

# HAPPINESS STUDIES:

## *Co-Production of Social Science and Social Order*

by Margareta Hallberg and Christopher Kullenberg

*This article is about the growth and establishment of the interdisciplinary research field "Happiness Studies". This article focuses on how research on happiness has become a quickly growing and successful field within western societies and what it says about both the social sciences and contemporary social order. The concept of co-production, as defined by Sheila Jasanoff, is used to show how science and society interact and influence each other. Hence, we show how happiness has become a significant topic for empirical studies and the way interdisciplinary research is intertwined with what is perceived as both challenging and worth striving for in society and culture.*

**Keywords:** Co-production, happiness studies, social sciences

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## Introduction

In the recent decades, empirical studies on happiness have increased significantly (Kullenberg and Nelhans 2015). Several social science disciplines, such as psychology, economics, public health, political science, and to some extent also sociology, have participated in this surge. Research on happiness has rapidly grown even in fields like philosophy, psychiatry, cognitive neuroscience and gerontology, indicating a broad academic engagement in how people's feelings and expectations are expressed in different life situations. There are various ways to understand and/or explain this increase, both internal and external. In this article,<sup>1</sup> the purpose is to analyse the growth and stabilisation of the interdisciplinary field happiness studies through the crucial idea of co-production, as developed within science and technology

studies (STS) (Latour 1993; Jasanoff 2004).

We will begin by presenting our analytical approach based on co-production. Thereafter, we will connect this perspective with research on the conditions of social knowledge in particular, as our focus is on a multidisciplinary field that has grown out of sociology, psychology and economics. This way we can proceed to our analysis of the making of a science of happiness, which, we argue, has made an impact on how culture and identities are shaped in contemporary societies and, in turn, contribute to configuring society and its institutions in a particular way. Finally, we will discuss these findings in relation to the role of happiness studies in the social sciences.

## Analytical approach: co-production

For several decades and in numerous studies, STS have convincingly shown the mutual interdependency between science/technology and society (Felt et al. 2017). It is claimed that scientific and/or technological developments cannot be understood without relating them to the social context in which they flourish. In other words, the claim is that science is a social activity and should be analysed as such. In 2004, Sheila Jasanoff edited the book *States of Knowledge*, in which she elaborated on the concept of co-production and its usefulness when trying to learn how the natural and social orders are being produced together. The idiom of "co-production" was introduced to avoid possible reductionist accounts, (i.e. both natural and social determinism). According to Jasanoff, '[...] co-production is shorthand for the proposition that the ways in which we know and represent the world (both nature and society) are inseparable from the ways in which we choose to live in it'. (2004, 2). Co-production thus signifies that science and technology constitute the world around us at the same time as they are embedded in the social.

The idiom of co-production helps demonstrate how new objects and phenomena come into existence, how controversies are created and resolved, how knowledge becomes stabilised, and how science and technology are made legitimate and meaningful. Jasanoff covered opposing trends within STS itself, under the umbrella concept of co-production, indicating a possible synthesis of common orientations, although with different emphasis. Even though STS are her main area of interest, she also addressed traditional social sciences and, to some extent, the humanities with the same concept. Co-production 'fits most comfortably with the interpretative turn in the social sciences, emphasising dimensions of meaning, discourse and textuality' (Jasanoff 2004,

4). What is more, co-production offers new ways of thinking about power, structures, expertise, knowledge, and relations of authority. Thus, it is an encompassing concept, useful for most analyses of knowledge and social order and of the complex processes producing both.

With the emphasis of co-production, it becomes clear that the way we speak of science and society matures. Often, science is said to speak to power, where a move from scientific results to the surrounding society is presupposed. For a long time, science has been regarded as one of the central forces for industry, innovation, welfare, medical care, higher education, and so on, and the course has generally been thought of as leading from science to society. Although various groups have recently started to question the reliability of facts, for decades the image of science as the major knowledge-producer has been quite solid.

What is not equally recognised, apart from by STS scholars and those acquainted with this body of knowledge, is how much society in turn influences science. Science has been put on pedestal as an entity, separate from other institutions and with no other goals than a search for truth. However, likely many of the problems that ordinary citizens experience regarding, for instance, occupational, relational, technical, environmental and health matters have an impact on what scientists choose to explore. Alarming issues tend to attract diverse efforts from knowledge-based expertise to help in overcoming difficulties, threats and dangers. Moreover, politicians and decision-makers take a strong interest, at least for their purposes, in research that is useful for solving or helping solve emerging problems.

<sup>1</sup> This article was written within the research project "The Co-production of Social Science and Society: The Case of Happiness studies", which was funded by the Swedish Research Council (grant number 2012-1117). It should be noted that neither the research project, nor this article are about happiness itself. It is not an analysis of what happiness entails, nor of what might make people happy, which concept of happiness is preferable, if happiness correctly captures a mental state, or whether it is shallow or misguided. A substantial amount of literature exists in which happiness as such is dealt with; it is thoroughly discussed by Jonathan Haidt, 2006. Instead, here, we look at how research on happiness has become a quickly growing field within modern western societies and what that says about both the social sciences and contemporary social order.



