

Rachel Allen

Happiness consultancy report

CST228, “Happiness: investigating its causes and conditions”

Autumn session, 2015

Cultural Studies, University of Wollongong

Subject coordinators: Chris Barker and Brian Martin

Assignment

The consultancy is a continuation of your reflective journal.

- You continue with the activity you used for your journal, or a different one, and/or an additional one.
- You recruit two or more individuals — called clients — to undertake an activity known to increase happiness, either the same activity as your own or a different one.
- You introduce your clients to the activity, for example through a presentation, talk, workshop and/or handout.
- You monitor their engagement with the activity on a regular basis (at least weekly) through observations, interviews, survey and/or other means.
- You evaluate the effect of the activity on yourself and your clients using questionnaires, interviews, focus groups and/or other techniques.

For more details see http://www.bmartin.cc/classes/CST_15outline.pdf

Rachel Allen's consultancy report starts on the next page.

This document is located at <http://www.bmartin.cc/classes/happiness-consultancy-tops/>.

While it has been suggested that 50% of an individual's happiness is pre-determined, 40% of our happiness come from the intentional activities we choose to do (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon and Schkade 2005). However, there are certain activities that have a greater impact upon one's happiness, two of which being cultivating optimism or positive thinking and also physical activity (Lyubomirsky 2010).

In choosing my initial activity, I focused on changing the biggest thing that brought me the most unhappiness. This was pessimistic thinking and dwelling on negative aspects of situations. In order to rid these habits, I kept a diary which I wrote in frequently, stating times I had consciously changed my negative thoughts into positive ones. The benefits of cultivating optimism have long been researched, with many studies showing that optimists tend to have better physical health, greater success in their professional life and more satisfying relationships (Carver, Scheier & Segerstorm 2010). They've also been known to have better mental health, reporting less depression and anxiety, as they are naturally in a more positive mood and utilise effective coping strategies (Andersson 1996). Renowned researcher in the field Martin Seligman also concludes that thinking positively encourages greater persistence in the face of obstacles and optimists are more resilient and realise that defeat or set backs are only temporary (Seligman 2002).

Unfortunately, before starting my original activity I did not take any happiness questionnaires and as a result I was unable to statistically analyse my happiness levels before and after keeping the optimism diary. Regardless, I felt within myself that I was a much happier person overall and was in a better mood. Hence, I will be continuing with cultivating optimism as my activity and recording diary entries, but feel as though I needed to add another activity. Upon completion of the 'Person-Activity Fit' Diagnostic (adapted from Sheldon 2001 in Lyubomirsky 2007), it had come to my attention that 'cultivating optimism' was my number two fit, with 'taking care of your body' my number one fit. Therefore I chose physical activity as my additional activity. A study conducted by Babyak et al (2000) concluded that exercise was as effective as using medication as a treatment method for depression, further stating that "the medication seemed to interfere with the beneficial effects of the exercise program" (pg.636).

One explanation for this could be that exercise causes the muscles to bind stress chemicals such as adrenaline, effectively neutralising their psychological impact and producing a more relaxed state of mind. Additionally, after exercise, there is an increase in circulating b-endorphins

which can help to promote mood elevation and increase one's pain threshold (Sarris, Kavanagh, & Newton 2008). I definitely found that these benefits applied to me. Increasing my level of exercise improved my mood, and I even saw that when there were two weeks of wet weather I became quite withdrawn and easily irritated, showing the positive impact that exercise had had on me. As my physical fitness improved, I had more energy and was constantly in a better mood.

Below is my exercise schedule I began before starting the activity to keep me on track and motivated.

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Monday	30 min run	Day off	1 hr bike ride	Weights and stretching
Tuesday	Weights & stretching	Walked the dog + weights & stretching	Weights & stretching	Day off
Wednesday	Soccer training	Soccer training	Soccer training	Soccer training
Thursday	Work + walked the dog	Work + 30 min run	Work	Work + 30 min run
Friday	Work + Flip Out	Work	Work	Work + body pump class
Saturday	Day off	3-4hr bush walk	Day off	Day off
Sunday	Soccer	Soccer	Soccer	Soccer

Client Recruitment and their introduction to the activity

I recruited two clients to undertake the activity of cultivating optimism to compare my results with theirs, and also with the literature. When deciding who to choose I considered both family and friends. However, I chose to go with friends as I thought my family may not feel completely comfortable with me reading their diaries. This also made the process as easy as possible for both myself and for my clients as I was not difficult to get in contact with if they needed to ask any questions once beginning the activity. As well as being convenient, neither had participated in a similar activity and hence I believed that each would get something positive out the activity.

