, Research and Consultancy - Hudson Institute (US, conservative)	1
Think Tanks, Advocacy, Research and Consultancy - Institute for Economic Affairs	2
Think Tanks, Advocacy, Research and Consultancy - National Bureau of Economic Research	2
Think Tanks, Advocacy, Research and Consultancy - New Economics Foundation	7
Think Tanks, Advocacy, Research and Consultancy - Social Issues Research Centre	1
Think Tanks, Advocacy, Research and Consultancy - UK Centre for Applied Positive Psychology	1
Think Tanks, Advocacy, Research and Consultancy - Young Foundation	5
Universities - California, Missouri, Illinois	2
Universities - Cambridge	30
Universities - Dartmouth (US)	4
Universities - Edinburgh	4
Universities - Erasmus, Netherlands (World Database of Happiness)	10

Universities - Gothenburg	1
Universities - Harvard	29
Universities - King's College London (Institute of Psychiatry)	2
Universities - Leicester	3
Universities - London School of Economics	35
Universities - Manchester	3
Universities - Michigan	6
Universities - Oxford	8
Universities - San Francisco State	1
Universities - Sheffield	4
Universities - State University of New York	1
Universities - University College London	6
Universities - UWO	1
Universities - Warwick	22
Universities - Wisconsin-Madison	5
Universities - York (UK)	2

Total: 89

Appendix C. Expert Claimsmakers

Type and name of expert claimsmaker identified in sample	Number of articles in sample containing name (n=306)	Number of articles in database containing name (n=765)
Experts: Economist - Richard Layard	81	125
Experts: Economist - Andrew Oswald	25	37
Experts: Psychologist - Martin Seligman	25	32
Experts: Psychologist - Nick Baylis	15	49
Experts: Historian - Richard Schoch	13	14
Experts: Psychologist - Daniel Gilbert	13	20
Experts: Psychologist - Oliver James	13	26
Experts: Economist - David Blanchflower	9	14
Experts: Philosopher - Darrin McMahon	8	10
Experts: Psychologist - Sonja Lyubomirsky	8	9
Experts: Psychologist - Tal Ben-Shahar	8	9
Experts: Sociologist - Ruut Veenhoven	8	12
Experts: Economist - Richard Easterlin	7	10
Experts: Philosopher - Alain de Botton	7	21
Experts: Psychologist - Ed Diener	7	11
Experts: Psychologist - Daniel Kahneman	6	10
Experts: Psychologist - Jonathan Haidt	6	10
Experts: Psychologist - Richard Stevens	6	10
Experts: Psychologist (pop) - Paul Martin (behavioural geneticist)	6	10
Experts: Sociologist - Frank Furedi	6	7
Experts: Economist - Joseph Stiglitz	5	11
Experts: Economist - Nattavudh (Nick) Powdthavee	4	4
Experts: Geneticist (behavioural) - David Lykken	4	5
Experts: Historian - Avner Offer	4	4
Experts: Philosopher - AC Grayling	4	6
Experts: Psychologist - Felicia Huppert	4	6
Experts: Psychologist - Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi	4	6
Experts: Business (academic) - Betsey Stevenson	3	4
Experts: Business (academic) - Justin Wolfers	3	4
Experts: Economist - Amartya Sen	3	4
Experts: Economist - Dimitris Ballas	3	4
Experts: Philosopher - Owen Flanagan	3	4
Experts: Psychoanalyst - Adam Phillips	3	4
Experts: Psychologist - Daniel Goleman	3	5
Experts: Psychologist - Dorothy Rowe	3	5
Experts: Psychologist - Michael Argyle	3	4
Experts: Psychologist - Robert Holden	3	5
Experts: Psychologist (neuroscience) - Richard	3	4

