Problematising 'happiness': A critical explanation of the UK's happiness agenda

Laura Knight

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Department of Health and Human Sciences

University of Essex

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Abstract

Issues of 'wellbeing' and 'happiness' are becoming more and more prevalent in discussions of social policy and in the provision of healthcare services. In recent years, the maximisation of a nation's 'happiness' has emerged as both a key policy objective and as a central focus within social, political and economic research, with public policy makers around the world having demonstrated a growing interest in national accounts of 'wellbeing'. In the UK context, this growing interest is comprised of a perceived need to 'know' 'happiness' and 'wellbeing' better, so that they might be maximised. Such attitudes and beliefs made possible the introduction of four new questions to the Annual Population Survey that were specifically designed to measure the UK's "subjective wellbeing" (now referred to as "individual life satisfaction" following revisions in subsequent years). In addition to this, in 2010 a non-profit organisation named Action for Happiness (AfH) was founded which sought to maximise the 'happiness' of society by offering individual members help and training towards living a 'happier' life - an endeavour which is understood to be necessitated by the stagnation of 'happiness' in modern Western societies. This thesis seeks to critically account for the emergence of such social and political practices – or 'happiness agenda' - and does so from a poststructuralist, post-Marxist standpoint. This is achieved by utilising the specific methodological strategy developed by Glynos & Howarth (2007) which constitutes a retroductive, deconstructive, approach to accounting for socio-political phenomena. In doing so, three types of logics underpinning these practices are identified, presenting an explanation as to what, how and why these practices are. Accounting for the emergence of such a 'happiness agenda' enables it (and its emergence) to be critiqued – specifically, the notion contained within it that maximised individual 'happiness' constitutes social progression. Indeed, central to the critique of the 'happiness agenda' that this thesis presents is an acknowledgement of the need of a socio-political equality agenda, where 'social progression' is instead conceptualised as maximised social equality.

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Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

Issues of 'wellbeing' and 'happiness' are becoming more and more prevalent in discussions of social policy and in the provision of healthcare services. The maximisation of a nation's 'happiness' has emerged as both a key policy objective and as a central focus within social, political and economic research. Policy makers around the world have demonstrated a growing interest in accumulating national accounts of 'wellbeing' and in demonstrating the relationship between 'happiness' and social progress (O'Donnell et al 2014; United Nations General Assembly 2011). For example, in 2011 the United Nations General Assembly called on member states to incorporate factors affecting 'happiness' and 'non-economic wellbeing' into policy making, as it was noted that the economic state of a nation "does not adequately reflect the happiness and wellbeing of people in a country" (United Nations General Assembly 2011: 1). To do so, member states were encouraged to incorporate some measure of 'happiness' into their population surveys. This was followed by (and made possible) the release of the first 'World Happiness Report' in 2012. Here, 156 countries were ranked by the reported 'happiness' of their societies (Helliwell et al 2012) - a practice which has since continued annually (Helliwell et al 2013; 2015; 2016; 2017). The necessitation of the measurement of societies' 'happiness' announced here was not an entirely novel idea. The perceived importance of the measurement and socio-political prioritisation of 'happiness' was already present in a number of countries – most notably, the Government of Bhutan had been tracking its Gross National Happiness (GNH) since the 1970s (GNH Centre Bhutan; Meier & Chakrabarti 2016; Munro 2016; Sithey et al 2015). In 2010, the UK's specific socio-political interest in 'happiness' began to really gain momentum. Drawing on an already established body of literature that evidenced a need for maximised non-economic or subjective 'wellbeing', it was announced that the 'wellbeing' of British citizens was going to be measured (by tracking their self-reported 'happiness') in addition to the UK's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (ONS 2011). At this time, there was also a growing body of research that emphasised a need for the maximisation of socio-economic

equality in the pursuit of maximised 'wellbeing' (for example, Lynch et al 2000; Kunst et al 1998; Phelan et al 2004). Indeed, as Warwick-Booth (2013) notes, there was (and continues to be) a whole wealth of literature on social inequality that seeks to determine how and why social inequality persists in modern societies. The findings and recommendations of such works included suggestions as to how 'wellbeing' might be improved; however, they received a fraction of the socio-political attention that the idea and necessitation of maximised 'happiness' enjoyed. This thesis seeks to critically account for the emergence of this idea of, or attitude towards, or belief about, 'happiness' and its relation to improving 'wellbeing' in the UK context. More specifically, it seeks to critically account for the belief that 'happiness' (and not 'equality') should act as a guiding principle for both policymakers and individuals who seek to maximise 'wellbeing' – which shall be referred to from here onwards as a UK 'happiness agenda'.

1.1 The UK's happiness agenda – an introduction

In 2010, the British government announced an explicit commitment to maximising the UK's 'wellbeing' during the launch of the ONS' Wellbeing Survey (Cameron, 2010). During which it was claimed that there are two types of 'wellbeing': economic wellbeing, to be measured via the nation's GDP; and non-economic, or 'subjective' wellbeing, to be measured via the nation's Gross National Happiness (GNH). The claim was that when both types are maximised, 'wellbeing' *in total* can be understood to be maximised. It was stated that British society's 'subjective wellbeing' was now going to be measured because, it was claimed, doing so enabled governments to possess a more accurate measure of 'social progress' and 'wellbeing' than GDP alone (Cameron, 2010). The underlying premise being that the government was going to assist society in being the 'happiest' that it can be. To measure this idea of 'subjective wellbeing', four new questions were introduced to the Annual Population Survey. These were:

- Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?
- Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile?

- Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?
- Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?

Establishing 'happiness', 'satisfaction' and 'anxiety' as national measures of 'subjective wellbeing', and raising the immediate question as to what these terms are understood to mean, and how they are understood to be related to 'wellbeing' at all.

Historically, a country's GDP figure was understood to provide society with a tangible, scientifically calculated figure to be traced, tracked and monitored; but more than this, it was understood to accurately represent a society's 'quality of life' or 'wellbeing' *in total* by revealing what sort of material existence we (as a nation of individuals) sustain and experience during our day-to-day life (Stiglitz et al 2009; ONS 2014). Indeed, GDP was understood to provide a glimpse of the general economic state of a nation and its economic state was, by proxy, understood to be representative of its 'wellbeing' or 'quality of life'. Therefore, to gain insight into how a society was progressing (both socially and economically) one simply had to look at its GDP figure. The political justification provided for the launch of the new ONS survey (Cameron, 2010) signalled that 'wellbeing' *in total* was no longer understood to be represented by GDP alone - suggesting that this idea or belief had been contested in some way and that dominant British political discourse had changed as a consequence. Indeed, 'wellbeing' was now understood to be determined by economic and *non-economic* factors.

Non-economic or 'subjective wellbeing' is, broadly speaking, understood to be more challenging to measure than GDP, simply because it's subjective nature necessitates determining an accurate and representative proxy measure of it (Diener, 2000; Diener, 2012; Blanchflower & Oswald, 2004). Despite this acknowledged difficulty, policy makers and social scientists presented the case that self-reported 'happiness', 'satisfaction' and 'anxiety' constituted a measure of this subjective state – an argument which, as the implementation of the ONS wellbeing survey demonstrates, was accepted (politically, at least). In doing so, a 'truth' of these concepts was established which posited them as being conscious states that individuals are both aware of, and able to detect changes within. Here,

the concept of 'wellbeing' is complicated, and the concepts 'happiness', 'anxiety' and 'satisfaction' are viewed as being demonstrative of this physical and psychological 'wellbeing'. This made possible arguments that attempts to maximise wellbeing *in total* should include attempts to maximise 'happiness' and 'satisfaction', and minimise 'anxiety'. Further to this, these concepts were explicitly related to (and defined) a person's 'wellbeing' *in total* which, it was suggested, was in fact (in part) a broad, long term psychological condition affected by positive and negative, conscious and unconscious experiences of the social world; experiences which produce feelings of 'satisfaction', 'anxiety' and 'happiness' and experiences that, as I will come to discuss, were understood to be affected by *more than* a person's wealth status. Indeed, non-economic or subjective wellbeing was understood to be strongly related to a person's 'health status' - which included an emphasis on their mental health state.

The findings from the new ONS wellbeing survey, as well as the wider 'wellbeing initiative' that it was a part of, were intended (in part) to guide assessments of existing, and assist in developing new, public policies (Cameron 2010; Dolan et al 2011; O'Donnell et al 2014) - an intent which the coalition Government began to fulfil. For example, in a move to reprioritise 'mental health' (in order to improve 'wellbeing') on the political agenda, the coalition government's controversial overhaul of the National Health System included an amendment to the Secretary of State's duty – where they were made responsible for the "prevention, diagnosis and treatment of physical *and mental illness*" (Health and Social Care Act, 2012, Section 1b, emphasis added). It also introduced (and necessitated) new local Health and Wellbeing Boards (HWB). These were intended to oversee this overhaul of health and social care, and ensure the maximisation of 'wellbeing' by incorporating *more than* physical health services in the provision of individual care (Health and Social Care Act, 2012). Indeed, a clear message was being conveyed by the coalition government's new health policies (which were shaped by this 'wellbeing initiative'): (i) 'wellbeing' is *in part* influenced by our physical health, but it is also *more than* our physical health status and, as such, requires an integrated, collaborative approach to its maximisation; and (ii) individual and societal 'wellbeing' is not only defined by *more*

than individuals' wealth (and even their physical health), it is specifically defined by an individuals'
physical *and* mental health.

Whilst a growing political interest in (and concern with the maximisation of) 'wellbeing' *in total*
culminated towards the launch of the new ONS 'subjective wellbeing' measures in 2010, their launch
did not mark the beginning of political interest in 'wellbeing' or its subjective component parts - for
example, in as early as 2006 David Cameron (in his capacity as leader of the Party) announced the
Conservative Party's specific political commitment to the maximisation of 'subjective wellbeing'
during a speech to Google Zeitgeist Europe (Cameron 2006). Nor was it party specific - for example,
an All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Wellbeing Economics was formed in 2009 - its self-
expressed purpose being to, amongst other things, "[p]romote policies designed to enhance
wellbeing" (online at: https://wellbeingeconomics.wordpress.com/about last accessed on
28/03/2017) and was comprised of representatives from a number of the UK's parliamentary
parties. Indeed, this interest in, and concern with the maximisation of, 'wellbeing' was not even an
exclusively political agenda – as the emergence of several non-political 'subjective wellbeing' or
'happiness' initiatives in society demonstrates (see, for example, 'The Happiness Foundation'
http://www.thehappinessfoundation.co.uk/ and 'The Happiness Club'
http://www.thehappinessclub.co.uk/). Such initiatives were concerned with the maximisation of
individual 'subjective wellbeing' by encouraging individuals to implement small changes in their daily
actions, attitudes and beliefs. Most notably among these was the organisation Action for Happiness
(AfH). Founded in 2010 by Richard Layard, along with two other 'happiness experts' (Geoff Mulgan
and Anthony Seldon), the self-proclaimed purpose of this organisation was to build a "happier and
more caring society… where people care less about what they can get for themselves and more
about the happiness of others" (AfH website, online at http://www.actionforhappiness.org/about-
us). It was AfH's explicit aim to make societies 'happier' by (re)educating individuals about
'happiness'; understood to be achieved by encouraging individuals to interact with the organisation,
their message, and their members via their website, literature, and regional groups, respectively.

AfH conceptualises 'happiness' in a very specific way - as a state of overall 'satisfaction' with one's life to be achieved through practicing 'positive thinking' and 'mindful' techniques (where we learn to be appreciative of the status quo). Here, 'happiness' is presented as a state of mind that is individually defined and pursued but collectively felt, something which is affected by our thoughts and behaviours, but is also impacted on by others' actions (as well as our own). It necessitates both social and individual change for this 'happiness' to be maximised; specifically, that we need to better understand (and accept) what (AfH's definition of) 'true happiness' is and find ways to appropriately pursue it – ways which enhance our individual pursuit of it, but also do not hinder others' pursuits. Indeed, AfH hopes to instigate a seemingly "necessary" change in populist opinion about the importance of 'happiness' in an attempt to better society; and it is understood that 'happiness' (or rather, 'finding' it) constitutes a curative and preventative measure in (what is presented as) a battle against 'misery'. The hope being that enough individuals will become enlightened to this way of thinking and acting to result in a society that no longer solely prioritises hyper-consumerism and GDP growth, as it is understood that such a focus is a detriment to the maximisation of 'wellbeing' *in total* (as it focusses only on the satisfaction of economic need). Indeed, Layard (2011) states that

Public opinion [of the importance of happiness] is changing but far too slowly. There is still so much unnecessary misery that goes undressed while less important issues attract enormous attention... So a group of us…are launching a movement called Action for Happiness…Our hope is that it may become a worldwide force for good (Layard 2011: xiv)

In doing so, he highlights his and AfH's explicit belief that the maximisation of 'happiness' (or 'subjective wellbeing' or 'non-economic wellbeing') is an important issue; one that is fundamentally 'good'. Indeed, AfH's mission to increase individual 'happiness' (and to reduce 'misery') contains an implied definition of it as something which is 'good' or 'desirable', and as something to be pursued. It also contains an implied definition of 'misery' as something which is 'bad' or 'undesirable', as something to be avoided – a point which Layard (2011) himself explicitly makes: "So by happiness I

mean feeling good – enjoying life and wanting the feeling to be maintained. By unhappiness I mean feeling bad and wishing things were different" (12).

Throughout this thesis, Richard Layard emerges as a key social actor. As I will come to demonstrate (in Chapter 3), he has played an active and pivotal role in the formation and emergence of the UK's socio-political happiness agenda by taking what he 'knows' about 'wellbeing' *in total* and 'subjective wellbeing' (and their relation to 'social progress') and using it to push for the reprioritisation of maximising 'positive mental health' in British social, academic and political spheres. He is considered by many to be an incredibly influential 'happiness' expert or guru (Ahmed 2010; Bell *et al* 2006; Clark *et al* 2009; Layard 2011) and, for this reason, I appear to pay close attention towards his specific conceptualisation of 'happiness', 'wellbeing' and 'social progression' (along with the supposed methods to maximise them), but it should be recognised that his conceptualisations of 'happiness', 'wellbeing' and 'social progression' constitute the dominant socio-political beliefs about them. So, rather than paying close attention to one 'guru's ideas and beliefs, I am in fact drawing attention to *dominant* ones. Part of his influence stems from his work *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science* (2011) where he presents a clear and coherent case for the measurement and reprioritisation of 'happiness' on the UK's socio-political agenda - one that is accessible to broad audiences and which constitutes an 'evidence based' approach to 'self-help' rather than an academic text. However, it also stems from his academic and political careers. Indeed, in his capacity as economist and political advisor, Layard was able to exert considerable ideological influence onto the development of the UK's 'happiness agenda'. Whilst much of his earlier academic career was focussed on issues of social deprivation (and the economic benefits of eradicating poverty), Layard had spent almost a decade arguing the need for intervention into (and prevention of) common mental health problems (in an economic context) – to which a 'happiness agenda' is believed to enable. Indeed, and as I will demonstrate, by drawing on the works of (predominantly) positive psychologists, Layard (and others) were able to construct 'happiness' as an object of economic measurement and establish its

maximisation as curative and preventative intervention for 'mental illness'. In doing so, the measurement of 'happiness' was necessitated to both learn how to alleviate the misery and suffering that 'mental illness' produces, and to track our progress in doing so. As I have noted, these ideas and beliefs are formed within an economic context, and as such the necessitation of and justification for the alleviation of such misery was made by arguing that 'cured' individuals (who were suffering from 'mental illness') would become economically productive – a point that I elaborate on in Chapter 3.

I should note that the UK's 'happiness agenda' is more than Layard, his work, and AfH, however they constitute significant component parts of the agenda, and present specific ideas and beliefs about 'reality' which, I shall demonstrate, have helped to shape this agenda and steer it in a specific direction. Whilst these ideas and beliefs have not gone unchallenged, this thesis is not concerned with determining the accuracy of Layard's (or any other actors) claims surrounding what 'happiness' is or how (if at all) it should be pursued. Instead, this thesis is concerned with identifying ideas and beliefs that are implicit within the 'happiness agenda' and critically explaining what makes these possible – thus, this thesis will come to present a critical account of the 'happiness agenda' through the deconstruction of Layard's and AfH's ideas about 'happiness', as well as those presented in additional component parts identified. In doing so, this thesis presents a critique of ideology not from a position that such ideology is *wrong*, but from a position that such ideology is *dominant*; and the critique that develops is concerned with relations of power, and not accuracy of 'facts' presented– a position that I explain in detail in Chapter 2.

1.2 A critical account of the 'happiness agenda': an outline

Whilst, as I will come to reference, there is an ever-increasing supply of quantitative 'happiness' research, qualitative research on 'happiness' is, by contrast, less common. With that said

there have been some mixed methods and qualitative explorations of 'happiness' taking place in recent years (for example see Baranowska- Rataj et al 2014; Koffman et al 2012). However, it is frequently noted within these works that there is a lack of qualitative research into 'happiness' – specifically into the area of defining 'happiness' and how to better understand it in a qualitative capacity. There have also been additional theoretical explorations of 'happiness', which have sought to account for a growing interest in, and concern for, 'happiness' within contemporary society (Ahmed, 2010; Ehrenreich, 2010; Davies, 2015). This thesis seeks to enhance this debatably neglected area of qualitative 'happiness' research and enhance theoretical explorations (of what 'happiness' is and how it has become understood to be so important in contemporary society) by developing a critical explanation of the emergence of this socio-political 'happiness agenda'. This thesis constructs a critical account for the emergence of a UK socio-political happiness agenda from a poststructuralist, post-Marxist standpoint – utilising the specific methodological strategy developed by Glynos & Howarth (2007), which constitutes a retroductive, deconstructive, approach to social research. I provide a detailed discussion of the ontological suppositions that the poststructuralist, post-Marxist methodological approach that I employ incorporates, as well as the specific methodological implications that such a standpoint has in Chapter 2. I then explicitly outline the 'logics' approach to critical explanation proposed by Glynos & Howarth (2007) that is utilised here to develop a detailed, critical understanding of the emerging social and political practices identified as the 'happiness agenda'. I note that an important part of critically explaining the emergence of these practices is to explore the self-interpretations of social actors. In doing so I justify my selection of members of AfH as participants in this study, providing detail with regards to how they were approached to participate in this study and the end sample that resulted. In essence, Chapter 2 serves as a detailed methodology chapter – explaining and outlining the research strategy that subsequent chapters employ.

In Chapter 3 I characterise the specific social and political practices that constitute this 'happiness agenda'. I note the presence of a perceived social problem of 'misery' or 'unhappiness' in modern

Western societies; a problem which the emerging 'happiness agenda' is posited as a solution to. I argue that 'happiness' and 'wellbeing' are ideologically related with 'mental health' and 'productivity', and demonstrate that the complexity of the concept of 'wellbeing' is emphasised – in particular the belief that 'wellbeing' is formed of two types (economic, and non-economic). I go on to show that there is an assumption that 'economic wellbeing' has already been (and continues to be able to be) maximised, and that a focus on increasing our non-economic wellbeing by pursuing 'happiness' is instead necessitated. I note that this specific approach to social progression side-lines the idea of 'economic wellbeing' but doesn't dismiss it entirely from a pursuit of maximised 'happiness' - as economic and non-economic wellbeing are presented as two component parts of wellbeing *in total* (the maximisation of which, is understood to progress society). In doing so, I construct an object of social inquiry – how and why 'happiness' is understood in this way.

In Chapter 4 I seek to account for the object of study identified in Chapter 3 – that is to say that I seek to account for why maximised 'wellbeing' has come to be understood as being comprised of two parts (economic and non-economic wellbeing). To do so, I explore the history of ideas surrounding 'happiness' and 'wellbeing', and their historical relation to the idea of 'social progression'. In doing so, I demonstrate that the emerging happiness agenda (and its idea of 'wellbeing' as maximised economic and non-economic satisfaction) constitutes a neo-utilitarian ideological project, tasked with decontesting alternative conceptualisations of 'wellbeing' - such as maximised socio-economic equality. I propose that the discursive purpose of which is to reify neoliberal discursive hegemony and that in doing so, the 'happiness agenda' makes possible the continuation of a state sanctioned engagement with the exploitative processes of capitalism. I do so by identifying that the promise of maximised 'wellbeing' constitutes the moral justification for an engagement with capitalist processes; and that a specific conceptualisation of 'wellbeing' is utilised to establish a relation between such processes and 'social progression'. Indeed, Chapter 4 works to establish the foundations from which *critique* of the emerging happiness agenda is able to be

developed, by demonstrating what ideological developments made possible its emergence and the specific conceptualisation of 'happiness' that it contains by drawing attention to the contingency of 'reality' that is presented.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 help to account for the neo-utilitarian happiness agenda that I have identified as emerging within contemporary society, by identifying the social, political and fantasmatic logics of such an agenda, respectively. In Chapter 5, I identify three social logics that underpin participants' ideas and beliefs about 'happiness' and the wider 'reality' within which they exist. Doing so enables me to identify how this specific 'reality' of 'happiness' that individuals are presented with, impacts on (and underpins) their day-to-day practices. In doing so, I am able to determine what normative practices, ideas and beliefs seemingly reify the 'reality' that participants understand to be true. The three social logics identified are: a logic of 'happiness' as individual satisfaction, a logic of the immateriality of 'happiness', and a logic of "basic needs". I demonstrate that these ideas of what 'happiness' *is,* are constructed and reified by the agenda itself, by showing that before participants became involved with AfH they thought very differently about what 'happiness' was. Most notably, that it wasn't believed to be anything substantial or overly important, that it was simply another way of expressing 'pleasure'; and that after engaging with the message of AfH, the 'happiness' literature and media made available to them by AfH (and other 'like-minded' individuals), participants came to understand 'happiness' to be the satisfaction of individually determined non-economic, immaterial needs. I also demonstrate that an engagement with the processes of capitalism is understood to be required in order to improve one's individual 'happiness', as it is understood that we have individual economic needs ("basic needs") that also need to be met before we are able to pursue and sustain 'happiness'.

In Chapter 6, I identify two political logics that establish *how* these social and political practices were able to emerge and continue to be sustained; these are a logic of the inevitability of inequality, and a

logic of individualised responsibility for wellbeing. I note that these political logics work to decontest collectivist ideas of what 'wellbeing' (and so social progression) is, and in doing so reify neoliberal discursive hegemony. It is clear that participants understand maximised equality to be a desirable state of society, but it is also clear that they believe this to be an impossible state to achieve because of the 'fact' that we are inherently selfish individuals, who seek only the satisfaction of our individual need - irrespective of whether to do so, is to the detriment of others. Indeed, participants demonstrated a will and a want for greater social equality but were shown to marginalise this desire. Maximised 'happiness' in society, it seems, is 'known' to be the only viable option for 'social progression', and maximised equality is simply an impossible dream. Participants also discussed where responsibility lies for the maximisation of 'happiness' and demonstrated an understanding that the pursuit of 'happiness' was the responsibility of the individual; but also that governments have a responsibility to create and sustain an environment within which this individualistic pursuit is able to take place. I present the argument that this understanding of the responsibility for maximised 'happiness' (and so 'social progression') works to reify neoliberalism's ideological hegemony, by necessitating state non-interventionism (as it is the responsibility of the individual, not the state, to maximise 'happiness' once the environment from which it can be pursued is formed).

In Chapter 7, I establish two fantasmatic logics that establish *how* these social and political practices were able to emerge and continue to be sustained; these are a logic of 'social progression' and a logic of the social desirability of 'happiness'. Here I identify the fantasy of the agenda, by exploring what grips social actors to these beliefs and practices of 'happiness' – that is, what such social actors believe the result of the adoption of these practices does or makes possible. It was evident that participants believed that the maximisation of happiness would lead to the eradication of a variety of social problems, and that the explicit promise of social progression made by the agenda makes this belief possible. Participants related the maximisation of 'happiness' to a number of (what they

perceived to be) 'social problems' including, but not limited to, poor health, reduced rates of life expectancy and the misery experienced by "disadvantaged" groups in society. The maximisation of 'happiness', it was believed, would eradicate these social problems. Participants discussions of the capacity for 'happiness' to eradicate social problems were incredibly interesting, and also revealed a belief that to be 'happy' is something which everyone desires, and that it is self-evidently 'good'. However, this idea of the desirability of 'happiness' (when applied to social identities) also revealed a belief that 'happy' people are desirable to others, and that 'unhappy' people are not. Indeed, 'unhappy' people were demonised and the social identity of the 'unhappy person' (as an undesirable, ungrateful and mentally ill person) is shown to act as an additional incentive for social actors to engage with these 'happiness' practices, as to do so ensures that they are not able to be identified as such – luring them into, and maintaining the grip of, the 'happiness' practices identified through a desire to be perceived as 'good'.

In the concluding discussion of this thesis (Chapter 8) I summarise the critical account of the emerging agenda that this thesis presents, and ask the question 'what does this mean for equality'. I note a desire for substantial social change amongst participants, and that they are shown to resent very tangible and real aspects of their lives that are related to the processes of capitalism. In this sense, social actors demonstrate a dissatisfaction with neoliberal capitalism, and it is my proposition that utilising this dissatisfaction would make possible the sedimentation of the collectivist ideas and beliefs about the world (and 'social progression') that the equality agenda contains. I suggest that the key neo-utilitarian attitudes and beliefs about 'happiness', 'wellbeing' and 'social progress' need to be successfully contested in order to challenge neoliberal discursive hegemony. Also that the equality agenda needs to provide a viable counter argument to the belief that inequality is inevitable, and that it is not the responsibility of the individual to maximise their own wellbeing (as it is these beliefs that are currently able to marginalise collectivist approaches to 'social progression'). I stress that the role and responsibility of the state to maximise 'wellbeing' should be emphasised, but

in a way which still relates 'wellbeing' and 'social progress' to 'happiness' – as it is the promise of (and desire for) maximised 'happiness' that grips social actors to the neo-utilitarian regime of practices currently. Indeed, if the equality agenda is able to provide counter-evidence that the maximisation of 'happiness' (and its idea of 'social progression') is best achieved by intervention into the free market from the state, I suggest that it will pose a much greater ideological challenge to neoliberalism – making possible the change in the synchronic formation of meaning that is so desperately needed in contemporary capitalist society.

Chapter 2: Ontological suppositions and methodological approach

The desire for maximised human happiness has long been debated philosophically, morally and politically, along with the potential for such a desire to be realised. From ancient philosophical works, such as Plato's *Republic* (cited in Ahmed 2010) and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (cited in Ahmed 2010; Layard 2011), right through to the contemporary debates surrounding the importance of the maximisation of 'happiness' that are emerging now, 'happiness' has been continually represented as a desirable and acceptable aim or objective in life. However, it is not the aim of this thesis to explore the entire history of the term 'happiness'. Instead, I seek to account for the specific understanding of 'happiness' (and the accompanying belief that its maximisation is a necessary pursuit) understood to be prevalent in the UK. In order to do so, this thesis explores the emergence of this UK 'happiness agenda' from a poststructuralist, post-Marxist standpoint. This chapter serves as an explanation of such an approach, providing a detailed discussion of the ontological suppositions that this standpoint includes. It will go on to outline the specific approach used to explore my research topic: Glynos & Howarth's (2007) retroductive, deconstructive, methodological strategy to social research – described as a 'logics approach to critical explanation'. Here, I note that such an approach necessitates the characterisation (and subsequent problematisation) of the UK's 'happiness agenda' to develop a critical explanation of it. One which incorporates the identification of the causal mechanisms which make possible an identified object of study, a consideration of its historical context, as well the self-interpretations of social actors. Thus, I begin this chapter by first clarifying the ontological presuppositions of this research project - drawing on the works of Saussure, Derrida, Marx, Lenin, Gramsci, Foucault, Laclau and Mouffe to justify the application of post-structuralist, post-Marxist thought to my research. I then explicitly outline the 'logics' approach to critical explanation proposed by Glynos & Howarth (2007) that is utilised to develop a detailed, critical understanding of this interest in the maximisation of 'happiness'.

2.1 Political Discourse Theory: a (brief) history

In order to outline and clarify the post structuralist, post-Marxist standpoint that shapes this thesis and the approach to critical explanation that it employs, it is necessary to first (briefly) outline the ideological roots from which it grew: structural linguistics, structuralism, deconstruction and Marxism – each of which will be discussed in this section. In doing so, I shall show that structural linguistics (in particular the work of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, 1857 - 1913) provided a novel approach to the study of the history of language, asserting that 'language' is a temporally fixed structure or system of meaningful signs. I will go on to demonstrate the significance of such an assertion to social scientific, rather than linguistic, inquiry by drawing on Claude Levi-Strauss's (1908-2009) extension of Saussure's work into the social realm -where he suggests that 'reality', like Saussure's 'language', is a temporally fixed structure or system of meaning. I will then go on to explore the expansion and critique of 'structuralism' proposed by Jacques Derrida (1930 -2004) and the subsequent formation of 'poststructuralism'. I will pay particular attention to his theory of deconstruction, and demonstrate how significant this deconstructive approach to understanding 'reality' came to be in the advancement of the socialist political project contained in the works of Ernesto Laclau (1935 – 2014) & Chantal Mouffe (1943-). I will also demonstrate that running in parallel to the development of this poststructuralist approach to understanding 'reality', is the development of post-Marxist theory - which can be understood as an extension of Marxist theory, intended to address a well-rehearsed critique of it (essentialism). Indeed, post Marxism offers an alternative to the class reductionism that is present in so much of classical Marxist theory, by proposing that social antagonisms can take on any form and not just the economic antagonisms between the bourgeoisie and proletariat. In outlining these two theoretical developments, I present a detailed introduction to the ontological presuppositions that, I note, have informed the poststructuralist, post-Marxist, approach to discourse analysis that I employ in this thesis. That is to say I establish the theoretical basis from which the socio-political 'logics' approach to analysing,

understanding and explaining the social world was made possible. I will then outline the specific

application of this approach to this critical explanation of the UK's happiness agenda, which

necessitates the following: a problematisation of the emerging happiness agenda, a historical

explanation of the ideas and beliefs about the world that underpin the agenda, making possible an

account of how they came to be, and an exploration of the social, political and fantasmatic logics

that maintain these ideas and beliefs about the social world, making possible an account of how they

are.

2.1.1 Saussure, Levi-Strauss and the foundation of structuralism

Saussure's (1857 - 1913) academic objective was to formulate a science of language, or

'semiology' and, more specifically, to establish linguistics as a 'science of signs'. Saussure's (1916)

semiology conceptualises language as systems of related, meaningful signs that enable social actors

to make sense of their experience within the social world and to communicate ideas about it. Within

this conceptualisation, 'language' is understood to be a structure of meaning which exists wholly

within our specific attitudes and beliefs about the social world, but which is socially constructed and

maintained by institutions and actors. This is an important ontological supposition, and one that

shall be returned to later in this chapter - particularly when discussing the ontological

presuppositions of the logics of critical explanation approach. For now it is important to note that

Saussure's (1916) conception of 'language' posits it as the representation of 'reality' in the social

world; and that such a conception of 'reality' (as a socially (re)produced object) provides an

alternative to more dominant ontological suppositions in social science inquiry (i.e. naturalism). In

his development of a science of language, Saussure (1916) differentiates between two types of

language use: *langue* and *parole*. Parole is understood to be the subjective act of actual speech - that

is, the specific instance in which a social actor uses language to express themselves (consider this the

observable phenomena); and langue is understood to be the formal system of language that *makes*

parole possible by assigning meaning and context to the specific speech acts of the actor. For example, someone talking about what does and does not make them 'happy', is an example of parole. In this example, this individual draws on a specific idea of what "happy" means (e.g. 'satisfied') along with specific ideas of the conditions that are said to determine it (e.g. the satisfaction of non-economic needs determines satisfaction, which is understood to produce 'happiness' or make someone 'happy'). It is langue that Saussure (1916) marks as the object of his semiology, as it is langue that shapes, guides, and makes possible, parole.

Langue is, for Saussure (1916), a socially produced structure that gives meaning to the social world, and such meaning can be derived from a series of utterances (parole). It is the 'common sense' understanding of the world that underpins what people say about it, and it enables the speaker's intent to be communicated effectively (providing this 'common sense' understanding is shared). In this sense langue is reality forming, as without such a 'common sense' structuring, language use would have no meaning and society no means of expression. To return to my previous example, without langue, someone talking about what does and does not make them 'happy' would simply be a series of sounds with no meaning to them - and so subsequently no means to communicate an idea, belief or experience of the world. This is because it is langue that enables these sounds to be contextualised and their meaning understood. If I state that "going for long walks makes me happy" I am reliant upon there being shared, normative, ideas and beliefs about 'happy' for my statement to make sense. Supposing the intent of this statement is to convey that going for a long walk makes me feel 'good', 'satisfied', and 'content', and that I understand going for long walks to be a 'good' or 'positive' action to take, it is only possible for this sentence (or example of parole) to convey this specific message if langue is structured in a way which makes this possible. If "happy" was understood to mean 'bad', 'unsatisfied', or 'discontented' by my audience, then my statement that "going for long walks makes me happy" takes on an entirely alternative meaning for the recipient, and my intent to convey a specific idea about long walks is not made possible. This example

demonstrates the importance in determining the idea or belief about the world that the speaker intended to communicate with parole, as well as what made its communication possible - that is to say, the importance of understanding the structure of langue. Thus, the question becomes how to go about achieving this.

Saussure (1916) notes that langue does not exist externally to the social world or its actors. It is an ideological structure that is produced and transformed through the way that actors use language – in particular, the relationships that are established between (and meaning assigned to) signs. This conceptualises langue *as not* an object, observable structure that can be studied in order to understand it, and instead establishes it as an implicit structure to be derived from parole. This point is better understood by clarifying that which constitutes langue, as langue is understood to be a system of meaningful signs that are related, and give meaning to each other. A 'sign' consists of a signified and a signifier; it consists of a concept (an idea or thought), and a sound/image (a ready existing sound or image that is related to a concept and communicates it) (Saussure 1916). For example, consider the use of the sign "cat" in a sentence: "cat" consists of the concept or idea to be signified ('a cat') and sound/image signifier that is readily available and related to that concept (the sound /kæt/, the three letters c-a-t ordered in a particular way, an image of a small furry animal with four legs). Such an image or sound would be meaningless if it wasn't related to the concept of 'a cat', and such a concept would be incommunicable without being associated to such a sound or image. Thus, for Saussure (1916), when we use language (that is, when we communicate using signs) we are in effect communicating an idea of something. When I use the sign "cat" I am communicating the concept of 'a cat' and am reliant on the recipient of my use of the sign "cat" having a shared understanding of the sign that I am using. Saussure (1916) also ascertains that the ready-relationship between "cat" and 'a cat' is arbitrary – that is, there is no reason *why* "cat" signifies 'a cat', it just *does* and this idea could just as easily be represented by another sound/image. In addition, Saussure (1916) states that this arbitrary relationship between the signifier and signified is non-divisible, that

"[e]very linguistic sign is a part or member, an *articulus*, where an idea is fixed in a sound, and a sound becomes the sign of an idea…it is impossible in a language to isolate sound from thought, or thought from sound" (Saussure, 1916: 111). In this argument, Saussure (1916) establishes the case for the non-divisibility of the relationship between the signifier and the signified, and establishes that the relation between the signifier and the signified (and so the meaning of the sign) is fixed. Indeed, Saussure (1916) demonstrates for a sign to function its meaning must be fixed; that if it *were not* fixed, the sign would have no shared meaning and a concept would be incommunicable. This idea of the non-divisibility of the relation between the sign and its signified has methodological implications for his semiology, as it presents signs in their entirety as the means to understand langue; that to understand language, we must begin with the signs that exist and are used by actors. We *should not* be searching to understand why "cat" represents 'a cat', as it simply *does*; we should instead seek to understand the wider system of meaning that fixes the meaning of 'a cat' to "cat". Thus, the question becomes that, if such a relationship between signified and signifier is arbitrary, and non-divisible, how and why do my recipient and I have a shared understanding of the sign? It is for this reason that Saussure (1916) marks langue as the object of his semiology, as it is langue that gives this meaning to signs (which enables the shared understanding necessary to the communication of idea) and so it is langue that requires exploration.

In addition to being arbitrary, the relation between signifier and signified is, for Saussure (1916), differential. Meaning that the concept which is signified through language use is constructed in terms of what it is not. To return to a previous example, when I use the sign "cat" I am communicating the concept of 'a cat', and this concept of 'a cat' is a furry animal with four legs that is kept as a pet. However, there are many other types of furry, four legged pets, and so incorporated into the concept of 'a cat' is what makes it different from these other types, what makes it unique. 'A cat' is *not* 'a dog', *not* 'a hamster', *not* 'a rabbit'. Thus, Saussure (1916) argues that language is negative; that the way in which we know the social world, or the meaning of things, is produced as

much by knowing what it *is not* as what it *is*. This is hugely significant to the methodological approach that this thesis employs, and is a point that shall be returned to in much greater detail later in this chapter, as it is not a point that Saussure himself really utilises in his science of language. Indeed, this lack of utilisation of the negativity of 'knowledge' is problematized by post-structuralist thinkers (in particular Derrida) - which I will discuss in 2.1.2.

Saussure (1916) was not concerned with what social actors are saying when they use language, nor why they are saying it. Instead, he was concerned with the shared ideas of the world that language use represents. To return to the "cat" example, the use of the sign "cat" to communicate the concept 'a cat' is an example of parole. If I am able to communicate the idea of 'a cat' successfully (that is, my instance of language use is understood) a shared system of meaning or shared understanding of the relationship between "cat" and 'a cat' is demonstrated between me and my audience, and it is this structure of language, or langue, that Saussure (1916) argues should be that which is studied. He goes on to state that

> *it is a great mistake to consider a sign as nothing more than the combination of a certain sound and a certain concept. To think of a sign as nothing more would be to isolate it from the system to which it belongs. It would be to suppose that a start could be made with individual signs, and a system constructed by putting them together. On the contrary, the system as a united whole is the starting point, from which it becomes possible, by a process of analysis, to identify its constituent elements (Saussure 1916: 112).*

In his science of language, Saussure (1916) is not concerned with what actors are saying, but rather that they are able to say anything at all. The task of his semiology becomes to understand the system of meaningful signs *in its entirety* which forms and structures language, thus enabling the

social world to be represented. The significance of his work is that the social world is understood in terms of its constitutive parts, and that 'reality' is only what it is because of ideas about how its constitutive parts are related to each other. It is Saussure's (1916) proposition that when we use language to communicate, we are communicating these ideas of the world. That is, we are communicating shared understandings of what reality simultaneously is and isn't, that are fixed at a specific moment in time. There is no reason that the ideas we communicate *are*- in the sense that there is no reason why 'a cat' is c-a-t, or Kaet, they simply are. However, an implication of this is that there is no reason why these shared understandings of the social world are fixed at a moment in time. Indeed, Saussure (1916) recognises that systems of language are susceptible to, and do, change. Subsequently, Saussure's semiology offers two distinct, but complimentary approaches to the study of langue: synchronic and diachronic. Each of which I shall now (briefly) explore.

As I have so far discussed, Saussure (1916) offers three key implications to the study of language (that language is constructed by and representative of a system of shared meaning and ideas; that the relationships between such meanings or ideas and their 'signs' are arbitrary; and whilst they are fixed at specific moments, are also susceptible to change over time). However, Saussure's (1916) work also offers two ways in which to *understand* language – what he identifies as the diachronic and synchronic explorations of language structures. For Saussure (1916), exploring what a specific instance of parole *does* and why that specific sign was used (for example, what stating "long walks make me happy" has, rather than "long walks make me feel satisfied" *does* in a specific instance) constitutes a synchronic study of language. Exploring how the choice of parole changes over time (for example, how the concept 'happy', and so what "happy" signifies, changes over time) constitutes a diachronic study of language. The fixed system of meaning that structures language (that I have so far described) is to be considered a synchronic formation of language – and it is the characterisation of the synchronic formation of language that Saussure (1916) was mostly concerned with. However, in recognising that these synchronic systems of language are susceptible to, and do,

change overtime, Saussure (1916) also makes possible the necessitation that, to *truly* understand the synchronic formation of a structure, one must also understand how such a synchronic formation came to be – that is to say, it makes possible the necessitation of understanding the synchronic, diachronically. Although, like the negativity of 'knowledge', this necessitation is not something which Saussure (1916) himself strongly utilises. However, it is hugely significant to the methodological approach that this thesis employs, and is a point that shall be returned to in much greater detail later in this chapter. Indeed, this lack of emphasis on the diachronic study of a language structure is problematized by post-structuralist thinkers (in particular Derrida) which I will discuss in 2.1.2. Saussure's (1916) structural linguistic approach to the scientific study of language formed the foundation for a structuralist approach to analysis that was extended to various other fields. Of particular interest to this thesis is the application of Saussure's structural model to the social sciences by Claude Levi-Strauss (1908-2009) as such an application provided a novel approach to exploring the social world – in the sense that it acknowledged the contingent and arbitrary nature of not just 'language', but of 'reality'.

At the core of all social science inquiry is a desire to better understand the social world in which we live – that is to say, our 'reality' - and there are numerous social scientific methodological approaches to inquiry that seek to better such understanding. A key point of contention within social scientific research is the conceptualisation of the very point of inquiry: are we seeking to determine an objective *reality*, or a subjective *'reality'*? I employ a methodological approach which argues the case for the latter. It is in the work of structuralists such as Levis-Strauss (whose work is indebted to Saussure's semiology) that made possible the study of *'reality'* rather than *reality*. What I mean by this is that the work of Saussure made possible the important alternative ontological supposition of the nature of the social world that the works of Levi-Strauss (and peers) provided. One which understands that 'reality' is socially constructed and maintained through social action, but also that such action is shaped and enabled by a shared system of meaning, or 'reality' – and the two cannot

be separated, as together they form an interrelated structure. An epistemological implication of this ontological supposition is that the object of study is understood to be not simply what social actors do and say, but rather what such 'doing' and 'saying' *does*. That social action (such as what someone says or does) and the intention of such action, can be understood as the representation of 'reality'. Subsequently, specific instances of language use should not be taken at face value – when I state that "long walks make me happy", it should not be taken as fact that long walks *cause* 'happiness'. Instead, such a statement should be considered by its intended and actual effects, as well as the 'reality' of the world that it draws on to do so. That is to say that it should be considered how I am able to state that "long walks make me happy" (by establishing what I understand 'happy' to be) and whether relating 'happiness' with long walks in this way reconfirms or expands the established idea of 'happiness'.

I have previously noted that temporally fixed, shared, normative, ideas and beliefs about 'happy' are necessary for my statement to make sense to my audience (introducing the idea of a language structure), and that to understand what that statement is *really* saying requires an understanding this temporally fixed system of meaning in greater detail (Saussure 1916) - e.g. that 'happiness' is 'good', 'positive', 'desirable' and is not 'bad', 'negative', 'undesirable'. Structuralists, such as Levi-Strauss, suggest that this structure of meaning constitutes a social 'reality', and so to understand the social 'reality' represented by my statement, we must understand what this statement *does*. For example, by drawing on the shared structure of meaning that 'happy' is 'good', 'desirable' etc., such a statement establishes the action of going for long walks as a positive one and one which can bring 'happiness'; that such an action should be encouraged and taken often. It also makes possible the notion that *not* going for long walks can prevent 'happiness'; that *not* going for long walks should be discouraged. Here, the notion that 'happiness' is 'good' is reified and so too is the notion that 'happy' is *not* 'bad' or 'undesirable'; but also a 'reality' that 'happiness' is achieved by the satisfaction of non-economic needs is both reified and made possible. For this reason, an

epistemological implication of this ontological supposition is that to understand the 'reality' that an action represents, it is necessary to understand the intentions behind it, as understanding intent reveals relations of difference that structure the wider system of meaning or 'reality'. In addition to making possible the idea of a temporal '*reality'*, the application of Saussure's theory of language to the social scientific study of 'reality' has further epistemological implications. If we consider my previous discussion of Saussure's (1916) notion of synchronic and diachronic approaches to understanding language structures, the application of his work to the social scientific study of 'reality' makes possible the necessitation of exploring the subjective conceptualisations of the social world in this way too – that is to say, it makes possible the necessitation that 'reality' should be understood as it is at a specific moment in time (synchronically) but it should also be understood in terms of how such a synchronic formation is possible (diachronically). However, that this application of structural linguistics to social theory makes possible the case for observing the changes in such synchronic 'realities' as they unfold over time, is an element which Structuralism pays little attention to, other than to acknowledge that this happens. Indeed, the structuralist approach is concerned almost exclusively with the synchronic and characterising the 'now'. In doing so, such an approach privileges the system of meaning, or structure, over the social actor using it to convey an attitude or belief about 'reality'. In essence, the actor is portrayed as a passive communicator, subjected or subordinated by the structure of meaning of the time (in the sense that they are only able to communicate attitudes and belief that are communicable). This is made possible by a focus on the synchronic formation as in dismissing *how* the synchronic is, structuralism fails to recognise actors' role in the diachronic transformation of 'reality'. Post structuralism (in particular the work of Derrida and Foucault), can be considered an attempt to address this issue of reducing actors' agency to the structure within structuralism – as I shall outline in the next section.

2.1.2 The deconstruction of structuralism and the construction of a methodological approach to discourse analysis

In a seminal piece of work, Derrida (1967) introduced the concept of deconstruction which presented the argument that to fully understand the Saussurian system of meaning or structure at any given time, it is necessary to understand how it came to be; that it is necessary to deconstruct the structure itself to understand how it was formed. In essence, Derrida expands on the structuralist model that section 2.1.1 describes, but where Saussure and Levi-Strauss drew attention to what *is* (the synchronic formation of 'reality'), Derrida essentially flips this and draws attention to what *is not* (the diachronic formation of 'reality'). That is, Derrida's deconstructive approach expands on the structuralist idea that 'reality' consists of 'negative knowledge' of the social world, and draws attention to ways that such differences are established and maintained. For Derrida, that a structure or system of meaning is presented as temporally complete and 'whole' is problematic. He proposes that if everything *within* such a structure is understood by its differential relations to other objects of the structure, then so to must the structure itself be understood in this way. That is, that the structure itself (as well as its constitutive parts) is defined as much by what it is not, as by what it is. Thus, to characterise a structure by its parts in a positive way (such as that which structuralism advocates) is to miss entirely the opportunity to critique it. The implication of this supposition (that 'reality' is defined as much by what it is not, as what it is) is incredibly significant to the development of Political Discourse Theory (PDT). Indeed, it is this recognition which made possible the notion of the impossibility of completeness of a structure – a notion which laid the path for Laclau & Mouffe's conception of 'radical contingency'.