Client 1 – Paige

Paige is 20 years old and is my neighbour. She is currently in her first year of a full time, five year Planning degree at UNSW. She is currently attending university four days a week and works at the local pub an average of 15-20 hours per week, as well as playing soccer on the weekend. As she is a new university student and due to her hectic university schedule and workload, she has found herself becoming increasingly stressed and often finds she is committing to too many things than she is capable of. She is often a little frazzled and rarely has an hour to herself to relax. I feel as though completing an optimism/positive thinking diary can relieve her of many stresses and gives her a moment in the day to herself where she can reflect upon how she is handling things.

Client 2 – Bec

Bec is 21 years old and is one of my close friends. She completed a Nursing degree last year and got a placement beginning this August at Sutherland Hospital. However, during her last semester, she failed an exam, postponing her ability to graduate at the end of last year. Luckily she was able to re-sit the exam and passed. This is significant as I saw it as a difficult time for her and she had to come to terms with the fact that her job may have been in jeopardy had she not passed the supplementary exam. She is a perfect candidate for the activity of cultivating optimism as she can tend to be like me in the fact that she dwells on negative situations longer than most, and this hinders her happiness.

However, she has been working at Shimano for the past six months until she begins her nursing position later in the year. For the last three months, she has had a very hectic working roster, working on average 40-52 hours a week. I have noticed that it has taken a toll on her wellbeing and overall mood, and believe she will benefit greatly by keeping an optimism diary to keep her spirits up.

When introducing my clients to the activity, I spoke to each separately about the theory of the activity to provide them with some context. I also shared my experiences of cultivating optimism and keeping a positive thinking diary with them. I feel as though by sharing my experiences it allowed them to see that this activity may indeed help them and I wasn't asking them to do something I had not done myself. Once they had agreed, I provided them with the following documents via email to introduce them to the activity:

1. 'Happiness Consultancy' activity introduction and instructions (see appendix 1)
2. 'Consent Form' (see appendix 2)
3. 'Information Sheet' (see appendix 3)

4. 'Oxford Happiness Questionnaire' (Hills & Argyle 2002) to determine an initial happiness score (see appendix 4)
5. 'Subjective Happiness Scale' (Lyubomirsky & Lepper 1999) to determine an initial happiness score and make sure it is consistent with the 'Oxford Happiness Questionnaire' score (see appendix 5)
6. 'Person-Activity Fit Diagnostic' (Sheldon 2001) to determine if cultivating optimism is a good fit for my clients and if not, what activity they could adopt in the future (see appendix 6)

Once I received each document back from them and had their consent to proceed, I was then able to calculate their happiness scores to use as a comparison once they completed the four week activity. However, I did not inform them of what their initial scores had been nor did I inform them of what activity was determined to be the best fit for them based on the Person-Activity Fit Diagnostic (Sheldon 2001). I did not want my clients to have any preconceived ideas as to what they should do or what I was expecting from them. Rather I let them complete the activity as per the instructions free from anything that may confound the results.

Monitoring client's engagement with the activity

In order to monitor both Paige's and Bec's involvement with keeping their optimism diary, I met each once a week for 10-15 minutes to talk about how they have been going with it, any issues they have had and if they feel it is beneficial to them. As I did not want to interfere too heavily on their activity, I did not ask to see their diaries but rather trusted them to complete it on their own. This weekly communication was crucial as it allowed me to see their progress and gauge how they were going with it. This face-to-face communication allowed for more open ended questions to be asked and I was able to read their non-verbal communication much more easily, which Birdwhistell (1970) states makes up 65% of messages. It allowed for feedback as they were able to ask questions they had relating to the activity. Furthermore, it allowed me to offer any advice I had as I completed the exact same activity they were doing. While it would have been easier to simply send a text message asking how they had been going, having face-to-face weekly meetings proved to be more beneficial to my clients and to me monitoring their involvement and progress.