Science and society are never separated, always interacting; thus, power and people also speak to science. The co-production idiom highlights the interdependency between science and society and between the various actors in both.

This article suggests that co-production is a valuable analytical concept for identifying how research, politics and people together shape the world because the notion turns our attention in a specific direction towards the seamless web of conscious and unconscious ambitions and strives to unite people and institutions in common aims. This makes the concept of co-production a useful concept

## Social Knowledge/Social Order

The impact of the social sciences on society is sometimes explicit, for instance, when social scientists produce government white papers or make policy recommendations to politicians, public authorities and decision-makers. Sometimes, the effects are implicit or even hidden but still real.

The social sciences take part in defining what society is, what it can be like, and what it ought to be like. Many issues tend to emerge from below, from experiences and challenges in real life. People look for knowledge about the world they live in to make it comprehensible and sometimes even bearable because the social world is filled with paradoxes. This is manifested in, for example, the numerous and best-selling self-help books on happiness (see for example, Lyubomirsky 2007; Dolan 2014). When people find human behaviour hard to immediately understand or feel sympathy for, both the social sciences and the humanities may assist in sorting things out, at least indirectly. Ideally, politicians, decision-makers and civil servants turn to the knowledge producers to find support for their actions or to find guidance in difficult matters. There is movement back and forth between the political level and ongoing research, notably within the social sciences and humanities, as they appear to be closer to the citizens than many natural sciences.

Findings from the social sciences are sometimes regarded as being 'softer' because in comparison with the natural sciences, they lack material technologies that are stable over time. Paradoxically, however, the knowledge production of quantitative social sciences has made a deep imprint in modern societies (Desrosières 1998; Horn 1994; Kullenberg 2010; Patriarca 1996; Porter 1995). Consequently, the average conception of social sciences seems to be contradictory to say the least. Findings that appear as soft still have hard effects on the organisation of modern societies,

## The making of a science of happiness

Empirical research on happiness started on a small scale in the 1970s and 80s (Veenhoven 1988). Previous research on the development

for understanding how the research-based knowledge and social order of happiness studies has grown.

In the co-production framework, one considers four well-documented pathways along which co-production occurs: the making of identities, institutions, discourses and representations (Jasanoff 2004, 38). A major task is to investigate the interconnected relationship between the production of scientific knowledge and social processes at various levels (i.e. how science interacts with societal and cultural practices, ideas, ideologies and/or other salient, public themes).

especially as they make possible a calculus of happiness in 'society as a whole' (Latour et al. 2012), or as Verran puts it, numbers are *performative* as they enact a 'whole-part' relation as they generalise the (in our case social-) world (Verran 2013, 28).

The wishes and claims of people and policymakers create images of what matters in specific times and hence influences what social scientists put on their agendas to research. Professionals, such as clinical psychologists, social workers, physicians and police officers, need to base their practices on, or let themselves be guided by, defensible results in order to continue to be respected and regarded as reliable in society. The community, in turn, wants professionals to act in a competent and informed manner.

Similarly, priorities and goals change in accordance with new challenges, hopes and wishes, which, in turn, have effects on "what knowledge of what" is expected from the researchers and the specialists. Academics are encouraged to reach out to the public and prove the value of their research and also to listen to what people require. The evaluations and assessments of social science research results are intended to provide the best possible knowledge in order to influence or dictate the direction chosen. There is a loop or a circle integrating research, politics, citizens and social order. This does not mean that one causes the other or is fundamental, rather that there is an interrelated process through which the human world is shaped and 'society cannot function without knowledge any more than knowledge can exist without appropriate social supports' (Jasanoff 2004, 2–3).

As the social sciences produce knowledge essential to both politics and people, they have power to change human life, including how such a phenomenon as human happiness is rendered knowable and, consequently, acted upon.

of this area of study has shown that a focus on happiness grew progressively in several scientific disciplines, in particular, since the



year 2000, with an immense increase in the number of publications on the topic in recent decades (Kullenberg and Nelhans 2015, 619). Many concepts are used to study states of mind akin to happiness: "subjective well-being", "positive affect", "life satisfaction" and sometimes the more general notion of "quality of life".

Happiness has existed, one might argue, for long as an emotional state and an everyday word. The question of what makes people happy has occupied the human mind for thousands of years, and philosophers and prophets have concerned themselves with happiness throughout history (Haidt 2006). However, in the western philosophical tradition, two points of reference are often made, either in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (1991) or Jeremy Bentham's *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1879[1789]), both of which resonate with contemporary research, often under the terminology of "eudaimonic happiness" (see for example, Ryff 1989) and "hedonic happiness" (see for example, Kahnemann et al. 1997). Jeremy Bentham's vision of finding an exact measurement of happiness that would work as a well-honed instrument for determining the correct form of government – one that rested firmly on the principle of utility – could, of course, not be simply transferred from its eighteenth century conception and become instantly inflated into contemporary research (Zevnik 2014, 105-119). The enlightenment idea of a political arithmetic based on a felicific calculus has to be co-produced both as a science and as a political programme simultaneously. However, Bentham's vision was not realised during his lifetime. As an object for empirical studies, happiness is a latecomer.