Central to Derrida's theory (and its subsequent deconstruction of structuralism), is the argument that the Saussurian system of meaning (formed of relational difference) isn't simply a system of 'difference', but rather a system of binary oppositions. For example, 'happy' (and its similes) are not just *different* to 'unhappy' (and its similes), 'happy' and 'unhappy' (along with their similes) are in *opposition* to each other, and such opposition is structurally valorised. That is to say, like Saussure,

Derrida proposes that 'reality' consists of temporal systems of meaning which are formed by relational difference, but unlike Saussure, Derrida proposes that such difference is formed of binary oppositions – so 'happy' is different to 'unhappy' but it is different because 'unhappy' is understood to be the antithesis of 'happy'. He attests that in a binary opposition, one concept will be valued higher than the other – for example, being 'happy' is typically valued as being *better than* (as well as different to) being 'unhappy'. This view that difference has value has a significant impact to Derrida's deconstructive approach. In essence, deconstruction is concerned with revealing that a particular temporal structure is not simply formed of relations of difference (which need to be characterised in order to identify 'reality'), but that it is instead formed of relations of power. That is to say that, the valorisation of these binary oppositions assigns power to them also. The implication of this to social scientific inquiry is that to understand the temporal structure of 'reality', it is necessary to determine why the hierarchy of the binary oppositions *is*. The task for Derrida is not just to realise that 'happy' is different to 'unhappy', and that this relation forms part of a temporally fixed structure to be characterised, it is to reveal that the temporal structural formation relates 'happy' as *better than* 'unhappy' and what relating 'happy and 'unhappy' in this way does. He proposes that changes in the synchronic formation of 'realities' are made possible when a 'blindspot' emerges within them. That is to say, when an event or action takes place, or object is revealed, which constitutes a logical contradiction of some sort which is not able to be reduced into the binary oppositions that are in place. He terms this "aporia", but as I will come to discuss, this can also be considered a 'dislocatory moment'. It is here that the attempt to address the issue of reducing actors' agency to the structure within structuralism, can be seen. As it is here, in this moment of aporia, that social actors are understood to constitute agents of change. That is, social actors are understood to re-describe this ruptured 'reality' by making sense of this logical contradiction, achieved by drawing on wider attitudes and beliefs about 'reality' and using them to transform the broken structure of meaning in some way. Indeed, social actors are awarded a key role in the re-conceptualisation of 'reality' and its systems of relational binary difference by 1) actively maintaining systems of relation that are *not*

contradicted and 2) by re-relating the contradicted relations of difference to the wider structure of meaning in a different way (thus repairing the fracture of 'reality' that aporia represents). This both makes sense of the disruption, but also alters 'reality'. Subsequently, Derrida necessitates a deconstructive approach to understanding 'reality', as it is understood that only by deconstructing these relations of difference (and understanding how they *are*) that 'reality' can be accounted for. Thus, the question becomes how to identify such relations of difference to be deconstructed in order to understand 'reality' at a given moment in time.

Glynos & Howarth (2007) propose that these social objects are identified through a process of problematisation and draw on the work of Michel Foucault (1926 - 1984) to justify such a proposition. As Howarth (2002) notes, Foucault's archaeological and genealogical writings develop original approaches to discourse analysis; that they make possible a fruitful approach to the analysis and critique of ideologies (when supplemented by a neo-Gramscian concept of hegemony - which I discuss in the next section). They advocate that his archaeological and genealogical writings can be considered as offering an original methodological approach to poststructuralist, deconstructive discourse analysis – a key contribution of which being the idea of 'problematisation'. In essence, Foucault introduces the idea that to make sense of a problem, event or object it is necessary to conduct an archaeological (synchronic) and genealogical (diachronic) exploration the 'reality' within which they are formed. When utilising Foucault's ideas, Glynos & Howarth (2007) suggest that objects of study are identified by a process of problematisation – that is to say that "a range of disparate empirical phenomena [are[constituted *as* a problem" (167) - and are then able to be understood and explained by their constitutive parts (or how they are constructed) as "the problem [is able to] be located at the appropriate level of abstraction and complexity" (Glynos & Howarth 2007: 167). In sum, poststructuralism provides a critical, rather than descriptive, approach to exploring 'reality'. It is important to emphasise that poststructuralism is a progression of structuralism, and so still assumes some of its key ontological suppositions. Specifically, that 'reality'

is constructed by and representative of a system of shared meaning and ideas (and that the relationships between such meanings or ideas, and their 'signs' are arbitrary), but also that whilst such systems of meaning are fixed at specific moments they are susceptible to change over time. However where structuralism is concerned with characterising the synchronic formation of 'reality' at specific points in time, poststructuralism is concerned much more with the diachronic formation – that is, with explaining how the changes in 'reality' at different specific moments in time are possible. As I have discussed, the incorporation of 'the synchronic' and 'the diachronic' to the Foucauldian methodological notions of 'archaeology' and 'geneology', outlines a specific poststructuralist approach to exploring and understanding a system of meaning or 'reality'. More specifically, this makes possible the critique of such a 'reality' by necessitating the problematisation of an object of it. Such a process identifies the constitutive parts of an object for analysis and, by conducting a genealogical and archaeological analysis of how it is constituted, a critical explanation for it is made possible.

As I have discussed, Derrida's theory of 'deconstruction' observes structural inequalities within a system of meaning, and asks *how* such inequalities are possible, and what such inequalities *do*. In this sense, it can be considered to be a political tool or approach to exploring 'reality' as it makes possible a critique of the status quo via the deconstruction of objects of research produced. Glynos & Howarth (2007) suggest that this process of deconstruction is achieved by conducting a Foucauldian problematisation of social phenomena under investigation and conducting an archaeological and genealogical analysis of it to highlight the contingency and arbitrariness of the structural inequalities that make such phenomena possible. Indeed, this approach draws attentions to, and is able to be critical of, structural inequalities in any 'reality' or structured system of meaning, by critically explaining how such inequalities *are* (by exploring them diachronically), as well as what they *do* (in terms of the relations of power that they establish), and revealing their arbitrary nature.

The result is the beginnings of a methodological approach to characterising and understanding 'reality' which avoids the reductionist approach that structuralism is guilty of. Indeed, I have shown that a post structuralist approach to the exploration of 'reality' involves understanding and characterising this temporal structure by both what it *is* (that is, the current attitudes and beliefs about the world) as well as what it once *was* (that is, the history of ideas that have made it possible). This is done so in a way which is critical (rather than descriptive) of such a temporal structure; where the arbitrariness of the relations of power within any 'reality' might be revealed, and in a way which attributes agency onto the social actor – reconceptualising them from a passive communicator, to an agent of discursive or ideological change. However, whilst this approach is invaluable as it makes possible a critical explanation of social, structural inequalities in societies, the ontological supposition that 'reality' is simply the temporal structured formation of valorised binary oppositions, makes possible the conceptualisation of structural inequalities as being *inevitable* - and so only makes possible an (albeit critical) understanding of how they came to be, and are maintained. It is my claim that it is not enough to simply draw attentions to structural inequalities, and how they have come to be, it is also important to seek to change them. In their work *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* Laclau & Mouffe (1985) expand further on this post structuralist approach to critically explaining 'reality', and seek to incorporate a means to address the potential complacency towards structural inequalities made possible by their perceived inevitability. They do so, by also drawing on and incorporating a post-Marxist perspective (particularly Gramsci's notion of hegemony) into their approach to post structuralist analysis of 'reality'. For this reason, it is my argument that this poststructuralist approach to exploring 'reality' is useful in this thesis' aim to critically explain the emergence of the UK's happiness agenda, as its process of deconstruction makes possible a critical account of it. However, what it lacks is a capacity to propose an alternative to or a means to address the 'inevitable' inequalities that it will both contain and reproduce. That Laclau & Mouffe (1985) can be seen to expand further on this post structuralist approach to critically explaining 'reality', by also

drawing on and incorporating a post-Marxist perspective, makes possible this task – as I shall now outline.

2.1.3 Marxist Theory & Hegemony

'Classical Marxist theory' typically refers to the works of Karl Marx (1818 -1883) and Fredreich Engels (1820 -1895) who jointly authored *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848. A brief summary of this (and their other) work can be that both theorists sought to critique the exploitative processes of 'capitalism' that were emerging in the late nineteenth century and to enable the self-liberation of the class of wage labourers (proletariat) from a 'false class consciousness' that was understood to be present at this time. As Davies (2015) notes "Karl Marx believed that by bringing workers together in the factory and forcing them to work together, capitalism was creating the very class formation that would eventually overwhelm it" (214). That is, classical Marxist theory suggests that the structures of capitalist society create a subordinate and exploited class who (when mobilised in the form of a class conflict, made possible by the intensification of this economically defined contradiction) possess the capacity to re-structure society in a less exploitative, more redistributive, communist manner. Indeed, it is generally accepted that classical Marxist theory sought to critically explore the basis for inequality within capitalist society with a view to change it. It divides individuals into two main social categories (the proletariat and the bourgeoisie) and establishes relations of power and subordination between the two. It necessitates the seizing of (economic) power by the proletariat as a way to emancipate them from their structurally imposed subordination, and the re-structuring of society in a way that is not perverted by capitalist ideals and values. However, the notable failure of communist societies (e.g. the former Soviet Union and China) and the apparent rejection of Marxist theory within Western political ideologies, raises an important question for the socialist project as to how and why this has been the case.

Simon (1991) explores the lack of social expansion of Marxist thought in twentieth century Britain, and attributes this lack, in part, to its early and most influential approach to politics –

36

'economism'. In essence, 'economism' conceptualises the political institutions of the state as a product of economic structures, and views the state itself as an instrument of class domination – subsequently presenting a line of causation from the economy to politics, and depriving political institutions of any autonomy (Simon 1991). 'Economism' assumes 'capitalism' to be an inevitable economic and political stage in a society's development (assuming that such a society has provided productive forces with an unregulated environment) and views 'capitalism' as a movement which exists independently of human will (Simon 1991). This approach to politics was initially critiqued by Vladamir Lenin (1870 – 1924), who argued that it prevented the development of a true understanding of the nature of capitalist domination, and was later continued by Antonio Gramsci (1891 - 1937) - leading to the development of his concept of 'hegemony' (Simon 1991). Indeed, both Lenin (1902; 1905; 1917) and Gramsci (1971; 1977) were critical of this view of 'capitalism', and subsequent classical Marxist approach to politics - with Gramsci referring to it as 'mechanical determinism'.

The key point of contention in their critique was the perceived inevitability of a collapse of 'capitalism' and its associated political institutions. This is because it makes possible a form of political passivity where classical Marxists are posited as waiting, poised ready, for this inevitable collapse to take place so that they might re-build society in a socialist model. Instead, it was proposed that attempts should be made to build and mobilise a political consciousness in the labour movement (irrespective of economic circumstance/crisis) in order to transform the working-class struggle (Simon 1991). That is, it was argued that socialists should not *wait* for a collapse of capitalism, they should instead cause it. In doing so, the purely causal relationship between the economic base and political superstructure that classical Marxism advocated was separated.

Lenin's critique of 'economism' (which was later developed by Gramsci) argued that political crises (where 'socialism' could be mobilised) exist irrespective of the developments of the economic base – that is to say, a political crisis is possible without there being a crisis/collapse of the market or modes

of production. Importantly, both Leninism and Marxism share the assumption that there is a structuring/maintaining relationship between the economic base and the political superstructure, but the difference becomes as to whether the break in the relationship that is necessary to make space for socialism can be forced (Leninism), or whether it can only happen organically (Marxism). What is key, and what Gramsci (1971; 1977) develops, is Lenin's argument that the relationship can be artificially broken – that is, the claim that the emancipation of the proletariat can be achieved via addressing the power imbalance in political institutions, and not only by taking control of the means of production. Where Lenin and Gramsci differ, is in their view of how socialism is to be achieved - that is to say, they differ in their belief as to whether socialism can be *imposed* on a society in the top down manner using political institutions (that Lenin proposed) – which I shall now discuss by exploring Gramsci's work further.

Gramsci (1971; 1977) complicates the Leninist understanding of the political superstructure through his concept of 'hegemony'. According to Simon (1991) Gramsci's 'hegemony' is best understood as "a tool for understanding society in order to change it" (23). It is a type of relation between different classes (between a dominant or hegemonic class and its subordinate or non-hegemonic classes) which is ideologically formed and maintained; and so by identifying hegemonic relations, it is understood to become possible to identify ideals and values that need to change in order to transform the 'social consciousness' in a manner that enables the progression of the socialist project (i.e. identify ideals and values that need to be changed to socialist ones). Indeed, by drawing on the classic Marxist supposition of 'historical materialism' (which claims that society consists of a number of dominant and subordinate contradictions such as 'capitalist' and 'working' classes) Gramsci understands society to be a network or structure of hegemonic relations, or contradictions. Importantly, where classical Marxism proposes that change in the power balance between the subordinate and dominate contradictions is bought about via their confrontation and resolution, Gramsci suggests that this is instead achieved by transforming them *ideologically*. Indeed, he makes possible the idea that to mobilise 'socialism' within a capitalist society, it is necessary to transform

the relation between the subordinate contradiction (such as the proletariat) and the dominant contradiction (such as the bourgeoisie), by addressing the hegemonic structure that establishes this specific power balance as the status quo, or 'reality'. To do so, Gramsci introduces the concept of 'civil society' – and it is in 'civil society' that the hegemony of the dominant contradiction, or class, is understood to be exercised. 'Civil society' is understood to be formed of ideas and values belonging to all of society's contradictions – almost as an ideological space in which ideas and beliefs about 'reality' exist – and he notes that, whilst the dominance and subordination of 'contradictions' are economically experienced and politically enabled, they are formed in civil society. As Simon (1991) notes, Gramsci suggests that the hegemonic relations that structure society or 'reality' are formed by "persuading the subordinate classes to accept the values and ideas which the dominant class has itself adopted, and by building a network of alliances based on these values" (18). The implication here is that for a capitalist society to be so, this process of persuasion (leading to specific capitalist formations of dominant and subordinate contradictions) has taken place. Thus, the emancipation of the subordinate contradiction (the proletariat, in the case of capitalism) requires breaking the hegemonic grip of the dominant ideas and values about the world that maintain the subordinate contradiction as such. For Gramsci, it is simply not enough to politically and economically empower the subordinate class, as to do so doesn't alter dominant ideas and values about the world. Such empowerment needs to be accompanied by a profound change in the hegemonic social consciousness.

There is a clear overlap here between the Gramsci's conceptualisation of capitalist 'reality' and the wider theoretical conceptualisations of 'reality' discussed previously. Indeed, Gramsci is recognising the contingency and arbitrariness of 'reality' (specifically the relations of power between social classes) and is presenting a case for bringing about a diachronic change in the synchronic formation of capitalist society. In essence, Gramsci seeks to improve on the socialist project, placing it in the political, rather than economic, sphere. His basic premise is that an economic crisis or collapse is not necessary to the advancement of socialism (as classical Marxism suggests). Instead, he is concerned

with acknowledging the primacy of the political and social (rather than economic) elements of society and with emphasising the role of the hegemonic relations that structure society. He tries to liberate Marxist theory from its economic determinism and class reductionism however, as Simon (1991) notes, he remained committed to its fundamental agents of history (proletariat and bourgeoisie). Laclau & Mouffe (1985) offer an alternative, in their *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* – as I shall now discuss.

2.2 Post Marxism & Political Discourse Theory

Laclau & Mouffe (1985) attempt to address the problem of essentialism and class reductionism within Marxist theory (Glynos et al 2009). That is to say they attempt to address "the idea that a society, human subject, or the objects that we encounter in social life, have fixed essences that exhaust *what* these essences are" (Glynos *et al* 2009: 7). They do so by drawing on the anti-essentialist, deconstructive approach presented by Derrida (and made possible by Saussure) to further advance the socialist project. In particular, they deconstruct the Marxist ontology (that is still present within Gramsci's work) which reduces all identities to a class essence. They propose instead the 'radical contingency' and 'structural undecidability' of the structures of meaning which temporally fix context in the social world and form a synchronic 'reality'. Such structures, or discourses, are understood to give meaning to the subject and object positions of the social world contained within them by forming arbitrary relations of difference between its constitutive parts (Saussure 1916) that are organised as hierarchical binary opposition (Derrida 1978). In this sense, Laclau & Mouffe (1985) recognise the Marxist subject positions of 'the proletariat' and 'the bourgeoisie' (and the associated relations of power between them) the as being *one of many* socio-political contradictions, or antagonisms, to exist in 'reality' at any given moment in time.

Like Gramsci (1971; 1977) they understand such discursive structures to be socially produced, maintained and challenged through the exertion of power in the social and political components of society. They too necessitate the primacy of the political sphere (rather than economic) in both

social inquiry and attempts to understand and critique the hierarchical organisation of society and its parts. Indeed, in drawing on Gramsci's 'civil society' Laclau & Mouffe (1985) understand that the articulation of political struggles (and their adoption into social consciousness) is what shapes the discursive structure itself. They state that

the Left should consist of locating itself fully in the field of the democratic revolution and expanding the chains of equivalents between different struggles against oppression... It is not the abandonment of the democratic terrain but, on the contrary, in the extension of the field of democratic struggles to the whole of civil society and the state, and that the possibility resides for a hegemonic strategy of the Left (Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 176)

In doing so, they articulate clearly their post-Marxist concept of 'radical democracy'. In essence, their approach is concerned with maximising equality in society but they award all socio-political struggles the same importance as those of 'the proletariat'. In doing so, they complicate the classical Marxist concept of (in)equality and perceptions of social relations. Indeed, Laclau & Mouffe (1985) maintain the classical Marxist objective of critiquing and displacing the exploitative structures of capitalism, but add to this with the recognition that not all inequalities in society are produced by capitalism. They offer a significant contribution to making sense of, and seeking to rectify, such social inequalities in the application of their theoretical stance to a specific methodological approach to understanding, exploring and explaining the social world: Political Discourse Theory (PDT).

PDT assumes that 'reality' is socially constructed, interpretive, reflexive, subjective and contingent. Indeed, it is understood that there is nothing which exists in the world that cannot be reduced to this way of representing it – and for this reason, Laclau & Mouffe (1985) note that we are always internal to a world of signifying practices. They state that

The fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has nothing to do with whether there is world external to thought, or with the realism/idealism opposition. An

earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs

here and now, independently of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed

in terms of 'natural phenomena' or 'expressions of the wrath of God', depends on the

structuring of a discursive field. What is denied is not that such objects exist externally to

thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects of

any discursive conditions of emergence" (cited in Howarth & Stavrakakis 2000: 3).

In doing so, they confirm how PDT constitutes 'reality'. Here, 'reality' *is* discourse – indeed, "discursive field" can be understood in the same way that "ideology" has so far been used in this thesis. That is, 'reality' is formed within discursive fields, and represented by discourses (what people say and do). This posits 'discourses' as the object of social inquiry – that is, how they originate, can be characterised, are sustained, are changed and finally, how they can be critiqued (Glynos et al 2009). Indeed, Glynos & Howarth's *Logics of Critical Explanation in Social and Political Theory* (2007) is best understood as an extension of the methodology of PDT.

2.2.1 Political Discourse Theory: a logics approach

In their logics approach, Glynos & Howarth (2007) develop the post-Marxist, post-structuralist ideas of Laclau & Mouffe (1985) (which share the ontological suppositions described so far in this chapter) into an explicit methodological approach to poststructuralist discourse analysis. Such an approach is understood to provide "a grammar of concepts, together with a particular research ethos, which makes it possible to construct and furnish answers to empirical problems" (7). Indeed, the ontological suppositions outlined thus far make _im_possible the use of any other analytical approach, as they draw attention to the arbitrariness of meaning, knowledge and 'reality', and necessitate a methodological and analytical approach that recognises this arbitrariness. Glynos & Howarth (2007) achieve this by noting that at the core of all social science inquiry is a desire to better understand the social world in which we live – that is to say, our "reality". Whilst there are numerous social scientific methodological approaches to inquiry that seek to better such

understanding (many of which could be explored and evaluated in this chapter to justify the 'logics' approach that this thesis employs), as Glynos & Howarth (2007) note, the key point of contention within all social scientific research is the conceptualisation of the very point of inquiry - the social world. Is the social world, like the natural world, comprised of fixed, discoverable, universal 'truths', rationalities and causal mechanisms, which constitute an objective social *reality*? Or is it a socially constructed, interpretive, reflexive, way of understanding our experiences, which constitute a subjective, contingent '*reality*'? (Glynos & Howarth 2007; Howarth & Stavrakakis 2000). The main ontological supposition of the poststructuralist, post-Marxist approach to social research that this thesis employs is that social scientific inquiry should not be concerned with revealing an object *reality* which exists external to thought. Instead, social scientific inquiry should be concerned with understanding the conditions of possibility of a particular '*reality*' at a specific moment in time. This is a key point that needs further explanation and, to do so, it is necessary to first establish what is meant by the use of, and the difference between, *reality* and *'reality'.* This will be achieved by outlining Glynos & Howarth's (2007) ontological argument in support of their logics approach to social research. In doing so, the numerous social scientific methodological approaches to inquiry that seek to better understandings of an assumed *reality* are immediately discredited.

Glynos & Howarth (2007) offer an approach to social and political inquiry which is, in part, a reaction to what they claim is an increase of 'scientism' within social science disciplines. Scientism refers to an "underlying disposition…of an elusive and unattainable ideal: a science of politics and society – at least one modelled on a particular conception of natural science" (Glynos & Howarth 2007: 2). It is, in essence, an ontological presupposition that there exists an objective *reality* which exists externally to thought and is discoverable; and that the objective of social and political inquiry is to discover such a reality by establishing its 'truths' and causality – theories of which can be tested and (dis)proved via their ability to predict: known as the 'causal law paradigm'. They claim that such an underlying disposition dates back to (at least) the work of Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) and has

proved to be an ideal that is difficult to realise; one that has "skewed the overall purposes of the social sciences", establishing itself as the 'status quo' and so immune to evaluation or critique (Glynos & Howarth 2007: 2). Such a dream of predictability, they note, has taken many forms throughout the twentieth century, and the power of the promise of predictability within these dominant, positivist approaches is key to positivism's methodological hegemony within social and political science. Indeed, they propose that it is the desire for the predictability of social behaviour (on which these methodologies were formed) which led to such approaches drawing from the ontological presuppositions of 'scientism' – that is, the presupposition of a discoverable, objective, *reality.* In their exploration and critique of alternatives to positivism, Glynos & Howarth (2007) highlight the appeal to conceptions of *reality* over *'reality'* in numerous methodologies and attribute this to 'scientism' or the 'scientification' of the social and political sciences. Glynos & Howarth (2007) problematize this apparent desire to form a 'science' of society (which establish 'laws' that enable 'scientists' to predict relevant political events and practices) and draw attentions to (and seek to reactivate) "a crisis in the social sciences" (2). That is, they seek to reignite challenges to the dominance of positivism within the social sciences by highlighting previous (and by presenting new) dissatisfactions with the 'scientification' of the study of politics and society. They are critical of 'scientism' and the positivist incarnation of its causal law paradigm for two main reasons: 1) because in drawing on and developing a previous challenge to the hegemony of positivism posed by interpretivism and constructivism, they believe that quantitative research methods are incapable of gathering the right information to develop an understanding of *'reality'* and 2) they argue that underlying a desire for predictability is an assumption that social and individual thoughts or actions are fixed, rather than contingent. Their argument is, in essence, that social and political sciences can't uncover reality 'truths', when such 'truths' don't exist – that there is not an objective *reality*, only a temporal *'reality'*, and this should be understood and critiqued, not uncovered. Indeed, that *'reality'* is understood to be contingent, and that 'knowledge' is understood to be able to be 'known'

only at a specific moment in time, is the key difference that their approach offers to its explanation and study of society (when compared to other methodological approaches).

Glynos & Howarth (2007) note that the motivation for their development of an explicit methodological approach to poststructuralist discourse analysis is to defend such an approach from criticisms (specifically methodological arbitrariness, historical particularism, and idealism). They also note that by providing an explicit approach to poststructuralist discourse analysis, they make possible the means to *evaluate* this approach comparatively to others (which much of their text does do), making possible the claim that they offer the social scientist a unique analytical approach that incorporates explanation, interpretation and critique. It refrains from reducing explanations to simply subjective viewpoints, whilst simultaneously incorporating the self-interpretations of social actors, and enables the development of an explanation which recognises the specificity of the case under investigation, but also provides a level of generality and space for critique (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). This is important to my research aim to explore why a 'happiness agenda' and why now, as it prevents the production of an opinionative narrative, and makes possible a descriptive explanation instead – a descriptive narrative that relates social phenomena to the wider context in which they exist/take place. That is, this approach enables me to explain events at both a micro and macro level (rather than simply interpreting them) and avoids isolating specific events from their wider social (and societal) context. This is achieved through the recognition that phenomena under investigation constitute component parts of a wider temporal 'reality'; that the emergence of a UK 'happiness agenda' is both a phenomena in its own right and a part of a wider social 'reality'.

For this reason I believe this methodological approach to my exploration of the emerging happiness agenda to be an important and appropriate one; one which is able to contribute novel insight into a growing body of 'happiness' research – a body which is disproportionately concerned with producing a scientific 'truth' of 'happiness' by adopting mostly quantitative research methods (the results of

which are discussed in detail in Chapter 3). In essence, their logics approach is concerned with developing

> *the theoretical means to account for the ways in which subjects are gripped by certain ideologies or discourses...while also seeking to account for the different ways in which dominant orders are contested by counter-hegemonic or other resistance projects, where the latter involve the construction of new identities (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p4).*

Glynos & Howarth (2007) draw on Laclau & Mouffe's (1985) notion that a 'discursive field' is reality forming, to develop their logics approach to critical exploring 'reality'. Indeed Glynos & Howarth's (2007) application of Laclau & Mouffe's 'discursive field' understands 'reality' as essentially consisting of, and being represented by, observable, meaningful social and political practices. That 'reality' consists of the clustering together, and interlinking, of social and political practices which, when combined, form specific regimes of practices (or 'discourses') that present a specific idea of the social world. This idea of the social world (or 'reality') is *implied* by these regimes of practices (or discourses) and can be characterised and explored by understanding the logics that underpin such practices. Subsequently, it is important to explain what is meant by the terms 'social practices', 'political practices', and 'regimes of practices' a little further.

Social practices are "largely repetitive activities that do not typically entail a strong notion of self-conscious reflexivity …they are (usually) carried out without it even occurring to someone to put into question the rules animating these practices" (Glynos & Howarth 207: 104)- they are things that we do, without *really* considering why we do them. For example, consider the social practice of celebrating a loved one's birthday: here, we acknowledge this as a 'special' occasion and we purchase gifts to give them (and repeat this process every year). We do not question these practices, we simply do them because it's what we understand *ought* to be done. We do not question the idea of repeatedly celebrating being born every year, we do not question the purchasing and giving of a material object as a sign of celebration, we simply do. This is because social practices, such as this

are "inscribed on our bodies and ingrained in our human dispositions" (Glynos & Howarth 2007: 104). Crucially, regardless of their intentions, social practices "contribute to the reproduction of wider systems of social relations" (Glynos & Howarth 2007: 104), in the sense that they reproduce the 'reality', and systems of relations that it presents simply by not challenging or questioning it. For example, in this practice of celebrating a loved one's birthday we gift a 'desired' object to please the loved one - and in doing so we reproduce the discursive, or ideological, relation between materialism and pleasure. We do so because we seek to please the loved one as a means to celebrate, and in doing so we reproduce the relation between pleasure and 'goodness', and the idea that pleasure is something to be pursued. Establishing the social practices of a 'reality' can be understood as part of the characterisation of its synchronic formation – in that doing so provides a snap shot of what the 'reality' structure *is*.

Political practices are more complex than social practices, and to explore this concept further, it is necessary to first emphasise once again the unfixed nature of 'reality' (as political practices are linked to the changing and maintaining of 'reality'). I have shown that 'reality' is a regime of practices, and that these regimes of practices are simply interlinking practices that are temporally fixed. Such regimes can be understood in much the same way as Saussure's synchronic structures – that they are presented in what we say and do. I have also shown, as Laclau & Mouffe (1985) demonstrate, the radical contingency of the 'reality' that any discourse presents can be revealed by exploring this temporally fixed regime of practices. A stance made possible by drawing on Derrida's (1978) work – in particular his prioritisation of the understanding the synchronic, diachronically (as discussed in 2.1). Indeed, Glynos & Howarth (2007) note that the 'reality' represented within a particular regime of practices, or discourse, is contestable by identifying alternative discourses (and so alternative 'realities') which consist of alternative regimes of social and political practices – the existence of which, are made possible by the binary oppositions that are used to make sense of the world. For example (and to reiterate discussions in 2.1) a happy person is both someone who is 'happy', and simultaneously someone who is not 'unhappy'; a cat is both 'a cat', and simultaneously

not 'a dog'. At a macro level, this way of organising the world produces both a 'reality' (what the social world *is*) but also a 'negative reality' (what the social world *is not*); and such a 'negative reality' has the potential to disrupt 'reality' by possessing the potential to redefine what *is*, with what *isn't.*

For example, consider again the purchasing and giving of a material object as a sign of celebration, and that through this practice of gifting a 'desired' object to please the loved one we reproduce the discursive, or ideological, relation between materialism and pleasure. 'Reality' here, in part, consists of this idea (that is understood to be 'fact') that materialism produces pleasure. An example of 'negative reality' here, would be the idea (that is understood to be 'fact') that *im*materialism produces *misery* (if we assume immaterialism to be the antithesis of materialism, and misery of pleasure). For 'reality' to be considered 'true' (what *is)*, so too must 'negative reality' (what *isn't)*, as these both define what is 'known' about the concepts of 'materialism', 'immaterialism', 'pleasure' and 'misery'. Thus, to reveal either of the understood relations between (im)materialism and pleasure/misery to be 'false' (e.g. deriving 'pleasure' from 'immaterialism') disrupts the 'reality' that is presented – and this is how 'negative reality' has the potential to disrupt 'reality'. Typically, the contingency of 'reality' is concealed within its social practices (through social and fantasmatic logics, which I shall discuss later in this chapter) but on occasion, such contingency is revealed during what Laclau & Mouffe (1985) call a moment of dislocation. Such moments are instances when the established relations of a discourse (which constitute 'reality') are questioned or challenged in some way, and subsequently reveal a discourse as simply *one way* of conceptualising the social world. It is in this moment of dislocation that political practices come to light, as political practices decontest (meaning they counter ideological contestation by making uncontestable the 'reality' presented, either by transforming a common-sense idea or belief being contested, or by discrediting or making impossible the alternative provided), and reify, specific attitudes and beliefs about the social world. To return to my example, the revelation that 'pleasure' can be derived from 'immaterialism' disrupts the status quo that understands 'pleasure' to be derived from 'materialism'. It proves this assumed 'fact' about 'reality' to be false, but it also, by its very nature, challenges the wider ideas and beliefs

about 'reality' that this (now false) 'fact' belongs to, by calling into question associated ideological relations. For example, it makes possible the questioning of whether 'pleasure' is able to be derived from 'materialism'; of what 'pleasure' *is;* of whether 'pleasure' should be pursued; and of how someone seeking 'pleasure' should behave (should they gift a loved one a material possession as a birthday present, or should they *not* gift them anything at all, if their desired outcome is to cause 'pleasure'). For Glynos & Howarth (2007), political practices can be understood as those practices which are able to "bring about a transformative effect on existing social practices" (105) – and in doing so, possess the ability to transform entire regimes of practices "resulting in the institution and sedimentation of a new regime and the social practices that comprise it" (105). They structure and maintain the social, but are also reactionary and transformative in moments of dislocation; because of this, identifying the political practices of a 'reality' is an important part of the characterisation of the synchronic, as they reveal how 'what *is'* is possible (how a 'reality' presented is maintained). However, they are also important in the diachronic exploration of the synchronic, as they also reveal how 'what *is'* came to be.

Regimes of practices are both formed of and form social and political practices, but they also have a structuring function – that is, they order these practices (Glynos & Howarth 2007). Regimes of practice are, in essence, constellations of practices that are ideologically related together and form a structure that gives meaning to, and makes sense of, 'reality' and for this reason are the object of social scientific inquiry (if we consider that at the core of all social science inquiry is a desire to better understand the social world in which we live, or our 'reality'). Such a structure of meaning is understood to be socially and politically (re)produced and as such, constitutes a discursive entity (in the sense that 'reality' is discursively produced) to be identified and accounted for. To return to the birthday example, if the social practice of purchasing and gifting a material object is understood to bring pleasure, this particular practice can be understood to belong to a regime of 'consumption' which informs, and is informed by this practice. Whilst such a structure is temporally fixed, it remains susceptible to change (as demonstrated with the example of the revelation that

immaterialism can bring pleasure) thus, the 'reality' that such a structure makes possible is to be understood as contingent. Indeed, regimes are in essence the clustering of specific attitudes and beliefs about the world (for example, that consumption brings 'pleasure', and that pleasure is 'desirable') and so by first characterising the social practices of a regime, it becomes possible to characterise the regime itself, and to then understand how that regime came to be by exploring its political practices. A methodological implication here is that when we attempt to understand and characterise the social practices of a particular discourse, our exploration makes possible the characterisation of the regime of practices to which they are related, which in turn makes possible the characterisation of the political practices.

Further to this, Glynos & Howarth identify three dimensions of 'reality': 1) social, 2) political and 3) ideological and ethical. The social dimension can be considered the 'status quo' – that is to say, in the social dimension the radical contingency of the synchronic formation of social and political practices is not revealed, addressed or known. The social dimension simply *is;* it is 'reality'. The political dimension can be considered *how* the social is. That is, in the political dimension the 'radical contingency' of the synchronic formation of social and political practices is concealed or contested in some way, and the political dimension transforms, or reifies, the social. The ideological and ethical dimension can be considered *why* the social is. That is, in the ideological and ethical dimension the grip of 'reality' exists, it is where attitudes and beliefs about the synchronic formation are. From these three dimensions, they delineate three kinds of 'logic': social, political and fantasmatic, which I shall now discuss.

Social logics are closely associated with the social dimension and are understood to "enable us to characterise practices in a particular social domain" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p133) - that is that they constitutive the 'common sense' or normative conceptualisations of 'reality' that are implied in the day to day practices of discursive subjects. They can be considered as 'rules' which, when are identified and deconstructed, enable us to describe and characterise specific synchronic formations

of regimes of practices, as they enable us to understand the context in which they exist. Political logics are closely associated with the political dimension and focus on the "diachronic aspects of a practice or regime, whether in terms of how they emerged, or in terms of how they are being contested and/or transformed" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p141). That is, they are attitudes and beliefs *about* social practices and either challenge or defend them during moments of discursive (de)contestation (when the status quo is challenged in some way by an alternative discourse). They are concerned with the institution of the social, and are integral to the (de)contestation of the hegemonic discourse. Typically, they are revealed following a moment of dislocation and they help to re-describe and formalise the way in which the moment of dislocation is articulated or symbolised (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). Fantasmatic logics are closely associated with the ideological dimension and are, in essence, an ideological fantasy that decontests challenges to, and work to sediment further, the common articulated relationships that constitute the structure of 'reality'. For Glynos & Howarth (2007) to account for the synchronic, is to reveal these logics.

2.2.2 Implications to this study

The 'happiness agenda' that I seek to account for in this thesis can be understood as a constellation or regime of social and political practices – which has subsequent implications for the explanation of its emergence. As I have shown, to critically explain the emergence of a regime of social and political practices (such as the UK 'happiness agenda') it is necessary to first characterise it by its component parts – by what such regime both is, and, (importantly), what it is *not*. Indeed, the key point made here is that to truly understand social phenomena (such as the emergence of a socio-political 'happiness' agenda), such phenomena must be deconstructed in a way which identifies the component parts of the 'reality' that is presented, and then each component part must be critically accounted for (i.e. the history of the 'reality' presented must be understood). Importantly, the idea of negative knowledge is introduced here – that 'reality' is defined as much by what it is not, as what it is; that the 'happiness agenda' is defined as much by what it is not, as what

it is. This idea of understanding social phenomena by what it is not as well as what it is, provides a valuable means to begin to answer the question that I seek to answer in this thesis – that is why and *how* 'happiness' and not 'equality'– as it draws attentions to what is excluded from such an agenda as well as what is included in it. Doing so carves out a critical space in this analysis; it enables me to provide a historical account of why the demonstrated ideas and beliefs about the world which underpin this socio-political concern with maximising 'happiness' *are*, by drawing attention to why they *are not* something else. Furthermore, this methodological approach also provides the opportunity to develop an of-the-moment explanation of *how* 'happiness'*,* by identifying the social, political and fantasmatic logics that maintain these historically produced ideas and beliefs about 'reality' *in the present*.

2.2.3 Action for Happiness as a sampling frame

In the subsequent chapters I demonstrate that what the UK's 'happiness agenda' (in its entirety) seemingly seeks to do is make individuals and policy makers to recognise the complexity of the concept of 'wellbeing' and, through this recognition, accept that the maximisation of 'happiness' is a necessary and worthwhile endeavour. Importantly, the 'happiness agenda' works to establish the 'reality' that it presents as 'fact'; this being that 'wellbeing' refers to the subjective experience of the social world *in addition* to its objective economic parts (but not *instead of*). For example, in his work *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science,* Layard (2011) notes that individual and societal 'wealth status' is still important in the pursuit of 'happiness' - and cites a variety of 'evidence' to support this claim. Intended for audiences both within and external to policy making, and used to underpin the objectives of the organisation AfH, Layard (2011) summarises political and academic 'happiness' research; the findings from which are used to convey the importance of a government and individual pursuit of 'happiness' to maximise 'wellbeing'. He criticises what he claims to be the *demonstrable* effects of a political and individual focus on maximising GDP and wealth accumulation and necessitates instead a focus on increasing the quality of our subjective experiences of the world

by pursuing 'happiness' (Layard, 2011) – effectively side-lining these seemingly irrelevant economic issues but not dismissing them entirely from a pursuit of 'happiness'. Such 'evidence' works to establish this claim as 'fact' of 'reality' that he, and the broader 'happiness agenda', present.

It is important to note here that the proposed means to maximise 'wellbeing' presented by social actors of the emerging 'happiness agenda' has not gone unchallenged, and the attention that I award it, rather than its academic and ideological counters, should not be considered as a demonstration of acceptance of this conceptualisation of 'happiness'. Indeed, this thesis is not concerned with determining the accuracy of such claims surrounding what 'happiness' and 'wellbeing' are, or how (if at all) they should be pursued. Instead, this thesis is concerned with understanding (i) what makes these ideas and beliefs possible, and (ii) accounting for how it is possible that they came to constitute the *dominant* socio-political approach to progressing society. That is to say, the aim of this thesis is to critically account for how this agenda's claims of 'happiness' are able to exist at all and are able to enjoy discursive dominance at a specific moment in time *despite* these challenges to it. So how then, is this to be achieved?

In Chapter 1 I noted that the establishment of the organisation AfH, which I identified as a component part of the emerging 'happiness agenda'. Indeed, AfH is an incredibly interesting component part of the 'happiness agenda' as, although it presents itself as a grassroots organisation consisting of individuals who reject materialism and embrace 'happiness', and as an altruistic, missionary organisation whose purpose is to recruit 'happy' people to spread the message and provide the intervention to others, it is in fact the hobby-horse of a significant, influential socio-political actor of the agenda (Richard Layard) and the teachings and materials that it provides do not echo this sentiment (a point which I will come to justify). Instead, these teachings appear to be 'nudges', or rather 'evidence based' suggestions that individuals can choose to follow to become 'happier'. Members of AfH are thus individuals who have interacted with Layard's (2011) work either by directly reading his text (that summarises the 'evidence' that the pursuit of 'happiness' will

maximise 'wellbeing') or through the teachings and mission statement that he co-constructed during the formation of AfH. Thus, such individuals have interacted with the 'facts' of 'reality' that this 'expert' attests to be 'true' (and which, as I will come to demonstrate, underpin this 'happiness agenda'). AfH presents individuals with specific, 'expertly proven' ideas and beliefs about 'happiness' and 'wellbeing' and such individuals accept these uncritically. Indeed, like the ideas and beliefs about 'happiness' and 'wellbeing' that comprise the broader 'happiness agenda', AfH's ideas and beliefs about 'happiness' and 'wellbeing' are informed by the works of Richard Layard and other behavioural economists, as well as positive psychologists. Like the broader 'happiness agenda', AfH's ideas and beliefs about 'happiness' and 'wellbeing' understand the maximisation of 'happiness' to be the key to maximising 'wellbeing' and subsequently progressing society. I will come to demonstrate these claims in subsequent chapters, but that Richard Layard has played an active and pivotal role in the formation and emergence of the UK's broader socio-political 'happiness agenda' *and* the formation of AfH is how I understand that collecting the self-interpretations of members of AfH to be able to assist in the development of the critical explanation that this thesis seeks to produce.

Through AfH, Layard offers individuals an explicit, 'proven' guide to achieving the maximisation of 'happiness'. At the core of this guide to maximising 'happiness' is what are termed the 'ten keys to happier living' (figure 1). These include thinking positively about all experiences ('acceptance'), trying new things ('trying out'), being charitable ('giving') etc. – all of which encourage the individual to make changes to both their behaviours and their thoughts in order to become 'happier'. AfH's suggested path to the maximisation of 'happiness' can be considered as an adaptation (and lay application) of practices such as 'mindfulness' and 'positive thinking' (advocated by the third wave psychology movement as being effective in the prevention of 'misery'), as well as the incorporation of specific approaches to 'transforming' negative experiences and thoughts into positive ones (approaches that are informed by the 'proven' practise of cognitive behavioural therapies (CBT) – practices which have been widely associated with the effective treatment of 'mental illness'). The "ten keys" prescribe an individualistic approach to social progression, by offering the individual ways

of acting and thinking that are focussed on 'happier living' so that they might be able to improve their own experiences of the social world. Throughout this thesis I will refer to these "ten keys" as things AfH and its members believe individuals should 'do'; when doing so, I mean that members should 'do' the acts of thinking or behaving that AfH suggests, in the way that AfH suggests. Acts which, when are all collated, involve the individual taking control of, and being responsible for, making themselves happy by 'doing' these things properly (by choosing or deciding to think and act differently). These are:

- **G**iving – action (doing things for others or 'doing good')
- **R**elating – action (connecting with other people)
- **Ex**ercising – action (taking care of your body)
- **A**wareness – action (living mindfully, which is described as 'stopping and taking notice of the world')
- **T**rying out – action (keep learning new things)
- **D**irection – action (setting and working towards personally defined goals)
- **R**esilience – thinking (find ways to bounce back through positive thought)
- **E**motions – thinking (look for what's good to ensure you experience more positive emotions)
- **A**cceptance – thinking (be comfortable with who you are and think less self-critical thoughts)
- **M**eaning – thinking (which AfH describe a good approach as being to consciously think about which activities, people and beliefs bring us the strongest sense of purpose and passion and prioritise them).

(AfH website, online at http://www.actionforhappiness.org/10-keys-to-happier-living , last accessed on 11/05/2017).

I find this to be an interesting stance for the means to achieve 'happiness', one which presents an idea of 'happiness' in terms of what it is understood to *not* be: 'happiness' *is not* the product of materialism, nor is achieved by changing material circumstance. It *is not* a unified or shared idea, nor is it a temporal state. Through this idea of what it is not, we are able to see that 'happiness' is understood as an individually determined and unique state of being, which can be continued or hindered through individual thought and action. This notion of 'happiness' presents it as something which is exempt from external social factors, and posits it instead as an attitude or way of existing. An implication being that 'happiness' can be found *despite* social circumstance. Indeed, lacking in

any of the ten keys is a suggestion of social change. There is even a step to encourage 'acceptance' of who you are and your social circumstance, by changing how you think about these things (rather than to change the 'problematic' circumstance) (as Figures 2 and 3 demonstrate). Furthermore, the practices that AfH promotes lack an end point or an achievable goal, and so this path to 'happiness' can be understood as a cyclical and repetitive (rather than a linear) journey. A consequence of there being no discernible end-point is that individuals must continually participate in this cycle to reach (and then maintain) 'happiness'.

Underpinning all of this is a desire to progress society through the relief of 'misery' and developing a society comprised of individuals that are better equipped (emotionally and psychologically) to handle setbacks, disappointment and dissatisfaction– wholly 'negative' experiences of the social world. AfH thus became the sampling frame from which I recruited participants for this study. The reason for this being that they are individuals who, as I have noted, I identified as having engaged with and adopted the ideas and beliefs of the broader 'happiness agenda'. Indeed, as this chapter has demonstrated, if I am to understand *how* and why 'happiness' and *how* and why *not* 'equality' in the pursuit of maximised 'wellbeing', it is necessary to gather the self-interpretations of those who have accepted these specific ideas and beliefs about 'happiness', 'wellbeing' and 'equality'. Futile attempts were made to contact policy makers and enactors who had been involved with the political implication of 'happiness policies' (which I will come to elaborate on), but members of AfH were more willing (by comparison) to share their ideas and beliefs with me. The focus on members of AfH is not to say that there are no other social actors in this agenda and I do not wish to simplify the significance of these additional social actors' role is the development and sedimentation of this 'happiness agenda' in UK society – as I will come to discuss in Chapter 3, politicians and 'happiness theorists' play important roles in constructing and reifying a socio-political desire to maximise 'happiness'. However, it is my understanding that AfH members are lay members of society – in the sense that they are not 'happiness' researchers, or politicians. Subsequently, these members are

understood to be individuals who simply want there to be more 'happiness' in the UK after engaging with the agenda's message. They are understood to be individuals who exist outside of, but form a constituent part of, the emerging political 'happiness agenda' because they are understood to be the social element of the socio-political 'happiness agenda'. For this reason, their interpretations of the importance of 'happiness' and perceptions of the significance of such an agenda are of real interest to this thesis. Members of AfH are in essence tasked with taking a specific conceptualisation of 'happiness' (produced and provided by AfH as an organisation) and making sense of it within the context of their pre-existing ideas and beliefs about the social world. What I mean by this is that members of AfH engage with and make sense of ideas about 'wellbeing' and 'happiness' that they are presented with, in the context of their lived experience of the world. Their accounts will provide insight into *how* an agenda is able to gain social momentum – how 'happiness' is understood to be desirable to those outside of 'expert' knowledge on the matter. However (and as this chapter has already noted) their interpretations of the 'happiness agenda' to which they are a part should not be considered in isolation, and so my analysis of their attitudes, behaviours and beliefs will complement and enhance my characterisation and ideological account of the agenda (in Chapters 3 and 4) - where I explore *why* such an agenda is able to gain *political* momentum. Enabling me to produce a comprehensive, contextualised, explanation of the emergence of such an *ideological* agenda; one which incorporates the self-interpretations of social actors as well as the broader context within which the 'reality' of 'happiness' exists.

2.2.4 The Sample

A variety of members of the organisation were invited to participate in this study. Three of the regional groups – Barking, Hackney and Brighton – were visited throughout 2013-2014 at their monthly 'meetups' and participants were sourced directly at these meetings. I recruited participants from multiple groups in an attempt to counter the risk that I would simply be gathering the ideas

and beliefs of one regional group of AfH. Whilst I recognise that generalisability inevitably continues to be a problem with my research design (unless I interviewed all 72090 members of AfH) I believe that interjecting some variance in this way helps to make the conclusions that I draw more plausible. In doing so I do not assume that the views of all members of AfH are to be represented, nor that all views of all social actors of the wider 'happiness agenda' are either – but this is not the aim of this thesis. I do not hope to produce a comprehensive narrative of who thinks what. Instead, it is my hope to produce a critical account of the emergence of this specific belief about 'wellbeing' and 'happiness' by exploring participants' accounts of what 'happiness' is and why its pursuit is believed to be important. I will identify shared/common themes across such accounts, and seek to relate these to the characteristics of the agenda (to be identified by conducting a diachronic and synchronic analysis of the 'reality' that the agenda presents). These themes will be considered as representations of 'reality' as it is perceived by participants; participants who have engaged with a component part of the emerging 'happiness agenda' in the UK (that is AfH and its pseudo-scientific message of what 'happiness' is). Thus, by analysing the contextualised self-interpretations of members of AfH I will be able to draw attention to the structuring (or 'reality producing') effects that a component part of the UK's 'happiness agenda' makes possible. In essence Chapters 5,6 and 7 (where much of this analysis takes place) can be considered as an explanation of the *how* this 'happiness agenda' enjoys dominance in terms of conceptualising 'wellbeing' – in the sense that these chapters present what social actors of the agenda believe 'reality' to be but, more importantly, they are examples of this 'reality' in use. By which I mean that participants will draw on the 'truths' or 'facts' of this 'reality' in their discussions with me; it will shape how they answer questions and inform their views on topics that they understand to be related to 'happiness' and 'wellbeing'. Analysing how this 'reality' is used, will enable me to determine what this 'reality' *does*, and will enhance my characterisation of it. Importantly, it is not my hope to state that X (the 'happiness agenda') definitively causes Y (participants behaviours/beliefs), but rather to show that X makes possible and informs Y – a subtle, but important, difference.