On completion of the four week activity, I sat down with each client separately and together to speak about their experiences. During the separate meeting, I asked specific questions relating to their involvement and in the group meeting I asked general questions about the activity (see

appendix 7). I thought this to be a good idea so that we could all see how the activity impacted individuals similarly and differently. This provided great discussion points and made it clear how different activities affect and impact individuals differently.

I asked each of my clients to fill out the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (Hills & Argyle 2002) and the Subjective Happiness Scale (Lyubomirsky & Lepper 1999) again upon completion of the four weeks. This was so that I could compare their results from before and after the activity to determine if cultivating optimism had any impact on their happiness levels. I also got them to write a small reflection of their experience as sometimes these surveys can be quite general and not completely representative of one's happiness (Jahedi & Méndez 2014).

Evaluation

I evaluated both my own and my client's experiences based on the questionnaires and surveys done at the beginning and the end of our respective activities, our diaries kept throughout the four weeks and conversations throughout the activity duration.

Paige's evaluation

Before scores:

Oxford Happiness Questionnaire: 5.1

Subjective Happiness Scale: 4

After scores:

5.586

5.25

"Personally I do see great value in focusing on positive things in your life to improve happiness. Also it is important to place hardships in perspective to analyse how difficult they truly are. The first activity was good as it felt natural. I felt that it was silly to search for three negative things in order to flip them around, but would rather wait for something negative to occur before making this alteration in thought. It felt unnatural and it was hard to find three things each day. But it was interesting to explore how there is always various ways to observe an event. "

The above quote came directly from Paige about her experience with the activity. As can be seen from this summary and the comparison scores on the happiness surveys, it is clear that thinking positively can improve one's happiness and well-being.

Similar to a study conducted by Lyubomirsky (2010, p.91), I got my clients to write in a diary three times a week. Paige's experience reflected the results from Lyubomirsky's study, which stated that those that had to write three times a week became bored with the activity compared

to participants that only wrote in their diary once a week. As Paige noted, writing this frequently felt unnatural and was a disadvantage to the activity, but would have benefited more if she were to just write down things when she saw fit. In order to further increase her happiness levels, this could be a recommendation for her if she chooses to continue with the activity. I somewhat agree with Paige's feedback, but in my experience felt as though if I gave myself that freedom to write whenever I wanted, I would forget or simply not be bothered too, so I found having a set routine of when I would reflect and write much more beneficial than Paige.

Throughout my interviews and discussions with Paige, it became evident that her experience with cultivating optimism ran true with the literature on the topic. As Carver, Scheier and Segerstorm (2010) suggest, optimists tend to have more satisfying relationships, which I saw was a major benefit for Paige's experience. She made the most of the limited time she had with her friends and family due to her busy schedule and overall she was in a better mood.

As cultivating optimism was not Paige's fit according to the Person-Activity Diagnostic Fit (Sheldon 2001), in the future she could undertake savouring life's joys, as that was her top rated activity. People who are inclined to savour are typically more self-confident, extroverted and gratified (Lyubomirsky 2010). As this activity helps to promote self-confidence, it may also help Paige in avoiding overthinking and social comparisons which was her second ranked activity fit.

Bec's evaluation

Before scores:

Oxford Happiness Questionnaire: 4.07
Subjective Happiness Scale: 4.25

After scores:

4.06
4.25

Contrastingly to Paige's experience, Bec found little to no benefit of cultivating optimism, which is reflected in her unchanging happiness scores. Her reason as to why she felt it didn't work was that *"it wasn't an appropriate time for me to be included in this study and I don't believe it reflects my true happiness. Firstly I was doing a job I disliked, then to become unemployed and doing nothing at home."*

I believe that Bec started out with a negative outlook and was unable to change that even though the instructions were to think positively throughout the four weeks, due to her dislike for her current job and becoming unemployed taking over her thoughts. She states that *"when I start*

my nursing job I'll be the happiest I'll ever be because it is something I want to do" and that *"I do my best to hide my emotions...but I see this as my problem that will eventually go away once I start nursing."* From these two sentences it is clear to see that Bec places much of her happiness on the things she does each day, mainly her job. The main disadvantage of cultivating optimism for her then, may have been the fact that it highlighted how much she disliked her job and when she became unemployed made her realise that she was doing nothing with her life as this point in time. As a result, she may have become even unhappier, which is demonstrated in her before and after Oxford Happiness Questionnaire scores.