Davidson		
Experts: Business (academic) - Michael Norton (Harvard Business School)	2	2
Experts: Economist - Bruno Frey	2	3
Experts: Economist - Helen Johns	2	2
Experts: Economist - Luisa Corrado	2	2
Experts: Economist - Paul Ormerod	2	3
Experts: Economist - Richard Thaler	2	3
Experts: Medical - British Medical Journal (authors referred to but unnamed)	2	n/a
Experts: Philosopher - Eric G. Wilson	2	3
Experts: Philosopher - Simon Blackburn	2	3
Experts: Psychiatrist - William Fry (benefits of laughter)	2	3
Experts: Psychologist - Barbara Fredrickson	2	5
Experts: Psychologist - Elizabeth Dunn (UBC)	2	2
Experts: Psychologist - Julie Norem	2	3
Experts: Psychologist - Linda Blair	2	5
Experts: Psychologist - Michael McCullough	2	2
Experts: Psychologist - Norbert Schwarz	2	2
Experts: Psychologist - Robert Emmons	2	2
Experts: Psychologist - Tim Bates	2	2
Experts: Sociologist - Barbara Ehrenreich	2	3
Experts: Sociologist - Nicholas Christakis	2	4
Experts: Business (academic) - Alex Edmans (finance professor)	1	1
Experts: Business (academic) - Howard Stevenson (Harvard Business School)	1	1
Experts: Business (academic) - Laura Nash (harvard business school prof)	1	1
Experts: Business (academic) - Melanie Bartlett (prof of 'Public Management' at UCL)	1	1
Experts: Business (financial) - Jasmine Birtles	1	1
Experts: Business (management writer) - David Bolchover	1	1
Experts: Economist - Ada Ferrer-i-Carbonell	1	1
Experts: Economist - Alan Krueger	1	1
Experts: Economist - Alois Stutzer	1	2
Experts: Economist - Andrew Clark	1	3
Experts: Economist - Angel Gurría (OECD secretary general)	1	1
Experts: Economist - Dan Ariely	1	1
Experts: Economist - David Bell	1	2
Experts: Economist - Nick Crafts	1	1
Experts: Economist - Paul Dolan	1	1
Experts: Economist - Paul Frijters	1	2
Experts: Economist - Peter Clinch (environmental)	1	1
Experts: Economist - Stephen King	1	2
Experts: Economist - Susana Ferreira	1	1
Experts: Economist - Vani Borooah	1	1

Experts: Economist - Yannis Georgellis	1	1
Experts: Educationalist - Philip Beadle	1	1
Experts: Educationalist - Sue Hallam	1	2
Experts: Geneticist - Steve Jones	1	2
Experts: Geneticist (behavioural) - James Fowler	1	3
Experts: Historian - Daniel Pick	1	1
Experts: Medical - Allan Colver	1	1
Experts: Medical - Hilary Tindle	1	1
Experts: Medical - James Le Fanu	1	1
Experts: Medical - Karol Sikora	1	2
Experts: Medical - Laura Kubzansky	1	1
Experts: Medical - Liz Miller	1	1
Experts: Medical - Michael Babyak	1	1
Experts: Medical - Michael Fitzpatrick	1	1
Experts: Medical - Michael Marmot	1	2
Experts: Medical - Robert Winston (fertility expert)	1	4
Experts: Neuroscientist - Michelle de Haan (inst of child health, UCL)	1	1
Experts: Nutritionist - Alison Duker	1	1
Experts: Parenting Adviser - Jan Stimpson	1	1
Experts: Parenting Adviser - Manuela Benini	1	1
Experts: Philosopher - Julian Baggini	1	4
Experts: Philosopher - Mary Warnock	1	3
Experts: Philosopher - Robert Smith	1	1
Experts: Philosopher - Tim Le Bon	1	1
Experts: Philosopher (ethicist) - Richard Holloway (also former bishop)	1	1
Experts: Philosopher (pop) - Jamie Whyte	1	1
Experts: Psychiatrist - Brendan Kelly	1	1
Experts: Psychiatrist - Judy Dunn	1	1
Experts: Psychiatrist - Raj Persaud	1	1
Experts: Psychiatrist - Stephan Collishaw	1	1
Experts: Psychiatrist - Steven Wolin	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Adrian Furnham	1	2
Experts: Psychologist - Adrian White	1	3
Experts: Psychologist - Airi Kivi (Bank of Happiness)	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Andrew G. Marshall	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Andrew Steptoe	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Auke Tellegen	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Ben Williams ('corporate psychology')	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Carol Craig (Centre for Confidence and Wellbeing, Glasgow)	1	2
Experts: Psychologist - Deborah Danner	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Helen Street	1	2
Experts: Psychologist - Judi James	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Karen Pine	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Laura King	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Lynne Friedli (consultant, WHO)	1	1