After reviewing all AfH regional groups, I decided to initially approach two of them; Brighton and Barking (which was initially called the 'East London' group but changed its name after additional groups in the region were founded). The reason being that it was my aim, wherever possible, to gather data from a variety of participants (to interject some variance in the ideas, beliefs and *experiences* of the world collected) - and I established (by exploring the 2011 census data) that the socioeconomic demographics of these areas varied considerably, as Table 1 highlights. There is notable variation on ethnic diversity, marital status, housing tenure, qualification level, religiousness, and occupation in these two areas. Thus, I felt that approaching AfH regional groups located in these areas would enhance my ability to gather a diverse sample of members to discuss 'happiness' with.

Both groups had been founded at similar times but were quite distinct in terms of the way that they were managed, the numbers of members that they stated they had, the frequency with which they met, and the locations for their 'meet ups'. The Brighton group was founded in March 2012 and was considered by almost everyone that I interviewed to be the most 'successful' of the regional groups. At the time that fieldwork was conducted, I was informed by the organisation's head office that they had the largest membership base (both registered and active) and would meet on multiple occasions throughout each month to discuss a wealth of topics relating to 'happiness'. However, I should note that no one was able to tell me exactly how many members they had and attempts to determine exactly how many people were engaging with them proved to be an impossible task. For example, their Facebook page has 565 'likes', whereas their website (www.actionforhappinessbrighton.org.uk/) claims that they have over 1700 members (correct on 17/08/16), but the largest group meet that I saw had approximately 30 attendees – around 15 of which were described as "regulars" by one of the groups' co-founders. The Brighton group used a variety of forms of social media to advertise themselves and their 'meet ups', and ran their own website (which was how initial contact was made with them for this project). Their 'meet ups' were

informal in nature, typically taking place in large social spaces (such as bars in Brighton town centre) and I was invited to attend and observe two of these by one of the co-founders of the group. It was at these meetings that I was introduced to members and I collected the contact details of people willing to be interviewed for my research. A total of four participants were sourced; two co-founding members and two new 'general' members. Each participant was interviewed for around one hour, where various topics were discussed by conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews.

The Barking Action for Happiness group was also founded in 2012 (a more precise date was not able to be determined) although it was then called the East London group. At the time that fieldwork was conducted it was considerably smaller than the Brighton group and was considered to be 'struggling' (in terms of member participation) by both head office and its members. Again, no one could provide me with exact membership numbers, but their Facebook page has 226 'likes' (correct on 17/08/16). The group used their Facebook page to advertise itself and its 'meet ups', which is how first contact was made. Their 'meet ups' were less frequent than Brighton's (usually once a month but sometimes less, depending on interest and the availability of those running the group) and were much more formal in their nature. A room (that resembled a classroom) had been sourced in the town's local library and I was invited to attend and observe at two of these meetings by the founder of the group, at which I was permitted to collect the contact details of people willing to participate in the study. A total of three participants were sourced from this group; one founder, one convenor and one 'general' member who had been involved in the group from the beginning. As with the Brighton group, each participant was interviewed for roughly one hour where various topics were discussed by conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews.

Data collection proved to be a challenging task; whilst there was a wealth of information available online with regards to how to contact regional groups, as well as when they were meeting, finding willing participants to be interviewed for the study proved to be more difficult than anticipated. Whilst I was in field, a new group was formed in East London that was based in Hackney and,

following low recruitment rates experienced in the Brighton and (newly named) Barking groups, I felt that this new group was worth exploring. After researching the group I discovered that two of the members (including a co-founder of the group) worked at Action for Happiness' head office and I felt that it would enhance the diversity of ideas and beliefs collected within the sample to approach the group and hear their additional thoughts on the movement. I attended their second ever meeting and was permitted to recruit participants at this event. Three participants were sourced; two members who worked at AfH head office and one co-founder of the group. As with previous participants, members were interviewed for around one hour where a variety of topics were discussed. In total, ten in-depth interviews were conducted with members of AfH. I also tried, and failed, to recruit the two remaining members of head office (who weren't involved directly with the regional groups) as well as the co-founders of the organisation.

Table 2 provides detailed information about the participants involved in this study. Participants' ethnicity is not varied (with most being White), nor is their level of education (with most being educated to degree level). Indeed, the end sample, when broken down by location, does not reflect the rates of ethnic diversity of each area that participants were sourced, nor the variance in level of education (table 1). This aim was hindered by both the diversity of the sampling frame and the willingness of members of AfH to participate in this study. Indeed, at my attendance of these meetings as well as my discussions with members that had attended (as I was approaching prospective participants), I noted that members were predominantly white, middle-class individuals educated to degree level. Whilst this was expected in Brighton, this was a surprise in Barking and East London – where the populations are understood to be more ethnically diverse and educated to a lower level (see table 1). This is something that I will take into consideration in my analysis of the data (Chapters 5-7) and any conclusions that I might draw or further research that I suggest (Chapter 8). However, the aim was not to find a representative sample of each location (as I am not seeking to make regional comparisons within the data), it was only to gather a diverse end sample – which I have still achieved. The end sample provides accounts of 'happiness' from participants of various

genders and employment statuses. Thus, although limited, I was satisfied that (somewhat) diverse data collected would assist me in developing the critical explanation for the emergence of the 'happiness agenda' that I hoped this thesis would provide. In addition to interviewing members of the organisation, I engaged with the wealth of literature that AfH provides. I did so to establish a point of comparison and reference when analysing the interviews conducted, and as such, there is no specific analysis of this literature. Such information was predominantly sourced from the organisation's website and drawn from downloadable resources aimed to help individuals on their path to happiness, but also from posts made by AfH's social media sites. I provide a summary of the usefulness of doing so in Chapter 8.

I begin my analysis in Chapter 3, which acts as part of the characterisation and problematisation of the happiness agenda. This process is, as I have noted, necessitated by Glynos & Howarth (2005) in order to identify and construct an object of study - which in essence means that "a range of disparate empirical phenomena have to be constituted *as* a problem" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007: 167) to which I then explain retroductively. In this sense, Chapter 3 serves as the first step in critically accounting for the emerging happiness agenda by defining precisely what such an agenda *is;* what social and political actions are understood to define it and what social and political actors constitute it. This is achieved by conducting an archaeological analysis of 'happiness' in which the very idea of what happiness both is and isn't believed to be, is deconstructed into its component parts. This process will identify 'happiness' objects and practices which come to constitute the objects of enquiry, critique and explanation for this research project (that is, objects to be critically accounted for by understanding what they *are,* by what they are not).

Chapter 4 can be considered as the second part of the characterisation and problematisation of the happiness agenda by providing a genealogical account of the ideological emergence of the happiness objects and practices that are to be critiqued (that I will have identified in Chapter 3). That is, Chapter 4 takes the component parts of 'happiness' (as they are understood to be at this specific

moment in time) and asks how they are; how these 'happiness' ideas and practices have developed. In Chapters 5, 6 and 7 I explore (in great detail) the self-interpretations of the social actors of the 'happiness movement'. Doing so enables me to grasp how these ideas of 'happiness' and 'wellbeing' (identified in Chapters 3 and 4) were able to achieve the socio-political importance that they were awarded. In these chapters I, in essence, seek to understand how the agenda's subjects are able to become gripped by the 'reality' is presented, as well as the ways in which the specific attitudes and beliefs about 'happiness' (along with their associated practices) decontest alternative ideological resistance projects to the one which is shaping and guiding the 'happiness agenda'. This is achieved by identifying the three types of logics which underpin subjects' beliefs and practices, by highlighting their effects (what they *do*).

Whilst there is an ever-increasing supply of quantitative 'happiness' research, qualitative research on 'happiness' is, by contrast, less common. With that said there have been some mixed methods and qualitative explorations of 'happiness' taking place in recent years (for example see Baranowska- Rataj et al 2014; Koffman et al 2012). However, it is frequently noted within these works that there is a lack of qualitative research into 'happiness' – specifically into the area of defining 'happiness' and how to better understand it in a qualitative capacity. There have also been additional theoretical explorations of 'happiness', which have sought to account for a growing interest in, and concern for, 'happiness' within contemporary society (Ahmed, 2010; Ehrenreich, 2010; Davies, 2015). This thesis seeks to enhance this debatably neglected area of qualitative 'happiness' research and enhance theoretical explorations (of what 'happiness' *is* and how it has become understood to be so important in contemporary society) by developing a critical explanation of the emergence of this socio-political 'happiness' agenda – a task that I begin in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Measuring 'happiness' and the 'evidence' of maximising 'wellbeing'

I have previously noted that that, in 2010, it was announced that 'happiness' was to be measured alongside economic growth in the UK – and it is from this point that I shall begin my critical account, where I shall seek to determine how and why, in 2010, the UK government understood that measuring 'happiness' offered a viable means to track 'social progression'. An important starting point here is that there exists an assumption that 'happiness' can be measured - that it is something to be 'known'. Indeed, as Davies (2015) notes, Western societies are gradually accumulating large amounts of 'happiness' data; which is understood to provide us with 'knowledge' of what kinds of lifestyles generate the greatest 'happiness' – producing a 'science' of 'happiness' that prescribes ways of behaving, thinking and feeling in order to be 'happier' (Davies, 2015). In this chapter I demonstrate that 'happiness' has become something which experts, disciplines, measures, and surveys now congregate around; and the 'reality' presented is that 'happiness' is a measurable subjective, psychological state. I wish to explore this idea or belief of 'happiness' further, to understand how it is understood as a measurable object, as something to be 'known' and, importantly, as something which it is possible to possess 'expert knowledge' of. In doing so, I hope to draw attention to the power that such 'knowledge' grants; what 'knowing' about 'happiness' does. It is my argument that these 'facts' of 'happiness' constitute a subjective political tool, rather than an objective collation of 'truths' about 'reality' – a point that I shall come to justify. Indeed, the collation of 'knowledge' of what makes society 'happy', I argue here, is made possible by the sedimentation of the wider 'reality' that the 'happiness agenda' presents about what 'wellbeing' is, and how it is to be maximised. In essence, in this chapter I seek to understand the conditions of possibility for the emergence of the political necessitation of the measurement of 'happiness', as well as drawing attention to the effects that measuring it has.

3.1 Happiness and 'wellbeing'

During the announcement of the launch of the ONS wellbeing survey, where it was announced that 'happiness' was to be measured alongside economic growth, the explanation for the inclusion of such measures was described as enabling the government to "start measuring our progress as a country, not just by how our economy is growing, but by how our lives are improving; not just by our standard of living, but by our quality of life" (Cameron 2010) - signalling that 'wellbeing' was understood to be related to 'social progression' in some way. Indeed, underpinning this statement is an assumed 'reality' that increased 'wellbeing' is demonstrative of 'social progression'. So what then does 'happiness' and 'wellbeing' have to do with 'social progression'? As Wren-Lewis (2014) notes, measuring 'happiness' has become an "increasingly prominent way in which both social scientists and public policy practitioners aim to measure wellbeing" (418), and this sentiment is evident in the expressed reasons for the UK to begin measuring 'happiness'. An initial question emerges here, which is what are 'happiness' and 'wellbeing' understood to be, and how are these two concepts understood to be related?

An individual's 'wellbeing' is, broadly speaking, viewed as how 'well' they are doing – as Wren-Lewis (2014) notes "[w]hen we question what makes someone's life go well for them, we are asking questions about their wellbeing (or their 'welfare')" (417). There has been increasing prominence of the notion that the measurement of 'happiness' constitutes a measure 'wellbeing'; more specifically, 'happiness' is established as a measure of 'subjective wellbeing', which is itself defined as a component part of 'wellbeing' *in total*. A specific idea of 'happiness' is presented here, which makes possible this relation between it and 'wellbeing'. 'Happiness' is understood to be affected by positive and negative events and experiences in life, positive and negative events and experiences which are related to a person's 'wellbeing' or welfare. For example, we can assume that if our lives are 'going well' we will experience more positive, than negative, events over a sustained period; and the prolonged experience of these positive events is understood to affect our affective state of 'happiness' in a positive way. However, considerable tension within academic literature remains

here, with regards to whether this is a fair relation to make. That is to say whether 'happiness' is an accurate and representative measure of a component part of 'wellbeing'. Indeed, Angner (2010) identifies at least two points of tension within the literature advocating the measurement of 'subjective wellbeing' (via 'happiness'), noting that there are differing stances with regards to (i) what exactly 'subjective wellbeing' *is* (what it is constituted by and if it's measurement is exploring individual 'happiness', 'satisfaction' or something entirely different) and (ii) how it is understood to be related to a more general idea of 'wellbeing' (whether 'subjective wellbeing' is to be considered 'wellbeing' in total, or simply a component part of it). The ideas and beliefs shaping the UK's specific happiness agenda can be positioned quite centrally here. In that the 'reality' presented here is that 'happiness' constitutes one of two measures of 'wellbeing' *in total*. Indeed, as I have previously noted, 'wellbeing' *in total* is understood to be comprised of economic and non-economic parts. This conceptualisation of 'wellbeing' *in total* explicitly maintains a relation between economic 'wellbeing' and whole 'wellbeing' (and so continues to justify a need for its maximisation) but introduces the concept of 'subjective wellbeing'. Indeed, what has seemingly taken place is a recognition of the complexity of the concept of 'wellbeing' which has made possible the incorporation of the idea of its subjective component parts *in addition* to its economic parts (but not *instead of*). In an example of this, Layard (2011) outlines the importance of a government and societal pursuit of 'happiness' to maximise 'subjective wellbeing' – criticising a focus on the objective, economic, means of maximising 'wellbeing' at the expense of our subjective experiences. Layard (2011) is critical of a modern Western social and political turn towards materialism, consumption and wealth accumulation; more specifically, a turn towards these in attempts to maximise 'wellbeing' through the satisfaction of economic needs alone. As, for Layard, this has led to the neglect of our subjective (not economic) experiences of the world, resulting in our 'wellbeing' stagnating (as our non-economic needs have not been satisfied). For this reason, Layard (2011) necessitates instead a focus on increasing the quality of our subjective experiences of the world by pursuing 'happiness' – effectively side-lining any socio-political focus on 'economic needs' because their satisfaction is understood to be

achievable within the status quo, but not dismissing such economic needs entirely from a pursuit of 'happiness'. Indeed, within his work the satisfaction of economic needs are understood to still be necessary in the pursuit of 'wellbeing', but only up to a certain point.

In addition to the introduction of these two types of 'wellbeing' (economic and non-economic), I also noted that four new questions were introduced to the Annual Population Survey which were understood to measure this non-economic, 'subjective wellbeing'; establishing 'happiness', 'satisfaction' and 'anxiety' as measures of it. Substantial discussion and debate surrounded the formation, and introduction of, these measures (ONS, 2011a), which worked to establish an idea of them as 'correct' or 'true' (as they had undergone some form of peer review, where the 'evidence' of the ability for such measures to determine 'happiness' was evaluated). The result of this consultation was that whilst 'happiness' was accepted as being an intangible, subjective emotional state, it was one that individuals were understood to have 'knowledge' of and were able to self-report about. The idea or belief presented being that, whilst individuals might not be able to define 'happiness' or describe what it is, they are aware if they are 'happy' or not; but also that 'happiness' is a "multi-dimensional concept which…begins to capture the more subjective dimensions of how people think and feel" (ONS, 2011a: 18). These debates did not challenge or question the conceptualisation of 'wellbeing' *in total* being comprised of economic and non-economic conditions, instead they reviewed the "expert" opinions of 'subjective wellbeing' (and 'wellbeing' *in total*) uncritically and accepted that the subjective experience of 'happiness' was related to the satisfaction of non-economic needs. The result being that this consultation, and works that followed it, simply focussed on the best way to measure whether individuals understand themselves to be 'happy'. The existence of understood "experts" of subjective wellbeing and 'happiness' (who validated this relation between 'happiness' and 'wellbeing') suggests that these ideas or beliefs about 'wellbeing' and 'happiness' were already 'known'. Indeed, as I will now discuss, the relation between non-economic, subjective needs and 'wellbeing', *and* their measurability via 'happiness' had begun to emerge in the UK long before the consultation on, and announcement of, the measurement of

'happiness' in 2010. So where then did these ideas and beliefs about 'happiness' come from, and how were 'happiness' "experts" established?

3.2 Healthcare provision, measuring outcomes and 'knowing' mental health

In 1997 the (then newly formed) Labour government published a white paper designed to improve healthcare in the UK by introducing collaborative, target driven, health care provision (Department of Health, 1997). Included in this white paper was the announcement that a National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) was to be created - the explicit purpose of which being to "to give a strong lead on clinical and cost effectiveness, drawing up new guidelines and ensuring they reach all parts of the health service" (Department of Health, 1997: 24). In essence, the role of NICE was to publish clinical guidelines for medical interventions or treatments to be offered by the NHS. However, it also published clinical targets for practitioners to meet. In doing so, NICE provided a governing mechanism for the Department of Health (and indeed the wider government), in the sense that it held the power and authority to specify which physical and mental health provisions were to be made available to individuals. Such specifications were based on research collated and evaluated by members of NICE panels. It also made healthcare practitioners accountable to both the government and the patients being treated, via the targets that were also set (which came to constitute performance measures). It was intended that NICE would evaluate a variety of research relevant to the provision of healthcare services (conducted by those both within and external to healthcare practice) and provide evidence-based recommendations and targets as to how healthcare provision should be implemented. An effect of the establishment of NICE (in particular, it's push for efficiency and effectiveness) was that 'outcome' came to be posited as the most important factor in health care provision - i.e. the rate at which society's health issues were shown to be reduced. Subsequently, it became necessary to construct health issues in a way that made them *measurable*. This is a fairly simplistic task in the context of 'physical health', as the presence (or lack of) health disorders is an entirely objective phenomenon; it is possible to observe and 'know'

absolutely whether a bone is broken, or an antibody is present in a blood sample, for example. However, 'health status' was understood to be *more than* a person's physical health, it was also understood to be comprised of a person's mental health. This presented the problem of establishing how a person's 'mental health' could be measured and, more importantly, how improvements in society's 'mental health' could be tracked.

In 1995 the Centre for Outcomes Research and Effectiveness (CORE) was established with the expressed purpose "to promote effectiveness based research within applied psychology" (CORE website online at http://www.ucl.ac.uk/pals/research/cehp/research-groups/core last accessed 02/05/17). Later, CORE came to focus on developing clinical guidelines for the provision of mental health care by evaluating existing, and developing new, methods of 'mental health' interventions. It did so (and continues to do so) so as part of the National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health, established in 2001 by NICE – and the findings from which are used to inform NICE guidelines for the provision of mental health care services. As part of its focus, CORE proposed supposedly 'reliable' measures of individuals' 'mental health' (in order to track its improvement) by incorporating objective results and subjective experiences of treatment. Indeed, the recommended CORE measures were for practitioners to note observed, objective changes in the patient (i.e. whether behaviour and attitudes have changed); and for patients to complete two self-reporting questionnaires which sought to determine whether treatments were carried out appropriately and how treatment had impacted or changed their daily life and experience (Clifford, 1998). The establishment of, and growing influence of, CORE is demonstrative of the 'scientification' of the concept of 'mental health' (like that which Glynos & Howarth (2009) noted of the 'scientification' of social research). The implied assumption or belief underpinning the claim that mental health treatment outcomes can be measured, is that 'mental health' can be measured also. What I mean by this is that to measure the outcomes of treatments, 'mental health' must be measured in some way – as the most desirable outcome of treatment is essentially the 'curing' of a mental disorder and this

can only be 'known' through its measurement. The result is that 'mental health' it is presented as a discoverable and measurable object of 'knowledge', which it is possible to establish 'facts' about. 'Facts' of 'mental health' are often developed within a medical (and so biological) framework - where 'mental illness' is understood in the context of there being an objective, discoverable 'reality' or 'truth' of 'mental health' to be explained and accounted for. The result being that 'mental illness' is constructed as an object of 'knowledge', to which 'causes', triggers and symptoms of it are understood to be able to be identified. Foucault (1961) wrote extensively on this subject; noting that the 'medicalisation' of the concept of 'mental health' can be traced back as far as the nineteenth century, where an individualistic, biological explanation of 'mental illness' was established as discursively dominant; and the causes of 'mental illness' were understood to be due to a malfunctioning of the body and *not* related to social factors. This made possible distinctly individualistic approach to 'curing' such ailments that came to dominate in modern 'enlightened' societies. Foucault (1961) also observed that the 'medicalisation' of 'mental health' constructed specific subject positions for individuals to identify with – the 'mentally ill person' and the 'mentally well person' – and individuals that occupy such subject positions were subordinated to those who were understood to possess 'knowledge' over them – i.e. 'mental health' "experts". I noted that NICE panels provide 'evidence-based' recommendations as to how healthcare provision might be implemented and improved after reviewing research conducted by researchers both within and external to the healthcare setting. Indeed, NICE provides an important link between the non-medical research community and policy makers, by giving their work the opportunity to shape health policy and with this, I shall demonstrate, made possible the opportunity for 'mental health' "experts" to emerge in disciplines external to the typical medical context. Something which was in part achieved by emphasising the importance of 'evidence based' recommendations as, in doing so, NICE invalidated works that were not found to have a strong enough 'evidence-base' to be included in its guidance – thus preventing 'expert' status from being awarded to some, and marginalising the 'knowledge' that they presented from dominant constructions of 'mental illness' and its treatment.

Importantly, NICE was not only concerned with establishing *clinically effective* treatment of 'mental illness', it was also concerned with establishing *cost-effective* treatment (Department of Health, 1997) – and it was determined that Cognitive Behavioural Therapy was able to offer both (NICE 2004a, 2004b, 2009, 2011). Here, individuals suffering from poor 'mental health' are handed responsibility for changing and 'curing' themselves (for example, by taking SSRIs or engaging in psychological therapies). Firstly, this approach to treatment works to perpetuate the belief that the cause of this 'illness' is a malfunctioning body (or mind), by incorporating uncritically the individualistic, biological construction of 'mental illness'. This is achieved by attributing the cause of 'mental illness' as something 'wrong' with the way that individuals experience and interpret the world. Secondly, the treatment process it necessitates and supposed 'evidence base' of its effectiveness establishes CBT as an *economically viable* solution to an apparent 'mental health crisis' that was understood to be developing in British society, as it was understood to be relatively cheap to implement. Indeed, a number of economists worked to make the case for the cost-effectiveness of CBT, as I will come to discuss.

In order to fulfil NICE's own objective of giving a strong lead on clinical and cost-effectiveness, NICE panels focussed on works that were able to provide demonstrative evidence of the cost-effectiveness of their recommended approach. The result being a self-perpetuating agenda of 'cost-effectiveness' taking hold in the provision of health care, where NICE searches for it, and research works to demonstrate it – all of which establish and sustain a perceived need for it. For example, in an early report where IAPT is proposed, Bell et al (2006) state that successful CBT treatment of someone suffering from depression results in

> *nearly two months extra in work, and nearly two months less on incapacity benefits… On top*
> *of this there are savings on other NHS services. People spend less time visiting their GP. The*

drug bill falls, and fewer people are referred to hospital – for mental or physical reasons.

(Many people complain of physical symptoms because they have mental problems, and half

of all patients referred to consultants for physical symptoms are found to have no 'medically

treatable' physical illness) So investing in mental health also has a pay-off through physical

health (8).

They go on to note that similar, if not stronger, results are understood to be found with the successful CBT treatment of someone suffering from an anxiety disorder. Indeed, CBT is also argued to help with the symptoms of schizophrenia – where Bell et al (2006) claim that it produces a 'significant improvement' in the prevalence of symptoms. The seemingly overwhelming evidence that CBT works to reduce suffering, but also to improve productivity, is then used to argue the case for the national implementation of IAPT (which is, in essence, a programme designed to make CBT readily available to all who 'need' it). In this report, Bell et all (2006) draw on NICE reaching the same conclusions to further argue the case for IAPT – positing it as the implementation of NICE guidelines.

A central tenet of the IAPT programme is that a person suffering from poor mental health will be at risk of 'absenteeism' or 'presenteeism' from employment (or a combination both) and that they therefore pose a direct risk to national productivity – and that this (along with their individual suffering) is why poor 'mental health' is problematic (and IAPT should be implemented). An additional central tenet of IAPT is that if such a person is provided with access to (and attends) psychological therapy (such as the seemingly effective CBT), they will be 'cured' of this ailment and so the risk they pose to productivity is reduced alongside their suffering (Bell et al 2006, Layard et al, 2007). The stance here is that not only is CBT an economically viable treatment because it can be implemented cheaply by the NHS, it is an economically viable treatment because it improves the economy as a whole. A relationship between 'employment' and 'mental health' is established here; as is the sentiment that 'employment' constitutes an important obligation of government. That is to say that both 'curing' mental health disorders and maximising employment are posited as

significantly important obligations of governments as they are understood to benefit society in its entirety, and not just those suffering from 'mental illness'. Layard had himself long expressed the sentiment that maximising 'employment' constitutes an important obligation of governments – having previously positioned 'employment' as a key preventative factor in the crusade against 'mental illness' (Layard, 2004; Layard, 2011) amongst other things. For example, Layard (2001) had worked to establish 'unemployment' as the cause of a number of pre-defined social ills – in particular, increased crime rates, increased marital/spousal breakdowns, and increased drug dependency. This emerging set of ideas and beliefs about how to address poor mental health relates this existing idea of 'unemployment' (as the cause of social ills) to poor mental health in society - with the idea that 'curing' mental health disorders will reduce 'unemployment'; which will in turn reduce the social ills it is believed to cause and so maximise 'wellbeing' (Layard, 2011). The political impact of these ideas and beliefs can be seen in subsequent policies that were implemented. For example, in 2005 the departments of Health, Work and Pensions, and the Health and Safety Executive introduced an integrated health, work and wellbeing strategy (Department for Work and Pensions et al, 2005). Designed to improve the health and 'wellbeing' of working age people, the report outlined a need "to ensure that healthcare services are designed and delivered in a way that will assist people of working age to either remain fit for work, or to return to fitness for work" (Department for Work and Pensions et al, 2005: 20) – suggesting that as early as 2005 policy makers were relating the concept of 'wellbeing' with 'employment'. This relation can be seen to underpin additional 'wellbeing' policies emerging in the mid-noughties - for example, in 2007 Dame Carol Black conducted a review of the health and 'wellbeing' status of the UK and proposed ways in which both could be improved. Here, the promise to maximise 'wellbeing' was used to justify a number of policy suggestions that involved getting more people (back) into work. The prevalence and power of this sentiment can also be seen in more recent attempts to reduce government spending, justified by the guise of improving 'mental health' and made possible by this idea of employment as a positive influencing factor in a person's mental health status. For example, the coalition government

amended existing workfare policies in the UK and sought to increase national rates of employment through application of the controversial 'Welfare-to-work' programme, launched in June 2011 (Department for Work and Pensions, 2010-2015). This programme incorporated, amongst other things, the capacity for claimants of Job Seeker's Allowance to be forced to undergo mandatory work activity in order to continue to remain eligible for financial support (Department for Work and Pensions, 2014). Thankfully, this was not continued after 2015 and there was significant social and political resistance to it ever enjoying substantial influence – but it remains that this seemingly moral obligation of the government's (to ensure that all individuals experience the benefits of employment) made possible the seemingly *immoral* action of forcing individuals into unpaid work. The message here is clear: those who are employed are 'healthier' but, more importantly, those who are 'healthy' are productive. Thus, 'mental illness' is presented as both a social and an economic issue, because it impacts both 'wellbeing' and productivity. Indeed, even more interestingly, the seemingly socio-political issue of 'unemployment' is re-constructed as an effect of 'mental illness'.

IAPT is the product of economic ideas of 'cost-effectiveness' and psychological ideas of how best to prevent and/or reduce mental illness converging. 'Cost-effectiveness' was established by NICE as an important factor to consider when making recommendations on which treatments should be available on the NHS to treat mental illness – enabling the IAPT proposal (that Layard co-developed) to enjoy political influence because of its seemingly demonstrable positive effect on both 'mental health' and productivity. However, a concerning argument for the economic case of improving mental health is presented. Concerning because we see the concept of the 'mentally ill' and simultaneously unemployed individual constructed in a way that conceptualises them as a problematic, non-productive, non-worker and a burden on the rest of society. For example, Layard (2011) states that there are now more mentally ill people drawing incapacity benefits than people on Jobseeker's allowance, and posits mental illness as the next priority target for action. Here, the unemployed, 'mentally ill' benefits claimant is conceptualised as a wasted resource and a cost to the taxpayer, and so (as this subject position's antithesis) the employed, 'mentally healthy' person is

constructed as a productive resource contributing to society. Doing so relates these two identities of a mentally 'healthy' and 'ill' person together in a valorised way - where the 'healthy' individual is understood to be more economically *and* socially desirable than the 'ill' person. What this specific construction of unemployed individuals suffering from mental disorders works to do is pit groups of society against each other, simplifying the concepts of 'mental health' and other social problems, and distracting attentions away from other conceptualisations of structural causes of 'mental illness' and 'unemployment', which posit them as political or social problems and not individual ones (such as those presented in the established equality agenda). The result being that social problems occurring at a macro level are able to be understood as being the result of individuals' direct action; action such as not engaging in 'employment' or CBT. Indeed, thanks to its economic 'evidence base', this belief is understood to be a fundamental 'truth' of society- which works to legitimise the individualistic solutions to the social problem of 'mental illness' that it presents. The solution presented here to the social and political 'problem' of an unemployed 'mentally ill' person, is for them to take responsibility for, and action against, their own health issues - which governments are presented with an obligation to encourage individuals to do. Indeed, it is understood that the individual, not society, is required to change in order to address the problems of 'mental illness' (and the related issue of 'unemployment') – and there is an expectation that individuals will engage in therapy when necessary. Here, 'unemployment' is conceptualised as a problem of individual 'mental health', and not a problem or product of the economy or free market; and 'mental health' is conceptualised as an individual problem and not a problem or product of circumstance. With this, an *individual* obligation to be both 'healthy' and 'employed' is constructed - so as to not be an 'unproductive', 'unhealthy' person and a subsequent 'drain' to taxpayers; and a *governmental* moral obligation is established to 'nudge' individuals to do so.

3.3 'Nudging' individuals towards 'mental health'

The establishment of NICE and the associated desire to implement a collaborative, target driven, health care service (Department of Health, 1997) is an example of a wider *ideologically constructed* 'Third Way' of governing that the then Labour government advocated and sought to implement. Posited as an alternative to both the creation of an interventionist state with centralised power (as experienced during the government of the 1970s), and the creation of a non-interventionist state with de-centralised power (as experienced during the governments of the 1980s and 1990s), this 'Third Way' was understood to fall somewhere between the two. Indeed, this 'Third Way' necessitated that governments maintain control over public services (such as the NHS), but simultaneously reduced government responsibility and accountability for their outcomes (by emphasising the role of the individual in the successes and failures of such services). In doing so, this approach called for a semi-interventionist state, within which governing and legislative bodies are prohibited from intervening into the actions of individuals and limiting their freedoms (i.e. disrupting a natural progression of society), but can share 'best practice' guides in the hope that individual behaviours will change as a consequence of receiving and reviewing this information (i.e 'nudge' the progression of society forward). This 'Third Way' approach to governance oversaw the implementation of a variety of 'nudge' policies in the UK during the 2000s – see Thaler & Sunstein, 2008; Sunstein & Thaler, 2003; Brown, 2012), and central here was the belief that these were 'evidence based' policies – derived from the measurement of individual action. That is, the 'nudges' that such policies implemented were informed by 'evidence' that the behaviours they encouraged would benefit individual 'welfare' or 'wellbeing' in some way – 'evidence' gathered from observing and measuring society. Here, responsibility for individual 'wellbeing' is understood as lying with both the paternalistic (but non-interventionist) state and the newly-empowered individual (who, although 'nudged' to behave in particular ways, is not forced to do so); but the accountability for 'wellbeing' is not. Indeed, this 'Third Way' reconceptualised the relationship between 'the governing' (the UK government) and 'the governed' (UK citizens) in a way which seemingly increased the role and responsibility of 'the governed' to improve their own 'wellbeing'. By 'nudging' individuals, the

government presented individuals with a choice: to either behave as recommended, or not; whether individuals subsequently chose to follow such recommendations or not, was understood to be their choice. This 'Third Way' to governing (and concern with developing 'evidence based' policies) took into consideration 'evidence' for policies from academic disciplines – such as behavioural economics, to which Bell et al (2006) belong.

As a discipline of economics, behavioural economics assumes that individual action is motivated by a calculated pursuit of 'utility' or 'maximised satisfaction', understood to be derived from the satisfaction of individual need. Much like classic economics' conceptualisation of us as rational, autonomous beings ('homo economicus'), behavioural economists understand the 'free market' as an institution that provides society with the ability to achieve maximised 'satisfaction' or 'utility' (by facilitating the satisfaction of individually determined material needs) – and so a moral entity to be preserved (a point that I will discuss in Chapter 4). However, what makes behavioural economics unique is the incorporation of the notion that individuals have a capacity for error in their judgement of what actions will in fact maximise their experiences of 'satisfaction' or 'utility'; that our judgement can be compromised by other *less rational* factors. Indeed, a key characteristic of behavioural economics is its rejection of classical economics' conceptualisation of individuals as purely selfish market actors, pursuing 'satisfaction' through the satisfaction of material need alone. In doing so, behavioural economics present the idea that there is more to 'satisfaction' and its pursuit than an unrivalled commitment to materialism, wealth, or money. Behavioural economists offer 'homo psycho-economicus' as an alternative conception of the motivation of individual action; one that is understood to enhance the supposedly problematic 'homo-economicus' (problematic because it is understood to simplify the motivations behind human action). Homo psycho-economicus is an alternative economic conceptualisation of 'the individual' made possible by the incorporation of psychological insight into economic theory. Behavioural economics offers a more complicated conceptualisation of 'the individual', presenting them as less rational beings than

classical economics assumes (Davies, 2011b). Here, 'satisfaction', is still understood as being enabled

by the satisfaction of material needs; but only in part, and the benefits of such needs being satisfied

are also understood to be countered by our individual capacity for irrationality – such as following

others too instinctively, or consuming things that are damaging to our

health/relationships/environments (Davies, 2011b). The emergence of behavioural economics

signals the evolution of the discipline of economics, not the eradication of its core ideas and beliefs

about 'reality'. Indeed, behavioural economics still shares several of the same characteristics as its

epistemological predecessor – including the incorporation of market principles into a 'science' of

society, and the desire to develop a 'factual' 'science' of human action which can predict individual

behaviours and mitigate against 'risks' (both market and social). Like classical economic theory,

behavioural economics seeks to improve society by enabling it to develop into its most efficient

form. Such a form is understood to be one in which individuals are able to satisfy their needs, thus

reducing the experience of 'dissatisfaction' or 'misery'. This desire for efficiency results in

behavioural economists necessitating that individual choices are monitored (by measuring their

actions) so that individuals can be prevented from making irrational, seemingly 'wrong' choices - and

thus protect them from the experience of 'misery' (Davies, 2011b). As I have previously noted, this

made possible the 'nudge policies' that emerged in the early 'noughties' as this acknowledgement

made possible a sense of a need for institutions and governments to guide, or 'nudge' individuals

towards making the 'right' decisions (ones which are understood to *not* cause harm or misery) and

prevent them from making 'wrong' ones (ones which *are* understood to cause harm or misery)

wherever possible - making possible a moral justification for a turn towards a less individualistic and

more paternalistic, approach to governance; it also made possible the perceived need to measure

individual action (in order to monitor individual choices). From this perspective, the measurement of

'subjective wellbeing' (via the measurement of 'happiness' from the inclusion of the "happiness"

measure in the ONS wellbeing survey) signals that 'happiness', like 'mental health', has come to be

conceptualised as an object of 'knowledge'; something which can be 'known' and measured; and the

'happiness agenda' as a governmental 'nudge' of individuals towards the 'right' way of pursuing maximised 'wellbeing'. So what then, is this 'right' way that governments should be 'nudging' individuals towards?

As I have already shown, the accepted method for the treatment of 'mental illness' was to 'nudge' individuals to think differently (via CBT) and, in more severe cases, to encourage individuals to manage their symptoms through medication (SSRIs). However, the problem of 'mental illness' was understood to be a significant threat to 'wellbeing' *in total* (because of its 'demonstrable' impact on both economic and subjective 'wellbeing' through its impact on productivity), and so preventative interventions were also necessitated (economically and morally). Such preventative measures were also understood to be 'evidence based' and, importantly, were epistemologically aligned to conceptualisations of 'the individual' and 'the state' that behavioural economics presented, and the 'reality' of 'mental health' that CBT presented. These recommended interventions were founded in the works of positive psychologists. In the late 1970s, a new movement within the discipline of psychology emerged which advocates of it referred to it as 'positive psychology'. This discipline is interested in "positive states of mind, the measurement of happiness, and the cultivation of positive attitudes and emotions" (Tomlinson & Kelly, 2013: 143). Whereas more traditional psychological approaches are concerned with treating specific instances of 'mental illness' (such as the onset of depression or anxiety), positive psychology is concerned with promoting personal growth and increasing 'mental health' in a proactive (rather than reactionary) way (Seligman 1999, 2002, 2003a, 2003b 2011; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi 2000; Seligman *et al* 2005; Seligman *et al* 2006). It calls for the reprioritisation of 'happiness' within the discipline of psychology, claiming there to have been a disciplinary focus on negative feeling states at the expense of positive ones (such happiness) (Seligman 1999, 2002, 2003a, 2003b 2011; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi 2000; Seligman *et al* 2005; Seligman *et al* 2006). In essence, positive psychology is concerned with promoting techniques through which individuals can improve their 'happiness' in order to improve or sustain their mental

health – and this is typically understood to be achieved by rejecting and transforming 'negative' thoughts, memories and experiences into 'positive' ones (Seligman 1999, 2002, 2003a, 2003b 2011; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi 2000; Seligman *et al* 2005; Seligman *et al* 2006). It presents 'happiness' as a choice, and as something which is individually pursued rather than circumstantially prescribed. This is an incredibly significant development in the conceptualisation of 'happiness', and one that makes possible the hyper-individualistic approach to both defining, and establishing the responsibility for its pursuit/maintenance, that we see in the preventative approaches to 'mental illness' that 'mental health' "experts such as Layard (2011), and organisations such as AfH, present.

As I have noted, within behavioural economics, 'the individual' is conceptualised in a way which understands them to be entirely *accountable* for the choices that they make. However, there is also recognition that additional, irrational (or, rather, less rational) factors can influence a persons' abilities to make the 'right' choice, and this is offered as a contribution towards a debate taking place within the discipline of economics – that being how to account for a 'paradox' that modern free market economies are thought to present (Easterlin, 1974; Layard, 2011). This paradox is that 'wealth' can be shown to improve individual 'happiness' or 'satisfaction' – i.e. that wealthier individuals are 'known' to be 'happier' than poorer individuals - but despite modern, 'developed' societies becoming richer (i.e GDP increasing year on year), aggregate rates of 'happiness' have plateaued (Easterlin, 1974; Easterlin, 2005). Through the incorporation of positive psychology's 'facts' of 'happiness', behavioural economists posit this stagnation of 'happiness' as evidence of individual irrationality; that this plateau of 'happiness' is caused by individuals losing sight of what 'happiness' both is and how it can be achieved. This stagnation of 'happiness' and the irrationality that it is thought to demonstrate is then related it to 'mental illness'; where the combination of increasing diagnoses of anxiety and depression, and static rates of 'happiness' in society are posited as 'evidence' of a 'mental health crisis' but also, and importantly, a 'productivity crisis'. Indeed, this apparent 'mental health crisis' was problematised in two ways (i) because it demonstrated that

'misery' was rife in modern British society and so individuals were not satisfying their non-economic needs effectively, but also (ii) because of the detrimental effects that the prevalence of this 'misery' would have on individuals' abilities to satisfy economic needs (as misery reduces, or even halts, productivity) – resulting in this 'crisis of mental health' emerging as a substantial threat to 'wellbeing' *in total* (as it impaired the potential for individuals to satisfy both economic and non-economic needs). The solution to such increasing rates of 'mental illness' is understood to be the implementation of a national CBT programme (IAPT) and, as I shall now discuss, the solution to the stagnation of 'happiness' rates, is to 'fix' 'misery'.

Within positive psychology, 'happiness' is conceptualised in a way which seemingly offers individuals a 'way out' from an economically oriented culture that has developed within modern western society, the effects of which are thought to produce misery (Layard, 2011). However, positive psychology simply presents one of many definitions of, and means to pursue, 'happiness'; one which focuses on the notion of non-economic factors of 'happiness', whilst reconfirming the notion that responsibility for 'happiness' is still understood to fall on the individual. Indeed, a key contribution of the positive psychology movement is this alternative definition of happiness and the 'evidence' that is provided in support of it. This is because this conceptualisation makes possible the political assumption that the non-economic factors of 'happiness' are individually defined and determined; that is to say it makes possible the idea that my 'happiness' is not the same as your 'happiness'.

The incorporation of positive psychology's 'knowledge' into the politically influential discipline of behavioural economics enabled a dominant idea of 'happiness' to emerge that we see shaping component parts of the 'happiness agenda' (in organisations such as AfH). Here, 'happiness' is conceptualised in a way which suggested that individuals have control over it – that they can choose to pursue and experience 'happiness', and should be encouraged to do so because of the beneficial impact being 'happy' is understood to have on our 'mental health' - and so our productivity. As I

have noted, this seemingly offers individuals a 'way out' from the risk of developing a socially undesirable 'mental illness', by emphasising the importance of positive thinking. Thus, an implication of positive psychology's representation of 'happiness' as an individual choice, is the capacity to blame individuals for their 'unhappiness'. That is, it makes possible the idea that an individual's 'misery' is somehow caused by their decision to not pursue 'happiness' and 'mental health', or to pursue it incorrectly – an idea which I find to be deeply problematic. This is because it makes *impossible* the belief that one's socio-economic circumstance can have any substantial impact on 'happiness' or 'misery' or 'mental health' and that changing economic circumstance therefore cannot improve 'happiness'. Indeed, throughout this conceptualisation of 'happiness' and 'mental (ill)health', there is a constant dismissing of the arguments presented by the 'equality agenda' (which I will come to define in Chapter 4).

It is consistently reiterated that our individual 'happiness' is our own individual responsibility, that there are objective happiness causes and happiness drains is society, and that 'happiness' is a choice (e.g. Layard, 2011). The implication here is that our individual misery or suffering, or 'unhappiness', is our own choice - that 'unhappiness' is an unpleasant state which it is our individual responsibility to address, by simply choosing to instead be 'happy' (and altering our behaviours accordingly). Such attitudes to misery and suffering – or 'unhappiness' – are able to have severe implications on the legitimacy of socio-political arguments for reducing social inequality, in so much as – to use a crude example - it makes possible the idea that unhappy people living in poverty have chosen to be unhappy, rather than that living in poverty makes such unhappy people unhappy. That is, it discredits any arguments for establishing a causal relationship between individual socio-economic circumstance and rates of 'happiness' or 'satisfaction', and by doing so is able to decontest one of the key criticisms of modern Western capitalism that theorists such as Wilkinson & Pickett (2010) present. 'Positive psychology' simply presents an alternative definition of, and means to pursue, 'happiness' which focuses on the notion of non-economic factors of 'happiness', whilst reconfirming

the notion that responsibility for 'happiness' is still understood to fall on the individual. Indeed, a key contribution of the positive psychology movement to the emerging happiness agenda is this alternative definition of happiness (as more than the satisfaction of material need) and the 'evidence' that is provided in support of it. As it makes possible the explanation of this previously inexplicable paradox of modern life (Easterlin, 1974) and the prevalence of 'mental illness' in society, in a way that doesn't criticise or threaten 'the free market' (understood to be necessary for the maximisation of 'wellbeing' *in total* through the satisfaction of economic need). This is because this conceptualisation emphasises the non-economic factors of 'happiness', which are understood as being individually defined - thus necessitating maximised individual freedom (and minimalised state intervention) so that we might be able to follow our own unique pursuit of 'happiness' which, as I will come to discuss, is an important 'reality' to sustain neoliberalism's ideological hegemony.

Chapter 4: 'Happiness', 'social progress' and capitalism: a history of ideas

Throughout my archeological analysis of 'happiness' in Chapter 3, I demonstrated that within the emerging happiness agenda the idea of 'happiness' is related to economic productivity, through its assumed relation to 'mental health' (and the detrimental effect 'mental illness' is understood to have on productivity). The idea or belief presented here is that is that '(un)happiness', or non-economic wellbeing (to be determined by our own personal and subjective experiences of our environment and our relationships) has the potential to (and has been 'proven' to) effect not only our non-economic needs, but also our economic ones; that being 'unhappy' makes us less productive and prevents us from being able to satisfy our economic needs and desires. Furthermore, through the construction of '(un)happiness' as an individual, psychological state affected by our positive or negative interpretation of our subjective experiences, the message of the 'happiness agenda' becomes that the state is unable to maximise 'wellbeing' *per se*, but can and should instead seek to improve society's *sense* of wellbeing by nudging individuals towards thinking more positively about life. In this chapter, where I conduct a genealogical analysis of these ideas, I shall demonstrate that this resonates with the individualistic utilitarian conceptualisation of 'happiness' and (specifically Bentham's) notion that the state should not (and could not) determine what makes people 'happy', because 'happiness' is not able to be defined and prescribed by a moral or ideological conceptualisation of what it is. Instead, all that the state can (and should) do is determine a sense of society's 'wellbeing status' from what people report about their 'happiness', and legislate in ways which are evidenced to enable it to be maximised. Such an outlook makes possible the notion that, through measuring and collating 'evidence' on 'happiness', the government has a duty to inform society of what non-economic 'wellbeing' is composed of and how we can (individually) pursue it and increase it for ourselves; but it also makes possible the notion that government does not have a duty to increase individual non-economic wellbeing through overt interventionism. That our non-economic 'wellbeing' or 'happiness' is something which is not *able* to be addressed via

legislation or governance, and so must instead become an individual pursuit. Thus, a direct consequence of this outlook is that it makes possible an argument that the state has no ability to increase levels of social wellbeing as it is understood to be determined by our individual, subjective experiences and interpretations of the world (how we interact with our surroundings and other individuals). That all it can do is establish an environment in which the individual is able to pursue their own 'happiness' (and so maximise their own 'wellbeing'). This calls into question, very early on in this political agenda, the role of the state in increasing a society's 'wellbeing'. Indeed, the happiness agenda is shown to present an outlook which justifies minimised state involvement in our individual pursuits of it. This chapter will show that this is outlook is made possible by a modern application of classic utilitarian moral philosophy and it is my argument that doing so contributes towards the continuation of an individualised society – a characteristic of neoliberal ideology, as I shall discuss in the second part of this chapter. Here, I propose that the emerging 'happiness agenda's ideas and beliefs about 'happiness' and productivity, their relation to 'social progress', and the agency it awards individual members of society, is fundamentally neo-utilitarian. I will go on to problematise this neo-utilitarian approach to the maximisation of 'happiness' and 'wellbeing' *in total*, by drawing attention to the 'equality agenda's alternative approach to maximising 'wellbeing'. In doing so, this chapter will enable me to answer the first half of my initial question raised in the introduction to this thesis – which was: *why* the maximisation of 'happiness' and not 'equality' as the path to social progression. In Chapters 5,6, and 7 I will go on to answer the second half (*how* the maximisation of 'happiness' and not 'equality' as the path to social progression).

4.1 Maximising 'happiness': a revitalisation of utilitarianism?

Layard (2011) refers to the re-prioritisation of 'happiness' and 'mental health' in the fight against 'misery' that he and others have successfully implemented in society (as the previous chapter discussed) as a revitalisation of utilitarianism. Indeed, as I shall now discuss, utilitarian moral

philosophy can be seen to underpin three of the 'happiness agenda's characteristics outlined in the previous chapter. Specifically, that 'happiness' is a measurable concept, that government policies should be based of 'evidence' based 'facts', and that the role of the state is a non-interventionist observer prohibited from intervening in individual action.