As a result, I think it would benefit Bec greatly if she were to do an activity in the future that actively got her out doing things, rather than commenting on what she has or has not done. This coincides with her Personal Activity Fit of committing to your goals. If Bec were to have a goal, she would put in conscious efforts to achieve it, which is said to be as important to well-being that its attainment (Brunstein 1993)

My evaluation

Before scores:

Oxford Happiness Questionnaire: 4.1

Subjective Happiness Scale: 3.375

After scores:

5.1

4.5

I experienced the greatest improvement of not only statistical happiness, based on the two surveys, but also the feeling of being happy. While I experienced my sense of happiness increase during the first five weeks of cultivating optimism and recording this in a diary, I felt as though I actually needed to do something to gain any lasting feeling of happiness. As a result, I did the Person-Activity Fit Diagnostic and found that taking care of your body was my number one fit. Hence, I decided to increase the level of physical activity I did in the hope that being physically active and healthy would also improve my mental health and happiness.

Not only did physical activity improve my fitness and physical health, it had a flow on effect into others areas of my life which elevate happiness, which can be seen from my constant positive mood in my diary. Firstly, as most of my activities involved aerobic exercise, I was able to increase my flow experiences, which is described by Csikszentmihalyi (2008) as a state of intense absorption and involvement with the present moment. By taking half an hour out of my day to go for a run for example, I was able to just be in the present, listen to my music, enjoy where I was and not worry about anything else. Flow is said to be beneficial to one's

happiness as the experience is fundamentally pleasurable and fulfilling that provides a natural high (Lyubomirsky 2010). Knowing I had exercised was intrinsically rewarding which was self-motivating to continue the activity.

Many of the days I exercised, I did so with friends. I found this to be the days where I most looked forward to exercising, and research has shown that individuals who exercise with a partner are likely to experience enhanced positive psychological benefits (Plante, Gustafson, Brecht, Imberi & Sanchez 2011). Plante et al (2011) go on to state that social interaction while exercising has been shown to make exercise more enjoyable, which is precisely how I felt. The biggest barrier however, was when there was a one to two week period of rain which denied me from exercising outside. I found that my motivation dropped significantly during this period and even though I was still exercising indoors, I didn't enjoy it as much as when I was outside. This outcome also coincides with Plante et al (2011) study concluding that exercising outdoors results in more enjoyment as well as less tension and stress.

In order to maintain or even increase my level of happiness, I feel as though I must continue with regular exercise. Within this realm, I can use different methods to improve my happiness, for example, creating goals in relation to exercise like completing a half marathon by the end of 2015. As stated previously, the journey towards a goal is sometimes just as rewarding as achieving it and I believe this is what I need to maintain and increase the happiness in my life.

Recommendations for continuing with the activity or choosing a better one

As was discussed with my clients prior to the commencement of this activity, I had chosen cultivating optimism for them as it was what I had done and I wished to compare our experiences with the literature. However, upon completion of the activity, it shows just how important it is to choose an activity that suits your own lifestyle, personality and interests. Schwarz, Kahneman and Diener (1999) identify that people who strive for something personally significant are happier than those who don't have strong aspirations. The same can be said about what it is people find happiness in. The very concept behind the Person-Activity Fit Diagnostic (Sheldon 2001) was to give people an idea for what they could do to increase their level of happiness, as intentional activity determines 40% of our happiness (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon and Schkade 2005). Although it seemed to work for me, it is not guaranteed that whatever the survey says is your fit will actually work for you. It is a guide to start you off, but it is ultimately up to the individual in finding the things that make them happy.

As a result, I would recommend for both Paige and Bec to begin an activity which reflected their best fit – for Paige, savouring life's joys and for Bec, creating and committing to personal goals. Hopefully their experience would be better than it was with cultivating optimism, however, if it did not work for them it is OK stop and change. As both my clients are still very young and are figuring out their lives, it is only natural that they change their minds, their interests and finding new and different things that make them happy.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: ‘Happiness Consultancy’ activity introduction and instructions

Hi and thank you for participating in my research on happiness, in particular how positive thinking and expressing gratitude can effect an individual’s happiness. I am asking this as I have completed this activity myself and found it extremely beneficial to my overall wellbeing. I am interested in seeing if the way we think about certain situations effects our happiness.