Experts: Psychologist - Nicky Page (Centre for Applied Positive Psychology)	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Paul Gilbert	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Richard Tunney (uni nottingham)	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Richard Wiseman	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Robert Biswas-Diener	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Rod Martin	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Sarah Pressman	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Sheldon Cohen	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Sophie Rowan	1	1
Experts: Psychologist - Stephen Joseph	1	2
Experts: Psychologist - Ziyad Marar ('The Happiness Paradox')	1	1
Experts: Psychologist (child) - Hugh Foot	1	1
Experts: Psychologist (evolutionary) - Daniel Nettle	1	2
Experts: Psychologist (evolutionary) - Randolph Nesse	1	2
Experts: Psychologist (pop) - Edward de Bono	1	3
Experts: Psychotherapist - Elizabeth Meakins	1	1
Experts: Psychotherapist - Phillip Hodson (also 'agony uncle')	1	3
Experts: Psychotherapist - Richard O'Connor	1	1
Experts: Psychotherapist (child) - Lisa Miller	1	1
Experts: Psychotherapist (child) - Margaret Rustin	1	1
Experts: Psychologist (pop) - Larry Culliford	1	1
Experts: Social Statistician - Mark Tranmer	1	2
Experts: Sociologist - Gerard Mermet	1	1
Experts: Sociologist - Glenn Firebaugh	1	2
Experts: Sociologist - Henrik Dahl	1	1
Experts: Sociologist - Laura Tach (graduate student)	1	2
Experts: Sociologist - Peter Gundelach	1	1
Experts: Zoologist - Desmond Morris	1	1

Appendix D. Akumal I-IV Participants (1999-2002)

Name	Position/Description at Time of Participation	Appear in UK Media Related to Happiness?	Hits in Nexis*	Primary or Secondary Hits**	Base at Time of Participation	Current Base
Adam Cohen	Post-doctoral fellow, Solomon Asch Center for the Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict, University of Pennsylvania	No	0	0	United States	United States
Alice Isen	Johnson Professor, Johnson Graduate School of Management, and Professor, Department of Psychology, Cornell University	Yes	1	1 secondary	United States	United States
Amy Fineburg	Psychology and English Teacher, Homewood High School, Alabama	No	0	0	United States	United States
Amy Wrzesniewski	Assistant Professor, Department of Management and Organizational Behavior, Stern School of Business, New York University	Yes	1	1 secondary	United States	United States
Annette Stanton	Associate Professor of Psychology, University of Kansas	No	0	0	United States	United States
Arthur Reynolds	Assoc. Prof Univ. Wisconsin, Madison	No	0	0	United States	United States
Barbara Fredrickson	Assist. Prof. Univ. of Michigan	Yes	5	4 secondary, 1 primary	United States	United States
Barry Schwartz	Dorwin Cartwright Professor of Social Theory and Social Action, Psychology Department, Swarthmore College	Yes	14	9 secondary, 5 primary	United States	United States

Bertram Malle	Assist. Prof. Univ. of Oregon	No	0	0	United States	United States
Carrissa Griffing	Coordinator, Positive Psychology Network, University of Pennsylvania	No	0	0	United States	United States
Chris Peterson	Visiting Professor, University of Pennsylvania and Arthur F. Thurnau Professor of Psychology, University of Michigan	Yes	3	2 secondary *	United States	United States
Charles Harper	Executive Director, Templeton Foundation	No	0	0	United States	United States
Claude Fischler	French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS)	No	0	0	France	France
Corey Keyes	Assist. Prof (Sociology) Emory Univ.	No	0	0	United States	United States
Dacher Keltner	Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, University of California, Berkeley	Yes	7	1 secondary, 6 primary	United States	United States
Daniel N. Robinson	Professor, Georgetown	No	0	0	United States	United States
Daniel Gilbert	Professor, Department of Psychology, Harvard University	Yes	35	27 secondary, 8 primary	United States	United States
Darrin Lehman	Professor, Chair, Social-Personality Area, Department of Psychology, University of British Columbia	No	0	0	Canada	Canada
Dov Cohen	Assist. Prof Univ. of Illinois, Urbana	No	0	0	United States	United States
David Myers	John Dirk Werkman Professor of Psychology, Hope College	Yes	4	3 secondary, 1 primary	United States	United States
David Schkade	Herbert D. Kelleher/McOrp Regents Professor In Business, Department of	No	0	0	United States	United States