'Utilitarianism' – and 'utilitarian' - refers to the moral philosophy originally presented by Jeremy Bentham (1748 - 1832), and later developed by John Stuart Mill (1806 – 1873). It can be characterised as a moral and political philosophy which emphasises the social and political importance of satisfying a society's aggregate needs and desires; as a philosophy which, guided by the 'utility principle', is concerned with maximising a society's sense of satisfaction. The utility principle refers to

that principle which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever according to the tendency it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question: or, what is the same thing in other words to promote or to oppose that happiness. I say of every action whatsoever, and therefore not only of every action of a private individual, but of every measure of government (Bentham 1781: 14).

That is, the principle of utility forms the basis upon which the morality of any social action can be determined - or rather, that the morality of any action cannot be known until its consequences are observed. Utilitarianism attests that individuals are governed by pain and pleasure- that we actively seek pleasure and avoid pain whenever possible- and that this continued pursuit/avoidance shapes and defines the ways in which we experience the world. For utilitarians, the maximisation of 'utility' (the level of individual satisfaction that can be increased and decreased depending on a person's experience of pleasure or pain) constitutes the absolute goal of government, and so they contend that any moral and just government should prioritise and enable that which is shown to produce

pleasure or satisfaction, or shown to prevent pain or dissatisfaction. Indeed, Bentham (1781) states that

> *nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and*
> *pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what*
> *we shall do. On the one hand the standard of right and wrong, on the other the chain of*
> *causes and effects, are fastened to their throne. They govern us in all we do, in all we say, in*
> *all we think: every effort we can make to throw off our subjection, will serve but to*
> *demonstrate and confirm it. In words a man may pretend to abjure their empire: but in*
> *reality he will remain subject to it all the while (Bentham, 1781: 14).*

In doing so, he explicitly establishes that the central assumption of utilitarian philosophy is that we, as individuals, are in a continual pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of misery, and that it is the role of any moral and just government to ensure that such a pursuit/avoidance is able to take place. We can already begin to see similarities here within the emerging happiness agenda and utilitarian moral philosophy. Most notably, the idea that maximised 'happiness' is a (morally) justifiable government objective because 'happiness' is understood to be fundamentally 'good' (Layard, 2011) - a view that is established by the 'fact' that 'happiness' is demonstrative of 'subjective wellbeing' and 'mental health', and governments should aspire towards enabling this 'goodness'. The question then becomes how is a government to pursue such an objective? As I have shown, the 'happiness agenda' attests that 'happiness' should be observed through measurement, enabling causes and inhibitors of 'happiness' to be identified, so that individuals can be 'nudged' towards behaving in ways that are 'known' to maximise 'happiness'. This too is a key idea of utilitarianism, as I will now discuss by exploring further Bentham's concept of utility, and in particular, the roles that 'satisfaction' and 'dissatisfaction' are understood to play in maximising it. Bentham (1781) states that

By utility is meant that property in any object, whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness, (all this in the present case comes to the same thing) or (what comes again to the same thing) to prevent the happening of mischief, pain, evil, or unhappiness to the party whose interest is considered: if that party be the community in general, then the happiness of the community: if a particular individual, then the happiness of that individual (Bentham 1781: 14-15).

In doing so he conceptualises 'utility' as a scale of pleasure/pain, in which 'utility' is understood to be the combined state of experiences of both pleasure and pain - as the following example highlights (represented in Figure 4). In essence, Bentham (1781) argued that an individual thrown into the world has a neutral utility score (0.5) - they are neither 'satisfied' nor 'unsatisfied' as they are yet to experience anything. As they go about their daily life and interact with the world, a number of experiences provide pleasure points (e.g. having a need or desire satisfied resulting in +0.25 points) and misery points (eg. being unable to satisfy a desire or need resulting in -0.25 points). At the end of the day, such an individual will have moved up and down the utility scale, resulting in a finishing score. If, by the end of the day, they experienced more misery than pleasure, they will have moved down the scale, and if they experienced more pleasure than misery, they will have moved up the scale. The argument made is that by observing behaviours and their outcomes, we are able to delineate what are utility causes and inhibitors. For Bentham, it is the aim of morally just governments to ensure that the majority of individuals are able to go about their day experiencing more pleasure than misery – and to aspire towards a society in which all individuals are able to have a continual utility score of 1.0. Indeed, we are able to see again the similarities between Bentham's idea of 'utility' as an affective state, and the 'happiness agenda's conceptualisation of 'happiness' as a subjective, psychological state influenced by our experiences of the world. Crucially, we are also able to see here the incorporation of the belief that 'happiness' (or 'utility') can be 'known' and measured, and that the identification of 'happiness' triggers and causes is possible.

Bentham assumes individuals to be rational, autonomous beings whose observed behaviour is the result of a calculation of pleasure/pain outcome. Thus, individual action is understood to be a rational choice by Bentham, chosen to satisfy some need, and enabling a continued pursuit of maximised utility. This sentiment is echoed in the definitions of 'happiness' provided within the happiness literature. Indeed, as I noted, the supposed 'happiness experts' share Bentham's assumption that individuals are (semi) rational, autonomous beings. Also that 'pleasure' or 'happiness' causes can be determined by granting individuals the freedom to pursue their own pleasure or 'happiness', and observing the positive and negative effects that this behaviour has. The assumption here is that individual behaviours are *chosen*, and that they are chosen because they are able to satisfy some need; thus, they should subsequently be able to be repeated and continued, as they are assumed to produce pleasure or 'happiness' – i.e. the 'knowledge' produced from measuring 'happiness' should be used to shape and influence policies.

Bentham's work is underpinned by his desire to avoid awarding governments unprecedented power and to protect a society's individuals from tyranny; desires which lead him to advocate that a (fair and just) government should be concerned with evidence-based, rather than ideologically-based, policy making. What is of interest here is that this reveals that in many ways Bentham was a conservative liberal, opposed to the role of state paternalism and truly invested in the notion of the sovereign individual. Indeed, his assumption that that we are rational agents choosing to behave in particular ways which maximise our utility, leaves little room within his moral philosophy for the justification of any form of (ideological-based) legislative or government intervention – as to do so would compromise the primacy of individual rights that he advocates so vehemently (in order to protect society from misrule). However, like behavioural economists, Bentham also recognises that our individual rationality has the potential to be compromised at times, and so his work incorporates conditions which make possible measures of evidence-based state intervention into the behaviour

of individuals in the event of this happening. This is specifically a measure which permits governing bodies to intervene into individual action to prevent harm being brought to both the actor and others. This willingness to compromise individual liberty or autonomy in the name of maximised utility seems somewhat contradictory and draws attention to the fundamental impossibility of utilitarianism. As Sandel (2009) notes, the biggest weakness of utilitarianism is an inherent inability to respect individual rights (as demonstrated by its justification of the morality in imposing the beliefs of the majority onto society in its entirety) irrespective of any ideological or moral objections those in opposition to it might have. This is not an *explicit* characteristic we see emerging in the 'happiness agenda' - where, as I noted in the previous chapter, the state is not necessitated to intervene with, only to passively 'nudge', individual behaviours. However, as I will come to discuss, this characteristic is present *implicitly* within the agenda – through its ideological marginalisation of calls for state intervention into the free market. Bentham pays little attention to this inherent inability to respect individual rights and instead places a much greater emphasis on the role of proper governance. Indeed, it is not until the work of John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) that utilitarian philosophy really addresses this issue of individual rights – as I will come to discuss.

Bentham (1781) contends that the prevalence of 'utility' in society is directly determined by the rules and restrictions that governments place on individuals - as governments are understood to possess the power to maximise or inhibit the individual pursuit of maximised satisfaction of needs (via the ability to maximise or inhibit an individual's freedom to behave in ways that would enable their pursuit of utility). This lead him to suggest that the most appropriate means for governments to produce the greatest 'happiness' for the greatest number, is to grant individuals freedom to pursue their own pleasure and to protect them from experiencing pain or misery (as well as preventing them from causing it for others) via punitive laws and social policies designed with an individual pursuit of 'happiness' in mind. Thus, in addition to the assumption that all individuals pursue pleasure/avoid pain, it is also understood that it is only possible to achieve a maximal utility

score if individuals are able to experience the satisfaction of their unique needs and desires. Indeed, satisfaction and dissatisfaction are understood to be critical in utilitarian thought to both experiencing 'happiness' and 'knowing' and measuring it. That is, for Bentham it is entirely possible to measure the experience of 'happiness' by asking society if they are 'happy', as individuals simply evaluate their sum of satisfactions at any moment in time – producing an of-the-moment assessment of their 'happiness' state. We can see this idea or belief about the 'measurability' of 'happiness' presented in the emerging 'happiness agenda' and the development of survey questions to measure 'subjective wellbeing'. As I stated, following a consultation on the subject, it was accepted that individuals were able to 'know' if they were 'happy' or not, and so the question "how happy were you yesterday" was posited as an effective measure of, and tool to gain insight into, an individual's 'happiness' status. Importantly, for Bentham the effective measurement of pleasure or 'happiness' is understood to hold governing bodies accountable to its subjects – in the sense that if 'utility' or 'happiness' is shown to be in decline, or at a low level, then the current governing body is held to be inadequate, or even unjust, in its approaches to governance. This sentiment is *lacking* in the 'happiness agenda'. Whilst 'happiness' advocates share Bentham's belief that the measurement of 'happiness' enables societies to track their progression towards an idealised end (in which utility is maximised for all), any decline or low level in 'utility' or 'happiness' results in 'the unhappy' individuals being held to be inadequately approaching their pursuit of 'happiness', not the state. Which suggests that additional ideological influences have shaped the agenda, and it is not, as Layard (2011) claims, a simple revival and application of 'utilitarian' philosophy – a point that I will come to discuss.

At the heart of utilitarian philosophy is a desire to progress society, to grant individuals as much freedom as possible whilst still maintaining governable state (i.e. that subjects remain as such) and a distrust of ideological-based governance. However, also at the heart of this philosophy are ideologically based assumptions: that it is necessary for there to be a hierarchical structure of society

consisting of the 'governed' and the 'governors', that all individual action is a choice made by a social actor, and most importantly, that there is no greater goal for governments than the maximisation of a society's utility. Individual sovereignty, freedom or 'liberty' is presented as important to protect subjects of government from tyranny and misrule. It is a valuable addition to the utilitarian philosophy, which came to be incorporated by Mill (1859) to counter critique of utilitarianism (which typically resided at the level of the authoritarian state it was understood to legitimate). Indeed, Mill (1859) attempted to defend criticisms of Bentham's utilitarian philosophy by addressing the two main objections to it: "that it does not give adequate weight to human dignity and individual rights, and that it wrongly reduces everything of moral importance to a single scale of pleasure and pain" (Sandel 2009: 48).

In essence, the underlying difference between Bentham and Mill's utilitarianism relates to their perceptions of the individual's sovereignty over their wants, needs and desires, and at what point it is morally right for an individual is to be prohibited from pursuing their satisfaction by the state (i.e. at what point it is morally justifiable to limit individual liberty). For Bentham, our individual needs and desires are inherent and fixed, and all human behaviour is guided by these fixed needs and desires (that is, by our self-interested pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain). At the individual level, this means that Bentham views individual sovereignty as entirely possible - and that it should be granted to enable this self-interested, rational pursuit. However, he also proposes that some such individual pursuits can be problematic to the social level (and so to the 'greater good') as all individuals have the capacity for error in their rationality – that is to say that all individuals are capable of action guided by emotion or irrationality – which can bring harm to themselves and others. For this reason, for Bentham, it is the state's responsibility to protect individuals from their own irrationality by limiting the range of choices available to them. Thus, the Benthamist path to maximising utility is to establish that which makes the majority of us happy, and govern in a way which both makes this behaviour possible and prohibits behaviours that will prevent this action from

taking place. By nature, this approach calls for a paternalistic (but *not* authoritarian), interventionist state within which governing and legislative bodies are permitted to interfere with the actions of individuals in the name of maximised aggregate utility. For Mill, there is much less concern with the role of the state, as the state is understood to only be there to govern in terms of preventing individuals from causing harm to others - harm to the self is understood to be beyond the reach of state intervention by virtue of the fact that it would require direct intervention into individual liberty. Mill complicates the idea of 'utility' and draws attentions to the wants and desires of the individual agent as an *individual*, rather than simply a part of an aggregate of shared wants and desires. Specifically, he centralises the individual and advocates that the path to maximising a society's utility is to permit individuals to discover their own route and determine their own 'happiness' (providing they don't harm others in the process); on the understanding that by doing so, individuals will establish the most efficient social order in the pursuit of maximised 'utility'. This demonstrates the true classical liberal basis of Mills take on utilitarianism and, later in this chapter (section 4.4), I will outline the transformative effects that Mill's attempts to address criticisms of Bentham's theory had.

4.2 'Misery' as a crisis of capitalism?

In Chapter 3 I noted that economists presented a 'paradox' of modern Western capitalist societies (that aggregate levels of 'happiness' stagnated despite countries growing richer) and drew on this stagnation of 'happiness' and growing rates of 'mental illness' diagnoses to conclude that there is a 'mental health crisis' emerging – which was used as 'evidence' to justify the need for, and emergence of, the reprioritisation of 'subjective wellbeing' (in policy terms) in modern, Western, capitalist societies. Importantly, this 'crisis' is not interpreted as a problem with 'capitalism', or as evidence that capitalist social order is incapable of maximising 'wellbeing' *in total*. Instead, we are presented with 'evidence' that the satisfaction of 'economic need' is a crucial component part of

'wellbeing' – which 'capitalism' is understood to provide. This 'crisis' is instead posited as, as I have shown, a problem with individual action which is understood to impact negatively on 'mental health' and 'subjective wellbeing'. Indeed, Layard (2011) states that this 'misery' (understood to be demonstrated by the lack of increases in 'happiness') is not caused by capitalism *per se*, but rather it is due to what can only be described as a 'forgetfulness' of society. What I mean by this is that it is claimed that in our prioritisation of the accumulation of wealth over and above other aspects of our life (which is acknowledged to have taken place in modern western societies), we have essentially 'forgotten' what really matters in life and "are seriously in need of a clear concept of the good society, and of the good action" (Layard, 2011: 112). Indeed, the message emerging from Layard (2011) and other economists is that this stagnation of 'happiness' rates is not because the processes of capitalism are unable to produce satisfaction or 'happiness', nor that they cause dissatisfaction or misery, but rather that we have for too long ignored the complexity of 'wellbeing' *in total* and neglected our 'mental health'– and it is the task of the 'happiness agenda' to remind us of it, so that 'happiness' rates might start to improve again (by employing practices of positive psychology and CBT that are 'proven' to make us 'happier'). In this section I wish to explore this idea, and the conceptualisation of the 'misery' or 'unhappiness' problem, further. Here, I will demonstrate that this 'evidenced' 'misery' in modern Western societies had the *potential* to challenge, or disrupt, the capitalist social order; and that the specific approach to 'solving' the problem of 'mental illness' and 'misery' that the 'happiness agenda' offers, works to maintain the 'status quo' of capitalism. Indeed, in this section, I demonstrate that this supposed "revitalisation" of utilitarian moral philosophy (Layard, 2011) which has taken the form of the emerging 'happiness agenda', is one that is 'capitalist' in spirit.

In *New Spirit of Capitalism* Boltanksi and Chiapello (2005a) trace the emergence and evolution of 'capitalism' - an evolution which has run parallel to the evolution of the dominant political and

economic philosophy that guides governing bodies (that I will come to discuss later in this chapter).

Here, capitalism is described as

an absurd system: in it, wage earners have lost ownership of the fruits of their labour and the

possibility of pursuing a working life free of subordination. As for capitalists, they find

themselves yolked to an interminable, insatiable process, which is utterly abstract and

disassociated from the satisfaction of consumption needs, even of a luxury kind. For two such

protagonists, integration into the capitalist process is singularly lacking in justifications

(Boltanksi and Chiapello 2005a: 7).

This is a crucial observation, as that there is a lack of any reasonable justification for the

participation in the processes of capitalism but that individuals in modern western societies continue

to do so, suggests that there is something which justifies these subjects' participation – what

Boltanksi and Chiapello (2005a&b) call the 'spirit of capitalism'. Such a spirit of capitalism is defined

as a shared set of beliefs about (or associated with) the capitalist social order. For example, the

shared belief that the accumulation of wealth and material possessions brings us 'happiness',

justifies our continued participation in these processes as it gives a purpose to them. If we

understand that to be 'happy' we must work hard to produce products, to earn money so that we

might accumulate wealth and buy other products, then (providing we aspire to be 'happy') we shall

continue to engage with these processes regardless of their absurdity, or our dissatisfaction with

them. By doing so, Boltanksi & Chiapello (2005a&b) argue, such beliefs also justify and legitimise the

associated subject and object positions that the two main protagonists of 'capitalism' occupy – 'the

worker' (typically an individual who voluntarily sells their labour for financial or material gains) and

'the capitalist' (typically employers, who profit from selling the product of the worker's labour). They

draw on the Weberian idea of the protestant work ethic and advocate that that people need moral

reasons to rally to capitalism, and so look to the ways in which the morality of the processes of capitalism are formed and presented.

For Boltanksi and Chiapello (2005a), the exploitative processes of capitalism are understood to justify themselves, simply by virtue of the fact that they can be seen to produce wealth. This means that they can been seen to do exactly what it is promised that they will – that such processes can and do work. However, they note that this fails to justify precisely *why* such processes are necessary to society – that is to say, why the generation of wealth that these capitalist processes can produce is a good thing, to be enabled and maximised. For Boltanksi and Chiapello (2005a), this is the role of the 'spirit of capitalism'. That is, such a spirit must present itself as more than *one* way of organising society, it must present its self as the *only* viable way and so establish itself as the dominant, hegemonic ideology within society. To do so, 'capitalism' must firstly be seen to deliver on the promises that it makes (that is to say, the processes of capitalism must deliver on the generation of wealth), but also the spirit must demonstrate why these deliverables are not just desirable, but *necessary* (it must demonstrate why we *need* to be wealthier and *need* to work) – forming a 'fantasy' of capitalism by providing a promise of something to come once we are wealthier and are employed, which engages individuals and encourages them to participate in its processes in order to turn the 'fantasy' into 'reality' – such as the promise of maximised 'happiness'.

To make that argument, Boltanski & Chiapello (2005b) state that capitalism mobilizes ideas and values about the world (typically stable arguments which have been shaped by economic theory) that are already legitimised and relates them intrinsically with its own processes - a point which is best explained by returning to my previous example. If we consider that the spirit of capitalism is comprised of the shared belief that the accumulation of wealth and material possessions brings us 'happiness', and that this constitutes the justification needed for our individual engagement with the processes of capitalism, then our continued engagement is dependent upon us understanding 'happiness' as being 'good', 'desirable', and as state to be pursued. This is because if we didn't

understand 'happiness' in this way (if for example we understood it to be 'unnecessary', a 'luxury', an unattainable state, or even something which is 'bad') then we would not be motived to engage in the processes of capitalism, regardless of the belief that to do so would bring us 'happiness'. This process of relating the processes of capitalism to pre-legitimised ideas and values about the world comes to form a 'reality' of capitalism; and such a 'reality' is able to endure all the while that the relationship between these pre-legitimised ideas and values about the world and the processes of capitalism that the 'spirit' presents holds true. If this relationship doesn't hold true, such a 'reality' becomes open to critique and challenge - and this ultimately makes possible a 'crisis of capitalism' (Boltanksi & Chiapello's 2005a&b).

Boltanski & Chiapello (2005a) provide a comprehensive account of the 'spirit of capitalism' and observe its evolution since the late nineteenth century. In doing so, they identify three specific spirits of capitalism, and characterise each specific spirit by the unique 'reality' that it presents. These are 1) the first spirit which emerged in the late nineteenth century alongside the capitalist process, 2) a second spirit that took hold in the early-mid twentieth century (forming an ideological project during 1930s-1960s) and 3) a third spirit which took hold in the later part of the twentieth century (forming an ideological project during the 1970s-1990s). It is the contingency of the 'reality' that the 'spirit of capitalism' presents, that I am seeking to demonstrate via Boltanksi & Chiapello's (2005a&b) work. It is my proposition that the emergence of, and subsequent accounting for, a 'crisis' of 'misery' or 'mental health' in British capitalist society *made possible* the ideological separation of the established relation between 'capitalism' and 'wellbeing' (where 'wellbeing' was understood to be the satisfaction of solely economic need, represented by 'satisfaction' or 'happiness'). That is, it made possible the idea that the processes of capitalism are not maximising a society's 'wellbeing' because of the apparent growing rates of 'misery', but more than this, it made possible the belief that the processes of capitalism are *unable* to maximise societal and individual 'wellbeing',

'happiness' or 'satisfaction'. In doing so, a critical ideological space is made possible, where a plausible ideological challenge to this specific (and seemingly 'wrong') justification of a commitment to the exploitative processes of capitalism is able to be considered – such as those presented within the 'equality agenda' (which I will detail later in this chapter). That is, the 'evidence' of capitalism's inability to maximise 'wellbeing' (that the growing rates of diagnoses of stress, anxiety and depression are thought to provide) makes it difficult for capitalist ideas and values about the world to be defended from alternative arguments that call for the rejection of 'capitalism' and a return to less exploitative, more collectivist ways of structuring society. Indeed, this evidenced problem of capitalism that the 'crisis' of 'misery' is thought to be demonstrative of, had already begun to weaken the 'fantasy' of the spirit of capitalism – as this is how an 'equality agenda' is able to exist at all. What I find to be interesting is that, in many respects, the 'happiness agenda' legitimated these anti-capitalist arguments by accepting the discrediting of the long-standing relation between of the processes of capitalism and 'happiness', 'wellbeing' or 'satisfaction' – and yet, this 'crisis of capitalism' did not result in the collapse of it.

Boltanski & Chiapello (2005a) note many reoccurring, constitutive parts of the spirit of capitalism. These are the ideological links that need to be made between dominant ideas and values of the world and the process of capitalism to continue to justify them; or the key benefits that a commitment to 'capitalism' needs to demonstrate, so that the 'reality' of the spirit of capitalism can maintain its ideological grip. All that changes and evolves with each spirit is how these links are made, and these change as the pre-legitimised ideas and values about the world do or as the processes do - which I shall now explore. First and foremost, Boltanski & Chiapello (2005a) note that the spirit of capitalism is consistently comprised of some sort of moral sanction for economic activities as well as a sense of the efficiency of private enterprise and competition in providing choice, autonomy and satisfaction to the individual. They note that towards the end of the nineteenth century, there was a sense that the processes of capitalism (in particular its economic activities) were moral as they made possible the emancipation of the individual from more

traditional forms of dependence (by introducing and developing competitive 'wage labour'). They note that this evolved in the early-mid twentieth century, when the moral sanction for the processes of capitalism became their ability to provide "for the large majority, the liberation from need, [and] the fulfilment of desires thanks to mass production and its corollary: mass consumption" (Boltanski & Chiapello 2005a: 18) – and that this idea of the morality of the processes of capitalism remained into the third. This was made possible by the emphasis that was made on growing and expanding small businesses into large, national organisations, as well as the growing prevalence and eventual dominance of the specific way of thinking about and understanding the social world: 'neoliberalism'.

Boltanski & Chiapello (2005a) note that the spirit of capitalism is also comprised of a promise to provide security from something understood to be undesirable, and so too promises that its processes enable a pursuit towards a 'common good'. They note how in the nineteenth century the processes of capitalism were understood to provide financial security for the capitalist, in return for their ability to emancipate the worker and maximise their autonomy. The common good here was that capitalist processes were understood to enable social progression by alleviating individuals from forced poverty. However, during the early-mid twentieth century Boltanski & Chiapello (2005a) note that this changed, and as well as providing security for the capitalist, security was understood to be provided to the worker too. In the sense that the continued growth of organisations (and the long-term planning that this necessitated) created an environment which became more collaborative with the worker – as it was in the interest of organisational growth (and so maximised profit) to improve the experience of the worker to entice new employees and increase the productivity of existing ones. This meant that workers were provided with greater career prospects, options for training, subsidised accommodation and a variety of other benefits. Here, the common good that the processes of capitalism enable a pursuit towards is still understood to be social progress, but such 'progress' is now understood to be maximised social justice and stability, and processes of capitalism are understood to enable this by increasing workers' rights and alleviating exploitation.

They go on to note a crisis of capitalism that emerged which underpins the transformation from the second to the third spirit of capitalism. That is that the security and common good of the second spirit no longer held true as the processes of capitalism transformed. Indeed, from 1965-1975 they observe a significant increase in the criticisms posed to capitalism, which were eventually accompanied by waves of union strikes and direct action, which often resulted in violence (Boltanski & Chiapello 2005a). What had changed here was the idea of the 'common good' that society should work towards, as well as the role that the processes of capitalism play in pursuing it. Boltanksi & Chiapello are here referring to the increase in collectivist ideas and values of the world which, as I will come to discuss, was less focussed on capitalist processes and more on maximising socio-economic equality. This change in the ideas and values of the world, along with a simultaneous transformation of the processes of capitalism (whereby the previous concern with workers' rights and alleviating exploitation was proving detrimental to production and profit and so these began to be reversed) created a crisis – in the sense that the 'reality' of the second spirit no longer held true. Such a crisis required (if individuals were to continue to engage with the processes of capitalism) its processes to be justified in an alternative way – and this made possible the emergence, and sedimentation, of neoliberal ideas and values where the processes of capitalism were constructed as a tool for *individual* not collective 'wellbeing' (which I detail in the next section).

So what does this mean? As I have briefly outlined, Boltanksi & Chiapello (2005a) identified previous 'crises of capitalism', and suggest that it is the ideological re-conceptualisation, or 'sense-making', that follows such 'crises' lead to the specific observed changes in the spirit. They note how a disruption to the 'reality' that each spirit of capitalism presents, or disruption of the relation of the processes of capitalism to the justification of our continued engagement with them, changes it in some way. It is my proposition that the emerging happiness agenda is a response to a modern crisis of capitalism where the 'reality' that the spirit of capitalism presents (that the capitalist social order

maximises 'wellbeing') is shown to be incorrect or false. The emerging 'happiness agenda' suggests that the capitalist free market creates an environment of instability and insecurity, and that this has led to a growing sense of 'misery' in society. However, it does not problematise this instability or insecurity, only its effects. What is interesting here, is that such a crisis can be understood as one which is self-perpetuating - in the sense that the unstable and insecure environment that is understood to be causing such 'misery', is created and necessitated by capitalist processes in order to maximise individual wealth and 'wellbeing'. Indeed, the implied inevitability of the instability and insecurity (and subsequent misery they are understood to bring) has made possible alternative ideological arguments which criticise the exploitative processes of capitalism by their inability to maximise 'wellbeing' – which I will come to discuss.

The significance of Boltanksi & Chiapello's (2005a) work here is that it draws attention to the way in which this growing dissatisfaction with the inevitable instability and insecurity produced by the processes of capitalism and the associated social order, can make possible the rejection of them. That the 'misery' produced by the instability and insecurity necessitated by capitalism, reveals the inability of 'capitalism' to fulfil its promise of maximising 'wellbeing'. Indeed, it is demonstrative of a breakdown of the established relation between the 'fantasy' of maximised 'happiness' that the spirit of capitalism presents, and the 'reality' that is experienced - and so the promise of 'capitalism' is revealed as false. Thus, it is my proposition that the association of the instability and insecurity that capitalism demands, with the growing prevalence of misery in modern society that the emerging 'happiness agenda' acknowledges, is able to break down the established relation between the processes of capitalism and their ability to serve the individual – and with it, it has the potential or ability to break down the moral sanction for capitalist economic activities. However, the "revitalisation" of utilitarianism does not argue this case, and this disruption to the status quo is not made. Instead, it is suggested that growing 'misery' *isn't* caused by capitalism's inherent ability to cause 'misery', it's that we as individuals have misunderstood what 'happiness' is. Indeed, the

proposed solution to this symptom of neoliberal capitalism (growing rates of misery) presented by the 'happiness agenda' is *not* to address such factors head on (e.g. the *causes* of conditions such as depression and anxiety – identified as instability and insecurity). Instead, it is argued individuals need to handle this seemingly *inevitable* misery better by re-thinking what both 'misery' and 'happiness' are (via the coping strategies offered by CBT and positive psychology). It is my argument that the emerging 'happiness agenda' is a fundamentally capitalist ideological project concerned with maintaining the exploitative processes of capitalism. That the emerging 'happiness agenda' covers over the disruptive event (or moment of dislocation) that the 'crisis' of 'misery' makes possible (by revealing capitalist 'reality' to be false or incorrect as its processes are shown to be unable to maximise 'wellbeing'). It does so by providing an alternative way of relating together the key ideological constructs of a 'common good' or 'social progress' (understood to be maximised 'wellbeing') and the processes of capitalism, in a way which still necessitates capitalist processes. This is achieved by reconceptualising and complicating the relationship between 'wellbeing', capitalist processes and individual 'happiness'. Indeed, society is offered an individualistic approach to maximising 'wellbeing'; one which reduces the role of the state and the capitalist social order in the experience of 'misery'.

4.3 A history of capitalist ideas

In the previous section I explained and referred to Boltanski & Chiapello's (2005a&b) 'spirit of capitalism'. It is my proposition that such a spirit of capitalism is a constitutive part of a wider ideological, or discursive, way of conceptualising 'reality'. That is to say that it is my proposition that whilst society's continued engagement with the exploitative processes of capitalism is made possible by a spirit of capitalism, it is a wider ideology or discourse that makes possible such a spirit. That the spirit of capitalism necessitates its exploitative processes by relating them to pre-legitimised ideas and beliefs about the social world (like 'happiness' should be pursued, and that which can be seen to

maximise 'happiness' should be considered 'good' or 'moral'), and that such ideas and beliefs about the social world are shaped by a dominant ideology, or discourse. It is therefore necessary to explore and understand the wider ideology, or discourse, that the spirit of capitalism relates its processes to in order to understand the spirit itself. Thus, this section shall (briefly) explore the evolution of ideology, or discourse, that ran in parallel with the evolution of the spirit of capitalism, in order to better account for this emerging 'happiness agenda'. Such ideologies, or discourses, I have identified as 1) classic liberalism 2) collectivism 3) neoliberalism – and each of which shall be explored. Here, I shall demonstrate that key developments in political and economic ideas and beliefs about the world shaped the continued ideological, or discursive, justification for a society's engagement with the exploitative processes of capitalism (that the spirit of capitalism presents). This will then begin to make possible an account for the emergence of this 'happiness agenda' during what I understand to be a modern day 'crisis of capitalism'.

The ideas and beliefs of 'reality' presented by utilitarianism were key to the emergence and sedimentation of classic economic liberalism to develop and thrive during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and 'capitalism' along with it. As it provided the political and moral justification for the implementation of its economic policies, based on a shared idea that state intervention was detrimental to 'progress' – in both the economic and social sense of the term. Indeed, drawing on the work of Adam Smith (1776) and Mill (1859), classic liberal economic theory advocated that in a non-interventionist state the market (i.e. processes of production, competition, supply, consumption and demand), coupled with an inherent individual pursuit to satisfy their needs, would interact in way that formed a fair market capable of maximising the satisfaction of material needs and desires of society (and thus utility or 'happiness'). This idea of a non-interventionist state (economically) corresponded with utilitarianism's non-interventionist state (politically) with both approaches assuming that such non-intervention would enable the development of the most moral and just society, and the most fair and just economy (as a means to distribute wealth). Importantly, this was understood to be an 'evidenced based', rather than

ideologically constructed, approach to structuring society and the economy. Indeed, as Dorling (2010b) and Boltanski & Chiapello (2005a&b) note, at the time of the emergence of the liberal free market (in the late eighteenth century), poverty was rife in the UK; and there is no doubt that the economic growth (both individual and national) stimulated by its capitalist processes progressed society by enabling individuals to work themselves out of absolute poverty and generating a surplus of wealth to be reinvested in society. The result was the emergence and sedimentation of economic liberalism throughout the nineteenth century – establishing a political economy of liberalism.

However, and as Dorling (2010b) also notes, high rates of *relative* poverty (i.e. inequality) continued until there was a policy turn towards state interventionism ('welfarism') which took place post-1929 financial crisis. Indeed, the dominance of classical liberal political economy began to decline at the beginning of the twentieth century following "the rise of corporations, trade unions, social policies, regulation and state socialism" (Davies 2014b: 311) and a growing concern with 'justice', 'fairness' and 'equality', over and above the generation of wealth and maximisation of productivity. This was made possible by the socio-political acceptance of collectivist interpretations and explanations of events such as 'The Great Depression'. Indeed, in the aftermath of The Great Depression, right through to the late 1970s, the work of John Maynard Keynes (1883 -1946) proved to be highly influential in terms of making this acceptance of collectivism possible. His work advocated (and 'evidenced') that state intervention into the free market would mitigate against the detrimental effects of the 'boom and bust' cycles of capitalism that caused the unprecedented 'misery' experienced in the aftermath of the Great Depression. In the UK context, this turn to collectivism made possible the founding of the welfare state. Such a welfare state was necessitated by the establishment of five social evils that were understood to be present within society: squalor, ignorance, want, idleness and disease (Beveridge, 1942). Such evils, along with the recommendation that governments should determine appropriate social reforms to alleviate them, were outlined in an influential report made by William Beveridge (1879 – 1963), and paved the way for the introduction of the National Insurance Act (1946), the formation of a National Health Service (1948)

and the passing of the National Assistance Act (1948) that provided a form of 'social security' for the most vulnerable in society, in order to maximise their 'wellbeing'. Indeed, during the period of 1940s – 1960s (where collectivism enjoyed ideological hegemony) the reformist, social democratic welfare state transformed the lives of millions (Hall, 2011). It is important to note here that the processes of capitalism were not problematised by social democratic progressives, such as Keynes. Indeed, the market was viewed as a means to generate state wealth in order to enhance social equality (by redistributing the wealth generated by progressive taxation) – so it was in the interest of society to maintain the efficiency of the market, so that it might continue to generate wealth and progress society. What it was against was the unfettered, unregulated, 'free' market, due to the understood volatility of such a market and its evidenced potential to cause harm. Indeed, the moral justification of state interventionism in the free market in the name of maximised 'welfare' or 'wellbeing' following the 'The Great Depression', combined fundamentally oppositional liberal and socialist political ideas in the name of 'evidence based' policies designed to ensure 'maximised utility'. It is largely due to this confounding of these 'evidenced' liberal and socialist ideas that socialism (or certainly a more progressive social democracy) was assumed to be inevitable, even by post-Millsian liberal thinkers, for much of the twentieth century (Gane, 203; Gane, 2014; Davies 2014a). However, the works of neoliberal theorists (being formulated in times of widespread collectivist social democracies across the Western world) offered an alternative to (and critique of) this solution, which I shall now discuss.

In essence, neoliberal theorists (such as Freidrich von Hayek and later Milton Friedman) successfully problematised the dominant social democratic interpretations and explanations of events (such as 'The Great Depression') which, it was argued, pushed Western societies towards totalitarianism by justifying and encouraging collectivism, and therefore were slowly eroding individual rights and democracy. Indeed, the rise of collectivism during this time was interpreted as the return of ideologically based (rather than evidence based) policy making and neoliberal theorists (such as Freidrich von Hayek and later Milton Friedman), drew on classical liberal ideas and values (guided by

utilitarianism) to construct an ideological opposition to this. Such opposition to collectivist programmes were based on the perceived threat that ideology-based policies posed to individual liberty, and echoed the utilitarian views of the boundaries between the state and the individual discussed previously – in particular on what grounds it is morally acceptable to inhibit individual liberty.

The emergence of 'neoliberalism' was not, and should not be understood as, simply representative of a return to 'liberalism' from 'collectivism'; it is the product of over fifty years-worth of political and economic thought (Gerber 1994; Mirowski & Plehwe; 2009; Ptak 2009; Bonefield 2012; Gane 2013; Gane 2014; Davies 2010; Davies 2014a&b) and is understood to be comprised of a number of new characteristics that are distinct from classic liberal theory. It is important to note here, that there are numerous definitions of 'neoliberalism' provided across a wealth of varying literature – indeed, the very idea of what 'neoliberalism' *is*, is something which remains a contentious debate within contemporary academic works. For the sake of clarification, this thesis employs the notion that 'neoliberalism' is a hegemonic ideology, or synchronic formation of meaning, which is discursively produced, sedimented and reified. It understands neoliberalism to have four key characteristics (identified by Davies 2014b), each of which shall now be briefly outlined: Firstly, a characteristic of neoliberalism is that classical liberalism forms the inspiration (rather than model) for it; that the two ideologies share similar characteristics but are distinctly different. Secondly, that neoliberalism is concerned with the expansion of market principles into the social sphere of everyday life. Thirdly, that competition and inequality are viewed positively. Finally, that the state must be an active, supporting, force of neoliberalism. This final characteristic highlights a paradox of neoliberalism: that whilst it claims to be predicated upon a non-interventionist state with a reduced capacity for intervention, it actually requires an *interventionist* state. That is, 'neoliberalism' requires a specific type of interventionist state, which intervenes in a way which makes possible the appearance of a deregulated free market, but which actually produces all sorts of quasi-state markets. It is the rejection of Mill's utilitarianism, and incorporation of Bentham's, that makes this

possible – and so requires that a moral justification for state intervention (to ensure the maintenance of the 'free market') is established. Like classic liberalism, neoliberalism also draws upon utilitarian moral philosophy to justify this stance – in particular, its emphasis on the need for 'evidence based' policies and maximised individual 'liberty' or 'freedom' to maximise 'utility' or 'happiness' (and thus progress society). However, as I have noted previously, the ideological hegemony of neoliberalism is contingent upon state intervention - crucially, neoliberalism is only dependent on state intervention into the political to maintain its ideological hegemony (by preventing a more collectivist approach to governance). For this reason, it is my understanding that neoliberalism presents a notion of 'liberty' as one which has transitioned from referring to political freedom (utilitarianism), to one which refers to *economic* freedom (neoliberalism) – as in doing so, state intervention is able to be justified on the grounds that 'freedom' or 'liberty' (as understood in an economic sense) is not compromised. This results in the re-conceptualisation of the 'individual' as a fundamentally economic subject (rather than political), and thus establishes 'happiness' and 'social progress' as economic, rather than political, entities – in the sense that they are understood to be derived from the satisfaction of individual (now economic) need. This was achieved by establishing the immorality of state intervention into the free market regardless of whether such intervention was in the interest of (a misunderstood perception of) 'social progression'.

The development and sedimentation of these characteristics within 'neoliberalism' can be traced back to the emergence of it as an ideological challenge to collectivism. The works of Ludwig von Mises and Freidrich von Hayek (and the Mont Pelerin Society), and later Milton Friedman, problematised the continued social and political adoption of collectivist ideas and values (that had been demonstrated throughout the first half of the twentieth century) and explicitly sought to reclaim the idea of 'liberalism' from collectivist and socialist ideologies (Gane 2013; Davies 2014a&b). This turn towards collectivism was deeply concerning for such early neoliberal theorists,

and it was suggested that such a turn had been made possible by that failings of classic liberal economic theory. Indeed, Mises and Hayek were deeply critical of both classic liberal theory and collectivism, believing that the former had proved itself to be ideologically inadequate in addressing the declining faith in the ability of the free market system to resolve social and economic problems that made way for the latter to enjoy ideological hegemony (Gane, 2013). Their critique of classic liberalism was centred around its incorporation of Millsian utilitarianism, and they instead necessitated a resurgence of Benthamist approaches to the maximisation of utility in their neoliberal economic theory (Gane, 2013). Doing so made possible neoliberalism's dominant message that any collapse of the free market (such as the Wall Street crash 1929) or social problem to emerge within society is not the consequence of too much market freedom, but rather the consequence of not enough. Rather than encouraging state intervention into any current or future economic or social crises, neoliberalism attempts to reconceptualise populist ideas and values about state interventionism in a way which understands it to be justified only in the sense to maximise the 'freeness' of the free market, and not to redistribute wealth. It is the continual justification and legitimisation of neoliberal ideas and values by the state that made possible the ideological hegemony that neoliberalism enjoys. In the sense that such state support made possible a social and political climate that grew increasingly supportive of, and focussed on, furthering and stimulating the interests of capitalism. Mark Fisher (in Fisher & Gilbert 2013) notes that such a climate can be understood as 'capitalist realism', which is in essence where the processes of capitalism have become naturalised and normalised, and that we are able to see this normalisation of 'capitalism' in the UK take place at around the same time as the application of neoliberal beliefs and values in the UK; in the late 1970s and early 1980s, under the political leadership of Margaret Thatcher. Here, we saw a social and political climate which enabled the privatisation of previously state run sectors, enabled the establishment of a global free market economy, and increased hostility towards groups such as trade unions who operated against exploitation and efforts to accumulate capital; and this climate has remained ever since. It was the emergence of 'stagflation' in the 1970s that made this

possible; in that the rising rates of inflation and unemployment were posited at 'evidence' that Keynesian economic policies were not efficient in maximising 'wellbeing'. That the transition from 'collectivist' ideas and values dominating social and political ideology, to neoliberal ideas and values, was accomplished is incredibly interesting. Particularly when it was astoundingly evident that social democratic policies were working (despite 'stagflation'); that is, 'wellbeing' or 'welfare' could be seen to be improving, and was *evidenced* to be so through health statistics, such as life expectancy and disease prevalence. I suggest that this was accomplished by successfully contesting (and so redefining) the conceptualisation of 'social progression' itself. That is, it is my argument that neoliberal theorists successfully contested the notion that the more equal a society becomes, the further it is understood to be progressing, and suggested instead that the higher rates of employment and productivity are, the further it is understood to be progressing.

As I have noted, the ideological dominance of collectivism and Keynesian economic policies was successfully challenged and made possible the emergence and sedimentation of 'neoliberalism' in the latter half of twentieth century, and which has enjoyed unrivalled ideological dominance into the twenty first century – in that it became, and remains, the hegemonic ideology of contemporary capitalist society (Fisher & Gilbert, 2013). This idea of 'social progression' is evident in works underpinning the 'happiness agenda'. As I showed in the previous chapter, a central tenet of 'happiness experts' justification for the 'happiness agenda' is that it will enable more individuals to return to, or engage for the first time in, employment – and that doing so, will improve 'wellbeing' *in total* (by enabling the individual to satisfy both economic and non-economic need). A specific conceptualisation of 'happiness' is presented, where 'happiness' is constructed as something to be economically and individually pursued and experienced (rather than politically). The individual is understood to be able to maximise their 'happiness' by satisfying specific economic and material needs and desires, via the free market – and that the ability for all individuals to do so is what society should progress towards (by maximising their 'freedoms' so that they are able to do so). Indeed, as I have previously noted, 'neoliberalism' presents a notion of 'liberty' as one which

specifically refers to economic freedom, and that ensuring individual economic freedom leads to maximised 'utility' or 'happiness'. The implication of all of these components is that neoliberal ideas and beliefs about 'happiness', 'freedom', and 'social progression' make possible the notion that the deregulated free market is a moral entity to be socially and politically preserved, and anything that threatens this deregulated free market, threatens the progression of society – such as the more socially democratic, collectivist economic policies which oversaw state intervention into the free market. In addition, I have also demonstrated that neoliberalism contains a paradox - that whilst it claims to be predicated upon a non-interventionist state with a reduced capacity for intervention on such moral grounds, it actually requires a specific type of interventionist state which intervenes in a way which makes possible the appearance of a deregulated free market. I previously noted that this highlights the contingency of neoliberalism (that it is simply one way of conceptualising and making sense of the world which has become ideologically dominant thanks to its legitimisation by political structures), but it is important to note also that this paradox suggests much more than this, it suggests that state interventionism is fundamentally necessary to the existence of the market. That is to say whether intervention into the market is to ensure it is structured in a way which maximises equality, or is simply to preserve its existence, state interventionism is necessary to maintain the market in all of its various forms. This suggests that not only that neoliberalism is simply one way of conceptualising and making sense of the world, but also that it is based on a false understanding of world – as this reveals that the 'free' market isn't self-sustaining/sufficient, and so is neither a natural occurrence of efficiency/social progression, nor a moral entity to be preserved. Indeed, the market is instead revealed to be a social construct, or social object, and so its meaning or purpose is contingent, and dependent upon the wider 'reality' that surrounds it. For it to be revealed in some way that the 'free' market isn't self-sufficient (and so neoliberalism contains a false understanding of world) is incredibly significant as it constitutes a weak spot within neoliberal ideology that, if revealed, can be exploited in order to discredit the entire 'reality' that it presents.

4.4 The 'unhappiness problem': a crisis of the neoliberal spirit of capitalism

It is my argument that the 'crisis of 'wellbeing' or the 'misery problem' that increasing rates of 'mental illness' and 'unhappiness' are understood to present, is in fact the social and political manifestation of an ideological 'crisis' of the neoliberal spirit of capitalism. If we consider that a 'crisis of capitalism' is made possible by the erosion or successful contestation of the 'reality' the spirit presents (Boltanksi & Chiapello 2005a), then very existence of a 'wellbeing' crisis suggests that there has been a breakdown of the relation between the processes of capitalism and their perceived ability to enable or work towards a common good. It is my proposition that the increase in rates of 'mental illness' and stagnation of 'happiness' reveals the specific 'reality' of neoliberal capitalism to be a 'fantasy', as it reveals that capitalism's promise to maximise 'wellbeing' doesn't hold true. This 'mental health crisis' emerging in modern Western societies makes possible a 'crisis of capitalism', as there is a subsequent inability to justify its exploitative processes with the argument that they are moral. Indeed, it is my proposition that the emergence of this apparent 'crisis' made possible an ideological debate concerned with addressing the question of what the appropriate method of intervention is (if at all) when 'wellbeing' is seen to be stagnating or declining; and that this makes possible a wider ideological debate as to how best to progress society, and what 'common good' we should even be working towards. In this sense, the perceived 'wellbeing crisis' makes possible a crisis of capitalism, by revealing the 'reality' and 'evidence' that necessitates state protection of the 'free market' to be incorrect. For this reason, the 'crisis of wellbeing' poses a direct ideological and discursive threat to the ideological hegemony of neoliberalism – especially if the purported solution to addressing or reversing increasing rates of 'misery' are couched in ideological assumptions which are external to neoliberal orthodoxy. However, it is also my proposition that necessitating the processes of capitalism on moral grounds also necessitates the *protection* of the processes of capitalism on moral grounds – and that this component of the neoliberal spirit of capitalism subsequently provides one of the greatest ideological tools in the event of the

collapse/disruption/dislocation of the justification of the processes of capitalism, providing of course, that they can still be related to a common good.

The 'common good' which the processes of capitalism were understood to be enabling has always been the notion of 'social progress' (Boltankski & Chiapello, 2005a) and although the conception of 'social progress' has changed ideologically throughout this period, the processes of capitalism remained morally justified by their ability to enhance it in some way. It is also important to note here that the evolution of the spirit of capitalism mirrors the evolution of British political ideology - as Table 3 demonstrates. Indeed, I mentioned that Boltanski & Chiapello (2005a&b) state that 'capitalism' mobilizes ideas and values about the world that are typically stable arguments which have been shaped by economic theory, and relates them intrinsically with its own processes to justify them; the discussion of the evolution of dominant Western socio-economic ideology, summarised in Table 3, supports this claim.