Before you continue, please make sure you have read and signed the **consent form**, had a glance over the **info sheet**, completed the **Subjective Happiness Scale** and the **Oxford Happiness Questionnaire**, as well as the **Person-Activity Fit Diagnostic**. Upon completion, please send them back to me and I can calculate your scores. These will be crucial for comparison once you have completed the activity.

Activity instructions

I will require a diary/log of some of your thoughts and feelings. This can be handwritten or typed. What I will require from you is the following:

- For the **first week, each day** write down **3 positive things** that happened to you. This could be from simply having an amazing sleep, going for a run, eating healthily to helping an elderly lady put her shopping in the car. I just want you to identify positive things that occur to you or that you do
- For the **next three weeks on Monday, Thursday and Saturday**, I would like you to write down **3 instances or situations** in which you have had **negative thoughts** or times when you have been unhappy, and I would like you to consciously **flip these negative thoughts to positive ones**. For example, “I ate too much chocolate and now I feel guilty and fat” to “I ate this chocolate and really enjoyed it but feel as though it wasn’t the healthiest option”, or “mum cooked the grossest meal for dinner” to “at least I got to have something to eat tonight”. Be aware of your negative thoughts but consciously modify them to be seen in a more positive light. I would like you to write down these situations, what you were thinking as soon as it happened and how you changed the thoughts and feelings to be seen in a more positive light.

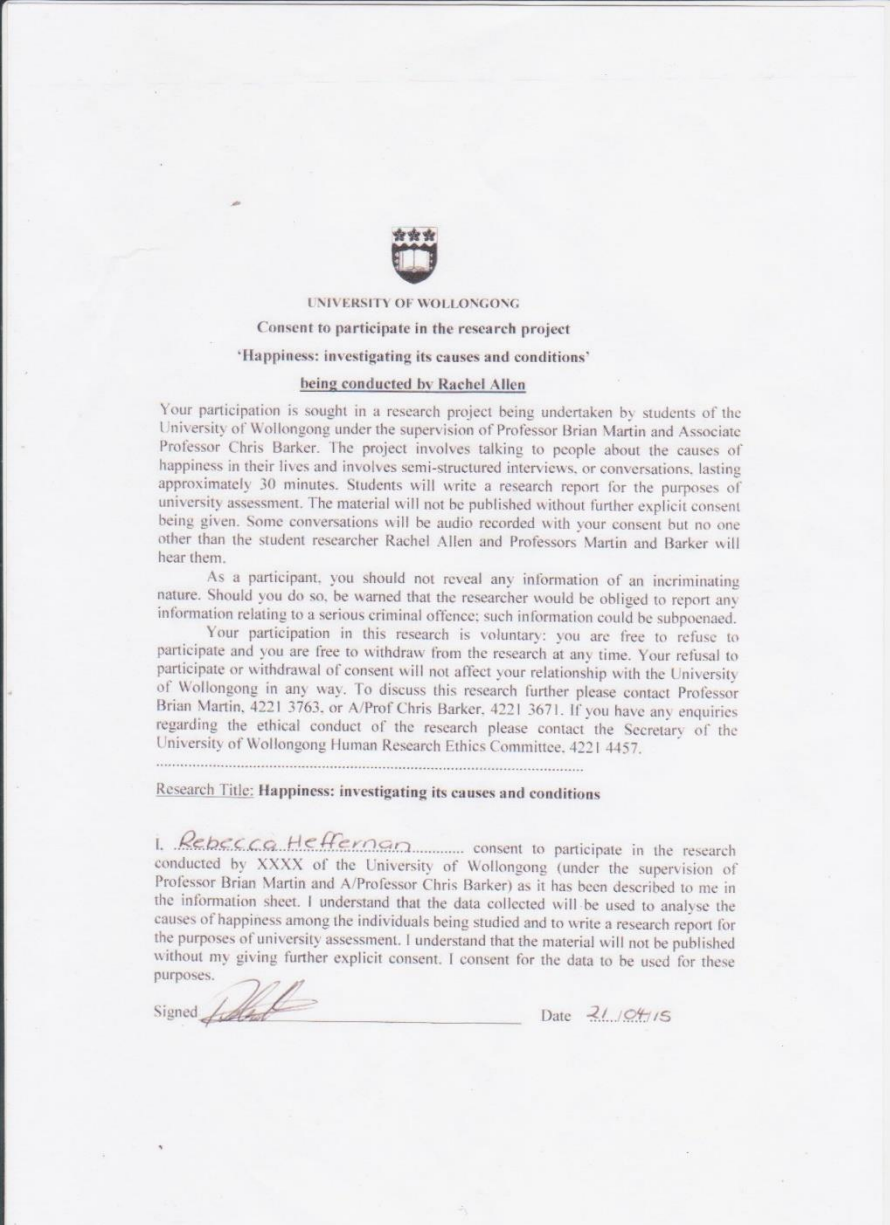
On completion on the four weeks or throughout, if you feel that works best for you, could you please write a summary of your experience. This can be in dot points or full sentences. Please include things like:


- If you or your friends/family noticed any changes in you and your mood/happiness levels/general wellbeing
- Anything you noticed e.g. you couldn't keep up with writing every day
- Any difficulties you had with the activity e.g. was writing every day too much, was writing only three times a week too little, did you find it hard to change your thoughts
- What benefits did you find with the activity?
- Has this activity impacted you and how you think? Do you believe you are a happier person?

You can obviously include more or different aspects, but please reflect on your personal experience and how this activity affected you.

Please contact me if you have any questions. If you could start the activity ASAP that would be much appreciated once you complete and return the attached documents.

Appendix 2: Consent Forms




UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

Consent to participate in the research project
'Happiness: investigating its causes and conditions'
being conducted by Rachel Allen


Your participation is sought in a research project being undertaken by students of the University of Wollongong under the supervision of Professor Brian Martin and Associate Professor Chris Barker. The project involves talking to people about the causes of happiness in their lives and involves semi-structured interviews, or conversations, lasting approximately 30 minutes. Students will write a research report for the purposes of university assessment. The material will not be published without further explicit consent being given. Some conversations will be audio recorded with your consent but no one other than the student researcher Rachel Allen and Professors Martin and Barker will hear them.

As a participant, you should not reveal any information of an incriminating nature. Should you do so, be warned that the researcher would be obliged to report any information relating to a serious criminal offence; such information could be subpoenaed.

Your participation in this research is voluntary; you are free to refuse to participate and you are free to withdraw from the research at any time. Your refusal to participate or withdrawal of consent will not affect your relationship with the University of Wollongong in any way. To discuss this research further please contact Professor Brian Martin, 4221 3763, or A/Prof Chris Barker, 4221 3671. If you have any enquiries regarding the ethical conduct of the research please contact the Secretary of the University of Wollongong Human Research Ethics Committee, 4221 4457.

Research Title: Happiness: investigating its causes and conditions

I, Rebecca Heffernan..... consent to participate in the research conducted by XXXX of the University of Wollongong (under the supervision of Professor Brian Martin and A/Professor Chris Barker) as it has been described to me in the information sheet. I understand that the data collected will be used to analyse the causes of happiness among the individuals being studied and to write a research report for the purposes of university assessment. I understand that the material will not be published without my giving further explicit consent. I consent for the data to be used for these purposes.

Signed  Date 21/04/15



UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

Consent to participate in the research project

'Happiness: investigating its causes and conditions'

being conducted by Rachel Allen

Your participation is sought in a research project being undertaken by students of the University of Wollongong under the supervision of Professor Brian Martin and Associate Professor Chris Barker. The project involves talking to people about the causes of happiness in their lives and involves semi-structured interviews, or conversations, lasting approximately 30 minutes. Students will write a research report for the purposes of university assessment. The material will not be published without further explicit consent being given. Some conversations will be audio recorded with your consent but no one other than the student researcher Rachel Allen and Professors Martin and Barker will hear them.

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Research Title: Happiness: investigating its causes and conditions

I, Paige Crowe consent to participate in the research conducted by XXXX of the University of Wollongong (under the supervision of Professor Brian Martin and A/Professor Chris Barker) as it has been described to me in the information sheet. I understand that the data collected will be used to analyse the causes of happiness among the individuals being studied and to write a research report for the purposes of university assessment. I understand that the material will not be published without my giving further explicit consent. I consent for the data to be used for these purposes.