	Management, University of Texas					
David Seligman	Assistant Director of Research, Access Measurement Systems	No	0	0	United States	Unknown
Derek Freres	Project Coordinator Department of Psychology University of Pennsylvania	No	0	0	United States	United States
Derek M. Isaacowitz	Doctoral Student, Department of Psychology, University of Pennsylvania	No	0	0	United States	United States
Donald O. Clifton	Owner of Gallup Corporation	Yes	2	2 secondary	United States	deceased
Ed Diener	Prof of Psychology, Univ. of Illinois	Yes	19	11 secondary, 8 primary	United States	United States
Edward Chang	Assist. Prof Northern Kentucky Univ	No	0	0	United States	Unknown
George Vaillant	Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard	Yes	8	6 secondary, 2 primary	United States	United States
James Pawelski	Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Albright College	No	0	0	United States	United States
James Pennebaker	Professor of Psychology, University of Texas	Yes	1	1 primary	United States	United States
Jane Dutton	William Russell Kelly Professor of Business Administration, University of Michigan Business School	No	0	0	United States	United States
Jefferson A. Singer	Professor and Chair; Director, Holleran Center for Community Action and Public Policy, Connecticut College	No	0	0	United States	United States
James Hovey	President, Fox Realty Co	No	0	0	United States	United States
Joachim Krueger	Assoc. Prof Brown Univ.	No	0	0	United States	United States

Joel Kupperman	Professor of Philosophy, University of Connecticut	No	0	0	United States	United States
John Lachs	Professor of Philosophy, Vanderbilt University	No	0	0	United States	United States
Jon Haidt	Assist. Prof. Univ. of Virginia	Yes	15	13 secondary, 2 primary	United States	United States
Jonathan Schooler	Assoc. Prof Univ. of Pittsburgh	No	0	0	United States	United States
Joshua Greene	Graduate Student, Princeton	No	0	0	United States	United States
Karen Reivich	Research Associate and Co-principal Investigator, Penn Resiliency Program, University of Pennsylvania	No	0	0	United States	United States
Kathleen Hall Jamieson	Psychologist, University of Chicago	No	0	0	United States	United States
Kennon Sheldon	Assist. Prof Univ. of Missouri	Yes	1	1 secondary	United States	United States
Kevin Rathunde	Assoc. Prof. Univ. of Utah	No	0	0	United States	United States
Laura King	Associate Professor of Psychology, Southern Methodist University	Yes	1	1 secondary	United States	United States
Lisa Aspinwall	Assoc. Prof Univ. of Maryland, College Park	No	0	0	United States	United States
Lisa Brotman	Graduate Student, Department of Psychology, University of Pennsylvania	No	0	0	United States	United States
Martin Seligman	Professor of Psychology, Head of APA	Yes	58	50 secondary, 8 primary	United States	United States
Marvin Levine	Professor Emeritus, Dept of Psychology, SUNY, Stony Brook	No	0	0	United States	United States
Mary Pipher	PhD	No	0	0	United States	United States
Melvin Konner	Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor of Anthropology and	No	0	0	United States	United States

	Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Neurology, Emory University					
Melanie Green	Assistant Professor of Psychology, University of Pennsylvania	No	0	0	United States	United States
Michael Carey	Professor Syracuse Univ	No	0	0	United States	United States
Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi	Psychologist, University of Chicago	Yes	25	19 secondary, 6 primary	United States	United States
Monica Worline	Doctoral student, University of Michigan	No	0	0	United States	United States
Nick Baylis		Yes	98	79	United Kingdom	United Kingdom
Paul Rozin	Kahn Professor for Faculty Excellence, University of Pennsylvania	No	0	0	United States	United States
Peter Schulman	Research Coordinator, University of Pennsylvania	No	0	0	United States	United States
Philip J. Stone	Professor of Psychology, Harvard University and Senior Research Scientist, Gallup	No	0	0	United States	deceased
Randy Ernst	Teacher, Lincoln High School	No	0	0	United States	United States
Raymond D. Fowler	CEO of APA	No	0	0	United States	United States
Richard Nisbett	Co-Director, Culture and Cognition Program, Professor, Psychology and Department Research Scientist, Research Center for Group Dynamics University of Michigan	No	0	0	United States	United States
Robert Emmons	Professor of Psychology, University of California, Davis	Yes	6	5 secondary, 1 primary	United States	United States