It is my argument that the emerging 'happiness agenda' is a fundamentally neoliberal capitalist ideological project concerned with decontesting alternative ideological challenges to the exploitative processes of capitalism, and not an alternative spirit of capitalism or ideology emerging; that the emerging happiness agenda covers over the disruptive event (or moment of dislocation) that the 'crisis' of wellbeing has the potential to become. It does so by providing an alternative way of relating together the key ideological constructs of a 'common good' and 'social progress', and the processes of capitalism. Which are, as I have discussed, that the 'common good' capitalist processes work towards is the maximisation of 'wellbeing'; that 'social progress' is maximised employment rates and productivity; and that the processes of capitalism enable both of these concepts to be achieved by enabling the individual to satisfy their economic needs, and helps them to satisfy their non-economic ones too. Thus the 'happiness agenda' becomes an ideological project concerned with redefining 'wellbeing' in a way which doesn't reveal the exploitative and unsatisfactory nature of

capitalist processes and which maintains capitalist institutions as moral entities to be preserved; preventing state intervention in the exploitative processes of capitalism, despite the 'misery' that they cause. As I have previously noted, the argument that a society's 'subjective wellbeing' is the most appropriate measure of 'social progress' is founded upon a number of ideological assumptions that are fundamentally utilitarian in nature. The emergence of a 'crisis of wellbeing' in capitalist society makes possible a critique of neoliberal ideology and neoliberal discursive hegemony is contingent upon this challenge being successfully decontested. In order to do so, a neoliberal account of the 'crisis of wellbeing' is required, which it is my claim the emerging 'happiness agenda' is. For this reason, this modern-day application of utilitarianism that Layard (2011) and proponents of the UK's happiness agenda seek to instate amongst populist understandings of the world, incorporates neoliberal ideas and beliefs about 'reality'. Thus, this re-institution of utilitarianism can actually be understood as the institution of 'neo-utilitarianism'.

4.5 Social progress: Another way?

As I have previously noted, at the time in which the emerging happiness agenda began to really gain momentum (2010) there was an already established body of literature that evidenced a need for maximised social equality (for example, Lynch et al 2000; Kunst et al 1998). Indeed, here a pursuit of maximised social equality is posited as the solution to the same health and social problems that the 'happiness' agenda relates to the problem of 'unhappiness' (or dissatisfaction) in modern societies. However, the findings and recommendations of such works (and the equality agenda that they constitute) received a fraction of the socio-political attention that the idea and necessitation of maximised 'happiness' enjoyed at this time. The literature available on the problem of social inequality is substantial and varied but as the happiness agenda has tasked its self with addressing modern health and social problems, I will focus on these same problems. In what I believe to be a hugely significant contribution to such an equality agenda, in their formation of an

evidence-based justification for the advancement of socio-economic equality rather than 'happiness' in the pursuit of social progress, Wilkinson & Picket (2010) present a coherent case that income inequality is the main contributory cause to most modern-day health and social problems. They suggest that a focus on purely economic growth in the name of 'social progress' has led to the observed relationship between a society's overall standards of living and its progression reaching a saturation point – even noting that there is some evidence of both beginning to decline due to the culture of excess that such a focus has created (in particular the growing rates of health problems and pollution). They note that this claim is supported by the weakening (and eventual disappearance) of the relationship between economic growth and life expectancy that is observed as countries become increasingly more developed. On the specific topic of happiness, they note that

> *like health, how happy people are rises in the early stages of economic growth and then levels off…[despite difficulties in measuring happiness it is possible to observe that] the richer a country gets, the less getting still richer adds to the population's happiness (Wilkinson & Picket 2010: 6-8).*

This interpretation of 'happiness' data is not new. As I have already noted, it forms a core argument for the emerging happiness agenda – in the sense that 'happiness' advocates such as Layard (2011) employ this interpretation in their necessitation of the reprioritisation of 'happiness' on the political agenda, and claim that a focus on wealth will not maximise 'happiness, only a focus on 'happiness' will. In this respect, Wilkinson & Pickett (2010) could be understood as endorsing the emerging happiness agenda – in the sense that the weakening of the relationship between 'happiness' and economic growth described, supports the same claims that the happiness agenda makes (that increased economic growth will not alone lead to an increase in happiness, and that 'happiness' is about non-economic circumstance). It also supports the claim that a political focus on maximising purely economic growth is therefore problematic for social progression *beyond a certain point,* and

so could be understood to support the happiness agenda's call for the reprioritisation of 'happiness' on the modern political agenda. However, this is not the case, and Wilkinson & Pickett (2010) offer instead an approach to social progression that centralises socio-economic equality (rather than 'happiness') as the most moral pursuit of governance. Drawing on more collectivist and redistributive ideas and beliefs about the social world, 'social progress' is understood as something which is related to equality, and "happiness" is posited as an effect of it. That is to say that, rather than conceptualising 'happiness' as an individually determined and unique state of being (which can be continued or hindered through individual thought and action), '(un)happiness' is presented as a status effected by (in)equality (like health status). This posits '(un)happiness' as a socially determined and shared state of being which can be continued or hindered through the prevalence of socio-economic inequality. In doing so, 'happiness' is recognised as a component part of 'wellbeing' but is not awarded such political primacy as it is by proponents of the happiness agenda/movement.

They present evidence which could be interpreted to suggest that a political focus on economic growth eradicates the social problems of poverty (such as infectious diseases and low life expectancy) and that this is how a focus on economic growth contributes to social progression. That is to say that their findings show that the richer a society becomes, the less prevalent these issues become and they suggest that this is because of the improved living standards that have been enabled. However, these are not the conclusions that Wilkinson & Pickett (2010) draw, and they instead go on to present further evidence which suggests that the problems of affluence (typically associated with illnesses and conditions associated with wealthier people such as obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and cancers) simply replace the problems of poverty amongst the poorest members of society as societies grow richer. Crucially, Wilkinson & Pickett (2010) note that although these problems of affluence are present across all socioeconomic demographics, they tend to be more prevalent amongst poorer groups of society (and worsen comparatively over time). This makes possible the argument that economic growth can be understood to *not* benefit all of society, that it

only benefits its wealthier members. What I mean by this is that whether we are discussing problems of affluence (such as obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and cancers) or problems of poverty (such as malnutrition, infectious diseases and low life expectancy) we are discussing problems of the poor. That is to say that that individuals who are worse off in society still experience the worst problems, irrespective of economic growth. Indeed, the only change that economic growth brings for these members of society is the nature of the problems themselves (they are no longer problems of poverty, but problems of affluence). They go on to dispel arguments that this observed reversed social distribution of social problems (that is, that as countries become richer problems of poverty are eradicated but that the problems of affluence become the new problems of the poor) is the social ordering effect of social mobility by drawing attention to the fact that this aggregation of social problems amongst the poorest members in society is worse in less equal societies. Thus, this reversed distribution is not the consequence of "a great sorting system with people flowing up and down the social ladder according to their capabilities and vulnerabilities" (Wilkinson & Pickett 2010: 24), but rather the social product of inequality. They provide evidence to suggest that more equal societies experience fewer health and social problems than unequal ones, and that such problems occur less often. They mark the maintenance (and sometimes growing rates) of inequality in society as a policy failure, and so they subsequently mark government policy as both the point for change in the solution to inequality (and its associated social problems) and as the contributing cause of these problems. Whilst their work is not without critique (see Rowlingson 2011; Saunders 2010; Snowdon 2010), Wilkinson & Pickett (2010) offer a viable alternative conceptualisation of both 'happiness' and 'social progress' - one which I believe it is ill-advised to ignore. Indeed, it is my proposition that, despite these criticisms, Wilkinson & Pickett (2010) provide the foundations from which an ideological critique of unequal societies can be developed - in the sense that their work makes possible an argument which highlights the inability of such societies to enhance (and a tendency to inhibit) 'social progression'.

They highlight, interestingly, that despite the resounding evidence to support policies to promote greater equality, there is reluctance by both governments and individuals to accept that the modern-day health and social problems (such as the stagnation of 'happiness') are the unintended consequences of increased income differences. Also a reluctance to believe that greater equality is attainable. Whereas Wilkinson & Pickett (2010) attribute this persistence of society's faith in inequality and rejection of calls for increased equality, to beliefs in human nature (that we are innately unequal), I would suggest that this persisting inequality is ideologically or discursively formed; and that this idea and belief of the inevitability of inequality is instead evidence of a wider ideological, or discursive, project that shapes what is 'known' about (in)equality and the wider social world. I suggest instead that the solution to this troubling persistence of faith in inequality is not, as Wilkinson & Pickett (2010) suggest, revealing a 'true' human nature and trying to counter it. It is to instead change the way that we as a society think and talk about the world, a change that their work provides the evidence to enable. Indeed, as Dorling (2010b) notes "there is no orchestrated conspiracy to prolong injustice" (227) by the rich; it is simply the social product of a prolonged political and economic commitment to a neoliberal principle of a free-market economy which suggests that inequality reduces with economic growth and trickle-down economics (Dorling 2010b). It is the primacy and hegemony of this belief about the inevitability of inequality that functions to perpetuate this system – and if the discourse itself is challenged, so too is the dominance of this belief.

In his work on injustice, Dorling (2010a) presents five social evils in contemporary society which have replaced Beveridge's (1942) original five evils (squalor, ignorance, want, idleness and disease) and their associated tenets which function to justify the continued prevalence of such evils. Dorling (2010a) notes that this view of social evils is present in all political agendas (although becomes more prevalent towards 'the right') and that "it is belief in these new tenets that leads those in power to talk of people only being able to achieve up to their 'potential'" (Dorling 2010b: 227). Indeed,

Dorling (2010) argues that inequality persists in societies because dominant attitudes and beliefs about the world justifies it – a sentiment shared by Wade (2007). This again supports my notion that the acceptance and incorporation of inequality into modern societies is an ideological phenomenon, as it suggests that beliefs about inequality shape guide and limit discussions about inequality – discussions which, in a political context, shape, guide and limit public policy. It suggests that there are particular attitudes and beliefs about the world that make inequality possible – that is, these five tenets (or specific ideas about the world) justify the prevalence of inequality in society by establishing its inevitability and efficiency. He goes on to state that

> *injustice continues, most strongly, in what we think is permissible, in how we think we exist, in whether we think we can use others in ways we would not wish to be used ourselves…Inequality cannot keep on growing. But it will not end without the millions of tiny acts required in order that we no longer tolerate the greed, prejudice, exclusion and elitism that foster inequality and despair. Above all else, these acts will require teaching and understanding, not forgetting once again what it is to be human (Dorling 2010: 228-231)*

In doing so, he necessitates that the modern discourse permitting injustice is challenged. It is Dorling's (2010) stance that social inequalities contribute toward the five social evils that he outlines and he closely links them together. Much like Wilkinson & Pickett (2010) *and* Layard (2011), Dorling (2010) appeals for a reprioritisation of human need over market needs within politics. However, like Wilkinson & Pickett (2010) *and not like* Layard (2011), Dorling (2010) makes possible an approach that centralises 'equality' rather than 'happiness' as the most moral pursuit of governance, and as the most effective way to achieve a reprioritisation of human need over market needs within politics. With this in mind, he too presents an entirely alternative argument for progressing society to the one presented in the emerging happiness agenda – one which draws on more collectivist and redistributive ideas and beliefs about the social world and, importantly, necessitates the rejection of neoliberal ideas and beliefs about the world.

An alternative, arguably more effective, measure of social progression is presented across these two pieces of work, consisting of the notion that rather than focusing on measuring and improving 'happiness', public policy makers should instead be concerned with measuring and decreasing levels of inequality in society. It raises the question as to how and why such work received a fraction of the attention that the idea and necessitation of maximised 'happiness' received, and how and why a desire to progress society came to constitute a socio-politcal 'happiness agenda' not an equality agenda. It also raises the question as to how and why it isn't both? That is to say, how and why does the emerging happiness agenda lack any calls for wealth redistribution and increased social equality, when there is a strong body of evidence to suggest that doing so would improve 'happiness'? As I note Wilkinson & Pickett (2010) and Dorling 2010) present an alternative measure of social progression (that rather than focusing on measuring and improving aggregate 'happiness', governments should instead be concerned with measuring and decreasing levels of inequality in society). This measure of 'social progress' is tangible, and factual, and not subject to the issues of validity and reliability that the measurement of 'happiness' is. However, as the idea of 'social progression' emerging in the happiness agenda demonstrates, despite this coherent argument and tangible measure, ideological faith has remained in market principles and values of neoliberalism in addressing the 'crisis of misery' – raising the question as to how such discursive dominance is maintained. To be deduced from the alternative explorations of social justice, is strong evidence that the social-normative practices of neoliberalism produce (and subsequently justify) social inequality and injustice, despite its discursive dominance being established and sedimented on claims of promoting justice/utility/happiness. Such exhaustive evidence supports more socialist calls for collectivist, state interventionist approaches to the maximisation of society's 'happiness', and towards maximised social progression, and raises the question as to how this evidence did not come to pose a significant ideological challenge to the neoliberal ideas and values incorporated into the 'happiness agenda'.

Chapter 5: Social Logics

In this chapter I present findings and analysis from my interviews with members of AfH. Here I have sought to identify the social logics of 'happiness' that form part of the 'reality' that the emerging happiness agenda assumes in order to better understand it. This is achieved by drawing out the normative assumptions about the world, and 'happiness', within the data – that is, the ideas and beliefs about the world that are *implied* by what participants say. As I note in Chapter 2, social logics are closely associated with the social dimension and are understood to "enable us to characterise practices in a particular social domain" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p133) - that is to say that they constitute the 'common sense' or normative conceptualisations of 'reality' that are implied in the day to day practices of discursive subjects, and are constructed by mundane social practices. They can be considered as 'rules' that are implied in social practices as to why social actors do what they do (which, on a day-to-day basis, are not considered by social actors) and which, when identified and deconstructed, enable us to describe and characterise specific synchronic formations of regimes of practices, as they enable us to understand the context in which they exist – that is, what the 'reality' is that produces them (and which they re-produce). I identify three social logics produced by the social practices described by participants: individualism, immaterialism and "basic needs" and demonstrate that they are produced by, and re-produce, neo-utilitarian 'happiness' practices – each of which will be described here.

5.1 Social logics of individualism, immaterialism and "basic needs"

If we consider that 'reality' is a temporally fixed structure of meaning represented by 'signs' (which make possible such representation by articulating 'reality'), then the way in which participants talk about 'happiness' can be understood as a representation of 'reality' as they understand it. All participants were asked to define "happiness" and the discussions surrounding

what 'happiness' *is* revealed a number of interesting attitudes and beliefs about the world that

participants understood to be 'fact' – specifically the idea of 'true happiness' which incorporates

ideas of individualism, immaterialism and consumption. Indeed, whilst these last two ideas seem to

be contradictory, I will discuss how these ideas and beliefs work together to seemingly appease

dissatisfaction with a sense of a modern society consisting of a culture of (excessive) consumerism,

in a way which doesn't problematize consumption *per se*. Understanding how members of AfH

define 'happiness' was incredibly important, and constituted one of the focal points in my

discussions with participants. This is because, understanding what 'happiness' *is* for these social

actors, enables me to establish what 'reality' produces the idea of 'happiness' (and 'wellbeing') – it

enables the identification of the social logics that are formed by, and underpin, such a 'reality'.

5.1.1 'Happiness' and a social logic of individual satisfaction of need

When asked to define "happiness", participants initially struggled to explain what the term

meant. A number of participants cited AfH's 'ten keys' (figure 1) as being instrumental in helping

them to rethink what 'happiness' was to them, and how best to pursue it. As I have previously

noted, each of the ten keys associates 'happiness' with individual thought and behaviour: such as

positive thinking ('acceptance'), trying new things ('trying out'), being charitable ('giving') etc. Thus,

rather than presenting individuals with speculative discussions about what 'happiness' is and the

best way to achieve it, AfH provides a specific path to achieving it. As Figure 1 shows, each of the ten

keys is vague - so vague in fact that each of the three regional groups involved in this research

project had, at some point, structured their member meetings around them (in various ways). The

purpose of which being to discuss what each of them means and work as a group to determine how

individuals can follow them in their everyday lives. AfH's ten keys (and their whole approach to

maximising 'happiness') assigns the individual complete control in defining what 'happiness' is and

simply suggests ways in which one might live a 'happier' life. In an approach that is redolent with classical utilitarianism, AfH leaves the definition of 'happiness' for individuals to determine. It presents it as nothing more than a desirable way of living and how individuals define happiness is thus of crucial importance to this study because, although AfH doesn't define "happiness" (beyond the idea that it is individually defined), participants note that the organisation has helped them to determine their own definitions. So how then did participants define happiness?

A number of terms were used repeatedly in the definitions provided by participants in their definitions of 'happiness'. These were: 'happiness' as 'fulfilment' and 'happiness' as 'satisfaction' with life. Here we are able to begin to see that 'happiness' is related ideologically to neoliberal conceptualisations of 'social progression' – that is, the satisfaction, or fulfilment of some need. Indeed, all of participants established happiness as being a state of being in which one has an overall sense of fulfilment or satisfaction with life, such as P5:

> *Smiling, laughter, having a good time - and that's what most people, the way most people see it. But I think Action for Happiness, as people who are into the happiness movement, they see it differently. It's basically about underlying contentment. And for a definition, my definition is that it's about all round wellbeing. Not a particular kind of wellbeing, but well-being that covers all our essential needs (P5).*

Here, P5 establishes what they believe 'most people' (those not part of the happiness movement) perceive 'happiness' to be – a temporal sensation of joy, as represented by a smile or laughter. By doing so, P5 distinguishes between "most peoples" and members of AfH's ideas of 'happiness' – suggesting that there are different perceptions of 'happiness' in society. By doing so, P5 presents a view which all participants appeared to share – that there are different perceptions of what 'happiness' is. This sentiment is presented in a way which distinguishes those as part of the "happiness movement" from the rest of society. P5 then goes on to associate the happiness movement's perception of 'happiness' with the satisfaction of individual needs.

What is interesting here is that perceptions of a temporal nature of 'happiness' are removed from P5's definition – 'happiness' is, for P5, about our needs being met and not about experiencing temporal sensations of 'pleasure'. This idea of 'happiness' as the satisfaction of need is redolent with economic ideas of human motivation and behaviour (that we are motivated by, and act in pursuit of, the satisfaction of our needs and desires); however, to separate 'happiness' from temporal 'pleasure' in such a clear and coherent manner, is unique to the neo-utilitarian agenda emerging. 'Happiness' and its pursuit is presented as *not* a hedonistic search of 'pleasure' - indeed it is not a pursuit of 'pleasure' at all. To be 'happy' is *not* to experience temporal feelings of joy, elation or 'pleasure'; to be 'happy' is simply having your needs met.

To associate 'happiness' with fulfilment or satisfaction, creates a notion of it as a state of being which is intrinsically linked to our individual needs being met (or fulfilled or satisfied), and that to determine whether we are 'happy' or not is achieved by determining what our own individual needs and desires are, and assessing whether they have been (or are able to be) met. To understand 'happiness' in this way is to present it as tangible entity that we are able to reach and possess – 'happiness' is not a fleeting emotional response to any number of stimuli, it is self-determined, self-controlled, and self-actualised. Which draws on the utilitarian ideological framing of this neo-utilitarian agenda – in that this idea of 'happiness' as the satisfaction of individually defined needs, centralises and empowers the individual. Further to this, my conversations with participants revealed that such needs are understood to *not* be determined by a set of social rules or norms and they require the individual to think of themselves as not a member of a society, as not a member of a social group, but as an autonomous, independent functioning being with unique needs and desires - which it is their right to pursue - echoing further the utilitarian goal of emphasising individual rights within society. However, an effect of this utilitarian framing is that there is no shared purpose, or pursuit, for such individuals other than aggregate (but not collective) 'happiness'. Indeed, numerous categories that such needs could fall under are provided by participants (such as economic, social,

interpersonal etc.) but the specific needs are described as, and assumed to be, individually determined – as the following quote from P6 demonstrates:

I think happiness is quite a wide term and it means different things to different people. For some people it could be financial security that will equate them to feeling happy. It could be being very successful in a job. I think drilling down to the core of what happiness means I think most people want a sense of contentment. I think most people want a sense of contentment in their lives and what they are doing and where they are heading to (P6).

Both P5 and P6 (and indeed all participants) define 'happiness' as an individually determined concept, suggesting that 'happiness' is framed as such by AfH. In this neo-utilitarian agenda, 'happiness' is conceptualised as the product of individual action, as a state of 'being' achieved only through a rational, individualistic assessment of our wants, needs and desires, and their ability to satisfy them. 'Happiness' is (in this context) unique, undefinable and indescribable beyond these terms; but most importantly, is always achievable via the satisfaction of need. For participants, 'happiness' is understood to be a lifestyle choice – and the action required being to choose to assess what you want out of life and how to get it, to work out what you like and continuing it, and to determine what you don't like and stopping it. An image of a rational individual is being presented here, as someone who is able to independently determine what their individual needs are (and how they are able to be achieved). In doing so, individuals are understood to focus inwards on themselves, and view their thoughts and actions as both the means to advance, and inhibit, their 'happiness'. Participants' ideas of 'happiness' (as the satisfaction of individual need) correspond with the idea of 'happiness' that I have discussed in the previous chapters - specifically, positive psychology's assertion that the individual is in control of their own 'happiness', and behavioural economics' assertion that 'happiness' is demonstrative of (and affected by) the satisfaction of individual subjective need. This idea of 'happiness' seems to be expanded upon, however, with the incorporation of a clear idea of what 'happiness' *isn't* (that it isn't a temporal sensation of pleasure).

This idea of what 'happiness' both is and isn't, works to empower the individual, to establish them as the master of their own 'happiness' by marginalising the belief that factors external to our own thoughts and actions can have an effect on it – and this individualistic nature of 'happiness' is a sentiment that all participants shared.

5.1.2 'Happiness' and a social logic of immaterialism

In their definitions of "happiness", participants elaborated on the types of needs that the satisfaction of would bring 'happiness'. All of these 'needs' are understood to be 'emotional' and not 'material' – indeed, there is a strong emphasis on separating 'happiness' from material gain, as the following quote from P3 demonstrates:

> *I think people are searching for happiness in the wrong places. That is the only thing. When people keep searching for the job - they don't know their values - and they keep searching for the job that's going to bring them loads of money, when actually their value is to enjoy their job. That for me is the biggest thing, and materialism. I think not just money, money, but actually people putting pressure on themselves to have things, stuff that they can't afford. People living outside of their means, and then they get it and they get that buzz for five minutes and the thing doesn't matter. Then they're on to the next thing (P3).*

Here, P3 is discussing why the way that 'most people' (implying those not part of the happiness movement) perceive 'happiness' to be, is problematic. That is to say that P3 believes that this alternative conceptualisation of 'happiness' leads to people prioritising financial gain over other aspects of their life that they are able to buy things and derive temporal pleasure from them. P3 is critical of this process and feels that there is a need to re-focus individuals' priorities – turning them away from financial gain or material possessions and on to more important parts of life, such as

working out their own individual 'values'. This is a sentiment shared by all participants – that is to say that all participants expressed views which were critical of materialism and rejected any notions of 'happiness' that associate it with processes of acquisition. A number of participants emphasise the importance of developing good quality relationships with friends and family, as well as the importance of a pursuit of 'true happiness' (not money) to guide individual action. The sense from participants is that conceptualising 'happiness' in this way serves an emancipatory purpose – freeing individuals from a seemingly 'false' need for material possessions and providing them with the power to determine what makes them happy, and how to achieve it, as the following quote from P10 demonstrates:

> *The core of happiness is a sense of freedom, but not freedom in the sense that we often think about freedom. It's like – let me see – I suppose things like freedom from expectation. So there would be a whole list of freedoms that we would have. Freedom of attachment to past issues, freedom of expectation of the future. Power of now says it a lot; being in the present, learning how to be in the present. Learning to see how beautiful everything is regardless of other expectations. I suppose it's kind of like as soon as we stop making choices about things, good or bad, then there's a sense of happiness that arises. There's also a huge confusion between the difference of joy and happiness. Joy is usually related to things. So you get something you feel joyful for a period of time and then you got used to it then it slides, but joy will give people the experience of what happiness can be like because at a heightened sense of joy then you're almost free of other things; they're not invading you while you're on that level of - So your freedom from invasion being evaded (P10).*

In a statement that echoes P5 sentiments provided in the previous section, P10 is once again separating 'happiness' from temporal sensations of joy or pleasure, sensations which they associate with materialism. Here, P10 understands 'happiness' to be distinct from material possessions. They understand 'happiness' to be produced by the *rejection* of want, desire and 'things', and as the

sensation produced once we are emancipated from a pursuit of material possessions. This sense of the emancipatory power of a pursuit of 'happiness' rather than wealth or possessions is shared by all participants; indeed they were incredibly passionate and unified in their rejection of 'materialism'. Such an association of 'happiness' with a rejection of materialism is not presented as a novel idea, or a ground breaking discovery of AfH or the wider "happiness movement". Instead, it emerges as a pre-existing belief that they all shared before becoming involved with AfH. Indeed, participants described being drawn to and becoming involved with AfH *because* they shared its sentiment that 'happiness' can't be bought, and they wanted to engage with like-minded people. For many participants, their motivation for joining their regional groups was not to learn more about 'happiness' or to become 'happy', it was to help to spread the message that 'happiness' is not a consequence of materialism.

That this sentiment of 'happiness' not being a pursuit of materialism was shared *before* joining AfH is incredibly interesting. If we consider that this is (what I understand to be) one of the main messages of the organisation, it appears as though the idea of what 'happiness' *isn't* acts as an organising principle. Participants were already aware of the 'fact' that materialism does not produce 'happiness', so this idea or belief of 'happiness' has not been produced, or made possible, by their engagement with the 'reality' AfH presents. So what did participants gain from their membership? When asked this question, the most common answer provided by participants was that they have been provided with an enhanced understanding of what 'happiness' *is*. If we consider that the neoliberal 'spirit of capitalism' presented 'happiness' as the satisfaction of material need, individuals who rejected this construction were seemingly left without an idea of what 'happiness' was; they 'knew' that 'happiness' *was not* derived from simply being employed and being able to buy things, but there was a lacking alternative idea or belief as to what it then was. It seems as though AfH offered an alternative to this lack of conceptualisation of what 'happiness' is (if it is not the satisfaction of material need). Indeed, participants spoke of this idea of 'happiness' as being alternative to 'most peoples' 'artificial', materialistic (and problematic) conceptualisations of

'happiness'; but more than this, participants spoke of AfH's conceptualisation of 'happiness' as being 'true'. When asked to clarify what this 'true happiness' is, P3 described it in the following way:

I think true happiness is when, for me, when you wake up in the morning and you're content with what's going on around you. Whether it's who your friends are, the person in your life, the choices that you've made, and just that you look forward - to whether it's that day, the next week or the future- with happiness. Feeling like there's' good stuff going on (P3).

P3's definition of 'true happiness' is similar to the rest of the definitions of 'happiness' provided by participants, and once again we see terms such as "contentment", "satisfaction" and "fulfilment" emerge in relation to what 'happiness' *is*, however (and crucially) also emerging here is the idea that that this perception of 'happiness' is true, or correct, and others are false. *True* 'happiness' is presented as the satisfaction of *non-material* needs, and presents a 'reality' that 'happiness' is the satisfaction of individually determined non-material needs. Participants suggested that for some, these needs might be developing stronger friendships, for others it might be finding 'love', and for others still it might be experiencing new cultures or environments. The point is that the *individual* determines these, pursues these, and is able to derive 'happiness' from them because they are their unique individual needs. An implication being that someone else following these who doesn't *need* them, will not be able to find 'happiness' in this way.

It seems as though individuals who reject materialism as a means to becoming 'happy' are drawn to AfH in order to understand what 'happiness' *is* (already 'knowing' what it isn't). Indeed, it is clear that a focus on materialism, wealth accumulation and consumption are examples of 'false', or 'artificial', 'happiness' for participants – with many noting the temporal nature of it. To view 'happiness' in this way is, for participants, considered to be alternative to what 'most people' understand happiness to be - establishing 'most peoples' conception of 'happiness' as 'wrong' and problematic. An implication being that the AfH's particular notion of 'happiness' is not simply being presented as an alternative, it is also being presented as the correct definition of "happiness".

By doing so, this definition of 'happiness' discredits challenges to it by creating an idea of 'true' and 'false' 'happiness' - a point which I shall pick up on in the next chapter when I explore the political logics of the agenda. The task here was to identify what 'happiness' was understood to be. So then, what is 'happiness' as defined by members of AfH? 'Happiness' is established as a feeling of overall contentment with life, which is achieved through the satisfaction of individual (non-economic) needs and desires. It is individually defined, achieved and maintained (by following the 'ten keys' to happier living). 'Happiness' *is not* temporal, nor is it about material wealth or possessions. In additional discussions with participants, 'happiness' was also described as something available to all in society, and something that can and should be pursued by all. Underpinning these ideas about 'happiness' was the belief that it is 'good', it is what we desire and aspire to achieve and it is what should be the main motivator behind all that we do and say.

Through this exploration of social logics, I have shown that participant's ideas of 'happiness' incorporated a strong sense of individualism, an emphasis of immaterialism and a relation of 'happiness' to satisfaction needs. However, this idea of 'happiness' began to unravel somewhat when 'unhappiness' began to be discussed, as the next section will detail.

5.1.3 'Happiness' and a social logic of "basic needs"

The previous two sections of this chapter have identified two social logics of 'reality' shaping, and shaped by, participants' ideas of what 'happiness' both is and isn't. What became interesting was the way that this idea of 'happiness' interacted with other ideas and beliefs about the world – which resulted in the incorporation of *some* material needs into their definitions of 'happiness' (despite their passionate claims that 'happiness' is immaterial), what a number of participants referred to as "basic needs". This was revealed in participants' descriptions of wider society - specifically, its current social structure and whether or not wealth inequality or 'unfairness' could

impact on a person's 'happiness'. Here, participants were more reluctant to invoke such a disassociation between material circumstance and 'happiness', and failed to do so as liberally as they did when discussing their own individual notions of what 'true happiness' is. Indeed, as much as participants advocated the idea that they control and are responsible for their own 'happiness', they became uncomfortable when presented with the suggestion that this also implied that "disadvantaged" individuals are responsible for, and cause, their own 'unhappiness'. Participants reconciled this uncomfortableness by relating 'happiness' to wealth in some way:

If you're not born into money then it's what money can buy that makes you initially happy for the first few years and then makes you miserable afterwards. Most people that are born into wealth, it's not the money, it's not really the money, it's your lifestyle. It's the guidance you have or have been given; it's how you choose to live your life that makes you happy (P9)

I'd say as long as you have enough money, whatever that means, more doesn't really help (P1)

I think everyone has to have that initial baseline [of wealth], because otherwise perhaps they don't even have the access to it [happiness] (P7)

If you have no money you will be unhappy, you will be very unhappy because you need – the statistics, as I understand it, are that below a certain threshold yes, money buys you happiness. You need a roof over your head, food, warmth and a little bit beyond that so ideally a TV and a mode of transport and some kind of - above that, extra increments of wealth don't make you any happier, according to the stats. That makes sense, in my personal experience. I need to be able to get about but if I've got an expensive car or I'm going on the tube, it doesn't actually make any difference. If I can't afford the tube then I'm unhappy. I need to be able to buy clothes but whether they're designer or not doesn't make me any happier actually (P2)

I believe money can't buy happiness. I saw a like meme thing. It said, "They say money can't buy happiness but money can buy a jet ski. Have you ever seen an unhappy person on a jet

ski?" That makes me think, okay, money can buy you things that will temporarily make you happy, but money can't buy fulfilment. Money can't buy you meaning in life. Money can't buy you good, close relationships with people… But your basic needs need to be met, which is shelter, food, safety. Then you have self-actualisation. It's Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Yes, you need money to have a certain level of comfort but after that [shrugs] (P4)

This results in participants presenting the idea of the (sort of) immateriality of 'happiness' – a complication to views they had previously espoused when defining 'happiness'. That is, that when this idea of 'happiness' (as not being related to wealth or material possessions) was applied to issues of inequality and poverty, participants revealed an ideological tension with this conceptualisation of 'happiness' – in particular the idea that 'happiness' is totally unrelated to material circumstance. Indeed, it transpired that participants were not comfortable with attributing the cause of the assumed 'misery' felt by the truly disadvantaged in society, to anything other than their circumstance. They resolved this tension by incorporating an idea of "basic needs" into their ideas of 'happiness' and its pursuit. In discussions with participants, "basic needs" were revealed to be economic needs, and it was understood that they needed to be met *before* an individual is able to pursue 'true happiness'. That is, it was understood that in order to be 'happy', participants understood that an individual must also have 'enough' wealth and material possessions to form a material base from which they pursue it (i.e. food, shelter and clothing). This idea is, in itself, not problematic. However, an immediate question here becomes what is the definition of 'enough' wealth and material possessions to form a base from which 'true happiness' can be pursued? This base-line of wealth was left vague; participants did not, and appeared to be unable to, provide a tangible measure of what these 'basic needs' are. This idea of "basic needs" needing to be met before 'happiness' can be maximised is also 'evidenced' within the happiness literature. Layard (2011) argues that wealth only impacts on 'happiness' and 'wellbeing' up to a certain point, and his (and others) neo-utilitarian interpretation of this 'fact' is that this is because 'happiness' isn't *only* about wealth status; it is about economic *and* non-economic needs being satisfied. The notion of

"basic needs" that participants described, is made possible by drawing on a specific conceptualisation of 'happiness' which understands that although the processes of capitalism are limited in their ability to *maximise* 'happiness', they continue to be important as they prevent some 'misery', and enable a pursuit of 'happiness'. I do not expect individuals to be only concerned with wealth or only concerned with immaterialism, and I do not wish to problematise this 'reality' nor project a belief to the contrary. Instead, my task here was to identify and describe how 'reality' was understood by participants. This idea that the satisfaction of material needs forms part of our individual pursuit of 'happiness' is a theme that I found across all participants. I find this interesting as, as I discussed in Chapter 4, if processes of capitalism are understood to satisfy material needs and produce 'happiness', this is ultimately what makes possible the idea that free market is a moral entity to be preserved and left ungoverned. This idea or belief is both simultaneously challenged and accepted by participants – resulting in them accepting that material circumstance does impact 'happiness' and so *makes possible* a continued justification of capitalist processes (as the continuation of *any* relationship between 'happiness' and the processes of capitalism is to continue to justify them). In essence, participants' incorporation of "basic needs" into the pursuit of 'happiness' makes possible the continued justification of a commitment to the processes of capitalism, as they are understood to still be related to 'happiness', and the satisfaction of needs – albeit only up to a certain point.

5.2 Summary of social logics

The three social logics identified here in my analysis provide a snapshot of the 'reality' that participants assume. That is here we see *what* the synchronic formation of meaning is, by the social logics of 'happiness' that it constructs. I have shown that participants understand 'happiness' to be individually defined, pursued and achieved, and have noted that this is redolent with a classic

utilitarianism. This is no real surprise given that both the 'happiness agenda' and AfH are both (in part) inspired by Layard's (2011) explicit revival of utilitarian moral philosophy. This idea of 'happiness' works to empower the individual and participants seem to respond positively to this empowerment – noting that it frees them from the constraints of mindless consumerism and excessive consumption, enabling them to pay attention to their seemingly more important (and often neglected) non-economic needs. In a similar vein, participants are not entirely critical of the relation between 'happiness' and consumption or materialism and are instead critical of the simplification of this relationship. Indeed, participants expressed dissatisfaction with consumerist culture in the modern Western world. This dissatisfaction is not described by participants as being with its exploitative nature, but rather because it doesn't satisfy our non-economic needs. For participants, the concept of our "basic needs" is constructed and defined. It is understood that we are only able to pursue the satisfaction of non-economic needs if our "basic needs" are satisfied. This offers the possibility of the moral justification for individuals to rally to the processes of capitalism that Boltanksi & Chiapello (2005a; 2005b) note is necessary for its continued maintenance. Here, 'happiness', or the satisfaction of need, is able to continue as the moral grounds for capitalism, but instead of it being understood as *causing* 'happiness', it is understood to enable its pursuit. However, participants' incorporation of "basic needs" into the pursuit of 'happiness' also *makes possible* a justification for the incorporation of an 'equality agenda' as a means to ensure these 'basic needs' are met. Although, as I will come to demonstrate, this is not what participants claim, and so, in my desire to understand 'how happiness and how not equality' it is necessary to understand how this *possible* 'reality' is made *impossible*.

In my earlier characterisation of the emerging happiness agenda I demonstrated that the concept of 'wellbeing' is complicated to include an additional component part: 'subjective wellbeing' to be derived from the satisfaction of non-economic need. I demonstrated that 'happiness' is posited as a measure of this 'subjective wellbeing', whilst GDP is understood to measure economic wellbeing. I demonstrated in in my discussion of utilitarianism, 'happiness' has long been understood

ideologically to be, or related discursively with, 'good'- and as the positive experience derived from the satisfaction of needs and desires. Participants established 'happiness' as a state of being in which one has an overall sense of fulfilment or satisfaction, which is achieved by the satisfaction of our individual needs - suggesting that this idea of 'happiness' is shaping participants ideas and beliefs about the world. Indeed, the definition of 'happiness' provided by participants was astoundingly unified: 'happiness' is established as a feeling of overall contentment with life which is achieved through the satisfaction of individual needs and desires. However, a redefining of 'happiness' becomes apparent when we begin to consider what participants defined 'happiness' as *not* being: 'happiness' is not temporal, nor is it simply feeling joy or elation. 'Happiness' is not about material wealth or possessions (beyond an undefined point), and it is not able to be collectively defined. The most significant difference here is that 'happiness' is understood to *not only* be related to materialism - that although 'happiness' is understood to be the satisfaction of needs, it is understood to be the satisfaction of *immaterial* needs made possible by the initial satisfaction of economic ones. The idea of 'happiness' being the satisfaction of individually defined immaterial needs was strikingly uniform across participants' descriptions and definitions of it.

My analysis so far has provided an observation and description of the 'reality' of 'happiness' that members of AfH understand to be 'fact'. It is clear that this 'reality' of 'happiness' corresponds with the broader 'reality' that the 'happiness agenda' presents. Whilst this has proved valuable in reconfirming my characterisation and problematisation of the broader 'happiness agenda', the aim of this thesis is to provide a critical account of the emergence of such an agenda, and not simply a descriptive one. Such critique is made possible when we being to question how this synchronic formation *is* – a task which is made possible by identifying the political and fantasmatic logics that underpin the idea of 'reality' that the social logics represent, and which the next chapter will seek to do.

Chapter 6: Political Logics

I have so far described 'happiness' as defined by members of AfH and this established that their ideas and beliefs about it are, in part, comprised of social logics which do not make *impossible* a relationship between capitalist processes of accumulation and consumption, and 'happiness' being established; but that nor do they make *impossible* a relationship between collectivism and 'happiness' being established. I also established social logics which stress the relation between 'happiness' and the satisfaction of individually determined non-economic needs. Identifying the social logics contained within the happiness agenda essentially produced a snap shot of actors' attitudes and beliefs about 'reality' at a specific moment in time (at the time at which fieldwork was conducted) and raised the question as to how the maximisation of 'equality' is not considered necessary in a pursuit of 'happiness', despite the recognition that 'happiness' is, in part, dependent on material needs being satisfied. In this chapter I seek to answer this question by exploring the political logics that my interviews with participants revealed underpin their ideas and beliefs about 'reality'.

In this chapter I demonstrate that participants felt there was an amount of ambiguity around the term "happiness" (as understood to be demonstrative of 'wellbeing'), suggesting that there is no widely accepted, clear, identifiable definition of the sign. I suggest that ambiguity surrounding the meaning of the sign "happiness" is due to the existence of alternative conceptualisations of it – such as those provided by the equality agenda, where 'happiness' is posited as an effect of 'equality' – and seek to understand how participants resolve this ambiguity (resulting in participants' marginalising a perceived need for 'equality') in their conceptualisations of it. I suggest that these attempts to establish what "wellbeing" signifies and what other concepts it is related to (i.e. 'happiness' or 'equality') suggests that the meaning of the sign is unfixed, and that there are signs of a battle for discursive dominance in which the dominant neoliberal discourse seeks to decontest

alternative ideas of what "wellbeing" *is*, by fixing its meaning and presenting structural completeness - in the form of assigning and fixing meaning to the sign "happiness" with the idea of 'subjective wellbeing'. This suggests that the practice of relating 'happiness' to 'subjective wellbeing' (and 'social progress') as I have so far demonstrated in this thesis, is a political practice – if we consider that political practices decontest, and reify, specific attitudes and beliefs about the social world that inform social practices. It is therefore essential to recognise that such a 'reality' forms part of (and is representative of) a specific way of thinking about the world - a way which defines "happiness" in a very specific way and prescribes social practices which produce the social logics so far identified. To draw on the ontological suppositions discussed in Chapter 2, 'reality' is made possible via processes of collective mobilisation, where social actors accept the ideas and beliefs about the social world with which they are presented, incorporate these into their experiences and interpretations of the world, and make possible the formation of a new (or maintenance of an existing) normative frame. This normative frame draws new social divisions or political frontiers within a discursive field (or reifies existing ones) and such social divisions and political frontiers are produced and reified by political and fantasmatic logics. Indeed, the task now is to establish how this hegemonic idea (for participants) of 'happiness' *is*, by identifying 1) what alternative ideas and beliefs about the world it decontests and 2) what 'fantasy' it presents that enables this hegemonic grip to be established amongst social actors. In order to do so, it is necessary to establish the political and fantasmatic logics which underpin this political practice of decontestation – I shall focus on political logics in this chapter, and fantasmatic logics in Chapter 7.

A political logic is qualified as such by its sedimentary character. It is a normative and ideological practice which marginalises ideological challenges to the 'reality' that it's associated discourse presents. This is achieved by connecting and mobilising associated social identities, and drawing political frontiers between them which reify ideas and beliefs about the world by creating a 'them' and an 'us' divide – an example of which I shall now provide. As I have noted, it became clear that participants felt there was an amount of ambiguity around the term "happiness", which suggests

that there is no widely accepted, clear, identifiable definition of the sign. A number of participants noted that this is problematic for the movement as the name "Action for Happiness" draws on connotations of this vagueness, creating an image of an organisation focussed on something which (for those who are outside and/or critical of its mission) is 'unknown'. Participants noted that they shared the perception of "happiness" as an ambiguous term before they joined the organisation, and that it was only through engaging with the literature and message of the movement that term "happiness" came to mean something to them. Indeed, it became clear very early on in field that participants had troubles with the name of AfH - in particular its use of "happiness" - and that they believed this impacted on the way that outsiders viewed the organisation:

> *I think the first thing I feel from people is they think it's quite fluffy. That was what I found myself struggling against sometimes. Even for me, it feels a bit cheesy sometimes. Meeting with people and fluffy talking about happiness, 'what is happiness?' and debating it if you like (P3).*

> *Being British and the word happiness [pauses] - people instantly get 'that sounds like an airy, fairy, unscientific, silly, unnecessary thing'. I get that. I react to the word happiness a bit like that (P2).*

> *Happiness for people might seem quite a hippy thing almost, it has that connotation. 'What is happiness?', 'are we all happy?' - it seems a very New Age kind of concept. People can't quite get to what you are trying to do or what you are hoping to achieve by going to a meeting (P9).*

Participants felt that there is some hostility towards AfH which causes people to be dismissive of it and its message, and participants blamed this on the use of the word "happiness" and the way it is perceived as a 'fluffy' word with no real meaning. The consequence being that participants understand that, for outsiders, the movement *itself* is perceived as silly, with no real purpose. This is

pinpointed by participants as a key issue for the organisation because it was a problem that participants had when they themselves first heard about AfH, but also when speaking to others about AfH (and so when they try to fulfil their pledge to create a happier society by teaching others about 'real' happiness). Essentially, participants take issue with the organisation being called "Action for *Happiness*" because until an individual has become a part of the movement, engaged with their literature and developed a greater understanding of what 'happiness' is, they will misunderstand what AfH is *really* about (the progression of society through the maximisation of 'wellbeing') and dismiss it. This reveals how participants are able to utilise the idea of 'true happiness' (identified in Chapter 5) when confronted with criticisms of, or challenges to, AfH, its message and mission. It enables the belief that those who are critical of it, or challenge the idea of maximising 'happiness', do so because they are misinformed (or uninformed) about what 'happiness' really is – creating an 'us' and 'them' divide. Indeed, I will come to demonstrate in this chapter that this belief that AfH is misunderstood enables participants to dismiss the views of those critical of, or who ignore, the broader 'happiness agenda' that AfH constitutes a component part of – which suggests that the idea of 'happiness' that AfH presents serves a double purpose. As the previous chapter demonstrates, it acts as an organising principle to encourage individuals to engage with the 'reality' presented by the broader 'happiness agenda', but (and as this chapter will demonstrate) it also enables the political practice of the decontestation of alternative ideas and beliefs about 'reality'. By observing *what* political frontiers are made possible by participants, and understanding *how* they are possible, political logics are able to be identified. Thus, this process is not simply describing *what* participants' ideas of 'happiness' are*,* it is accounting for *how* they are. This is achieved by first revealing the subject and object positions that social actors understand to exist and identify with, and then understanding the way in which social actors interact and identify with these positions. Doing so reveals the function and purpose of their existence, and how they work to decontest alternative 'realities'. Thus, the proceeding sections explore in detail the social identities that participants understand to exist in society, and what they *do.*

6.1 Political logics of the inevitability of inequality and individual responsibility for wellbeing

As I discuss in Chapter 2, it is the task of the political logic to underpin and organise regimes of practices that reify the 'reality' that a particular ideology presents. They focus on the "diachronic aspects of a practice or regime, whether in terms of how they emerged, or in terms of how they are being contested and/or transformed" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p141) - that is, they are attitudes and beliefs *about* social practices which defend them during moments of ideological contestation (when the 'reality' being presented is challenged in some way). In this section I demonstrate the existence of two social identities ('the happy poor' and 'the unhappy rich') and that such identities make possible the political practice of the dismissal or contestation of participants' sense of the need for wealth redistribution as a means to 'social progression' (focussing instead on the maximisation of 'happiness'). Indeed, I will show that the 'reality' reified within these identities is that maximised individual 'happiness' is a justified aspiration for both governments and individuals, that such an aspiration is achievable and, importantly, that such an aspiration is achievable without the maximisation of socio-economic equality. I will demonstrate that maximising 'equality' in society is understood by participants to be an ideal and an impossible task, and this understanding of 'reality' makes possible the consistent undermining of arguments in support of a pursuit of greater 'equality', as it is understood to be both an impossible pursuit and irrelevant to '(un)happiness'.

6.1.1 A political logic of difference: the inevitability of inequality

Participants were asked to discuss how, if at all, 'happiness' and 'equality' or 'fairness' were related. The terms "equality" and "fairness" were not defined by the researcher, leaving it open to participants to define themselves in discussions. All participants related 'equality' and 'fairness' with

wealth redistribution in some way, and some participants also incorporated issues related to gender and ethnicity with the concepts too. The majority of participants described this topic as being "difficult" and their considerations of the relationship between 'happiness' and 'equality' or 'fairness', revealed an ideological tension for them. As the following quotes demonstrate, a number of participants draw on 'evidence' that more equal societies are 'happier', to make the case for making the UK more equal, but then quickly counter this *need* to do so, by noting that 'happiness' is possible with or without equality:

> *There's some evidence on that isn't there? The ones [societies] that have more of an economic - what's the word - there's a big ratio between rich and poor, like the US, are less happy. The rich people are worried about being mugged and robbed and have gated communities, and the poor people are full of resentment, whereas Denmark and the Scandinavian countries are much happier and they have more taxation. The poor people are better off, more social provision, and probably the rich people are better behaved and don't show off their wealth so much (P1)*

Here, P1 demonstrates an awareness that 'happiness' and 'equality' are able to be related to each other, and this makes possible the suggestion that there is a causal relationship between the two – even citing (albeit anecdotal) 'evidence' in support of this. However, this is not the stance that P1 takes from this 'evidence', and their interpretation of it (in particular, the explanation for this correlation) is incredibly interesting. P1 does not relate 'equality' and 'happiness' in a causal way – in the sense that P1 doesn't understand this 'evidence' to mean that greater 'equality' *causes* 'happiness'. Instead, P1 draws on specific ideas about 'reality' to make sense of this 'evidence' and in doing so they are able to interpret this 'evidence' in a way in which 'happiness' is understood to be greater in more equal societies because their unmaterialistic culture causes individuals to behave differently – and that this *behaviour* is what impacts on rates of 'happiness'. To do so, P1 draws on ideas that 'happiness' is the product of individual behaviour

or action, not wealth status, and in doing so, P1 provides an example of what this specific conceptualisation of 'happiness' makes possible – that is, this specific conceptualisation of 'happiness' makes possible the reification of the individualistic idea of 'reality' (and how to improve 'happiness') in spite of 'evidence' which makes possible a contradictory claim (that equality is necessary as it maximises 'happiness').