Signed

Date 29/4/15

Appendix 3: Information Sheet**Information Sheet***for participants in the research project***Happiness: investigating its causes and conditions**

being conducted by Rachel Allen of the Media and Cultural Studies Program

Your participation is sought in a research project being undertaken by students of the University of Wollongong under the supervision of Professor Brian Martin and Associate Professor Chris Barker.

The project involves carrying out an assessment of the causes and conditions of happiness among individuals and making recommendations as to how happiness could be increased. Students will write up a report of the project's methods and findings that will be made available to you.

The project will involve carrying out semi-structured interviews, or conversations, with consenting adult participants lasting approximately 30 minutes. You will be asked questions such as "What do you most enjoy?" and "What would make you happier?"

The conversations may be tape-recorded with your consent but no one other than the student researchers Rachel Allen and Professor Brian Martin and Associate Professor Chris Barker will hear them notwithstanding the legal right of a court to subpoena transcripts in relation to criminal offences. It is not the intention to publish any of the material. However, should we later wish to do so, your further agreement will be sought. The tapes will be destroyed after transcription.

Your participation in this research is voluntary; you are free to decline to participate and you are free to withdraw from the research at any time. Your refusal to participate or withdrawal of consent will not affect your relationship with the University of Wollongong in any way. If you would like to discuss this research further please contact A/Prof Chris Barker on (02) 4221 3671 or Prof Brian Martin on (02) 4221 3763. If you have any enquiries regarding the ethical conduct of the research please contact the Secretary of the University of Wollongong Human Research Ethics Committee on (02) 4221 4457.

Appendix 4: 'Oxford Happiness Questionnaire' (Hills & Argyle 2002)**Instructions**

Below are a number of statements about happiness. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each by entering a number in the blank after each statement, according to the following scale:

- 1 = strongly disagree
- 2 = moderately disagree
- 3 = slightly disagree
- 4 = slightly agree
- 5 = moderately agree
- 6 = strongly agree

Please read the statements carefully, because some are phrased positively and others negatively. Don't take too long over individual questions; there are no "right" or "wrong" answers (and no trick questions). The first answer that comes into your head is probably the right one for you. If you find

some of the questions difficult, please give the answer that is true for you in general or for most of the time.

The Questionnaire

1. I don't feel particularly pleased with the way I am. (R) _____
2. I am intensely interested in other people. _____
3. I feel that life is very rewarding. _____
4. I have very warm feelings towards almost everyone. _____
5. I rarely wake up feeling rested. (R) _____
6. I am not particularly optimistic about the future. (R) _____
7. I find most things amusing. _____
8. I am always committed and involved. _____
9. Life is good. _____
10. I do not think that the world is a good place. (R) _____
11. I laugh a lot. _____
12. I am well satisfied about everything in my life. _____
13. I don't think I look attractive. (R) _____
14. There is a gap between what I would like to do and what I have done. (R) _____
15. I am very happy. _____
16. I find beauty in some things. _____
17. I always have a cheerful effect on others. _____
18. I can fit in (find time for) everything I want to. _____
19. I feel that I am not especially in control of my life. (R) _____
20. I feel able to take anything on. _____
21. I feel fully mentally alert. _____
22. I often experience joy and elation. _____
23. I don't find it easy to make decisions. (R) _____

24. I don't have a particular sense of meaning and purpose in my life. (R) _____
25. I feel I have a great deal of energy. _____
26. I usually have a good influence on events. _____
27. I don't have fun with other people. (R) _____
28. I don't feel particularly healthy. (R) _____
29. I don't have particularly happy memories of the past. (R) _____

Appendix 5: 'Subjective Happiness Scale' (Lyubomirsky & Lepper 1999)

For each of the following statements and/or questions, please circle the point on the scale that you feel is most appropriate in describing you.