Robert Nozick	Harvard Psychologist	No	5	5 secondary	United States	deceased
Robert Wright	Author of the "Moral Animal"	Yes	5	5 secondary	United States	United States
Sandra Murray	Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, State University of New York, Buffalo	No	0	0	United States	United States
Shane Lopez	Assistant Professor, Psychology and Research in Education, University of Kansas	No	0	0	United States	United States
Sonja Lyubomirsky	Assist. Prof Univ. of CA, Riverside	Yes	12	4 secondary, 8 primary	United States	United States
Steven Wolin	Co-director, Project Resilience, clinical professor of psychiatry at the George Washington University Medical School, and director of family therapy training	Yes	1	1 primary	United States	United States
Suzanne Segerstrom	Assistant Professor of Psychology, University of Kentucky	No	0	0	United States	United States
Thomas Joiner	Assoc. Prof Florida State Univ	No	0	0	United States	United States
Timothy D. Wilson	Professor of Psychology, University of Virginia	No	0	0	United States	United States
Ursula Staudinger	Research Scientist Max-Planck (Berlin)	No	0	0	Germany	Germany

*Search was conducted in Nexis database for all eight national newspapers included throughout this study

**Primary = person was directly contacted, interviewed or quoted (other than from a publication); Secondary = research mentioned by another claimsmaker

Appendix E. Rhetorical Grounds

The following claims are divided into the broad categories to which claims were observed to relate:

1. Terminology and Naming
2. Descriptions and Definitions of Happiness
3. Problematising Wealth
4. Causes of Unhappiness
5. Causes of and Contributors to Happiness
6. Characteristics of Happy People
7. Surveys, Indices and Happiest Countries
8. Childhood
9. Education
10. Work and Leisure
11. Women

N = Negative form of claim

C = Criticism or counterclaim

R = Response to criticisms

V = Variation of claim

1. Terminology and Naming	
Term	Number of Articles Containing
Happiness	100
Wellbeing	50
Life satisfaction	11
Flourishing	6
Eudaimonia	3
Hedonics	2
Quality of Life	1

2. Descriptions and Definitions of Happiness	
Claim	Number of Articles Containing
Happiness is not something everyday people understand/ People frequently wrong	19
V – People confuse happiness with pleasure	13
Happiness adapts to changes and new things	15
C – Adaptation means happiness is static and anti-progressive	1
Social gains are equivalent to large monetary gains	14
Happiness is moral; doing and being good	13
Happiness is not a feeling	12
Happiness is not a goal but a by-product	11
Happiness is about meaning	9
Happiness comes from within, not external circumstances	9
True happiness is sustainable, enduring, a lasting state	8

N – True happiness is momentary, unexpected	2
Happiness can be measured	8
C – Happiness can't be measured	6
Happiness is 'U-shaped' throughout the life course (young and old are happy, middle aged are less happy)	7
Genes factor in future happiness	6
N – Genes limited or no effect on happiness	2
Happiness can be taught	6
V – Happiness is a skill	6
C – Happiness can't be taught	1
C – Teaching happiness detracts from experience of happiness	1
Happiness is 'flourishing' (eudaimonia)	6
Happiness is not about pleasure	6
N – Pleasures are good	2
N – Pleasures are important 'getaways' from serious things	1
Meaning of happiness is elusive and can't be defined	6
Government activities can have an effect on happiness	5
N – Only so much a government can do	1
Happiness about 'good life', life well lived	5
Happiness lies in 'acceptance'	5
C – Accepting the way things are is passive	1
V – Acceptance is liberating	1
Happiness comes from living in the present	4
Happiness is not a right	4
Happiness is not individual but societal	4
C – Most people define happiness in personal terms	2
Relative measures are more important than absolute measures	4
C – Absolute measures are also important	2
Happiness drives human action; is universal human need	3
Happiness is not absence of sadness	3
3 Elements - feeling good, engaged in life, having purpose and direction	1
Comprised of 6 themes - family, health, learning, lifestyle, values, friendship	1
Happiness is the most important thing in life	1
C – People value many other things over happiness	1
Happiness is slowing down	1
Inner and outer happiness are different things	1
Social ills are ultimately reducible to problems of happiness	1
We have a responsibility to enjoy life	1