Other participants' interactions with these competing views about the relationship between 'happiness' and 'equality' aren't quite so clear cut as this, however. In P4's discussion of the relationship between 'equality' and 'happiness', we are able to see that they understand 'equality' to be important to 'happiness' and that they understand there to be a causal relationship between these two concepts, to some extent. However, P4 can be seen to struggle with this belief, and consistently describes this to be a 'difficult' and 'hard' topic to discuss:

I'm a really strong believer in minimalism, as in a more equal distribution of wealth rather than a constant striving for an increase in economic growth, material gain. More of everyone benefits - everyone is well off and there's not as big of a gap. And so I think making happiness more of a priority, and wellbeing, more so than stimulating the economy - I know that's important, but to a point there's nothing good coming from it rather from the GDP going up… I don't know. I think there needs to be more of a balance in wealth. I don't know why I keep thinking that has to do with happiness so much, but I think it's important that people stop putting so much importance on money and things and growth. Those are manmade constructs. Money is something that people made up. If that's what your life is about then that's not very fulfilling. It's not what people are meant to do… It's really hard to talk about it because I'm not a homeless person. I'm not someone who's really oppressed by society, so I can't really put myself in someone's shoes. I do think that if the values that are taught socially shifted to more of equality rather than trying to climb the ladder, trying to get above people, or using your oppression to have people feel sorry for you, I don't know, it would be completely

different… I think that the nations that struggle with materialism need a change in values and

a change in what's important before inequality can be addressed. As of right now, inequality is

based on wealth. If you shift importance away from wealth, then you can concentrate on,

okay, what are the things that people need in society that will make society more functional,

happier and better off, rather than taking money from one place and putting it in another

place. I don't know. I think it's a huge undertaking (P4)

Here, P4 presents an ideological tension – on the one hand, they believe that the redistribution of wealth and a more equal society is important and necessary for individuals' 'happiness' but on the other, they understand that wealth status is irrelevant to 'happiness'. This tension seems to be resolved by necessitating the equality of 'happiness' rather than wealth, and this is achieved by drawing on ideas about the (non) relationship between 'happiness' and wealth – which then enables P4 to dismiss their previous belief that income inequality is an important goal for societies. Such a dismissal is made possible by the belief that a focus on money and maximising individual and societal wealth is only going to increase the country's GDP, and that redistributing wealth is only going to enable more people to buy more things. This behaviour is understood to be irrelevant to 'happiness' and so whether more people are able to buy things, or fewer people are, is not a concern for P4 as it is understood that neither option will make these people 'happier'. Indeed, at the beginning of the discussion P4 strongly advocates a belief in the need for wealth redistribution, but by the end of it, they change their opinion and necessitate instead a reprioritisation of 'happiness' above 'equality'. This ideological tension that plays out in our discussion is interesting, as is the way in which P4 seemingly resolves it. P4's resolution to this tension is made possible by a specific understanding of 'happiness' as unmaterialistic, and we can see it utilised repeatedly throughout P4's discussion. That is to say, the belief that 'happiness' is more important than (and unrelated to) material possessions and wealth status can be seen to make possible the dismissal of calls for wealth redistribution. This is incredibly interesting and suggests that the social logic identified of the immateriality of 'happiness', also makes possible a

political practice which works to defend the 'reality' that AfH (and the broader 'happiness agenda') when confronted with a challenging idea or belief that doesn't fit within its neo-utilitarian frame. Indeed, by drawing on this 'fact', P4 is able to resolve the tension within their own attitudes and beliefs about the world. We see P4 begin by articulating a "really strong belief" in the redistribution of wealth almost instinctively and without really thinking about why. Then as they go on in their point, and they stress the immateriality of 'happiness', this "really strong belief" seemingly dwindles. This statement from P4 is incredibly interesting and illustrates perfectly how the ideological frame of AfH (and the broader 'happiness agenda') works to reify a specific 'reality' and decontest alternatives.

When drawing on (what appears to be) the same information or 'evidence' as P1, P2 reaches a slightly different conclusion to what this 'evidence' that 'happier' countries are also more equal might mean, and how the two concepts ('happiness' and equality) are related. They state that

> *Equality helps a lot. I would say. It's not a prerequisite, but it definitely is going to help a lot. Unhappiness on a societal level is linked to inequality, statistically. You can look at societies where there's more inequality, greater gap between rich and poor or segregation in terms of race or male and female, whatever and there'll be correlations with a degree of unhappiness on an ONS survey kind of thing. That just makes sense if you think about it in depth…. Then on the bigger thing, life is unfair. Life is unfair, shit things happen to lovely people all the time… People can be happy in the shittest situations. You see it quite often and you just think, "How are you happy? You've got no legs and all your family are dead," but people can. It would be easier for them to be happy if it was a bit fairer, I think (P2)*

P2 concludes that an individual's pursuit of 'happiness' would be *easier* if society were more equal or fair, but notes also that 'happiness' *is* possible regardless of (dire) circumstance - however, there is still an ideological tension playing out here. Like P4, P2 understands 'equality' to be important to 'happiness' and understands there to be a causal relationship between these

two concepts, to some extent. However, P2 goes on to draw on additional normative attitudes and beliefs about 'reality' in their claim that "life is unfair". This presents the notion of 'an equal society' as an ideal or as an unachievable goal, and describes unfairness or inequality as a fundamental 'fact' of life. This belief of the impossibility of an equal or fair society is then used to rectify this ideological tension as it makes possible the idea that whilst 'equality' would make a pursuit of 'happiness' *easier* for individuals, the inability for such 'equality' to be achieved does not make such a pursuit impossible as 'equality' is not perceived to be *causal* to 'happiness'. In doing so, and like P4, P2 is able to dismiss any *need* for 'equality' in a pursuit of 'happiness'. Again, this statement illustrates how the neo-utilitarian frame of the 'happiness agenda' works to reify a specific 'reality' and decontest alternatives. Whilst P4 demonstrates the ability to dismiss a need for equality by establishing it as unnecessary to equality, P2 demonstrates an ability to dismiss attempts to maximise equality as it is an unattainable ideal. The notion of the impossibility of 'equality' or 'fairness' in society raised by P2 and P6, is shared by P10, who states that:

I would say I think the most important equality in society is giving everybody equal opportunity as much as possible so that a child at birth has the same opportunities regardless what family they're born into. That would be the ideal so there are no inbuilt barriers and social restrictions, prejudices, anything like that. We know that there are prejudices, we know there are social - this is the human nature, this is the human condition, but again I think this is the responsibility of proper governance, or strategic governance, to ensure there are no sort of mechanical devices preventing- You can't stop human nature, but you can eliminate the devices that might be limiting people. Does that make sense?... So there are lots of mechanisms like that which will help people to really reconsider their whole attitude to life because if we start by saying, "Fundamentally we're all selfish, how can we achieve our best selfish needs" it's actually generally by being really nice to people and if we understand that then we can still be totally selfish and awfully nice. (P10)

This is an excerpt from a detailed discussion with P10 as to how 'happiness' can be maximised in an unequal society. P10 understands unfairness or inequality to be a problematic, but fundamental, fact of life because of our inherently selfish nature as human beings. Here, again, any notion of 'equality' or 'fairness', is able to be marginalised by this belief and P10 understands that 'happiness' is something which can be achieved regardless of 'equality'. P10 draws on beliefs about 'reality' to argue that, as we are all inherently selfish, we should each be able pursue our selfish needs and that governing bodies should create a climate in which these selfish pursuits can be pursued. P10 necessitates that we are prevented from causing misery to others by emphasising that the best way to maximise 'happiness' (and tackle the negative effects of inevitable inequality) is to be "nice" to others. This is, once again, demonstrative of a clear neo-utilitarian frame. P10 understands us to be rational actors motivated by our own selfish needs (utilitarianism), and demonstrates a normative belief that, as we are inherently selfish and individualistic, an unequal society is a 'natural order' (neoliberalism). Intervention from governing bodies in order to prevent misery is necessitated by P10, but a specific type of state intervention is necessitated. This intervention is not to make society 'equal' but rather to accept its inevitable *un*equal-ness and govern accordingly by encouraging individuals to be 'nicer' to each other (by pursuing 'happiness' the 'right' way – as per the ten keys). These ideas and beliefs are, as I demonstrated in Chapter 3, a central tenet of the broader 'happiness agenda' – where the understanding is that maximising 'happiness' will counter the 'misery' understood to be present in society and help to prevent the prevalence of 'mental illness'. P10 describes 'misery' in society as an effect of inequality, but posits a 'happiness agenda' as the solution to it and suggests the futility of an 'equality agenda'. In doing so, P10 dismisses any sense of a need for 'equality' in a pursuit of 'happiness' and, in particular, dismisses any need for governments to ensure 'equality' is maximised (as this is understood to be impossible). This ability to dismiss a need for 'equality' or 'fairness' in society is demonstrated further, in P6's discussion of the relationship between 'fairness' and 'happiness:

In an unfair society you could be happy. I think – [sighs] it's a really difficult one! I think you could have someone observing their society and say: "It is an unfair society; I live in a county where women can't drive and that is really unfair. However, I don't feel unhappy because my everyday life is fine, or I still feel I am making an impact in society and I feel my needs are fulfilled". I think it depends what lens you are viewing it from. If you are the person who wants to drive and cannot drive then perhaps you are unhappy and feel unfulfilled…It can be quite individualistic and it is really hard.…You can live in an unfair society but you can still feel okay about it… does necessarily living in a fairer society make people feel happier? Is there another deeper question of is it about their own personal happiness not being fulfilled as opposed to just basic needs being fulfilled? (P6)

Again, P6 understands 'happiness' to be possible in an unfair or unequal, society, and draws on the idea that 'happiness' is the satisfaction of immaterial individual needs and desires (and is not related to material circumstance) in order to do so. Furthermore, they use this idea of 'happiness' to make sense of 'unhappiness' in unfair or unequal societies too. For P6, 'unhappiness' is not caused by circumstance, it is caused by an individual being unable to satisfy their needs and desires as consequence of their environment. To draw on their example, 'unhappiness' is not caused by simply living in an unfair or unequal society, it is caused by living in such a society and being unable to do something that you wish (like drive). They justify this view of the (non)relationship between 'fairness' and 'happiness' by noting that 'unhappiness' is possible in a 'fair' society – and in a later discussion go on to cite the UK as an example of the prevalence of 'unhappiness' in a 'fair' society. For P6, 'unhappiness' is understood to be the product of individual needs not being satisfied and as being unrelated to 'unfairness' (in the sense that 'unfairness' doesn't *cause* 'unhappiness'). This attitude or belief about 'unfairness' and 'unhappiness' is incredibly powerful; it doesn't simply dismiss alternative calls for the need for 'equality' in a pursuit of 'happiness' (like we have seen in previous discussions), it also discredits the justification for that argument by making *im*possible the relationship between 'unfairness'

and 'unhappiness'. This works to not only reify neo-utilitarian ideas about the world, but also makes possible the discrediting any alternative calls for maximised equality or fairness in society which claim doing so would maximise 'happiness'. It suggests these ideas to be wrong as 'unhappiness' is possible in 'fair' societies. Emerging here in discussions with participants, is evidence of a clear normative frame that presents 'happiness' as an object unrelated to socioeconomic circumstance, and this works to dismiss a *need* for maximised equality (on the grounds that this won't maximise 'happiness').

Throughout our discussions surrounding equality and fairness, a number of participants described a particular type of 'happy' and 'unhappy' person in order emphasise (and justify) their disassociation of 'happiness' from a need for wealth redistribution, and the subsequent acceptance of income inequality that they showed some discomfort with suggesting. Here, participants construct specific social identities by utilising the notion of immaterialism found in the definition of 'happiness' - which I have named 'the happy poor' and 'the unhappy rich'. The identity of 'the happy poor' was spoken in hypothetical ways, and appeared to exist predominantly as a social myth – in the sense that participants were unable to draw on anything more than anecdotal evidence of such individuals existing. Indeed, it seems that some participants had been shown a film about 'happiness' by AfH, and in this film 'happy poor' characters were portrayed. Despite this lack of tangible evidence or ability to draw on a specific experience or example of their own, a strong emphasis is placed on 'the happy poor's ability to be happy because of a realisation of what 'true happiness' is:

So I just read a paper, it's, like - nations that are lower on the materialism and wealth scales are significantly happier than any kind of Westernised materialistic nation. They have intrinsic means of happiness. So, like, Thailand- everyone you see on the street is poor, there's kids begging everywhere, but if you talk to them, they will not stop smiling. They seem so happy because they know what's important. Having their family, having enough to eat, giving their

kids a few coins to go and get candy. That's their happiness. They're not always wanting

something bigger, they have what they need (P4).

P4 is arguing that intrinsic means of 'happiness' (to individually define and pursue an individual notion of 'happiness') enable even the most disadvantaged members of society to be 'happy'. Interestingly, 'happiness' is signified here by smiling rather than any explicit self-description of contentment from the smiling individual. With hindsight, it would have been advantageous here to challenge P4 on this point, to enquire how they are able to ascertain that these individuals are 'happy' simply from a facial expression. This is a point that I discuss further in Chapter 8 where I reflect on the findings of this thesis and my experience of fieldwork. Nevertheless, for P4, 'happiness' is considered to be present within this group of people, and the assumption is that this is because of their ability to 'know what's important' (their individual non-economic needs being met and strong relationships with loved ones) because if they did not possess this 'knowledge' they would not be 'happy' (as their socioeconomic circumstance is so dire). The emphasis of the example P4 provides is that pursuing intrinsic rather than materialistic needs is the key to the 'happy poor's 'happiness'. Similarly, P1 also references a Thai child in their construction of the 'happy poor':

Okay, they interview this young boy on a rubbish tip in Thailand or somewhere like that. I

mean the most awful condition you can imagine, living on this rubbish tip. And yet he's

absolutely radiant with happiness (P1)

Here P1 is emphasising the notion that 'true happiness' is possible regardless of circumstance by drawing on an image of extreme poverty, and is implying that individuals are able to be happy *in-spite of* their circumstance. Once again, with hindsight, it would have been advantageous here to challenge P1 on this point, to enquire how they are able to ascertain that this individual is "radiant with happiness" if, as I have previously discussed, smiling or laughing is not demonstrative of 'true happiness'. Indeed, 'true happiness' is not visible, it is supposedly felt. This is a point that I will come

to discuss in Chapter 8. The idea that 'true happiness' is possible regardless of circumstance is echoed in P7's recollection of their experiences while travelling:

Having just been spending time with people that have very little, they give everything and they seem very content, but their expectations of what they have and how their life is are much lower… It just appears to me very much so that if you have very little and you expect very little you actually seem far more content… They have each other and that seems to be of far greater value in providing happiness than monetary value. (P7)

Again, in P7's recollection, the idea that 'true happiness' is unmaterialistic is utilised to construct the identity of 'the happy poor' - indeed, immaterialism is perceived as being key to their contentment. The idea being presented by P4, P1 and P7 (and their examples of 'happy poor' individuals) is that we are able to be 'happy' regardless of our socioeconomic situation – indeed, this is a consistent message amongst participants. In doing so, an identity is constructed in which individuals who have 'nothing' (judged by Western consumerist cultures) are still able to find 'happiness'. It is concluded that their 'happiness' is thus irrelevant to their material circumstance and the message becomes that if such 'happy poor' are able to find 'true happiness' in the direst of socioeconomic situations, so too can we. Here, this idea of 'happiness' clearly functions to background material inequality. It prevents participants from problematising the circumstance of these anecdotal impoverished people on the grounds that they are 'happy' despite their material circumstance, and that these people are understood to demonstrate being 'happy' (by smiling and radiating happiness) enables them to claim they are so because they appreciate the 'right' things in life.

The 'unhappy rich' were discussed in much more definitive terms than the 'happy poor'. Participants drew on personal experience and social-scientific 'evidence' when constructing such an identity and emphasised the role that materialism played (and a pursuit of 'false happiness') in creating their 'unhappiness'. P1 discusses the 'unhappy rich' person in great detail and associates a number of causes for their 'unhappiness' by drawing on their own experiences with stress and focus:

You look at the super-rich, celebrities or people who win the lottery. I don't see any happiness there….So I'd say as long as you have enough money, whatever that means, more doesn't really help… I'm lucky I've got enough money. I retired at 60 with what I call a 'big fat pension'. I'm really lucky. And the reason I took retirement is because I recognised exactly that, that my time is more valuable than money to me, so I was essentially trading the two. I was getting a lot more time in exchange for [pauses] I could have had more money if I'd carried on working, but for me the time is a lot more valuable. And that's a thing that we haven't talked about which is stress. Middle class people have plenty of stress and you often see they're not particularly happy, and that's often something you <u>can</u> do something about – you know, you can essentially decide you don't need so many sports cars or foreign holidays or whatever -not always but often- and then work less hard (P1).

P1 establishes a problem with deciding to pursue 'happiness' through materialistic gains: that it makes a person cash rich, but time poor. Such a situation, P1 believes, contributes to a person's stress levels and ultimately creates or increases their 'unhappiness'. What is interesting here is that such a lifestyle is presented as a choice, and so enables the belief that the 'unhappy rich' have made a *wrong decision* in their pursuit of 'happiness' and their 'unhappiness' is a consequence of this wrong choice. This idea or belief works to support the 'reality' that is presented that 'happiness' is a choice. That is, implied in this account of 'the unhappy rich' is the belief or assumption that these 'unhappy rich' have ignored 'happiness' in favour of furthering their material circumstance and that in doing so they have *chosen* to be 'unhappy'. Interestingly, P1 introduces the notion of 'stress' and relates this, and 'unhappiness', to employment (that employment can cause stress, which causes 'unhappiness'). They offer a simple solution to this causal relationship – to "work less hard". In doing so, P1 presents an alternative idea or belief to that which I have identified as being a central tenet of the broader 'happiness agenda'. P1 is suggesting that employment *can be* detrimental to 'happiness'; whereas, as I have shown, the ideas and beliefs contained in the broader 'happiness agenda' construct employment as being *beneficial* to 'happiness' (and a preventative measure

against 'mental illness'). The necessary change that P1 advocates when individuals are experiencing 'stress' or 'unhappiness' *because* of employment, is not to make employment less stressful; it is simply to withdraw from employment. I challenged P1 on this point (although with hindsight, I could have perhaps challenged them further), and asked whether the solution to everyone's stress and unhappiness was for all to withdraw from employment, and what would happen when someone said that they couldn't withdraw from work. Their response was:

> *People will say that we have to work long hours to get the money because we need the money. I guess some people do and some people don't… You can talk about it a lot….There's a lot you can do really… There's many ways of saying it, but you could ask people, what really makes you happy? If you really had the choice, would it be better to work less hours or more hours? Just to start to ask the questions and have the discussion, not telling them what to do. That could be quite effective I would have thought (P1)*

In essence, P1 believes that people will believe that they can't withdraw from employment when they can, and that they should do so if employment does not make them 'happy' (and only brings them stress). I understand P1's take on ways to address 'unhappiness' to be influenced by their own privileged position. As P1 notes, they are fortunate to have a substantial pension that enabled them to afford to retire (i.e. to withdraw from employment to make themselves 'happier') and they appeared to be the wealthiest of all participants. The belief that P1 is espousing does not correspond with the broader 'happiness agenda', nor with AfH's stance on stress and employment (whose position is that practicing 'mindfulness' in a stressful environment can reduce the levels of stress experienced, not to remove oneself from the situation entirely). For this reason, I believe P1 to be presenting their own unique take on the relationship between '(un)happiness' and employment. Although this is still of interest, as it is still informed by the teachings of AfH. More specifically, P1's view that one should simply withdraw from employment if it is thought to be a causal factor in our experience of 'unhappiness' or 'stress' draws on AfH's claim that individuals should take control of

their own 'happiness' and make changes to maximise it. Indeed, this identity of the 'unhappy rich' emerging in other participants' responses draws on (and suggests is in part made possible by) the idea of 'happiness' being individualistic too. However, other participants described a person being 'unhappy' and employed (including those who identify the cause of this 'unhappiness' being stress from employment) as simply needing to think differently about the situation – a response much more in line with AfH's teachings. The implication here is that, regardless of how the situation should be resolved, the 'unhappy rich' person is understood to be so because of their individual *unwillingness* to think differently about the relationship between 'happiness' and wealth (or, for P1 to act on this situation and change it). Participants appear to present an assumption that 'unhappy' employed individuals are able to satisfy their "basic needs" so should therefore stop caring about wealth accumulation beyond this point, and not enable their employment to affect their 'happiness'. Indeed, participants emphasised once more the need for a notion of 'immaterialism' to be incorporated in our pursuit of 'happiness' – that we should prioritise the satisfaction of non-economic needs, otherwise we will become time poor, stressed and 'unhappy'. It is suggested that we should only pursue wealth as a means to be 'happy' up to a certain point (when we have 'enough' money) then we should separate our pursuit of 'happiness' from it – and the 'unhappy rich' are so, because they haven't done this. However, as with "basic needs", 'enough' money is not defined and, when pushed to explain what 'enough' money would be, participants simply claimed that it would be for the individual to determine.

The idea of having 'enough' money as being the point at which a focus on wealth accumulation is no longer able to increase our 'happiness' (and might be detrimental to it) is redolent with the 'evidence' used to support the political implementation neo-utilitarian frame of the happiness agenda (that 'happiness' plateaus despite societies growing richer, as I outlined in Chapter 3). This is a sentiment which is echoed in the following extract, in which P6 is speculating as to why an 'unhappy rich' person might exist:

You hear about people who have had access to lots of things, they have grown up in a really secure and happy family but they still don't feel happy, but what has been their definition of happiness, you know? (P6).

P6 pinpoints the 'unhappy rich' person's (seemingly incorrect) definition of 'happiness' as being the cause of their 'unhappiness'. They go on to demonstrate an assumption that a desire for status or superiority has been the 'unhappy rich' person's main focus, instead of developing an appreciation and sense of gratefulness for the environment in which they were bought up in. For P6, the 'unhappy rich' person is so, because they have failed to separate 'happiness' from materialism and have subsequently been unappreciative of the positive environment in which they grew up in, and live in. Focussing only on wealth accumulation they are believed to neglect their non-economic needs, and this is the reason that they are 'unhappy'.

The 'reality' that these two social identities defend is that 'happiness' is achievable, providing that it is pursued in the 'correct' way. Importantly, it establishes that *anyone* is able to achieve 'happiness' so long as they pursue it 'correctly'. I have already mentioned that the notion of the immateriality of 'happiness' proved to be a real point of tension for participants when it came to the issue of social deprivation, and participants seemed uncomfortable with not necessitating wealth redistribution in order to ease such groups' suffering. The idea of 'the happy poor' person appeared to appease this discomfort by reconfirming that 'happiness' is possible in any circumstance - providing that it is pursued 'correctly' (through the satisfaction of non-economic needs). Furthermore, to be derived from participants' discussions of 'fairness' or 'equality', there *is* a desire for 'equality' and 'fairness' in society (and it is thought to help individuals to become 'happier'), but such a 'reality' is understood to be impossible to achieve. The impossibility of equality however, is not understood to be problematic because participants understand 'equality' and 'fairness' as not *necessary* to be 'happy' (as an individual's socioeconomic status is understood to be unrelated to their 'happiness' status).

I suggest that for participants the belief of the immateriality of 'happiness' makes possible the simplification of 'need'. Participants understand that there are only two significant groups within society: 'the happy' and 'the unhappy' and individual 'need' is not conceptualised outside of the frame of this specific idea of 'happiness'. I asked several participants whether there is a need for wealth redistribution in order for 'happiness' to be maximised. Participants' responded uniformly by questioning whether the satisfaction of such a 'need' is able to bring 'happiness', or whether to dismiss it will cause 'misery'. To do so, participants drew on a specific idea of 'happiness' (which understands 'happiness' to be individually determined). Most participants went on to suggest that there is no 'need' for wealth redistribution, as to do so will not help to make 'the unhappy' 'happy', nor would it maintain the 'happiness' of 'the happy', as all this would achieve is some people being able to accumulate more material possessions – which are not relevant to 'happiness'. The issue of wealth redistribution was not considered by participants in any context outside of its ability to bring 'happiness' – indeed, this was the only way in which 'wealth redistribution' was considered; whether it would or wouldn't maximise 'happiness'. By drawing on a 'reality' in which individuals who have 'nothing' (judged by Western consumerist cultures) are still able to find 'happiness', participants conclude that an individual's socioeconomic circumstance is irrelevant to their 'happiness'. Subsequently, it is believed an individual should only assess their 'happiness' based on their individual ability to satisfy their non-materialistic needs. This belief enables calls for equality to be dismissed, as greater equality is not believed to maximise 'happiness' and so reifies neoliberal ideological hegemony in the process. Here, arguments that social inequality and injustice should be addressed in order to enhance 'wellbeing' (and 'happiness') are thus de-legitimised and able to be marginalised – in particular, arguments that suggest wealth distribution impacts on a person's 'happiness' and 'wellbeing'. This process of marginalising arguments surrounding the significance of economic inequalities in relation to 'happiness' and 'wellbeing', makes possible the continued existence of economic inequality in society - in the sense that it discredits calls for wealth

redistribution on the basis that having more wealth won't improve an individual's 'happiness', because having *less* wealth isn't what makes them 'unhappy'.

Underpinning this is a political logic which breaks down the varied and complex demands of varieties of social actors and unifies them in alternative ways through the pursuit of 'happiness'. That is, there is a political 'logic of difference' (Glynos &Howarth, 2005) presented, that makes possible this decoupling of collective demands into more discrete and manageable elements that are related to a pursuit of 'true happiness'. For example, consider the argument put forward by the 'equality agenda' (that maximising socioeconomic equality will reduce all of society's ills – from poor health, to crime); this is an example of a collective demand, where varieties of 'need' are grouped together and the solution to all of these needs are presented as being wealth redistribution; indeed, these social ills are presented as symptoms of inequality. The 'happiness agenda' instead decouples these varieties of needs by emphasising their difference. For example, proposing that someone suffering from 'mental illness' is experiencing 'misery' differently to someone suffering from 'physical illness' or someone who commits a crime(s); but they are also experiencing 'misery' differently to someone *else* suffering from 'mental illness'. The causes and experiences of 'misery' for these individuals are understood to be fundamentally different, and socioeconomic equality is posited as being incapable, or irrelevant to their treatment and prevention. Instead, the solution to relieving this suffering is presented as being an individually determined pursuit of 'happiness'. The result is the re-conceptualisation of these social ills in a way which complicates them to the point that the pursuit of individual 'happiness' is posited as the only means to resolve them. Indeed, discussions with participants hinted toward another idea about 'happiness' that I shall now explore further: that 'happiness' is understood to be an individually pursued object.

6.1.2 A political logic of equivalence: individualised responsibility for wellbeing

All participants were asked what they felt the best way to improving 'happiness' in society was. The responses here were varied and complex but ultimately it was suggested that individuals were responsible for the creation, pursuit and maintenance of their own 'true happiness'. Indeed, whilst I have previously established that 'happiness' is understood to be something which is individually defined (a conception made possible by neo-utilitarian attitudes and beliefs about the world), in this section I will demonstrate that this plays out in an interesting way when *responsibility* for the maximisation of 'happiness' is brought into discussions with participants. I reveal that an implication of this notion of individualised *responsibility* for 'happiness' is that individuals are understood to be empowered (as they hold the key to their own 'happiness') but also that institutions are subsequently devoid of any social responsibility for the aggregate's 'happiness' (and 'misery') because of its individualistic nature. For participants, anyone (or any institution) attempting to maximise 'happiness' in a way which *doesn't* emphasise or accept the individual's role in their own 'happiness' status, is understood to be going about relieving suffering the wrong way, and setting themselves up to fail.

As Table 4 shows, all participants discussed the role of the state vs the role of the individual in achieving maximised individual 'happiness' and participants clearly demonstrated an overlap with regards to state and individual responsibility for 'happiness' – that is, participants recognised an individual's responsibility for their own 'happiness', but also the role that the state plays in creating an environment in which an individual pursuit of 'happiness' is possible. It was evidenced that participants believed there to be a need for the creation of a political environment in which individuals are granted the freedom to pursue their own needs and desires – a focus which is redolent with the utilitarian moral philosophy that frames AfH's (and the broader 'happiness agenda's) construction of 'reality'.

The responses shown in Table 4 highlighted two distinct groups that participants fell into: 1) those that emphasised social institutions as the starting point from which a society's 'happiness' could be

improved and 2) those that emphasised the individual as the starting point to improve aggregate 'happiness'. However, it is interesting to note that neither group felt it was exclusively one or the other - emphasis was simply placed on either the individual or social institutions as being the main route to improving 'happiness', but each group recognised that 'happiness' was both an individually and politically achieved object. As Table 4 shows, of the ten people interviewed, seven emphasised the role of the individual in improving society's 'happiness'. For these seven participants, the individual is understood to have the power to influence their own environment (by thinking more positively about their situation or by making the decision to change it) but also to influence institutions into considering 'happiness' a social priority (by collectively forming a mass social movement – like AfH). Even for those that prioritised the role of the individual in increasing 'happiness' the role of government is discussed, but in a way that is secondary to the individual. For these seven participants, the message appears to be that the government should prioritise 'happiness' as a policy objective – but that this should take the form of providing individuals with the resources and awareness necessary to change their own situation. The logic being (as P8 notes) after all "how can they [the government] really know what is going on in someone's head" to be able to determine what social changes need to be made on the individual's behalf? This attitude is something which Boltanksi & Chiapello (2005a) discuss emerging in the late 1960s/early1970s during the emergence of neoliberal ideology. Here, they note there was a shift from a focus on implementing 'social change' via direct action and intervention from the state, to a focus on changing how individuals *thought* (and subsequently chose to act) in order to implement 'social change'. That participants advocate the latter, or rather, that participants understand the latter to be the appropriate means to implement the social change that they understand to be necessary, suggests once again that such a belief is the product of a neoliberal frame – a frame which shapes how they understand 'social change' should be implemented.

The three participants who emphasised government and institutional responsibility for society's 'happiness' noted the role that such institutions play in shaping the way that we live and what we as

individuals are able to achieve. The key to improving society's rates of 'happiness', for these three participants, begins with governments finding ways to make individuals 'happier'. When encouraged to hypothesise how governments would be able to make individuals 'happier', all three participants described the need for a governing body which recognised 'happiness' as an individual pursuit of an individually defined notion of 'happiness', and promoted this; also the need for a government which learned what makes individuals 'happier' from surveys such as the ONS wellbeing data, and would 'nudge' people into pursuing 'true', rather than 'artificial', 'happiness'. This is an interesting finding as, despite this distinction in terms of where the implementation of the social change necessary for maximising 'happiness' should begin, participants' ideas and beliefs about the role of the state in maximising 'happiness' share a common theme – that the state should compel individuals to take responsibility for maximising their own 'happiness'. Both interpretations remain within the neo-utilitarian frame of the 'happiness agenda' - where the individual is empowered by 'knowing' what makes them happy (and not the state) and so individuals must be compelled to take responsibility for their own 'happiness' (rather than the state defining what 'happiness' is, and limiting behaviours accordingly). Indeed, ultimately it was felt by all participants that societal change was necessary for 'happiness' to be maximised - however, the 'change' perceived as necessary by all ten participants was not circumstantial or material. All participants discussed the need for members of society to change the way they think about their lives (and in particular, the emphasis they place on material possessions) in order for 'happiness' to be maximised, and necessitated the state to encourage this individual immaterialism.

In support of their claims that 'happiness' is the responsibility of individuals, many participants described a number of different ways that they have changed their behaviours or the way that they think about their lives in order to enhance their own 'happiness' since becoming involved with AfH. Such behavioural changes range from relatively small changes (like taking time to savour and enjoy a cup of their favourite tea) to larger changes (such as opening themselves up to connecting with new people). These changes (small or large) are described as being the result of participants assessing

their personal situation in terms of whether they are 'happy' or not, and determining what they need to do in order to change it. Such processes are described as being guided by participants' perceptions of what 'true happiness' is, as well as how to achieve it. Participants consistently described practices of 'looking inwards at themselves' in order to determine what they needed to do to improve their own happiness in a 'real' and 'authentic' way – a way which is more substantial than temporal sensations of joy. These practices have significant implications, as the following extracts from my discussions with participants demonstrate. In the following quote, P6 is discussing life changes they have made and how this has changed their outlook on what 'happiness' is. P6 was recently made redundant from a highly paid local government job, in a role which they found to be incredibly stressful and which lacked personal fulfilment. They had a full career change following the redundancy and, although it pays significantly less, P6 feels is more personally fulfilling. It is whilst being in this new role that P6 heard about, and became involved with, AfH:

I am in a role where I feel I am more authentic to what I am doing and to my own core values. I think that feeds into my own personal happiness agenda if you like in my own journey of trying to figure out who I am - how I've evolved and how I want to see myself and the roles that I play - so that has definitely played a big part of it...How I feel in terms of my progress in terms of what my output is, what am I learning and who am I interacting with, those kinds of things. I think that is more about how I see happiness now. I think entwined with that is my values, really looking at my values and looking how authentic I can be in those things. My happiness is not necessarily directly linked to how much money I earn for example (P6).

In the above quote, P6 is describing how they employ a practice of inward reflection to assess how 'happy' they are and they speak a lot about recognising their own core values and being an authentic, and better, version of themselves. P6 identifies their experience of being made redundant and changing their career as playing a big part in their personal 'happiness journey' - indeed, they describe this as being an entirely positive experience which has helped them to determine what

makes them truly 'happy'. It is interesting to see how the idea of the immateriality of 'happiness' is utilised by P6 here, as they are describing a significant life event where their income was dramatically reduced (and which many would find to be a distressing situation) but through adopting this process of inward reflection they have come to understand that their 'happiness' is not related to their earnings, and so feel differently (and considerably more positive) about this experience than one might expect. Indeed, P6 speaks incredibly positively about a life event that many would feel upset and angry about and this appears to be due to practicing the inward reflection that AfH encourages individuals to do. Crucially P6 reports that by recognising that '*true* happiness' is associated with immaterialism, they are able to feel positively about their life despite their reduced income. P6 does not discuss the impact that having a reduced income has, only that income is not related to their 'happiness' (and so is an irrelevant discussion point). By drawing on a specific idea of 'happiness' (that it is immaterial) and by conducting a process of 'inward reflection' (that is redolent with positive psychology's notion that 'happiness' is able to be maximised by simply changing the way that we think about 'reality'), P6 is able to determine that they are 'happy' despite the change in their economic situation. Here P6 has taken responsibility for their own 'happiness' by changing their attitudes and beliefs about it – changing their outlook, rather than their circumstance. This has enabled them to 'realise' that their individual non-economic needs are being met (and they feel fulfilled) despite their change in economic situation (and their ability to satisfy their economic needs being reduced). We can see a sense of individual responsibility for 'happiness' underpinning P6's practice of inward reflection here; a sense made possible by drawing on AfH's notion that individuals can improve their 'happiness' by rejecting and transforming 'negative' thoughts, memories and experiences into 'positive' ones. Indeed, P6 only speaks positively about their experience of being made redundant and this works to reify their idea that 'happiness' is immaterial; that it can be found irrespective of circumstance. This idea of taking responsibility for our own individual 'happiness' was also demonstrated by P7 who joined one of the regional groups through a friend's recommendation after returning from travelling for a year and re-entering work, which had led them to feel

'unhappy'. Here P7 is discussing how becoming involved with AfH helped them to turn around their 'unhappiness':

It was really good to be with a group of people talking about 'why can we not be happy within our current situation?' Especially for someone like me who seems to be looking elsewhere constantly… [becoming involved with AfH has taught P7 of the importance of] taking stock again, giving myself time on a regular basis to think about how I'm feeling and enjoy what I've got and be positive again about everything that's going on (P7).

Again, P7's utilisation of 'happiness' is incredibly interesting. In the above quote, P7 states that prior to becoming involved with AfH they were 'unhappy' with their current situation - in particular, of having to be working again following a year of travelling. The way in which P7 addressed this 'unhappiness' they were experiencing, was to simply think differently about their situation – to be grateful for what they have and find 'happiness' there, rather than looking "elsewhere" for it. We can again see a sense of individual responsibility for 'happiness' underpinning P6's practice of inward reflection here; a sense which, as I have already noted, is made possible by drawing on positive psychology's notion that individuals can improve their 'happiness' by rejecting and transforming 'negative' thoughts, memories and experiences into 'positive' ones. P7 is able to be 'happy' because, although they attest to being fundamentally 'unhappy' with their current situation, they have realised the need to accept and be grateful for what they do have rather than what they don't, and the need to think positively about things which they feel negatively towards. By doing so, P7's previous desire to change their situation in order to become 'happier' has been pacified through their engagement with the notion that 'happiness' is immaterial, but also with the notion that becoming 'happy' is possible by changing the way we think.

In both of these quotes, P6 and P7 are describing the impact that being involved with AfH, and increasing their understanding of what 'happiness' is, has had on their life. In both examples, an engagement with AfH's particular notion of 'happiness' (and how to pursue it) has transformed any

negative feelings about their lives into positive ones by encouraging them to reflect inwardly, to be appreciative of what they have rather than what they don't have, and to understand their non-economic needs and how to address them 'properly' and 'effectively'. In the statements selected, we are able to see that this idea of 'happiness' seemingly pacifies feelings of discontent with the status quo. In our conversations, P7 described resenting living a stressful lifestyle that they feel is forced onto them (in the sense that they have to work and are unable to exist nomadically); P6 was made redundant and experienced a significant decrease in income, and stability and security. The practices of inward self-reflection described (where participants in essence take responsibility for maximising their 'happiness' by changing the ways in which they think about their circumstances) were described as key to participants accepting their circumstance, rather than wanting to change it. Indeed, all participants note the individualistic nature of their pursuit for 'happiness' and that they measure the success of their pursuit by their ability to have their non-economic needs met. All describe conducting a process of self-assessment (often on a regular basis) where they assess their levels of 'happiness' and alter their behaviour and attitudes if they ever feel they aren't 'happy'. Importantly, participants did not appear to relate their experience of '(un)happiness' with any external factors; suggesting that, for participants, 'happiness' is not thought to be affected by external events (beyond the way in which we think about their effects). 'Happiness' is, for participants, something which is achieved through thinking positively and being appreciative; it is individually defined and pursued; and our 'happiness status' is our individual responsibility. For participants, our experience of 'unhappiness' is our responsibility also, and such 'unhappiness' is made possible by thinking negatively rather than positively about our experiences. This sense of individualised responsibility for '(un)happiness' only makes possible individual accountability for 'misery' in society, and makes impossible the conceptualisation of social structures and institutions as being '(un)happiness' prescribers. In doing so, the idea that our 'happiness' is our individual responsibility removes a means to critique such structures and institutions as it cannot be claimed that they *cause* 'misery'. Further to this, we are able to see that focussing on their non-economic

needs and how to satisfy them pacified any desire for circumstantial change for P6 and P7; and such

a pacification of desire for circumstantial change is evidenced further in other participants accounts.

It is clear that participants understand 'happiness' to be individually defined and pursued, and the

analysis here has shown that this idea of an individualised definition of 'happiness' is underpinned

by a political logic of individualised responsibility for its pursuit and maximisation. This political logic

makes possible the emphasis placed on the role of the individual in discussions with participants, in

terms of where responsibility lies for 'unhappiness' or 'misery'. Whilst participants advocate that the

maximisation of 'happiness' is the responsibility of both individuals and governments, the role of the

government is minimised and emphasis is placed on the need for governments to provide individuals

with the freedom to pursue 'happiness' – reifying the neo-utilitarian ideological hegemony that

frames the emerging happiness agenda. Furthermore, participants' accounts suggest that placing

responsibility on the individual in this way and removing any institutional responsibility in the pursuit

of 'happiness' (only that governing bodies should enable a pursuit, not force it) makes possible the

'othering' of those who are identified as being 'unhappy' – as I will now discuss.

In an anecdotal discussion of 'unhappy' people with P1, they state that:

> I do know one or two 'happiness deniers' as I call them who either say, "There's no such thing
>
> as happiness. It's just an illusion," or, "I haven't got time to be happy," those kind of things. I
>
> think both of those people are wrong. If they spent five minutes and went a bit deeper, they'd
>
> get to a better place I think (P1)

Here, P1 labels 'the unhappy' as 'happiness deniers' - this is an incredibly powerful term to use as it

directly implies that 'unhappiness' is the result of an individual denying themselves 'happiness' by

making a conscious decision to withhold it from themselves. P1 presents an understanding of

'unhappiness' that conceptualises it as something which is individually preventable, but an

implication here is that it also individually *caused*. The go on to describe a specific event involving who they understand to be 'unhappy' people:

Yes, I've got a boat on the beach and I was involved in basically turning people out from under the boats. They messed around with my boat and I really didn't want them sleeping there. You don't know how much they're there voluntarily. You presume they could go and sleep in a hostel somewhere. It's not a very nice life….Obviously you've got unhappiness everywhere, different kinds. But yes, when I see people on the streets, people on the buses, people sleeping under my boat, there must be enormous distress and unhappiness there. The other thing to mention is the pie chart which shows the sources of unhappiness, which shows that I think 45% of your happiness is fixed, comes from your genes and upbringing, only 10% comes from your environment and 45% is down to you. It comes from your action. That's a thing that says to me, go to these 'disadvantaged' people and somehow convey the idea that a lot of it is still within your choice. Even though you're in a difficult environment, you still have quite a lot of choice about what you do (P1)

Here, P1 is making a powerful statement – one which is made possible by a specific understanding of '(un)happiness' as a choice. P1 begins by simplifying 'disadvantaged' and 'homeless' groups into one ('the unhappy'), and also simplifying their needs into one (the need to be 'happy'). P1 goes on to cite 'evidence' of 'happiness' which is used to justify their necessitation for changing the attitudes of 'the unhappy', rather than their material circumstance and in doing so, P1 is able to dismiss material needs of individuals who are homeless or 'disadvantaged'. This dismissal is made possible by P1's understanding that such individuals are 'distressed' and 'unhappy', and presenting these to be far greater problems for such individuals than their deprived circumstance. By drawing on their specific idea of 'happiness', P1 is able to suggest that such individuals simply need to think differently about their situation in order to relieve this 'distress' and 'unhappiness'. In doing so, P1 is ignoring substantial and important material (perhaps even "basic") needs not being met, and doesn't even

consider that these needs might ought to be addressed first to rectify the presumed 'unhappiness' of these individuals. This is achieved by drawing on the specific idea of 'happiness' as an individual's responsibility discussed previously, and seemingly enables P1 to attribute blame to those who they understand to be 'unhappy', for their 'unhappiness', and believe that their dire circumstance is even a choice. It is important to note here however, that no other participants discussed specific 'disadvantaged' groups of society in this way – and so it is difficult to determine whether P1's dismissal of such needs are made possible by their specific understanding of '(un)happiness', or whether P1 is simply drawing on other ideas and beliefs about the world. However, as P1 can be seen to utilise an understanding of 'happiness' that some happiness literature presents, (the 45%, 10%, 45% breakdown), I have decided to include this discussion in my analysis. Indeed, P1 appears to draw on the works of behavioural economists to justify this understanding of '(un)happiness' and material circumstances.

6.2 Summary of political logics

The two political logics identified here in my analysis begin to account for *how* the emerging happiness agenda's neo-utilitarian approach to 'social progression' (and idea of 'wellbeing') is able to become sedimented in populist opinion, by engaging with individuals who have engaged with, and accepted the 'reality' that is presented – more specifically, how the ideas and beliefs about the social world that shape its approach to the maximisation of 'happiness' are able to be fixed in its synchronic formation. I have demonstrated that a political logic of the inevitability of inequality can be seen to underpin participants understandings of the (non)relationship between 'happiness' and equality; and that this political logic enables individuals to marginalise alternative ideas about 'social progress' (specifically, that maximised equality is how to progress society) by conceptualising 'equality' as an unrealistic and unachievable goal. 'Equality', it is revealed in participants accounts, is something which is constructed as a state of being or social order that we all desire and something

which would be a valuable change in society. However, it is also considered to be an impossible task as we are understood to be inherently selfish beings whose only commonality is that we are all different, and all have different needs and desires. This logic of the inevitability of inequality enabled participants to discredit alternative calls for the maximisation of equality (despite its understood desirability) by recognising that it is impossible. Furthermore, my analysis suggested that this shared belief that 'equality' is inevitable makes possible the political practice of the *dismissal* of calls for wealth redistribution – even amongst individuals who make such calls, and who seem to present some discomfort with the marginalisation of the need for greater social equality. In doing so neoliberal ideas and beliefs about 'reality' are reified. Here, this logic of the inevitability of inequality constructs 'inequality' as a 'fact' of life, something which cannot be prevented because, as my discussions of the 'logic of difference' present here notes, we as individuals are not understood to be equal as we have unique needs and desires, not shared ones – other than the desire to be 'happy'. The important issue to be addressed, for participants, is not that inequality persists but that 'unhappiness' does; and instead of necessitating social equality, participants necessitate that society educate individuals about 'true happiness' to prevents them pursuing it 'incorrectly' – for example, by comparing themselves to others based on material possessions and economic circumstance (a social practice which is understood to *cause* misery). Participants necessitate a political practice of changing the way that 'unhappy' individuals *think about* their circumstance, rather than seeking to change their circumstance itself. Such a change is understood to be one that encourages 'unhappy' individuals to be appreciative of what they do have instead (a practice which is understood to cause 'happiness'). This sentiment echoes the works of Layard and other 'happiness' (behavioural) economists, who advocate that it is status differentials that cause misery (by individuals comparing themselves to others in terms of their income) and not income differentials *per se* (for example, see Luttmer, 2005; Clark & Oswald, 1996); as well as the preventative measures to 'mental illness' that positive psychologists advocate (and which behavioural economists accept uncritically). Participants place responsibility for educating individuals about this 'effective' approach to maximising 'true

166

happiness' on governing bodies but, crucially, responsibility for any 'unhappiness' that persists despite such 'education' is not. Participants suggested that this is because the uniqueness of the causes of 'happiness' and 'unhappiness' for individuals makes it impossible for governments to legislate for and against – and risks limiting individual freedom in the process. This belief works to reify neo-utilitarian ideology and challenge more collectivist ideas and beliefs about the role of the state in the pursuit of maximised 'wellbeing'. Here, it suggests that collectivist approaches (which welcome state intervention) will prevent 'happiness' or even cause 'unhappiness' in some way.

My analysis here has provided the beginnings of the second half of the critical account for the 'happiness agenda' that I seek to construct – that is, drawing attentions to *how* this synchronic formation is. I suggest that such an agenda is made possible by political practices (underpinned by the two political logics identified here) which work to continually contest (and decontest) collectivist calls for the maximisation of equality and the redistribution of wealth – as these practices of (de)contestation draw on, and further sediment within the normative values of participants, neoliberal ideas about the inevitability of inequality and individualised responsibility for 'wellbeing'. The task now is to account for *why* such an agenda is – a task made possible by exploring the fantasmatic logics of the agenda.