1. In general, I consider myself:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not a very happy person						a very happy person

2. Compared with most of my peers, I consider myself:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
less happy						more happy

3. Some people are generally very happy. They enjoy life regardless of what is going on, getting the most out of everything. To what extent does this characterization describe you?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all						a great deal

4. Some people are generally not very happy. Although they are not depressed, they never seem as happy as they might be. To what extent does this characterization describe you?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all						a great deal

Appendix 6: 'Person-Activity Fit Diagnostic' (Sheldon 2001)

Consider each of the following 12 happiness activities. Reflect on what it would be like to engage in each activity every week for an extended period of time. Then rate each activity by writing a number from 1 to 7 in the space next to the words Natural, Enjoyment, Value, Guilt and Situation. These terms describe different reasons for why we might choose to engage in a given activity:

Natural: I'll keep doing this activity because it will feel "natural" to me, and I'll be able to stick with it.

Enjoyment: I'll keep doing this activity because I'll enjoy doing it; I'll find it to be interesting and challenging.

Value: I'll keep doing this activity because I'll value and identify with doing it; I'll do it freely even when it's not enjoyable.

Guilt: I'll keep doing this activity because I would feel guilty, ashamed or anxious if I didn't do it; I'll force myself to do it.

Situation: I'll keep doing this activity because my particular situation will compel me to or because somebody else will want me to.

Use this 7-point scale to rate each activity on these five dimensions:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all			Somewhat	Very much		

1. Expressing Gratitude: Counting your blessings for what you have (either to a close other or privately, through contemplation or a journal) or conveying your gratitude and appreciation to one or more individuals whom you've never properly thanked.

Natural _____ Enjoyment _____ Value _____ Guilt _____ Situation _____

2. Cultivating Optimism: Keeping a journal in which you imagine and write about the best possible future for yourself or practicing to look at the bright side of every situation.

Natural _____ Enjoyment _____ Value _____ Guilt _____ Situation _____

3. Avoiding Overthinking and Social Comparison: Using strategies (such as distraction) to cut down on how often you dwell on your problems and compare yourself with others.

Natural _____ Enjoyment _____ Value _____ Guilt _____ Situation _____

4. Practicing Acts of Kindness: Doing good things for others, whether friends or strangers, either directly or anonymously, either spontaneously or planned.

Natural _____ Enjoyment _____ Value _____ Guilt _____ Situation _____

5. Nurturing Social Relationships: Picking a relationship in need of strengthening and investing time and energy in healing, cultivating, affirming and enjoying it.

Natural _____ Enjoyment _____ Value _____ Guilt _____ Situation _____

6. Developing Strategies for Coping: Practicing ways to endure or surmount a recent stress, hardship or trauma.

Natural _____ Enjoyment _____ Value _____ Guilt _____ Situation _____

7. Learning to Forgive: Keeping a journal or writing a letter in which you work on letting go of anger and resentment toward one or more individuals who have hurt or wronged you.

Natural _____ Enjoyment _____ Value _____ Guilt _____ Situation _____

8. Increasing Flow Experiences: Increasing the number of experiences at home and work in which you "lose" yourself, which are challenging and absorbing.

Natural _____ Enjoyment _____ Value _____ Guilt _____ Situation _____

9. Savoring Life's Joys: Paying close attention, taking delight, and replaying life's momentary pleasures and wonders, through thinking, writing, drawing, or sharing with another.

Natural _____ Enjoyment _____ Value _____ Guilt _____ Situation _____

10. Committing to Your Goals: Picking one, two, or three significant goals that are meaningful to you and devoting time and effort to pursuing them.

Natural _____ Enjoyment _____ Value _____ Guilt _____ Situation _____

11. Practicing Religion and Spirituality: Becoming more involved in your church, temple or mosque or reading and pondering spiritually themed books.

Natural _____ Enjoyment _____ Value _____ Guilt _____ Situation _____

12. Taking Care of Your Body: Engaging in physical activity, meditating, and smiling and laughing.

Natural _____ Enjoyment _____ Value _____ Guilt _____ Situation _____

Appendix 7: General Meeting Questions

Are you enjoying the activity so far?

What are you enjoying the most and least?

Are you beginning to change your thinking or behaviour in certain situations and overall?

Is it becoming easier or more difficult to carry out the activity?

What factors are helping you to continue the activity?

What factors are making it difficult for you to continue the activity?

If you were to repeat the activity, what would you do to increase the likelihood of continuing with it?

Would you recommend the activity to others?

If so, would you try to encourage them to undertake it? If so, how?