3. Problematising Wealth

Claim	Number of Articles Containing
Paradox	29
Most common variations:	
V – 'Richer....but not happier'	16
V – Between personal income increases and happiness	15
V – Between wealth and mental illness rates	5
C – No correlation between happiness and anything	1
Money/wealth doesn't buy happiness	27
N – Money does buy happiness	1

Materialism/commodity acquisition does not produce happiness	24
No increase in happiness beyond certain income/level of development	20
Income growth does not make people happy/happier	19
Economic growth does not produce happiness	15
1950s was height of happiness/development	12
Happiness is a better measure than GDP	11
V – Happiness and wellbeing indicators should be composite measures	2
C – GDP is a better measure than happiness	2
Success, fame, achievement doesn't bring happiness	9
Wealth makes people unhappy	9
Life is about more than money	8
Poorer countries as happy/happier than rich	7
C – Freedom and prosperity are more important than happiness	1
C – Indices contradict each other	1
Immaterial and non-monetary values/achievements more important than material	6
C – Immaterial focus not practical for most people	1
Progress has not made people happier/does not bring happiness	3
Basic needs have now been met, subjective needs must now become focus	2
Focus on economic growth distracts from policies that will produce happiness	2
Poverty does not make people unhappy	2
N – Poverty makes people miserable	2
N – Contributors to unhappiness exacerbated by poverty	1
Psychological needs as important as material needs	2
GDP does not measure things that matter	1
V – Concern with GDP 'masculine'	1
V – Economics still important, but not enough	1
Happiness itself is success	1
Happiness itself is wealth; if a person is happy, they don't need wealth	1
Pursuit of wealth damages rich as well as poor	1
Wealth about having 'enough'	1

4. Causes of unhappiness	
Claim	Number of Articles Containing
Social comparison or 'keeping up with the Joneses' cause of unhappiness	23
Advertising and television make people unhappy	19
Expectations and aspirations are cause of unhappiness	16
V – Striving to succeed cause of unhappiness	1
'Hedonic treadmill' cause of unhappiness/People stuck in a 'rate race'	15
Capitalism and consumerism cause of unhappiness	11
Inequality makes people unhappy	10
Modern life makes people unhappy/mentally ill	7
Competitiveness bad for happiness	5
V – Competitiveness cause of unhappiness in women	1
People increasingly self-obsessed/Excessive individualism	5
Change bad for happiness	4
C – Masks conservative impetus	1
Divorce makes people unhappy	4
Obsession with celebrity is cause of unhappiness	4
Taking possessions and money away once gained makes people unhappy	4

Loss of trust is cause of unhappiness	3
Modern life makes people unhappy/mentally ill	3
Choice bad for happiness	2
N – Choices give people freedom and happiness	1
Moral decay caused by selfish materialism	2
Daydreaming or not concentrating makes people unhappy	1
Declining levels of friendship cause of unhappiness	1
Individual fulfilment does not make people happy/makes people unhappy	1
Loss of values and virtues cause of unhappiness	1
Obesity is cause of unhappiness	1
Obsession with having more	1
People define themselves by their possessions	1
Politicians to blame for 'social recession'	1
Pollution (environmental) makes people unhappy	1
Smoking bad for happiness	1
State promotion of market values bad for happiness	1
Traffic makes people unhappy	1

5. Causes of and contributors to happiness	
Claim	Number of Articles Containing
Family and relationships important for happiness	33
Religion and spirituality good for happiness	15
Community and community participation important for happiness	11
Trust good for happiness	8
Experiences (rather than money) important for happiness	7
Exercise important for happiness	6
Sleep important for happiness	5
Emotional literacy important for happiness	4
Feeling in control of life important for happiness	4
Democracy good for happiness	3
C – Undemocratic China shows high satisfaction	1
Happiness depends on surroundings and culture	3
Mental health influences happiness	3
Optimism and positive thinking important for happiness	3
C – It is normal and logical to be pessimistic	1
Good governance important for happiness	2
Gratitude important for happiness	2
Having a goal important for happiness	2
Hope is important for happiness	2
Spending on others or charity makes people happy	2
Taxes good for happiness	2
N – High-tax countries unhappier in spite of better quality of life	1
Weather affects happiness	2
Wellbeing dependent on actions of others	2
Being of average height and weight important for happiness	1
N – Physical attractiveness weakly correlated to happiness	1
Meditation increases happiness	1
Pets make people happier	1