Chapter 7: Fantasmatic Logics

I have so far described 'happiness' as defined by members of AfH, which enabled me to identify three social logics of individual satisfaction, immaterialism and "basic needs" as being present in their attitudes and beliefs about 'reality' (which both produce, and are produced by, the social practices that AfH and its members necessitate in the pursuit of 'happiness'). I have also identified two political logics of the inevitability of inequality and individualised responsibility, and shown how they make possible political practices which work to reify neo-utilitarian attitudes and beliefs about the world, and defend them from the alternative attitudes and beliefs about the world contained within the equality agenda (in particular, calls for the maximisation of equality and the redistribution of wealth). In doing show I have shown *what* participants understand 'reality' to be and what this understanding does (in terms of what ideas, beliefs and practices it makes possible, but also what ones it makes *impossible*). However, in keeping with the logics approach outlined in Chapter 2, it is now necessary to account for *how* these social and political logics and practices are. That is, how participants are able subscribe to this neo-utilitarian approach to progressing society, the 'reality' that it presents, and the social and political practices that it makes possible – a task which is achieved by determining how actors are gripped by the 'reality' that AfH presents or rather, by determining the fantasmatic logics that motivate actors to indulge it's specific approach to the maximisation of 'happiness', 'wellbeing' and the broader 'happiness agenda's attempts to maximise 'social progression'. As I note in Chapter 2, fantasmatic logics are ideological fantasies that work to decontest challenges to the ideological relations which constitute the structure of 'reality' (their associated synchronic formations of meaning). Fantasmatic logics are closely associated with the ideological dimension of 'reality' and are in essence an ideological fantasy that decontests challenges to, and work to sediment further, the common articulated relationships that constitute the structure of 'reality'. They "contribute to our understanding of the resistance to change of social practices (the 'inertia' of social practices), but also the speed and direction of change when it does happen (the

'vector' of political practices) (Glynos & Howarth, 2007: 145). They work to conceal the radical contingency of 'reality' by concealing the political dimension of a social practice (that a social practice reifies the hegemony of the ideology to which it is constructed by) and reinforce the natural, 'common sense' character of political practices (that decontest alternative conceptualisations of 'reality'). This is achieved by constructing a beatific promise of enjoyment to come if such practices are adopted, and/or a horrific promise of disaster if they are not. In this chapter, I shall seek to explore the fantasmatic logics demonstrated by participants; exploring the beatific and horrific promises that they contain, which work to grip participants to this neo-utilitarian idea of 'wellbeing' and 'happiness'.

7.1 Fantasmatic logics of 'social progression' and the desirability of 'happiness'

Previous chapters have demonstrated that a specific 'reality' of 'happiness', 'wellbeing', 'social progression' and 'equality' is exists within participants' discussions of what 'happiness' is and how it is to be maximised. This 'reality' is evidenced in my characterisation of the 'happiness agenda' and the social logics that were shown to underpin participants' discussions with me, and made possible the construction of the identities of 'the happy poor' and 'the unhappy rich'. This section will demonstrate the valorisation of such identities and the effect that this has. I have so far demonstrated a normative assumption underpinning the construction of such identities: that individuals should seek to determine (and pursue the satisfaction of) their individually defined non-economic needs in their attempts to achieve 'happiness'. I have also shown that the ideological conceptualisation of these identities enables participants to dismiss the 'unhappiness' of those who are understood to be 'unhappy' – by making possible claims that they are so because they have chosen to be (or because they haven't yet chosen to be 'happy'). Indeed, the political logics of 'happiness' identified in participants accounts (that 'equality' is impossible to achieve, and doing so

would not enable the maximisation of 'happiness' anyway) can be seen to reify the 'reality' that neoliberal ideology presents, as well as to contest arguments in support of anti-capitalist calls for wealth redistribution (by making possible the dismissal of the idea that greater 'equality' would progress society, on the grounds that it is unable to maximise 'happiness'). The task now is to understand the fantasmatic dimension of this 'reality'. As I have noted, the logics of the political reveal the way in which a 'reality' is able to become sedimented in a society – forming the temporally fixed synchronic formation of meaning. Like a political logic, a fantasmatic logic possesses a sedimentary character (in the sense that it is a normative and ideological practice which marginalises ideological challenges to the 'reality' that it's associated discourse presents); but unlike a political logic, a fantasmatic logic works specifically to defend how such a 'reality' links social relations. In essence, fantasmatic logics here work to reify the relationship between 'happiness', 'wellbeing' and 'social progression' that is presented, by necessitating a commitment to a pursuit of the maximisation of these three concepts. Fantasmatic logics are logics which form the allure of doing so - of why individuals *do* their pursuit of it, and of why these concepts are understood to be a worthy. By observing *why* participants understand 'happiness' to be so important to society, I am able to identify fantasmatic logics of the agenda – that is to say, I am able to identify what it is about 'happiness' and the 'reality' that the agenda presents, that maintain participants in a state of its pursuit; what they believe pursuing 'happiness' will do.

7.1.1 'Happiness' and a fantasmatic logic of 'social progress'

All participants were asked whether they believed the maximisation of 'happiness' to be important in society. It was assumed that they did as they were members of AfH, and part of becoming a member involves taking a pledge to increase 'happiness' in society (suggesting that they believe its maximisation to be important). However, for clarification this was checked. As expected,

all said that they did believe this to be an important goal, and were then asked *why* they understood it to be important. The following statements are some of the responses to this question:

Why is it important? Well there's a whole argument that I buy actually, that it's the key that unlocks all doors. If people are happier they work harder, enjoy their work more, are physically healthier, have better relationships, live longer. It's basically like a fix to all problems so therefore it's important (P2)

Here, P2 is stating that a pursuit of 'happiness' is important because they understand that it will improve society in a variety of ways, by "fixing" a number of social problems, and making society 'better'. Interestingly, P2 brings up the notion of productivity here; specifically, that 'productivity' is a problem that the maximisation of 'happiness' can provide a solution to (that happier people are more productive). In doing so, P2 demonstrates acceptance of the social and economic construction of the problem with 'misery' (specifically, its understood relation to 'mental illness') discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

P7 shares this view that the maximisation of 'happiness' will improve society. They state that:

[in a happy society] people would be more giving, people would be more accepting of others, more courteous, more polite, more awareness of other people and give each other more time. It becomes less about self, that's just how I see it, I think the happier you are, you become more about caring for others, being aware of others (P7)

Emerging here is a clear idea of why maximised 'happiness' is believed to be important. For P2 in a 'happier' society individuals are more productive, healthier and live longer. For P7 a 'happy' society is one where individuals' care for each other – but a 'happy' society is not 'happy' *because* people are more caring, people are more caring *because* they are 'happy'. Indeed, both P2 and P7 attribute a causal relationship between 'happiness' and a better society and believe that pursuing 'happiness' will make society better. P2 and P7 can be seen to relate what they perceive to be important social

problems to a pursuit of 'happiness' in a way which suggests that they believe the maximisation of 'happiness' will bring benefits *in addition* to making people 'happier'; that a pursuit of 'happiness' will make society better than it is currently. This fantasy of maximised 'happiness' clearly draws on the neo-utilitarian frame that I have established, making possible the notion that maximised 'happiness' is social betterment, or 'social progression'.

What is interesting here is that participants do not present *new* social problems and relate the eradication of these (through the maximisation of 'happiness') to social betterment. Instead, the idea or belief presented is that recognised, existing social problems will be 'fixed' through the maximisation of 'happiness'. Participants express a desire to "fix" these problems and, emerging here is a fantasy that 'happiness' will do just that. P2 and P7 understand that "fixing" these specific social problems constitutes 'social progression', not that simply maximising 'happiness' does. This fantasy of 'happiness' works to relate it to participants' ideas of 'social progression' by making possible the notion that maximised 'happiness' will address these problems. Two of the three problems (ill-health and low life expectancy) are also argued as being "fixed" by maximised 'equality', and so it is interesting that these have been incorporated into the idea of 'social progression' that maximised 'happiness' enables too. It suggests that, irrespective of the ideological framing of the discourse, the prevalence of these problems are understood to be demonstrative of a lack of 'social progression', and so the promise of "fixing" these problems works to justify the approach to 'social progression' that each presents. Indeed, this idea about the positive effects of maximised 'happiness' in relation to the betterment of society is something which a number of participants draw on to explain why they understand a pursuit of 'happiness' to be important. Both P3 and P6 understand that a societal pursuit of 'happiness' will make society more connected – they state that:

It feels to me, because I've experienced it, that when you're connecting with the community and when you're aware of things around you, the beauty of things, that it's important. The

more happy the society is, it just kind of keeps growing from there and so much is possible I

think (P3)

I think it has become more important or it has become a topic of conversation quite high on

agendas now. Even on a political level people come forward and talk about social isolation and

they have been talking about the impact we see on health. All of these studies that come out

about people not feeling great or people feeling disconnected to their environment. People are

not actually having any real love for the area they live in anymore or even the people they live

with. How we treat each other and all of those interactions we have. It is becoming a more

important topic to talk about and to see how as a society we function. For so long I think we

have been encouraged to be very individualistic and pursue our own goals that we forget

actually we are still are living with other people and as a community. What is that famous

quote? No man is an island unto himself (P6)

Here they draw on a specific idea of 'happiness' (in particular, one of AfH's 10 keys: 'relating') to

explain why they understand a pursuit of 'happiness' to be important. It emerges that both P3 and

P6 understand that a pursuit of 'happiness' will re-connect individuals to each other, it will restore a

much desired sense of community and it will subsequently improve society because we will all

become interconnected and care for each other. Of particular interest is P6's statement of

discontent with the status quo. They suggest that "for so long" we have been encouraged to focus

on our own needs that we have lost sight of social needs – this pursuit of 'happiness', for P6, is

understood to rectify this in some way, by encouraging us to become social beings, rather than

individualistic, once more. I find this to be incredibly interesting as, as I have shown, a key element

of the emerging agenda is an emphasis of individualism (of individuals taking care of themselves and

putting their needs first) but a key feature of the fantasy of the agenda is a revival of collectivism. In

a 'happier' society it is believed that individuals will be more caring towards each other and share

responsibility for each other's 'happiness'; that society will become less individualistic and collective

goals and communities will be restored. A more collective and connected society is clearly a desire of P3 and P6, which suggests a dissatisfaction with the status-quo. This discontent with the status quo is a sentiment that P9 shares. The following is an excerpt from a detailed discussion that we had about the importance of 'happiness' and the problem with society today:

I think a lot of things we do make us unhappy. Yes, there's a lot of things which we do which makes us miserable because of the world we live in. How do I say, it's the modern world, modern living that's produced so much unhappiness, the breakdown of society, the erosion of rituals. When I say rituals its things which - when I say rituals - I remember when we were growing up, we had to go to church every single Sunday… That's a ritual that not only my family, but many other families, had growing up. Going to church, having Sunday roast together, Sunday meal. Having breakfast together. Having supper together. I can remember going to bed every single time by seven and that's a ritual. But so many things have changed… The things you have now that make life a lot more comfortable - that should make life a lot more fun, at the same time it's taken away the happiness (P9)

Like P6, P9 expresses frustration at "the breakdown of society" and in our discussion revealed that this is understood to be its gradual individualisation, extreme fluidity and rapid change (in the sense that we are no longer able to have "rituals"). The whole tone of our discussion is that P9 believes a pursuit of 'true happiness' will address the 'unhappiness' that has been caused by "the modern world", and that this is why it is important.

What is interesting here, is the relation between individualism and collectivism that is established. There is a clear process of reconciliation taking place between the individualism that this neo-utilitarian approach demands, and the collectivism, or collective progress, that social actors desire. In the sense that it is believed that the pursuit of individual, immaterial satisfaction will result in collective 'happiness'. Indeed, a clear 'fantasy' of 'happiness' is revealed in my discussions with participants, and there are a number of points revealed here that I wish to pick up on. Firstly, the

overall fantasy of maximising 'happiness' shown here is that it *will* make society better - there is no doubt of this in participants' beliefs about what 'happiness' is and why it's maximisation is believed to be important. This idea of 'happiness' relates it to 'social progression', in a way which posits the 'maximisation of happiness' a cause of progression - the fantasy being that 'happier' people change their behaviours and become more collectively and socially minded, connect more with others, and creating a society that is generally *better*.

Secondly, part of this bettering of society is understood to be achieved by re-establishing a sense of community and addressing the individualisation of society. This suggests that participants understand 'social progression' to be (in part) the rejection of 'individualism' and that a focus on maximising 'happiness' makes this rejection possible. Here, 'individualism' is attributed to being *caused* by individuals' seemingly selfish behaviours and attitudes about the world, and the allure here of the pursuit of maximising 'happiness' appears to be its promise to make people think differently, and *less selfishly*; that establishing the maximisation of 'happiness' as an individual priority will alter this individualistic society - albeit via an individualistic pursuit of immaterial 'happiness'. Participants appear to understand 'unhappiness' or 'misery' to be caused by 'individualism', and all express a dissatisfaction with the status-quo as a consequence. This supports the claims made by advocates of the agenda that there is a growing dissatisfaction with neoliberal societies, claims which are then used to necessitate the emergence and application of a 'happiness' agenda in society (Cameron 2006; 2010). Participants demonstrate that they accept this message, and understand this agenda to be important because of its supposed ability to address this (and their) dissatisfaction. This plays into AfH presenting its self as an altruistic, missionary organisation whose purpose is to recruit individuals to spread the message of 'happiness' and provide the intervention to others. However, in practice, all AfH seemingly offers individuals, is an individualistic approach to being 'happier'. There is an allusion of collectivism presented here, but in practice all that transpires is individuals working towards a shared goal of maximised *individual* 'happiness'.

Thirdly, and most interestingly, there appears to be a belief that being 'happy' or 'happier' addresses a whole variety of social problems that participants understand to be present within modern society, *in addition* to 'individualism' (problems which the equality agenda relates to growing social inequalities in society and the hyper-individualisation of it) – specifically, issues of ill-health, low life expectancy and productivity. Indeed, there appears to be a desire to address these problems and a further appeal of the agenda is its supposed promise that maximising 'happiness' will improve productivity, health and life expectancy also. In this sense, we are able to see that the promise of the enjoyment of 'happiness' to come (of a better, less individualistic society), as well as the horror of a lack of social progression (the continuation of these social problems) functions to grip participants to the 'reality' of 'happiness' (as the satisfaction of individual, immaterial need, and individualised responsibility for 'wellbeing') with the promise that to do so will progress society, and to not, won't.

7.1.2 'Happiness' and a fantasmatic logic of social desirability

My discussions with participants revealed a second fantasmatic logic of 'happiness', that of social desirability. I have noted that despite variations in how it is understood to be achieved, 'happiness' is consistently understood as desirable by participants in this study. In the previous section, the 'goodness' and 'desirability' of 'happiness' is implied in the fantasy that a 'happier' society is a better society, but it is frequently revealed as such in more general discussions with participants, as the following quote from P1 demonstrates:

If happiness is what people want, which it almost is by definition, if you define it as being a state that someone wants to be in and stay in, then of course society wants it. I suppose all my life - my career has been about trying to help society ... I have quite a strong instinct there, partly because I feel it's my duty, partly it gives me a lot of pleasure, it gives me meaning which is one of the 10 keys. In a way there couldn't be anything more important, either for me or for society (P1)

Here, P1 is drawing on their idea of what 'happiness' is to claim that its pursuit is important for society. Whilst P1 doesn't elaborate further on why 'happiness' is important, they justify its importance with the 'fact' or common sense notion that 'happiness' is what people desire, that it is a state that individuals wish to be in – it seems that P1 understands the importance of 'happiness' to be self-evident, because it is what 'society' wants.

Whilst articulating what 'happiness' was (and its importance in society, along with its desirability) participants presented a particular type of 'reality' during their discussions which revealed four social identities. I have already discussed two of these in the previous chapter ('the happy poor' and 'the unhappy rich'); here, I wish to discuss the remaining two: which appear to be more general identities of 'the happy' and 'the unhappy'. Participants discussed various topics relating to 'happiness' and it was during these discussions that an image began to be drawn of what they perceived a 'happy person' to be. Participants spoke of 'the happy person' in very positive ways; describing them as someone who is caring towards others, is wise or knowledgeable, is consistent with their 'happiness', as a person that people would want to be around and as someone who others would enjoy the company of. However, participants spoke of the 'happy person' in hypothetical ways, suggesting that such a social identity is in itself a 'fantasy' as there were no readily available, tangible examples for participants to draw on (i.e someone who they were able to say is definitively 'happy'). In response to being asked to describe a happy person P5 describes them as:

A happy person?...Well somebody who feels good about himself, and who feels good about the

world.. Content, kind of, inner piece, inner resources. Has the ability to cope with setbacks and

is able to appreciate the small things in life y'know? Kind of a buddhist approach. But at the

same time can have fun [laughs] (P5).

P5's (and others) description of a happy person is in essence the personification of the definition of 'happiness' participants provided previously. A 'happy person' is understood to be someone who is content; 'happiness' is a sense of contentment. A 'happy person' is someone who copes with

setbacks; 'happiness' is recognising positive elements in negative situations. A 'happy person' is someone who appreciates the small things in life; happiness is about appreciation of what you have and not focussing on what you don't – all of which contribute towards a beatific dimension of the fantasy of 'happiness'; that it is the ultimate good. It appears as though participants are clearly drawing on this beatific notion of 'happiness' in order to construct a specific identity of a 'happy person'. Interestingly, P5 explicitly describes a 'happy person' as some who has adopted a Buddhist approach to handling "setbacks" in life; and there was the opportunity here to explore AfH's (and the broader 'happiness agenda's) re-appropriation of Buddhism (a wholly egalitarian philosophy) into a neo-utilitarian context. However, as I discuss in more detail in Chapter 8, there was not the scope in this thesis (that is concerned with understanding how and why 'happiness' not 'equality') to complete such a task. This is, however, something that I consider to be a subject for further research, having seen the striking overlap between the 'happiness agenda' and the 'reality' presented by the third wave psychology movement (i.e. 'happiness'). An implication from P5's, and others, descriptions of a 'happy person' drawing on the beatific notion of 'happiness' was that, just as 'happiness' is believed to be desirable (because of its inherent 'goodness'), so too is the 'happy' individual. In much the same way as the desirability of 'happiness' makes possible the idea that the 'happy' person is too, just as 'unhappiness' is believed to be undesirable, so too is the 'unhappy' individual.

The specific ideas of an 'unhappy person' presented by participants were varied and complex but, despite this, a number of commonalities were found within their descriptions. For participants, the 'unhappy person is not simply someone who lacks 'happiness', the 'unhappy person' is demonised and discussed in very negative ways, as the following extracts demonstrate.

Unhappiness for me isn't just someone who is a bit sad or depressed, it's someone who has got any mental health issue really. Basically any mental health issue and also I'd put criminality in that as well. (P2).

Oh man. I think unhappy people, it would be like they are ungrateful for what they do have. They focus on what's lacking rather than what they do have…I'd say unhappy people, they don't see what's good in their life. They only see what's missing (P4).

They live their individual life. Some of them are inaccessible. Some of them are accessible but they want to reveal their true self because being happy [pauses] happiness is a weakness; happiness is almost like a plague (P9).

P2, 4 and 9 all draw on very different ideas of what an 'unhappy person' is, but, crucially, use very negative language to describe this social identity; presenting a horrific dimension to the fantasy of 'happiness' that is promised if 'happiness' is denied or unpursued. An 'unhappy' person is someone with 'mental health' issues, someone who is a criminal, is 'ungrateful', and someone who is *unwilling* to find 'happiness'. A scale of 'happiness' appears to be being constructed here where it seems that 'happiness' is placed as the ideal at one end (in terms of individual and societal functioning) and 'unhappiness' as the other (which is problematic, dysfunctional and requires intervention), with some kind of 'OK' middle ground (so such a person is functioning but not at optimum). Whilst not all participants construct or reference a scale of 'happiness' in this way, many talk about 'happiness' and 'unhappiness' in terms of the functionality of individuals within society. It seems that it is understood that just as 'happiness' can impact on an individual's health, work performance and relationships in a positive way, 'unhappiness' can impact on these factors negatively. In doing so, we able to see a consequence of the broader 'happiness agenda's conceptualisation of 'misery' as a social problem.

It became clear through discussions with participants that there were strong feelings about 'unhappiness' in society, as well as its causes. The majority of discussions with participants took similar routes, in which 'unhappiness' was explained using the example of 'the unhappy person' who, it appears, looks at the world in the wrong way, isolates themselves from others and loses sight of any good around them. It was apparent that participants understood 'happiness' to be something

which can be individually achieved and maximised (requiring only small, simple changes in the way we think and act) and that this idea of 'happiness' established 'unhappiness' as something which is also individually controlled and changed. 'Unhappiness' is understood as something which individuals bring upon themselves because they don't appreciate what they have, they cut themselves off from others, or they engage in dysfunctional and damaging behaviours. 'The unhappy' are understood to be characteristically different to 'the happy' - indeed, there is a very clear process of 'othering' taking place in these discussions around 'unhappiness'. In the sense that 'the happy' and 'the unhappy' are defined and their differences are emphasised based on the belief about how '(un)happiness' is achieved. An individual's 'happiness' status can be seen here to work to identify those who are 'normal' and those who are 'abnormal' – in the sense that it identifies 'unhappiness' as an abnormal mental state whilst normalising 'happiness', and these ideas are incorporated into the associated social identities of 'the happy person' and 'the unhappy person', and valorises them – in the sense that just as 'happiness' is believed to be desirable, so is the 'happy' individual; also that just as 'unhappiness' is believed to be undesirable, so too is the 'unhappy' individual. Thus, we begin to see the emergence of a fantasy of the social desirability of being 'happy', and of being identifiable as a 'happy' person.

A 'happy' person is constructed as a subject position for individuals to aspire towards, and this is achieved by the fantasy such a subject position is constructed to be a desirable subject position to occupy. The 'happy person' is someone who others want to be around and who individuals should want to be. Indeed, the 'happy person' is presented as wholly good and desirable in much the same way as 'happiness' is. The 'reality' being presented by the agenda is that to be 'happy' is to experience contentment with life, and the fantasy, or beatific promise, that sustains this is that to be a 'happy person' is to be liked and admired. Furthermore, the 'reality' also being presented by the agenda is that 'unhappiness' is more than undesirable, it is *bad* and the fantasy, or horrific promise, that sustains this is the belief that 'unhappy person' is undesirable - that they are fundamentally flawed, are ungrateful for what they have, and unwilling to open themselves up to 'true happiness'.

This analysis has revealed that social actors greatly expand on the definition of 'happiness' that AfH provides amongst its literature. Within such literature, 'happiness' explicitly defined as nothing more than the satisfaction of our individually determined, non-materialistic needs – with a 'happy person' defined as someone who has been able to satisfy (and continues to satisfy) these needs, and an 'unhappy person' as someone who has been unable to do so. As I have previously noted, this specific conceptualisation of 'happiness' places the responsibility for defining and maximising *their version* of 'happiness' firmly with the individual. Actors have shown that this results in 'unhappiness' being understood as being *caused* by an incorrect pursuit of, or rejection of, 'happiness' and the implication being that the 'unhappy person' is understood as being equally responsible for their 'unhappiness', as the 'happy person' is their 'happiness'. When we relate the social identities constructed by participants to the means to achieving the definition of 'happiness' they provide, a specific regime of practice emerges in which social actors are pursuing an identity of a 'happy person' through processes of individualisation. It becomes evident that 'happiness' (and subsequently a 'happy person') is socially 'good', but also that social actors are entirely responsible for their own 'happiness' or 'unhappiness'. The identities of 'the happy person' and 'the unhappy person' interact in a way which, regardless of any other identities or subject positions individuals may occupy, creates a measure of individuals based on whether they are 'happy' or 'unhappy'. This interaction positions being 'happy' or a 'happy person' as the only acceptable identity to have and necessitates that social actors ensure they occupy this subject position - subsequently establishing the importance of the pursuit of 'true happiness'. There is a 'reality' being reified that establishes social actors as individually responsible for their own 'happiness; but also a 'reality' in which being 'happy' is necessary in order to be socially desirable. Thus, the emerging attitude or belief emerging from this is that social actors must not only pursue 'happiness' individually, but that they *must* pursue 'happiness'. In this sense, we are able to see that the promise of the social desirability to come, as well as the horror of undesirability, functions to grip participants to the agenda's logics (and associated practices) of 'happiness' as individual, immaterial satisfaction, and individualised

responsibility for wellbeing with the promise that to do so will ensure individual desirability, and to not, won't.

7.2 Summary of fantasmatic logics

The two fantasmatic logics identified here begin to account for *why* the emerging happiness agenda is – more specifically, why the ideas and beliefs about the social world that shape its approach to the maximisation of 'happiness' are able to be fixed in this synchronic formation of meaning. The fantasmatic logic of maximised 'happiness' as 'social progress' works to appease discontent with the status quo by promising real and substantial social change, and grips social actors with its beatific and horrific promises. The fantasmatic logic of 'happiness' as socially desirable works to necessitate an engagement with its prescribed pursuit of 'happiness' and also grips social actors with its beatific and horrific promises. 'Happiness', it is revealed by participants, is 'good', desirable, and the pursuit of which is why we do all that we do. I have previously noted that the potential for maximised human 'happiness' has long been debated philosophically, morally and politically, and that 'happiness' has continually been constructed as an important objective in life - as the reason that we do all that we do, and as a state that governments should seek to maximise and maintain for its subjects. Ahmed (2010) suggests that the discursive purpose of 'happiness' is to legitimise our desires as it acts as an end point- *why* do we want x,y,z? Because it will make us happy. By this same logic, I suggest that 'happiness' is able to legitimise demands and expectations of us – why should we want *to do* x,y,z? Because it will make us 'happy'. In this sense, 'happiness' becomes the ultimate end in life, the explanation that requires no more questioning, and the means to establish what is necessary in society – as anything becomes necessary if it is understood to make you 'happy'. The fantasmatic logic of 'social progress' that underpins participants involvement with (and necessitation of) AfH can be seen to draw on this idea of maximised 'happiness' as the greatest good, in order to constitute a fantasy that the happiness agenda is able to address a whole spectrum

of social problems simply by making individuals 'happy'. This sentiment is repeatedly demonstrated by participants and comes to form a fantasmatic logic of the agenda – that maximised 'happiness' is maximised 'social progression'. This is achieved in three ways which all interlink and constitute a fantasy of maximising 'happiness'.

Firstly, the belief that 'happiness' is self-evidently good (Layard, 2011) makes possible the belief that the emerging agenda is 'good' - and so maximising 'happiness' is understood to be a worthy pursuit, the reasons for which are believed to be self-evident (of *course* it is, as to be 'happy' is 'good'). This works to sediment the agenda its self, in the sense that this belief of the 'goodness' of 'happiness' makes it impossible to challenge its emergence – in the sense that it makes possible the belief that a pursuit of 'happiness' is 'good', and so to *not* pursue it is *not* 'good' (and not 'good', is something which should be avoided). Secondly this idea of the 'goodness' of 'happiness' legitimises the specific individualistic approach to maximising 'happiness' that the agenda prescribes, on the grounds that individuals are compelled to follow them by the promise that they will be 'happy' as a result. In essence this belief in the 'goodness' of 'happiness' that justifies the agenda, also works to sediment the specific attitudes and beliefs about how to pursue 'happiness' that it prescribes - in the sense that the desire of 'happiness' (based on the belief of its 'goodness) is formed, and behaviour and attitudes that are believed to cause 'happiness' are thus legitimised. Thirdly, the maximisation of 'happiness' (understood to be the 'greatest good') is able to constitute a fantasy of 'social progression' – in the sense that maximised 'happiness' is believed to be the ultimate goal and the end point to which individuals and governments aspire towards, and so reaching a point of maximised 'happiness' is believed to be the furthest point that society is able to progress towards. Thus, the promise of eventually progressing society that the happiness agenda makes (by maximising 'happiness') is what keeps participants engaging with the agenda and its associated ideas and beliefs about the world. The appeal of the promise of 'social progression' that the agenda presents, works to appease participants' discontent with the status quo, by suggesting that it makes the social change possible that they appear to desire (the rejection of materialism). More than this, this

183

relation between maximised 'happiness' and 'social progress' works to create a fantasy of it where the maximisation of 'happiness' is conceptualised as, and understood by participants to be, the solution to additional, unrelated, social problems that they also understand need to be addressed in order for society to progress – such as ill-health, and low life expectancy. This begins to shed light as to why 'happiness' has become understood to be socially and politically important. It has become so, because it is believed to be the 'greatest good' and the key to addressing all of modern society's social problems by its ability to progress society (made possible by the beatific dimension of the 'happiness' fantasy presented by this neo-utilitarian agenda).

As I also discussed, a 'happy person' was conceptualised in very positive way. In essence they are believed to be a person that people would want to be around and as someone who others would enjoy the company of; whereas conceptualisations of an 'unhappy person' saw them demonised and discussed in very negative ways. These social identities are made possible by valorised ideals of '(un)happiness' (that 'happiness' is *good,* and that 'unhappiness' is bad). The application of these ideals to social identities has been shown to form 'good' and 'bad' subject positions that individuals must identify with. It is this identification process which works to sediment the happiness agenda further – as individuals are incentivised to be seen as 'good' ('happy) and not 'bad' ('unhappy'). That 'the unhappy' are able to be demonised in this way provides evidence in support of Ehrenreich (2010) and Davies (2015) discussions of how we are pressured and sold 'happiness'. Ehrenreich (2010) observes how "the more entrenched the cult of cheerfulness becomes the more advisable it is to conform" (Ehrenreich, 2010, p54) and the more severe the consequences of not conforming are. My analysis has revealed what such severe consequences looks like in the UK context –the demonisation of 'the unhappy' and the formation of social antagonisms in the shape of two valorized social groups ('the happy' and 'the unhappy'). These 'severe consequences', or horrific promises, actively discourage nonconformity in such a way that nonconformity with an individual pursuit of 'happiness' is inconceivable for participants – after all, who wouldn't want to pursue 'happiness' in the hope to one day be 'happy'? To conform with the growing happiness agenda is

understood as rejecting 'unhappiness' and to not do so is believed to accept 'unhappiness' in yourself as an individual. For participants, this acceptance of 'unhappiness' is so absurd that they understand it to be demonstrative of suffering from poor mental health as best, or demonstrative of other undesirable traits (such as ungratefulness, criminality and being a "happiness denier") at worst. To relate being 'unhappy' or 'miserable' with abnormality, ungratefulness and an unwillingness to be 'happy' is enough to discourage any behavior that either reveals such a status for participants. Indeed, as much as 'the happy' are understood to be responsible for their own happiness, so too are 'the unhappy' – in the sense that the specific conceptualisation of 'happiness' as being the result of an individual's *non-materialistic* needs being met, places the responsibility for defining their version of 'happiness' firmly with the individual (by determining what their needs are), and places the responsibility for satisfying their identified needs firmly with them too – removing any responsibility or accountability for individual happiness from the state. This results in 'unhappiness' being understood to be caused by an incorrect pursuit of, or rejection of, 'happiness' – the implication being that the unhappy person is as equally responsible for their unhappiness, as the happy person is their happiness; that we are all responsible for our own 'happiness' and 'misery'. When we consider this, we are able to see that the fantasy of the 'goodness' or 'desirability' of 'happiness' (when applied to social identities) works in a way which encourages individuals to participate in its associated practices, for fear of being identified as 'unhappy' and so identified as undesirable. This works to sediment and reify the neo-utilitarian agenda by gripping individuals with the horrific dimension of the 'happiness' fantasy (of (un)desirability) that it presents.

Chapter 8: Concluding Discussion

Throughout this thesis, I have demonstrated a 'happiness agenda' emerging in modern Western societies, with issues of 'wellbeing' (and how to improve it) growing ever more prevalent in discussions of social policy and in the provision of healthcare services. I have shown that underpinning these socio-political developments is the belief that there are two types of 'wellbeing' (economic and subjective) and that there exists an assumption that the maximisation of a nation's 'happiness' will assist in this endeavour to maximise 'wellbeing' *in total.* Subsequently, maximising 'happiness' has emerged as both a key policy objective and as a central focus within social, political and economic research. I noted that in the UK context this desire to maximise 'wellbeing' *in total* (via the maximisation of 'happiness') necessitated its measurement, so that an 'evidence' base of where 'wellbeing' needs to be improved and how this might be achieved, can be established. I drew attention towards a number of social and political developments that have been implemented in recent years in the UK, which were underpinned by the perceived need maximise non-economic, 'subjective wellbeing' as a means to maximise 'wellbeing' *in total*. Noting, in particular, the founding of AfH; an organisation which I posited as being part of this move towards maximising 'happiness' and 'wellbeing'. I also noted the existence of an alternative conceptualisation of 'wellbeing'; one which posited 'wellbeing' as a state achieved through the maximisation of equality. I noted how the policies designed to improve 'wellbeing' *in total* did not acknowledge the substantial evidence base that this 'equality agenda' presented – specifically, that maximising equality would improve individual mental and physical health and that the best measure of 'wellbeing' *in total* was instead 'equality', not 'happiness'. In doing so, I raised two questions about the emergence of this 'happiness agenda': 1) *why* such a concern with society's (un)happiness in maximising 'wellbeing' both emerged and alternative, evidence based ideas and beliefs about how to improve 'wellbeing' (as represented in the equality agenda) were not included in the development of 'happiness' and 'wellbeing' policies and 2) *how* this specific approach to maximising 'wellbeing' was to enjoy

ideological dominance, *instead of* the alternative evidence based 'equality agenda' – i.e. how and why 'happiness' and how and why *not* 'equality'. These two questions have guided the critical exploration of the UK's happiness agenda presented throughout this thesis. In this chapter I seek to summarise the discussions so far, and to provide a speculative answer to the initial questions I raised. Also in this chapter, I reflect on the experience of using this methodological approach to explore and account for the emergence of the problematised practices, as well as the process of data collection.

8.1 Personal Reflections

Throughout my thesis, I have identified areas that required further reflection. The first of these to be identified was the process of participant recruitment and the end sample that was produced. I noted that recruiting participants was a challenging process. I found the regional groups to be friendly and welcoming and, at the AfH meetings, most members were keen to become involved in my research and talk to me about their perceptions of the importance of 'happiness'. However, this eagerness was soon contrasted with an apparent unwillingness to commit to an actual, documented, conversation with me. Whilst I recognise that this is a common experience in research, I was surprised that members of AfH were reluctant to give up their time to talk with me – especially given the organisation's explicit mission of 'spreading happiness' by sharing the idea of 'true happiness' with others. I feel that I have learnt from this challenging process; prior to conducting field work, whilst I was aware that recruitment would be challenging, I did not anticipate how reluctant members would be to discuss their personal beliefs, ideas and values with a researcher. Had I of done, I would have selected a larger sampling frame (i.e. more regional groups), where I would have been able to approach more members and perhaps have been able to have collate more ideas and beliefs than the ten that I did. In addition to this, I understand that a question is raised as to whether there are (and what) ideas and beliefs about 'happiness' that I was unable to

collect (from those members who I failed to engage with). There is no way of determining this, however, I tried to interject as much variance amongst participants as possible within the time constraints of being in field and feel that this is the closest to countering this bias that I was able to do. In addition, I could have perhaps been more tenacious when faced with those who had initially agreed to participate but who later withdrew/became unavailable indefinitely to meet with me. I am unsure as to the appropriate level of tenacity here, especially with regards to fulfilling my ethical duties as a researcher, and consider 'participant recruitment' as an area for personal development.

I have noted that the end sample, when broken down by location, does not reflect the rates of ethnic diversity of each area that participants were sourced, nor the variance in level of education (Table 1). I stated that the diversity of the sample was hindered by both the diversity of the sampling frame and the willingness of members of AfH to participate in this study. Whilst I stated that the end sample was still varied (by age, gender, marital status and employment status) and so I could be confident that I was collecting a diverse range of ideas, beliefs and attitudes about 'reality', it is important to recognise that there are some 'missing voices' in this thesis – particularly of those belonging to ethnic minority groups and unskilled workers. Indeed, participants that I recruited were predominantly white, middle-class individuals, and the position of privilege that these individuals are able to enjoy in society should be noted here – especially as this may have impacted on their perceptions of the importance of 'equality'. I would be particularly interested in determining how ethnically and economically diverse the membership of AfH is. During my analysis of the interviews, I was aware of this potential bias and this is why, in addition to interviewing members of the organisation, I engaged with the wealth of literature that AfH provides. In doing so, I was able to establish a point of comparison and reference when analysing the interviews conducted and this helped me to identify whether participants were expressing ideas and beliefs learned from their engagement with AfH or personal, pre-existing beliefs. Whilst I cannot be entirely certain that the beliefs about 'reality' that were espoused were formed *entirely* from AfH's teachings, I was able to cross reference these with AfH's teachings. I feel that this was the best counter possible to this

potential bias, but recognise that it is impossible for this to be 'known'. I feel that it would also be advantageous to explore the ideas and beliefs of others who haven't engaged with AfH and compare and contrast the 'reality' presented by such individuals with that presented by members. I feel that doing so would enable me to further validate my claims that the 'reality' presented here is *made possible* by the 'happiness agenda' and the neo-utilitarian hegemonic ideology that frames it. I considered incorporating this into my research design, but the additional recruitment that this would have encompassed, and the additional detailed analysis of the data produced, would have been too large a project for this doctoral thesis – I do, however, consider this to be an area for further research to both enhance my findings reported here, and to gain greater insight into the 'happiness agenda'. In a similar vein, I noted AfH's (and the broader 'happiness agenda's') re-appropriation of Buddhism (a wholly egalitarian philosophy) into a neo-utilitarian context. I found this interesting, especially as there seems to be a clear sentiment in the teachings of AfH (and much of Layard's work) that 'religiousness' impacts positively on mental health and 'happiness'. This perceived benefit is described in AfH's literature as being because this enables a sense of belonging to something greater than ourselves; that feeling a part of something greater, or working towards a greater goal (such as divine reward). I felt that there was not the scope in this thesis (that is concerned with understanding how and why 'happiness' not 'equality') to complete such a task. This is, however, something that I consider to be a subject for further research, having seen the striking overlap between Buddhism, the 'happiness agenda' and the 'reality' presented by the third wave psychology movement.

Another point for reflection raised in this thesis, is the extent to which participants ideas and beliefs were challenged in our discussions. As appendix 5 demonstrates (my interview guide), I sought to establish a semi-structured conversation with participants rather than a challenging interview. When in field, it was my hope to gather descriptive, unbiased, 'true' accounts of members' ideas and beliefs, and consciously avoided confronting or contradicting the views they espoused – for fear of leading the conversations with participants. I was also conscious to not appear negative about the

views shared with me, or AfH and the broader 'happiness agenda' as I did not want to create a defensive or hostile interview. Indeed, I noted that almost all participants were initially very sceptical of my interest in the organisation and that it took a lot of reassuring to convince them that my desire was not to attack AfH. With hindsight, I was perhaps over-cautious in these interviews and I think that the difficulties experienced in recruiting participants in the first place contributed towards this. Indeed, when analysing the transcriptions of the interviews, there were a number of topics that I felt frustrated that I hadn't pushed participants on – particularly in our discussions of "basic needs" (a concept that is never explicitly defined), the abstract concept of the 'happy poor' person (that was cited without any tangible evidence that such a person exists) and the perceived *inevitability* of inequality (where it would have been advantageous to explore further *why* it was believed to be an impossible goal). Nevertheless, I feel that this thesis produced some interesting and insightful findings, which I shall now discuss.

8.2 A (brief) recap

To answer my first question (why such a concern with society's '(un)happiness' and not 'equality') I sought to establish what shared meaning of "happiness" was present - as in order to determine why something is understood to be so important, I established that it is first necessary to explore exactly what it is understood to be. In both my characterisation of the 'happiness agenda' and my analysis of discussions with members of AfH, I have shown that that there are three specific ideas about 'happiness' that make possible its specific conceptualisation as a social and policy priority. Firstly, I have shown that there is a clear perception that 'happiness' is 'good', desirable and necessary for society – in the sense that it is understood that to pursue 'happiness' is to enable 'social progression'. This attitude or belief about 'happiness' is made possible by the neo-utilitarian frame that the 'happiness agenda' was formed within. Indeed, as I have shown, it draws heavily on Bentham's (1781) central assumption that we, as individuals, are in a continual pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of misery, and that it is the role of any moral and just government to ensure that such

190

a pursuit/avoidance is able to take place. Secondly, I have shown that there is a shared understanding that 'happiness' is individually defined and pursued, and that 'happiness' is described as a sensation of satisfaction or contentment to be derived from our individual non-economic, subjective needs and desires being met. I have shown that this makes possible the belief that it is the responsibility of individuals to satisfy such needs and desires, and for governments to ensure that individuals are able to do so. Indeed, my analysis revealed that an individual pursuit of 'happiness' is necessitated by a normative assumption that the responsibility for 'happiness' (and its maximisation) lies with the individual, as it is understood to be achieved by thinking differently about the world rather than by changing circumstance. The findings presented here suggest that the individualisation of 'happiness' in this way alleviates the responsibility of maximising it from the state, and subsequently removes accountability of the state in the advent of growing 'misery' or 'unhappiness' – playing a crucial role in the maintenance of neoliberal ideological hegemony. Thirdly, I have shown that there is a relationship formed between the notion of 'immaterialism' and 'happiness'– to the extent that it is suggested that the previously assumed relationship between 'happiness' and wealth accumulation or material possessions was limited; and that to believe that this is 'fact', is understood to be demonstrative of falling victim to a false sense of what 'happiness' is. This belief is made possible by supposed 'evidence' that 'happiness' is not affected by 'wealth' beyond a certain (undefined) point, and only partially affected by our status in society. In doing so, this (albeit limited) relation between economic need and 'happiness' makes possible a continued engagement with capitalist processes. Indeed, in answer to my first question (why such a concern with society's '(un)happiness' and not 'equality') I suggest that 'equality' rejects capitalist processes (in part), demanding instead state intervention into the free market (in the form of wealth redistribution) and that this approach to the maximisation of 'wellbeing is a challenge to, not complimentary of, the dominant neoliberal capitalist social order. In order to answer my second question (how 'happiness' and how *not* 'equality') I drew attention to the acceptance of the idea that individuals in Western societies were becoming more 'unhappy' more often, despite increasing economic growth; and that

this is believed to be caused by individual action, and not state processes. Indeed, to further substantiate my claim that the 'happiness agenda' it *neo*-utilitarian, I note the existence of the belief that maximising 'happiness' will maximise 'wellbeing' appears to be made possible by a normative belief that 'happiness' is a 'good', 'desirable', moral entity to be protected and maximised (utilitarian); but also the belief that *individuals* are pursuing 'happiness' in wrong ways and that this is the cause of the 'misery' crisis that modern Western capitalist societies are experiencing.

I noted that the 'misery' crisis made possible an ideological challenge to the discursive hegemony of neoliberalism - especially if the purported solution to addressing or reversing increasing rates of 'unhappiness' were to be couched in ideological assumptions which are external to neoliberal orthodoxy (as to do so makes possible the undermining of the 'reality' neoliberalism presents). That is to say, to do so makes possible the undermining of the justification of the exploitative processes of capitalism that the capitalist spirit of neoliberalism presents - such a justification being the 'fact' that they enable the maximisation of 'happiness'. This is significant because if such challenges are not successfully decontested, alternative conceptions of 'reality' are able to be understood to be 'true' instead. Thus, the growing 'proof' that becoming wealthier or owning more things does not make people 'happier' made possible a battle for discursive dominance, which necessitated that neoliberal ideas and values of the world account for this crisis of 'misery'.

It is my proposition that the 'crisis of misery' had the potential to make possible a wider ideological debate as to how best to progress society and to what 'common good' we should be collectively and individually working towards; should it be "wellbeing" as maximised 'happiness', or should it be "wellbeing" as maximised socio-economic equality instead? Indeed, it is my argument that the 'crisis of misery' had the *potential* to become a crisis of capitalism by revealing the normative assumptions constructed by its neoliberal spirit that necessitate the 'free market' (as the free market maximises 'happiness', and furthers 'social progression') to be incorrect, and so alternative means of

192

progressing society (such as reprioritising the pursuit of equality over the pursuit of happiness) are able to be considered instead. However, this potential was not realised, and a crisis of capitalism did not follow the emergence of this 'crisis of misery'. What resulted instead, was the reification of neoliberal ideas and values about the world through the reinvigoration of neoliberalism. This reinvigoration of neoliberalism was achieved by drawing on the revival of classical utilitarian moral philosophy found in the works of behavioural economists (such as Layard, 2011) to make sense of the 'crisis of misery'. Indeed, this neo-utilitarian approach to explaining the stagnation of 'happiness' and justifying a pursuit of maximised 'happiness' *alongside* wealth served to improve the ideological reach of the economic into the social that 'neoliberalism' seeks to establish. The result of this reinvigoration of neoliberalism being that a critique of capitalist processes (by their proven inability to maximise 'happiness') is removed. This is achieved by drawing on these neo-utilitarian ideas about 'happiness' and changing the way that 'happiness' is understood within the structure of meaning that shape individuals' ideas and beliefs about the world. In doing so, the belief that *only* capitalist processes are able to produce (and so maximise) 'happiness' is removed, and the responsibility for the *production* and maximisation of 'happiness' is instead placed onto the individual.

The emergence of a 'crisis of misery' within a neoliberal capitalist society (and the happiness agenda that emerged in response to it) had the potential to bring about a substantial ideological or discursive transformation. That this didn't take place, is demonstrative of wider neoliberal hegemonic discourse that social actors we able to draw on to explain this inexplicable event – resulting in the production and sedimentation of a neo-utilitarian conceptualisation of 'happiness' as something which is *individually* produced and maintained. To reiterate, it is my proposition that the growing body of 'proof' of the prevalence of 'unhappiness' in modern, Western, capitalist societies accumulated to constitute a possible challenge to the discursive hegemony of 'neoliberalism' - thus, it needed to be explained and accounted for *within* the discursive frame – which the emerging

'happiness agenda' serves the purpose of. Indeed, the result of the growing sense of the prevalence of 'unhappiness' is the emergence of a neo-utilitarian happiness agenda that seeks to maximise 'happiness' in a way which contributes towards the sedimentation and reification of neoliberal ideas and values. Specifically, it necessitates the *sort of* progression of society but only in a way in which individuals are able to be more 'happy' with, and within, a neoliberal society - points which I shall now discuss.

8.2 The (sort of) progression of society

My exploration of the happiness agenda has suggested that the central premise of it is to progress society, through the maximisation of 'wellbeing' *in total* (via 'happiness'). I noted that at the time in which the emerging happiness agenda began to really gain momentum (2010) there was an already established body of literature that evidenced a need for maximised social equality, and that incorporated into such works (and the equality agenda that they constitute) was strong evidence to support the claim that socio-economic inequality is (i) problematic to society in a manner of ways, and (ii) that a pursuit of maximised 'wellbeing' (via equality) is a worthy pursuit for societies and governments alike in order to progress society. This revealed that there were two very different, and competing, conceptualisations of 'social progress' present within the discursive field at the time that the 'happiness agenda' emerged; both of which understood 'social progress' to be the maximisation of "wellbeing", but both of which presented very different ideas of what 'wellbeing' both *is* and how it might be pursued. For Layard (2011), AfH, and other 'happiness' advocates, 'wellbeing' is understood to be the maximisation of individual satisfaction, contentment and fulfilment which is achieved by addressing our individual, economic and non-economic needs and desires; establishing 'happiness' as a component part, and proxy measure, of 'wellbeing'. For Wilkinson & Pickett (2009), Dorling (2010) and other 'equality' advocates, 'wellbeing' is understood

to be the maximisation of socio-economic equality which is achieved by redistributing wealth and creating a 'fair' social and economic environment in which our collective economic and non-economic needs are able to be satisfied equally; establishing socio-economic status as a proxy measure of 'wellbeing'. I sought to understand how and why one of these competing ideas of 'wellbeing' (Layard et al's) was able to be incorporated into mainstream social and political discourse (in terms of what the maximisation *of* was believed to constitute 'social progress') and not the other. In essence, asking the question why maximised 'happiness' as a socio-political goal, and not equality. In doing so, I presented a unique social phenomenon to be critically explained: the emergence of a 'happiness agenda' as a means to 'social progression'.