6. Characteristics of happy people	
Claim	Number of Articles Containing
Married people are happier	9
N – Marriage has little effect on happiness	1
Lists of miscellaneous happy people characteristics	4
Happy people are more popular	1
Happy people are free from excessive materialism	1
Happy people are less likely to get divorced	1
People who care about the environment are happier	1

7. Surveys, Indices and Happiest Countries	
Claim	Number of Articles Containing
UK ranks poorly on (various) subjective indices	12
C – Indices manipulated to pre-determined conclusions	1
Surveys show stable happiness over decades	8
V – Happiness has fallen over decades	2
V – Numbers of 'very happy' has remained stable over decades	1
Scandinavians and Canadians happiest	5
African and Eastern European countries are happiest	2
Nations that promote happiness are more economically successful	2
Slough is one of the unhappiest places in the UK	2
Edinburgh happiest city	1
France ranks highly in happiness polls	1
Happiness rising in Italy	1
High-tax countries unhappier than low tax countries	1
Irish happiest	1
V – Most happy, but people are worn out	1
Liverpool and Glasgow are unhappiest cities	1
Satisfaction lowest in former communist states	1

8. Childhood	
Claim	Number of Articles Containing
Children increasingly mentally ill; wellbeing in decline	13
C – Statistics manipulated to predetermined conclusion	1
Parenting and parenting styles affect children's happiness	8
Childhood determines future happiness	7
Achievement (rather than being happy in oneself) can cause unhappiness	5
Children don't make parents happy	5
C – Children contribute to happiness (or different kind of happiness)	3
Young people are seeking happiness in the wrong places	4
Expectations cause of childhood unhappiness	4
Family break up cause of childhood unhappiness	3
Consumerism/Acquisitiveness makes children unhappy	2
Friendship important for childhood happiness	2

Play important for childhood happiness	2
Young people link physical attractiveness to happiness	2
Boredom cause of youth unhappiness	1
Poverty cause of childhood unhappiness	1
N – Poor parenting in low incomes, not poverty, cause of childhood unhappiness	1
Emotional literacy important to childhood happiness	1
Rules important for childhood happiness	1

9. Education	
Claim	Number of Articles Containing
Excessive testing cause of childhood unhappiness	4
Education is ill-balanced	3
Educated people are happier	2
N – Being educated has no effect on happiness	2
Happiness lessons improve behaviour and lower delinquency rates	2
Meditation improves pupil performance/behaviour	2
Education is too competitive	1
Exams don't capture what's really important	1
Happiness education can make up for unhappy home lives	1
Happiness education will create a good society	1
Happiness lessons encourage emotional literacy	1
Happiness lessons improve exam results and pupil performance	1

10. Work & Leisure	
Claim	Number of Articles Containing
Certain leisure activities are conducive to happiness/unhappiness	25
People work too much/too many hours	16
Happy workers are more productive/work harder	6
References to work-life balance	6
Unemployment/job loss makes people unhappy	5
N - Job security has little or no impact on happiness	1
Money does not motivate workers	4
Work and things associated with work make people unhappy	4
V – Work one of the most important influences on happiness/unhappiness	4
Happy workers are more loyal workers	3
Having a satisfying and fulfilling job is important for happiness	3
Pursuit of money as singular goal of work makes people unhappy	3
Feeling in control of work is important for happiness	2
Feeling valued and doing something valuable is important for happiness	2
Happy workers make for more profitable businesses	2
Long hours are detrimental to mental and/or physical health	2
Happiness comes from challenging work	1
Particular professions are conducive to happiness	1
V - HR workers happiest	1
V - Legal profession happiest	1
Long hours make people unhappy	1

Relationships with colleagues important for happiness	1
Surveys show many workers are unhappy	1
Young workers are unhappiest	1

11. Women	
Claim	Number of Articles Containing
Women are unhappy	3
N – Women are happier than men	2
N – Men are happier than women	1
N – Women are more likely to be depressed	1
Couples in which men earn more are happiest	1
Female competitiveness bad for happiness	1
Increased expectations cause of female unhappiness	1
Increasingly unattainable beauty ideals make women unhappy	1
Part-time work makes women happier	1
Striving to succeed makes women unhappy	1