In the exploration of the history of ideas surrounding 'happiness', 'social progress' and capitalism, I showed that 'happiness' became established as the moral justification for the exploitative processes of capitalism within the neoliberal frame of contemporary society (Boltanksi & Chiapello 2005a). This was achieved by drawing on classic utilitarian ideas of 'happiness' (which understood it to be 'good', 'desirable' and emblematic of 'social progress') which made possible the conceptualisation of such processes as 'good', 'desirable' and a means to progress society, due to their understood ability to satisfy individual need and thus *produce* 'happiness'. I also demonstrated that such a justification for the exploitative processes of capitalism drew on Bentham's (1781) specific notion that state intervention is justifiable if it is in the name of maximising 'happiness'. Making possible the establishment, maintenance and necessitation of such processes by the state *because* of their understood ability to maximise 'happiness'. This worked to justify a socio-political engagement with, and maintenance of, the exploitative processes of production, consumption and acquisition that was enjoyed throughout the latter half of the twentieth century (Boltanksi & Chiapello 2005). Typically, such needs took the form of 'material needs' but as such material needs were exhausted (and *excessive* consumption took hold culturally), individuals were shown to become increasingly dissatisfied with capitalist systems themselves (Soper, 2009; Davies 2011) – indeed, a sense of growing dissatisfaction with materialism was referenced by Cameron (2006) in his justification for

the implementation of a political happiness agenda, and participants also demonstrated this. Subsequently, a perception that 'materialism' is unable to make people 'happy' was made possible. An implication of this being that it became possible for there to no longer be any ideological justification for an engagement with, and maintenance of, the processes of capitalism (and also that the absurd, exploitative nature of its mechanisms was able to be revealed). This appeared in participants' accounts of why they became involved with AfH in the first place – where many of them referred to a personal rejection of materialism-as-the-path-to-'happiness', and were drawn to the organisation by its conceptualisation of 'happiness' as the product of *immaterialism*. This was later echoed in participants expressed dissatisfaction with "the modern world", or rather, an expressed dissatisfaction with neoliberal capitalist society.

If we consider that the equality agenda also necessitates this ideological de-valuing of wealth accumulation (in relation to 'social progress'), it suggests that there is a general ideological consensus that a commitment to maximising individual and societal wealth is not an adequate approach to progressing society; that 'social progression' is *more* than making individuals and society richer. In this sense, the emerging happiness agenda can be understood to be seeking to progress society (if we understand 'social progression' to in part be the ideological separation of it from wealth accumulation) by its attempt to separate its main objective of maximised 'happiness' from 'materialism'. However, a key difference between the 'happiness' agenda and the equality agenda is the capacity to make possible a critique of the exploitative processes of capitalism – and thus the capacity to challenge the discursive hegemony of 'neoliberalism'. The equality agenda provides a means to think critically about these processes, in particular, a means to call for state intervention into the free market in a manner which redistributes the wealth that they create. Indeed, the purpose of state intervention for the equality agenda isn't to preserve the free market, but rather to redistribute wealth to the poorest in society so as to improve their physical and mental 'wellbeing'. The happiness agenda, however, continues to necessitate these processes as well as state intervention into the free market in a manner which protects them. This is achieved by establishing

them as the means to satisfy our individual "basic" economic needs, and relates them to the pursuit of 'happiness' still. In essence, within the happiness agenda, the relationship between 'happiness' and the processes of capitalism is re-defined in a way in which the latter are still understood to be necessary to our 'wellbeing' because they provide individuals with food, clothing and shelter, and that it is only once these "basic", material needs are met that individuals are able to pursue the satisfaction of their non-economic needs or 'happiness'.

The ideological debate described here, surrounding what 'social progress' is and how it is best to be achieved, is not new. Indeed, it is redolent with debates noted during the changes in ideological hegemony from liberal, to collectivist, to neoliberal discourses that I noted in Chapter 4. As I discuss in Chapter 4, during the time in which 'capitalism' emerged (late eighteenth century), poverty was rife in the UK and there is no doubt that the economic growth (both individual and national) stimulated by its processes, progressed society by enabling individuals to work themselves out of absolute poverty and generating a surplus of wealth to be reinvested in society. However, high rates of relative poverty continued until there was a policy turn towards state interventionism into the free market that was concerned with wealth redistribution (welfarism) which took place post-1929 financial crisis. The introduction of progressive taxation, the National Health Service, state funded education etc. arguably did far more for society's progression than a commitment to the processes of capitalism – and for this reason I understand this approach to 'social progression' (if we conceptualise it as the betterment of society) to be *the* approach to 'social progress'. The ability of welfarism to better society is not acknowledged within the approach to 'social progress' that is emerging within the happiness agenda. However, I have also shown that, for participants, the pursuit of 'happiness' is perceived to be more complex than was being explicitly articulated - and that 'happiness' (and so 'wellbeing') *is* understood to be associated with wider social factors rather than simply an individual pursuit of our immaterial needs and desires. This is implied by their assumption that the "disadvantaged" in society are 'unhappy', in their acknowledgement that that "basic needs" need to be met to be 'happy', and their belief that "the modern world" is causing

'unhappiness'. However, participants themselves do not suggest this or argue this point, indeed they argue instead that any disparity in society's 'happiness' amongst socioeconomic groups is not related to socio-economic status. This suggests that whilst there is an awareness that 'happiness' and 'misery' are related to structural, and not individual, conditions and factors, this belief is able to be marginalised. As I have shown, for participants, it is the social identities of the 'happy poor' and the 'unhappy rich' that work to marginalise this relationship, as they are believed to be 'evidence' that *anyone* can be 'happy' or 'unhappy', irrespective of additional social factors. In my analysis, I noted that these social identities were made possible by the belief in the immateriality of 'happiness' and it is my proposition that this belief prevents the emancipation of individuals from the misery produced by engaging with capitalist processes, and the individualisation of society that neoliberal ideological hegemony is contingent upon. It directly contests collectivist ideas and beliefs about the social world, as well as collectivist approaches to progressing societies – approaches which focus on the materiality of 'happiness' and that, whilst they have been shown to improve 'wellbeing', are not conducive to the maintenance of the processes of capitalism.

It is my claim that this specific conceptualisation of 'wellbeing' and 'happiness' present in the emerging happiness agenda, does things. That is to say that it continues to make possible the ideological hegemony of 'neoliberalism' in contemporary capitalist society by marginalising more collectivist ideas and beliefs about 'social progression'. My analysis suggested that the beatific fantasy of 'happiness' (that it *will* make society better) is how participants are able to necessitate the maximisation of 'happiness' and relate it to the progression of society. Indeed, and as I have shown, there is no doubt, for participants, that maximised 'happiness' will make society better. For participants, a pursuit of 'true happiness' is understood specifically to progress society by re-establishing a sense of community and addressing the individualisation of society (issues that are understood to be the causes of 'unhappiness' in "the modern world"). This is achieved by encouraging people to "connect with others" as part of their individualistic pursuit. This idea of social progression is, on the surface, alternative to more traditional neoliberal conceptualisation of it

- in the sense that it posits 'social progression' as the maximisation of 'true happiness' (the satisfaction of *non-economic* needs) rather than the maximisation of material 'happiness' – (the satisfaction of economic needs). However, and as I have shown, this idea of 'true happiness' continues to relate 'happiness' to a certain type of "basic" materialism, and establishes it as the satisfaction of individual (economic) need - central tropes of neoliberalism. This conceptualisation of the *sort of* immateriality of 'happiness' still necessitates the processes of capitalism in a pursuit of 'happiness', and in doing so necessitates such processes for the effective progression of society.

When discussing the relationship between equality and social progression, participants spoke of an inevitability of inequality – where a more equal society was posited as a 'nice to have' but an unrealistic and unachievable end goal. Indeed, whilst some acknowledged the impact that social inequalities could have on 'happiness', the effect of such inequalities was believed to be countered by individuals *thinking differently* about the world and their place within it, not seeking to *change* it. Participants expressed no desire to (or belief that it is possible to) progress society *beyond* a neoliberal capitalist social order, despite expressing dissatisfaction with it. This belief was made possible by drawing on the 'evidence' presented by the broader 'happiness agenda' and, for this reason, it is my claim that the emerging happiness agenda only works to *sort of* progress society – as my discussions with participants suggest that it lacks the capacity to emancipate individuals from the misery produced by engaging with capitalist processes (by still necessitating them) as well as calls to address socio-economic inequality (an approach which is proven to improve 'wellbeing' and progress society). In essence, it's only contribution to the maximisation of 'wellbeing' is to redefine what "wellbeing" *is,* and an encourage individuals to think differently about what 'happiness' is, so that they might 'realise' that they are 'happy' after all.

8.3 The lack of desire for social change

Throughout my discussions with participants, I noted an implicit desire for social change. The change understood to be necessary here is presented by participants as being the reprioritisation of 'happiness' by individuals and policy makers alike – to be achieved by increasing a society's awareness of the importance of 'happiness'. I noted that the agenda proposed a 'crisis of misery' within Western society, and that the solution to such a crisis was understood to be achieved in three ways: (i) to reprioritise 'happiness' on political agendas (ii) to educate society about 'true happiness' and (iii) to encourage individuals to behave differently in their personal pursuit of it. However, I have also highlighted that a significant issue with this message is the inability to accept that there are factors external to us which affect our 'happiness' or 'subjective wellbeing'. That is, there lacks any acknowledgement of the real pain, misery and suffering of individuals which is caused by structural inequalities in societies; structural inequalities which are not able to be addressed by simply putting a positive spin on them (as AfH and positive psychologists would have us believe). Because of this inability, it is my claim that the maximisation of 'happiness' that the agenda necessitates becomes less about relieving pain, misery and suffering, or even of implementing real social change; and is instead about maintaining populist confidence in the very structures that contribute towards the growing 'unhappiness' problem in neoliberal capitalist societies. Indeed, and as I have noted, both participants and the broader 'happiness agenda' place the responsibility for an individual's '(un)happiness' status very much on them – specifically, their individual outlook and disposition. An implication of this is that the 'happy' person is understood to be so because of their characteristics and choices, not their socioeconomic circumstance. That is, their 'happiness' is understood to be produced 'internally' not 'externally' and the perceived "necessary" task becomes to encourage the 'internal' production of 'happiness'. A further implication here is that a specific idea of 'unhappiness' is conceptualised too, in a way in which it is also understood to not be related to the processes of capitalism, and is instead believed to be related to the 'unhappy' individual's outlook and disposition. The 'unhappy' person is understood to be so because of their individualistic characteristics and choices, not their socioeconomic circumstance - that is, their 'unhappiness' is

understood to be produced 'internally' and not 'externally' - and so the happiness agenda seeks to discourage the 'internal' production of 'unhappiness'. It is my argument that in doing so, the happiness agenda ultimately draws attentions to the individual differences of character and outlook between those understood to be 'happy' and 'unhappy', and attributes the cause of their '(un)happiness' to them. It is also my proposition that this practice takes place *instead* of considering the circumstantial differences between the two groups, which would make possible drawing attentions to the structural causes of the misery, pain and suffering of 'the unhappy'. I established that this idea of 'happiness' makes possible the "othering" of 'the unhappy' (as their 'unhappiness' is able to be understood to be their fault), but it is also my proposition that this makes possible the continued dismissal of the needs of the most disadvantaged in society – and so it is my argument that, whilst demonstrating an implicit desire for social change, the emerging happiness agenda instead reifies the status quo (and the social inequalities contained within it).

If we consider that participants identified "disadvantaged" groups in society as being 'unhappy', and also that the status of 'happy' and 'unhappy' are ideologically valorised (in the sense that such ideas are already conceptualised as 'good' or 'bad': 'happy' being 'good' and 'unhappy' being 'bad'), then the significance of the formation of the subject positions of the 'happy person' and the 'unhappy person' can be better understood. That is to say that process of identifying and labelling individuals (and social groups) as 'happy' or 'unhappy' indirectly labels individuals and social groups as 'good' and 'bad', based on their 'happiness' status - thus making possible the conceptualisation of "disadvantaged" groups in society as not just 'unhappy', but also as 'bad'. Indeed, discussions with participants demonstrated that the existence of these valorised social identities makes possible an additional valorisation of established social groups. For example, consider again the examples of participants attributing a 'happiness' status to individuals belonging to what is understood to be a "disadvantaged" group in society. Here, participants were able to question *why* these groups were *choosing* to be 'unhappy' (or why they weren't choosing to be 'happy'), instead of questioning *what*

is causing these groups' pain and suffering. It is my argument that the possibility of this type of questioning has severe implications for tackling issues of poverty and social inequality. As it is this believed 'bad-ness' of 'unhappy' individuals and social groups that enables their needs and desires to be marginalised (and thus ignored), by making possible the notion that such needs and desires are also 'bad' (as they are produced internally by 'bad' individuals).

In doing so, neoliberal ideas and beliefs about the world are further sedimented and reified. What I mean by this is that implicit within neoliberal ideology is the belief in a need for the production of competition (be that within or external to, the market) in order for society to progress into its best form. This transpires into a belief that those who *will* and do engage in such a competition, should be able to reap the rewards and excel in all forms of life; and those who *won't* and don't, are left behind. This makes possible the idea of the inevitability of socio-economic inequality that participants described, but crucially this justifies the unequal distribution of resources and status. What this conceptualisation of a competitive state fails to account for, however, is the distinction between 'will' and ability. That is, the belief that those who do and don't engage in competition have chosen to do/not do, marginalises the notion that those who don't, *can't*. We are able to see this belief play out in participants' discussions of 'the unhappy' – where it is understood that they are so, because they have *chosen* to not pursue 'happiness'. Indeed, the valorisation of social groups that the happiness agenda makes possible (through the labelling of such groups as 'happy/good' and 'unhappy/bad') emphasises this neoliberal 'reality' further. If we consider that Laclau & Mouffe (1985) (whose post-Marxist theory underpins this critical explanation of the happiness agenda) maintain the classical Marxist objective of critiquing and displacing the exploitative structures of capitalism, but add to this the recognition that not all inequalities in society are produced by capitalist processes, this finding is incredibly interesting. I have demonstrated that 'the unhappy' are demonised by participants, who understand that an 'unhappy' person is someone with 'mental health' issues, someone who is a criminal, is 'ungrateful', and someone who is *unwilling* to find

'happiness', and noted that the idea of the '(un)happy' person forms a social antagonism in the shape of two valorized social groups: 'the happy' and 'the unhappy'. This antagonism isn't produced by the processes of capitalism, and is instead shown to be produced by the happiness agenda. However, participants are shown to place this seemingly new social antagonism *onto* existing ones, some of which are produced by capitalism, and some which aren't. That is, participants complicate existing social identities with the label of '(un)happy' – such as: rich/poor, criminal/lawful, sane/insane - and by doing so, can be shown to utilise ideas of '(un)happiness' to reify existing social inequalities, not challenge them or change populist opinion of them.

I have also demonstrated that participants are actively altering their behaviours in order to better pursue 'happiness'. As I note in the genealogy of 'happiness' (where individuals were understood to take specific consumerist action in order to be 'happy') this is not a new phenomenon. However, what appears to be different in this happiness agenda to the more traditional neoliberal spirit of capitalism (where 'happiness' is understood to be something that is pursued and achieved through an engagement with the external processes of acquisition, consumption, and accumulation alone) is that there is no promise of 'happiness' on the horizon point which individuals must chase. Instead, 'happiness' is understood to be something which exists within all of us and must be *uncovered* by focussing on, and satisfying, our non-materialistic desires and being appreciative of what we already have. It is this idea of being appreciative and accepting of what we have, rather than focussing on what we don't, that I wish to expand upon a little more. The solution to 'unhappiness' within the agenda is understood to *not be* to buy 'happiness', nor to demand socio-economic change so that one might be able to buy 'happiness'; it is instead to view the world differently. That is, it encourages 'unhappy' individuals to look at the world in a non-materialistic way, which admires its simplicity and beauty, and which enables individuals to be grateful for what they do have rather than be 'resentful' for what they don't – presenting a romanticised view of 'happiness' that is influenced heavily and made possible by, positive psychology's specific conceptualisation of both 'happiness'

and 'unhappiness'. This romanticised view of 'happiness' and 'unhappiness' understands them to be derived from an individual's outlook or disposition (by conceptualising them as a choice), and separates them from individual material circumstance. It understands the growing prevalence of social problems associated with, and understood to be caused by, 'unhappiness' (such as anxiety and depression) with individuals' outlooks or dispositions, rather than their individual material circumstance, and in doing so dismisses the works of theorists such as Wilkinson & Pickett (2009) and Dorling (2010), which relate these social problems (conceptualised as problems of 'unhappiness' within the agenda) to socio-economic circumstance instead. The message contained within the agenda becomes that 'unhappiness' is not caused by an inability to get the things that we 'want' - but rather it is caused by an incorrect and misinformed pursuit of 'happiness'. Indeed, as we saw in the positive psychology movement's notion of 'happiness', emerging is the idea that 'happiness' *is* attainable by everyone – in the sense that all anyone has to do in order to be 'happy' is to make positive changes to their thoughts, behaviours and interpretations of the world. An implication of this, is that 'unhappiness' is understood to be avoidable, preventable and crucially, *chosen*. As I have previously noted, this is a very dangerous message to be sending as this makes possible the notion that those experiencing 'misery' are doing something to cause it, or to prohibit themselves from experiencing 'happiness' in some way – drawing attention away from the structural causes of 'unhappiness'. However, an additional problem here is that this makes possible the marginalisation of calls for real, substantial, socio-economic change.

As I have noted previously, AfH's literature lacks any suggestion or necessitation of real social change in order to maximise 'happiness'. Individuals are instead encouraged to practice 'acceptance' of 'who you are', and a number of participants discuss doing so. I have also noted that 'happiness' it is continually conceptualised as something which is undeliverable by government, and is explicitly described as such by politicians, 'happiness' theorists' and participants alike. As I noted, this resonates with the utilitarian notion that the state could not (and should not) determine what makes people 'happy', because 'happiness' is not able to be defined and prescribed by a moral or

ideological conceptualisation of what it is. Instead, it is understood that all governments can and should do is aggregate a sense of 'happiness' from what people report and legislate in ways which are evidenced to enable it to be maximised. In essence it is the outlook that *what* makes people 'happy' is not, and should not be, of interest to governing bodies, as all that matters is that people *are* 'happy'. This is reflected in the data collected, where participants were shown to understand that the individual is understood to have the power to influence their own environment (by thinking more positively about their situation) and that the government should prioritise 'happiness' as a policy objective – but that this should take the form of providing individuals with the resources and awareness necessary to change their own 'happiness' status. Thus, it is my argument that the individualisation of 'happiness' contained within this neo-utilitarian approach to its maximisation, contributes towards the continuation of an individualised neoliberal society, and has no capacity or desire to change this. Furthermore, by continually representing 'happiness' as the main or only objective of life (by repeatedly conveying the message that we as individuals should strive towards it, and that governing bodies have a duty to enable its maximisation) the happiness agenda keeps individuals desiring 'happiness', and so commits them to specific, individualistic, actions and behaviours in order to pursue and achieve it – thus further reifying the status quo.

In what I believe to be a hugely significant contribution to the formation of an evidence-based justification for the removal of neoliberal capitalist ideology within socio-political structures and the introduction of collectivist ideology instead, Wilkinson & Picket (2009) present a coherent case that income inequality is the main contributory cause to most modern day social problems. Within their work, a strong argument is presented to suggest that the social, political and market freedom demanded by neoliberalism broke both society and the market itself (as evidenced in the 2008 financial crash) through the culture of inequality that is created. In further support of the problematisation of the sedimentation of these beliefs in society that the equality agenda presents, Dorling (2010) notes that, following the 2008 financial crash, inequalities (particularly in health)

continued to grow. Despite this, public and political faith remained in the market. Indeed, there was the belief that its eventual re-stabilisation (assumed to be quick) would not only restore the status quo, but resolve the issues of increased inequality. This highlights the discursive strength that neoliberalism possesses (that even in the wake of a market failure, public and political faith remains in the market principles and values that it advocates) and he goes on to necessitate the re-evaluation of these. I find this argument incredibly interesting and wish to identify this as an area for further research. Specifically, the role of the 'happiness agenda' in maintaining public and political faith in the market during the period of 'austerity' that followed the 2008 crash (and began to be implemented in 2010) – particularly whether, following several years of austerity, 'happiness' still holds its grip on participants. However, I did not feel that there was the scope within this thesis to do so (at this time). I felt that, as the 'happiness agenda's development was pre-austerity measures and 'austerity' was not discussed with participants, it was not advantageous to try and explore and critically account for an additional epoch – i.e. the era of austerity surpasses the launch of the ONS wellbeing survey, which I define as the point in the development of the 'happiness agenda' that I work back from; asking why 'happiness' as the measure of 'wellbeing' and not 'equality'.

I have raised the question as to why maximised 'happiness' has emerged as the believed means to progress society, and not maximised equality, and I suggest that this critical explanation of the happiness agenda has provided an answer to this question. The equality agenda necessitates 'social change' that is both anti-capitalist and anti-neoliberal; and it is for this reason, such alternative conceptualisations of 'wellbeing' (as maximised equality rather than 'happiness') have not been incorporated into this neo-utilitarian ideas and beliefs about how to progress society – and are instead discursively marginalised. Wilkinson & Pickett (2009), and other advocates of the equality agenda, present evidence with disruptive or dislocatory implications for the discursive, or ideological, hegemony of the neoliberal spirit of capitalism, in the sense that their work makes possible (and necessitates) the rejection of neoliberal free-market principles and a return to state

interventionism into the market in a manner which redistributes wealth, rather than maintains its exploitative processes. Indeed, the evidence provided by the equality agenda methodologically critiques utilitarian notions of implementing aggregate-based 'happiness' policies and draws attention to the need to observe rates of 'wellbeing'-as-equality' in order to construct social policy capable of social progression. As I note in Chapter 4, an alternative, arguably more effective, idea of 'social progression' is presented by the equality agenda; that rather than focusing on measuring and improving aggregate 'happiness', governments should instead be concerned with measuring and decreasing levels of socio-economic inequality in society. However, and as the idea of 'social progression' emerging in the happiness agenda demonstrates, despite this coherent argument social and political faith has remained in the market principles and values of neoliberalism in addressing the 'crisis of misery'. Thus, the social-normative practices of the emerging neo-utilitarian happiness agenda work to reify (and justify) socio-economic inequality through its discursive marginalisation of this proposed need for social change. Indeed, despite its discursive dominance being established and sedimented on claims of promoting maximised utility, 'happiness' or 'wellbeing', the emerging happiness agenda works to reify the very processes that can be understood to cause 'unhappiness' and lacks the desire for the social change necessary to really maximise 'wellbeing' and progress society.

8.4 What does this mean for equality?

I have noted that there is a 'reality' being presented in which being 'happy' is believed to be necessary for social progression, and that social actors are individually responsible for their pursuit of it. I have suggested that the emerging happiness agenda reifies neoliberal ideological hegemony and the 'reality' that it presents (by virtue of the fact that this idea of 'happiness' doesn't *really* challenge the relation between processes of capitalism and 'happiness') and subsequently that this

emerging happiness agenda is a fundamentally neoliberal ideological project that works to conceal

the inability of the processes of capitalism to enhance 'wellbeing'. It serves to repair the severed

relationship between capitalism and 'social progress' (understood to be the maximisation of

wellbeing) that the symptoms of growing social inequality (created by neoliberal capitalism) has

made possible. Indeed, this 'happiness agenda' makes possible the reinvigoration of neoliberalism

by making sense of the 'crisis of misery' through the production of a neo-utilitarian happiness

agenda. This neo-utilitarian approach to explaining the stagnation of 'wellbeing' (and so 'social

progress') justifies a pursuit of maximised 'happiness' *alongside* wealth, and in doing so serves to

improve the ideological reach of the economic into the social that 'neoliberalism' seeks to establish.

If, as this thesis argues is the case, we consider 'neoliberalism' as a hegemonic ideology, and that

such hegemony is reproduced by the social and political practices that it legitimates, we are also able

to consider such hegemony as contingent (and therefore able to be changed). Specifically, this thesis

has highlighted that this ideological dominance is contingent upon the continued legitimisation from

the state of the 'reality' that it presents (that maximised 'happiness' is social progression, and that

the free market contributes toward the maximisation of happiness), and thus reveals a weakness in

neoliberalism's ideological, or discursive, hegemony – that if political structures no longer legitimise

its ideas and values of the social world, it is unable to justify itself. This is a key point, as it draws

attention to the fact that neoliberal capitalism isn't a necessary or organic progression of society (as

neoliberal thinkers would have us believe), but rather it is simply one way of conceptualising and

making sense of the world which has *become* ideologically dominant – dominance made possible by

its legitimisation by political structures. If there is to be any substantial challenge to this hegemony,

alternative discourses must therefore directly challenge the political legitimisation of neoliberalism

(as well as the free market) made by the state. Furthermore, if such alternative discourses wish to

succeed in this challenge, alternative discourses also need to challenge the ideological legitimisation

of neoliberalism amongst social actors – which I suggest might be achieved by providing a viable

alternative to definitions of what 'happiness' *is*.

As I have shown, participants consistently relate 'happiness' with the satisfaction of individual, non-economic needs and desires. It is understood that such needs are not determined by a set of social rules or norms, and they require the individual to think of themselves not as a member of a society, not as a member of a social group, but as an autonomous, independent functioning being with unique needs and desires which it is their right to pursue. There is no understood shared purpose in life or pursuit for such individuals other than aggregate 'happiness'. Numerous categories of such needs are provided by participants (such as social, interpersonal etc.), but these specific needs are described as being, and are assumed to be, individually determined. Furthermore, I have shown that this specific idea of 'happiness' serves to pacify feelings of discontent with the status quo. Participants were shown to resent very tangible and real aspects of their lives that are related to the processes of capitalism - for example P7's resentment of living a stressful lifestyle that they feel is forced onto them through having to work in a job that exhausts them in order to live and function in society, and P6's redundancy and subsequent decrease in household income and disposable cash. They described being able to resolve such resentment and 'unhappiness' with practices of inward self-reflection encouraged by Afh (and learned from their involvement with the organisation), where participants learned to be appreciative of what they have instead of what they lack. Instead of being encouraged to change their circumstance, or using those feelings of resentment and anger and frustration to draw attention to these tangible and real problems, participants describe a process of thinking differently about their situations and no longer feeling such resentment or 'unhappiness'. The result is that the purpose of this practice of inward reflection is not to work out what needs to change in order for an individual to be 'happy', but to work out they need to *accept*. This creates an almost apathy towards lived injustices, or difficulties, or dissatisfactions, and makes possible the further sedimentation of the status quo by drawing attentions away from social structures as the causes of 'unhappiness' and turning causation inward to the individual's way of thinking about the world. In doing so, alternative arguments for social change made using the argument that doing so would enhance "wellbeing" are weakened (as 'wellbeing' has come to be understood as 'happiness'

and 'happiness' is individual). Indeed, to emancipate 'the unhappy' from this neo-utilitarian conceptualisation of them (that is constructed with the formation of the social antagonism between 'the happy' and 'the unhappy', and within which the hegemony of neoliberalism resides in part) an alternative discourse must work to challenge the individualistic idea of 'happiness' that is presented, and draw attention to the structural causes of 'unhappiness' instead.

This thesis has also shown there to be a dominant view that social change won't be able to make you 'happy' or 'happier' because it is individual, not social, factors that *cause* 'unhappiness' – which implies that social change is unnecessary. Indeed, the only change that participants necessitated was an apolitical objective to encourage all individuals to take responsibility for their own 'happiness'. That is, all participants described conducting a process of self-assessment (often on a regular basis) where they assess their successfulness in pursuing 'happiness', and alter their behaviour accordingly. It is encouraging this process of individual self-assessment that participants understood to be the necessary change in society in order to maximise 'happiness'. Importantly, participants were not concerned (unless prompted) with any external, social impacts on their own (or anyone's) 'happiness'. Which, as I have noted, suggests that incorporating immaterialism into the definition of 'happiness' has had significant impact on participants' behaviours and beliefs - in particular, that focussing on their emotional, non-materialistic needs and how to satisfy them pacifies any desire for circumstantial change. By drawing on this notion of 'happiness' and crucially this idea of individual responsibility for its pursuit, I have shown that 'the unhappy' are understood to be responsible for their own misery (much the same as 'happy' people are responsible for their own contentment). The consequence of this is that an understanding of 'unhappiness' is made possible where it is conceptualised as something which is individually preventable, but also individually *caused* – and this makes possible the marginalisation of the needs of 'the unhappy' on the basis that they are understood to be 1) the only ones, not government, to change their 'happiness' status and 2) that they have somehow *chosen* to be 'unhappy', to be a "happiness denier". That is to say, the belief that 'happiness' is more important than (and unrelated to excess) material possessions and wealth

status can be seen to make possible the dismissal of calls for wealth redistribution. However, this thesis has also revealed that there is a desire for equality and a willingness to implement substantial social change, if it is able to be conceptualised as necessary for the progression of society and the maximisation of 'wellbeing'-as-'happiness' – but that currently this desire and will is able to be marginalised. To successfully contest neoliberal discursive hegemony, this marginalisation needs to be prevented and in doing so, the possibility for social and political change in order to maximise equality will be able to be made.

In sum, the implication here is that in order to constitute a substantive discursive challenge to neoliberalism (and make possible a diachronic change to the synchronic formation of 'reality'), the equality agenda needs to contest the relationship that the neo-utilitarian happiness agenda reifies between individualism, the exploitative processes of capitalism and 'social progress'. Simply offering an alternative conceptualisation of what "wellbeing" (and so 'social progress') is, has proved inadequate in implementing social change. This challenge could utilise the growing dissatisfaction with capitalist processes (that is clearly evident) in a way which promises society "happiness" as a consequence of maximised equality, and emphasises the possibility of socio-economic equality to challenge the perceived inevitability of inequality that is understood to be 'fact'. In this way, the promise of "happiness" could be utilised to justify a pursuit of equality and rejection of neoliberalism – establishing it as a collective goal achieved through the alleviation of the suffering, 'unhappiness' and misery *caused* by inequality (and the additional social problems that cause them) and thus directly challenging the presumed inevitability of inequality that made possible the sedimentation of the neo-utilitarian happiness agenda. Such a challenge could be further aided by the (ever growing) critique of this 'happiness agenda' (from within mental health professions and a range of academic disciplines). There is a clear desire for social change amongst individuals in society and politically there remains a strong equality agenda as seen in the rise of left-wing populism in recent years; the task of the equality agenda should be to mobilise this desire and make possible an environment that

is accepting of, rather than dismissing of, real and substantial socio-economic change – challenging

the neo-utilitarian happiness agenda, with a collectivist happiness agenda.

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Tables and Figures

Table 1. Population demographics of Barking and Brighton

	Barking	Brighton
Usual Resident Population	**185911** (48.5% male, 51.5% female; 26.3% under 16, 73.8% 16+)	**273,369** (49.8% male, 50.2% female; 16% under 16, 83% 16+)
Marital Status	48.8% Married/civil partnership	23.3% married/ civil partnership
Ethnicity	White 58.3%, Mixed 4.2%, Asian 15.9%, Black 19.9%, Arab 0.5%, Other 1%	White 89.1%, Mixed 3.8%, Asian 4.1%, Black 1.5%, Arab 0.8%, Other 0.7%
Unemployment	7.3% economically active; 32.2% economically inactive	5.2% economically active; 28.4% economically inactive
Employment by occupation	Highest is elementary occupation 15.2% (professional occupations 13.3%)	Highest is professional occupations 22.7% (elementary occupations 8.6%)
Hours worked	Part time: 29%, Fulltime : 71%	Part time: 31.6%, fulltime 68.4%
Highest Qualification level	None: 27.9%, Level 1: 15.2%, Level 2: 15.0%, Level 3: 2.1%, Level 4: 20.9%, Apprenticeship: 9.3%	None: 16.1% Level 1: 11%, Level 2: 12.6%, Level 3: 16%, Level 4: 36.9%, Apprenticeship: 2.1%
Housing	47.7% homeowners, 33.7% rent from LA or HA; 17.7% privately rent	54.2 % homeowners, 14.9% rent from LA or HA, 29.5% privately rent

Health status	16.4% activities effected by health	16.3% activities effected by health
Religion	18.9% no religion; 6.4% not stated	42.4% no religion; 8.8% no religion stated

Data Source: 2011 Census Data. NB: excluded co-habitation under marital status as data was not included in the data sourced for Barking.

Table 2. Participant Information

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	Employment Status	Marital status	Education	Residence
P1	M	White, British	Retired	Divorced	Postgraduate	Brighton
P2	F	White, British	Unemployed	Single	School leaver	West London
P3	F	White, Other	Self employed	Married	Undergraduate	East London
P4	F	White, Other	Unemployed	Single	Undergraduate	East London
P5	M	White, British	Retired	Married	School leaver	Brighton
P6	F	Asian, British	Employed	Married	Postgraduate	East London
P7	F	White, British	Employed	Divorced	Undergraduate	Brighton
P8	F	White, Other	Unemployed	Single	Undergraduate	East London
P9	M	Afro-Carribean, British	Employed	Single	Undergraduate	Brighton
P10	M	White, Other	Retired	Divorced	Undergraduate	East London

Table 3. Capitalist Spirits vs Dominant Ideologies

Dates	Capitalist Spirit	Processes of capitalism are morally justified because they….	Wider Ideology	'social progress' is…
1890s – 1920s	1	Eradicate poverty & empower individuals	Classic Liberalism	The eradication of poverty & emancipation from misrule
1920s – 1970s	2	Generate wealth which can be redistributed to reduce inequalities	Collectivism	A fairer, more equal and just society
1970s – present day	3	Maximise 'wellbeing' via maximising individual wealth (through employment)	Neoliberalism	Maximised 'wellbeing'

Table 4. Participants' responses to the question "where does responsibility for society's happiness lie?"

Individual responsibility	Institutional responsibility
That's a philosophical question. Does it lie with the nanny state or does it lie with the individual having to do everything? That's the political question in a way isn't it? Like I said, my view is that individuals can do an enormous amount for themselves. Usually that's the only course of action open to us…Yes, it's great if you can have the right political parties who will change the world or have a revolution…[but]there's a limited amount of influence I can have there. Whereas things I do on the smaller scale, either for myself or around me, I can actually do it and it happens. I can get to the end and see a result. For me, that way of doing things is much more satisfying. Working… all of your life to try and get someone out there to do something else which they're not going to do, it's just really frustrating. I like to get some immediate rewards (P1).	I think to start improving it [happiness] in society; I think it's just an awareness of what is going on in the community. Rather than just an informal meetup about what is happiness, but actual workshops…That's the best way to reach out because not everybody picks up personal development books. Not everybody can help themselves in that way. Even if they picked it up, it would be like hold on, I don't understand. They don't have the emotional intelligence maybe to understand what's in the book (P3)
I think everybody really. I think government but then I think everybody, it's our personal responsibility. Also, I don't think government are ever going to do anything about anything unless people ask them to. Then it comes back to everybody again. Yes, it's a funny circle this because people need to pressurise government but then they need to understand what they're pressurising government for. I think in order to do that they need to have some kind of awareness. I think the problem actually is awareness, at root (P2).	I think it [happiness] is a responsibility of the government. We have no choice but to live under the government. I think it should be for the benefit of the greater society… Yes, I do think it's a responsibility of local governments and the national government to at least acknowledge that this is a thing, to not sweep it under the carpet. I think it should have some sort of impact (P4).
So yeah, you've got your action at the political level. But in the end, the politicians are not gunna change course unless there's a ground swell of public opinion. So the ground swell of public opinion can only happen if you have a successful mass movement that in the end is gunna reach millions and not just thousands (P5).	If society doesn't consider itself in terms of its leadership, or governance, doesn't consider that social happiness is a duty of proper governance, as well as the individual taking responsibility, then it's not going to work because…if people put it onto the individual to be happy they're asking for an impossible - it just causes more and more strain (P10).
I think there is a collective responsibility [for society's happiness]. Then if a person wants to develop their own individual happiness or their goals and their own value system then that is their personal journey and it is their personal responsibility (P6).	
We all have a responsibility [for our own happiness]… but for some that's not always going to be easy and therefore it's up to other people to help them and also give them the opportunities to make them aware, which is very much what the Action for Happiness group is, isn't it? It's giving people simple ideas that they would never have thought of, of how to make them feel happier about a situation, how to look at the positives in a situation, how to appreciate something, just things that people don't think about (P7).	
It starts with us, I mean…of course we need the policy and stuff but ultimately we all have to make the changes within ourselves. So it's all these individuals together impacting happiness with their interconnection I guess…of course the policy and politics of a country have an impact on people – so it's really good if their agenda is happiness, that will have a positive impact. But then how can they really know what's going on inside someone's head? (P8).	
Only the individual can make themselves happy. Okay, right, that's quite a controversial question because some [pauses] - Yes, it is, because some people could be in situations beyond their own control that makes them unhappy, but happiness comes from a state of mind, so fundamentally it is the individual, it is the individual appreciating, it is fundamentally the individual (P9).	

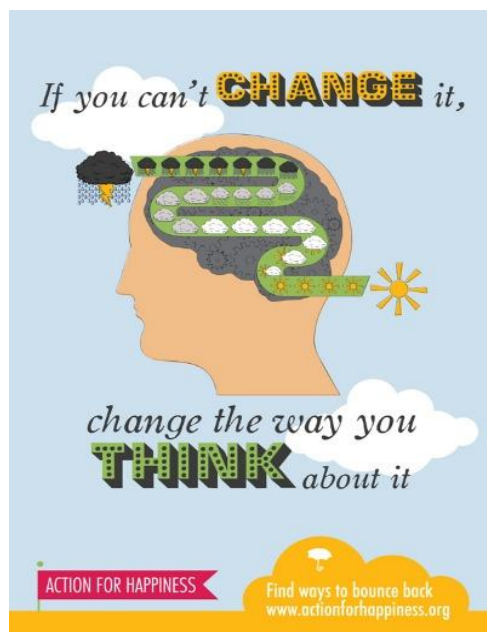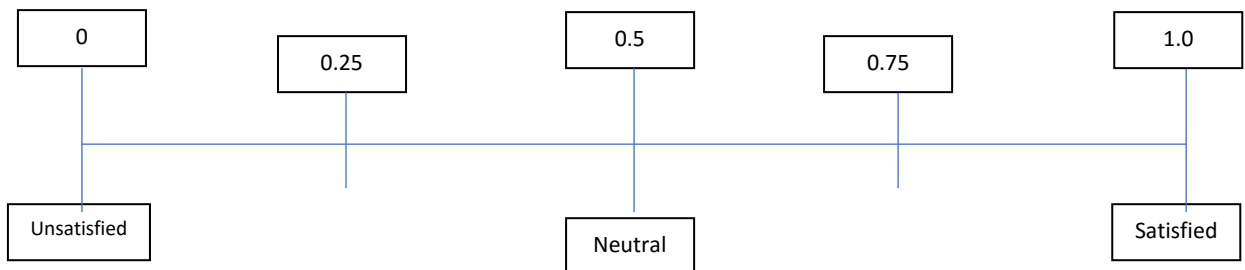**Figure 1. AfH's Ten keys to happier living**

Figure 2. AfH poster

Figure 3. AfH poster

Figure 4: Utility Scale Example

Appendices

1. Ethical Approval Form

23 January 2013

Miss L.J. Knight

1 Rowan Place

Colchester

Essex

CO1 1AJ

Dear Laura,

Re: Ethical Approval Application (Ref 12003)

Further to your application for ethical approval, please find enclosed a copy of your application which has now been approved by Dr Wayne Wilson on behalf of the Faculty Ethics Committee.

Yours sincerely

Claire Wicks

Ethics Administrator

School of Health and Human Sciences

cc.   Ewen Speed, Supervisor

        Sarah Manning-Press, REO

2. Letter of Invitation

University of Essex

Laura Knight, PhD Student
The School of Health and Human Sciences,
The University of Essex
Wivenhoe Park
Colchester, Essex
CO4 3SQ

Email: ljknig@essex.ac.uk
Phone: 07738673987

2013

Dear Sir/Madam

I would like to invite you to participate in my postgraduate research that is exploring the emergence, and development, of a 'happiness agenda' within UK social policy.

I am interested in developing a greater understanding of the emergence of 'happiness' as a UK social policy objective; and my research is attempting to understand the ways in which such an objective has developed, as well as the impact that it is having across society.

I would like to have the opportunity to discuss with you your definition of 'happiness', your involvement with 'Action for Happiness' and the impact that you feel 'happiness' can make in society.

Attached to this invitation is a Participant Information Sheet which will provide you with further information about my research, as well as what participation will involve. If you are happy to participate after reading this information, please contact me (email: ljknig@essex.ac.uk, phone: 07738 673 987) to arrange an interview time and location.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely,

Laura Knight

3. Participant Information Sheet

Title of Project: **An Exploration of the UK's Happiness Agenda**

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research project exploring the emergence, and development, of a 'happiness agenda' within UK social policy. The information that you provide will contribute to my PhD Research Project taking place at The University of Essex; the project has received ethical approval from The University of Essex Ethics Committee and is being supervised by Dr Ewen Speed.

What will happen:

In this study, you will be asked to discuss your experiences and views on a number of topics relating to the issue of happiness. These discussions will be recorded, and later transcribed and anonymised, and sections of them may be used in a published PhD thesis.

Discussions can last as long as you wish; although typically it is asked that you allow an hour or so of your time – to ensure that there is ample time to listen to all that you have to say!

Participants' rights:

You may decide to stop being a part of the research study at any time without explanation. You have the right to ask that any data you have supplied to that point be withdrawn/destroyed. In addition, you have the right to omit or refuse to answer or respond to any question that is asked of you if you so wish.

You have the right to have your questions about the procedures answered (unless answering these questions would interfere with the study's outcome). If you have any questions as a result of reading this information sheet, you should ask the researcher before the study begins.

Benefits and risks:

There are no known benefits or risks for you in this study.

Cost, reimbursement and compensation:

Your participation in this study is voluntary.

Confidentiality/ anonymity:

The data collected does not contain any personal information about you except some biographical questions asked towards the end of the discussion.

For further information:

Please contact Laura Knight – mobile phone: 07738 673 987 email: ljknig@essex.ac.uk – who will be glad to answer your questions about this study at anytime.

4. Consent Form

Title of Project: **An Exploration of the UK's Happiness Agenda**

Name of Researcher: **Laura Knight**

PLEASE INITIAL ALL BOXES

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet provided for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

3. I understand that anonymised relevant sections of my data collected during the study may be looked at by individuals from The University of Essex and I give permission for these individuals to have access to my anonymised data.

4. I understand that, and consent to, some of my discussions with researchers being recorded and sections of the anonymised transcripts being published in the project report.

5. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant:

Date:

Signature:

Name of Person taking consent:

Date:

Signature:

5. Interview Schedule

Turn on recorder.

<u>Opening</u>:

Introduce myself : Student at University of Essex... research is exploring 'happiness' across the UK... You have been asked to assist in this due to your involvement with 'Action for Happiness'; as you have clearly given happiness some thought.

Would like to ask you some questions about your definition of what 'happiness' is, your involvement with Action for Happiness and some experiences that you've had during this involvement, as well as some general biographical questions.

I will be recording the discussion today, and I may take some notes- but this only to make sure that we fully explore all of the points you raise.

And just to remind you that you don't have to answer a question if you so wish, and you are free to stop the interview at any point.

Could I just ask you to have a look through the participant information sheet – it's the one that I emailed you the other week - any questions?

Ask to sign the consent form.

<u>Action for Happiness</u>

I'd like to start by talking a little about Action for Happiness. So can you tell me about your involvement with AFH?

When did you become involved with the group?
How did you find out about it?
What motivated you to join?

Why are you involved?

What do you gain from your involvement?
What negatives (if any)...

<u>Biographical:</u>

I'd also like to talk a little about you and what you do. So can you tell me about yourself?

Age

Marital Status
-How long married for/how long divorced for/ever been married?

Children?
- How old, how many etc.

242

Do you work?
- What do you do?
- Do you enjoy it?

Where do you live?
-who with?-

Do you like living there?
- what do you like/dislike about the area?

Do you consider yourself to be in good health?

Do you have any hobbies/Interests
- involvement with any other groups other than AFH?
-how/why become involved with them?

<u>Happiness</u>

I'd like to talk about your feelings on the importance of happiness in society. But before we discuss this, I'd just like to start by establishing what the term 'happiness' means to you?

Describe a happy person...
Who is the happiest person you know, tell me about them.
Who is the saddest person you know, tell me about them.

And why is happiness so important?

What are the benefits of a happier society?
What are the consequences of an unhappy society?

And how can we make society happier?

Where is the best place to start improving happiness?
Why?

<u>Responsibility</u>

Who do you feel is responsible for ensuring the happiness of people in the UK?

Is this something that you feel lies with the individual themselves? Or is this something which is the concern for larger institutions... such as government departments?

Can you expand on this?

Why individual/government
Why not individual/ government?

And similarly, who is responsible for the unhappiness of people in the UK?

What causes unhappiness?
What can be done to prevent unhappiness?

<u>Social</u>

As someone who studies how society works, I'm particularly interested in the social context of happiness. And so would like to discuss this area a little with you.

So let's start with the age old question....Can money buy you happiness?

> (potential yes/no response, so need to ask them to explain their answer...)

(As well as money?) What other factors can impact on your happiness?/Anything else, other than money, that can impact on your happiness?

> *Health*
> *Gender*
> *Where you live*
> *Spiritualtiy/Religion*
> *Relationships/Family*

<u>Fairness</u>

I'd like to talk to you a little bit about fairness, and any relationship that it might have with people's happiness.

Can we be happy in an unfair society?

> *Why? Yes/No*
> > *How are happiness and fairness linked?*
> > *Why aren't they linked?*

Is a fair society, an equal one?

> *In a fair society, is everybody treated the same?*
>
> > *How do you make sure that everyone is treated the same?*
> >
> > > *-Laws?*
> > > *-Punishment?*
> > > *-Education?*
> > > *-Integration?*
> >
> > *Is this what happens in the UK?*
>
> *In a fair society, is wealth shared equally amongst all individuals?*
>
> > *Is this what happens in the UK?*
>
> *In a fair society, does everyone have the right to pursue and experience happiness?*

How can you ensure that everyone does actually have an equal opportunity to pursue happiness?

-Changing individual circumstance?

Closing Q's

Where would you say a lot of your values in life have come from?

> *Religious/spiritual?*
> *Family influence?*
> *Life experience...comparison with others?*

Do you have a philosophy of life?

> *What is it?*
> *Where has this come from?*
> > *Learnt?*
> > *Taught?*

And finally…do you consider yourself to be happy?

> *Why?*

_____

That's everything that I wanted to talk about; are there any other comments you'd like to make, or is there anything else that you'd like to discuss?

> *Free reign, depending on what they would like to say...*

Closing

I'd like to thank you again for agreeing to take part in my research, and just remind you that all the information you've provided here today will be anonymised if used, and from a confidentiality POV only myself and my supervisors will have access to the recordings and my notes.

If you have any questions about the study that you think of once we leave, my contact details are on the information sheet I've given to you- so feel free to give me a call/ email me.

Thanks & Goodbyes etc.

Turn off recorder.