Early surveys of happiness, such as Beckham's (1929) study "Is the Negro Happy?", Watson's (1930) "Happiness Among Adult Students of Education" and Hartmann's (1934) "Personality Traits Associated with Variations in Happiness", began to use simple scales for measuring self-reported levels of happiness to work in "real" surveys, mostly among student populations. These pioneering empirical studies did not have well-defined terminology of what happiness was, nor had they established any form of standardised scales. Nonetheless, they were beginning to struggle progressively with the ordeals of questionnaires and sample sizes. In 1967, psychologist Warner Wilson summed up the primary results of a number of studies conducted from the 20s and onwards. He concluded that happiness could be correlated with age, health, education, income, religiosity, marriage, etc. (Wilson, 1967). Wilson's synthetic meta-study reported on empirical facts of 'avowed happiness', and it glimpsed with fresh eyes into the question of what were the causes of human happiness. Unlike the case of the nineteenth century utilitarians, happiness could finally be *measured* as a practical felicific calculus, with the cold sobriety of statistical association being put to use in real surveys. Wilson was able to conclude that knowledge about human happiness had accumulated; thus, the first steps towards an emerging field called 'happiness studies' had been taken.

However, the hedonic conception of happiness has both co-existed and sometimes competed with the notion of eudaimonic

happiness, derived from Aristotle's ancient works. In the 1980s, a number of psychologists wanted to turn the attention to the realisation of the individual's true potential as an essential component of happiness (or Eudaimonia) 'in the sense of an excellence, a perfection toward which one strives, and it gives meaning and direction to one's life' (Ryff 1989, 1070). Rather than striking a balance between pleasure and pain, as Bentham defined happiness, this Greek ambition towards self-realisation and strive towards living a "full" life resonates with what Foucault called "the care of self", in his seminal work of the third volume of *The History of Sexuality* (1986[1984]).

The practice of measuring happiness continued progressively. Notable large-scale surveys that include subjective measurements of happiness and well-being were the World Values Survey (1981), Eurobarometer (1973) and a large number of national surveys.

During the 1980s, there were several attempts to measure happiness, life-satisfaction and subjective well-being, methods that are used frequently within several disciplines today. The two most notable examples, as well as the most cited references in happiness studies, are the works of psychologists Diener et al. (1985) and Watson et al. (1988). They introduced and defined specific measurement scales, the *Satisfaction With Life Scale* (SWLS) and the *Positive and Negative Affect Schedule* (PANAS), respectively. These scales measured life satisfaction and affect, a combination which covered one of the most central concepts in contemporary happiness studies: *Subjective well-being* (SWB). Psychologist Ed Diener (see especially Diener 1984; Diener et al. 1999), who is also the single most cited author in the field of happiness studies (Kullenberg & Nelhans 2015), is perhaps the best-known advocate of the concept of SWB. In a 1984 article, he defined SWB as consisting of two entirely subjective aspects: *satisfaction with life* and *positive affect*. Diener explicitly distanced himself from any 'normative standards' that are implicated in, for example, Aristotle's *eudaimonia* (1984, 543).

However, these recent ways of measuring happiness fall back on a set of older scales that date back to the 1960s, when subjective indicators were first being discussed seriously. Bradburn (1969) conducted an early study that measured positive and negative affects in a similar way as Watson et al. (1988). Moreover, Andrews and Withey's "Social Indicators of Well-being" (1976) is a large-scale survey that pioneered the measurement of well-being, using the 'Delighted-Terrible Scale' (DT). In Cantril's ambitious cross-national study "The Pattern of Human Concerns" (1965), the 'Self-Anchoring Striving Scale' was defined to measure satisfaction and dissatisfaction among people. Finally, we end with the 'Life Satisfaction Index' by Neugarten et al. (1961), which comprises two major scales for measuring self-perceived life satisfaction.

In addition to the opposition between hedonic and eudaimonic happiness, there is also a tension between so-called subjective and objective indicators in happiness studies that are particularly



spelled out in sociology (Kullenberg & Nelhans 2017). It signals a contrast that social scientists make between, on the one hand, the subjective experience of satisfaction, happiness, sadness or any other emotional state, and, on the other hand, the objective, material aspects of everyday life such as housing, child mortality or nutrition. This tension depends in part on different knowledge traditions in the disciplines engaged in the field and in part on the relationship between a given discipline and the state.

In accordance with the assumptions in their respective specialty, researchers tend to emphasise either individuals' own experiences or social/cultural surroundings and structures. Subjective indicators (i.e. how persons estimate his/her level of happiness) could be measured more or less out of context through questions about feelings, family, friends, hopes and fears. In addition, the level of happiness might be valued as high by persons living in objectively poorer circumstances. Nor do objective indicators necessarily capture how satisfied an individual is with his or her life. Income and other economic factors, political rights, living area, status of health and so on are relevant for an overall picture of life conditions in a given society, regardless of how each individual feels about them. In 1974, the economist Richard Easterlin was already arguing that empirical data showed that economic growth only increased happiness up to a certain level. He showed that the populations of rich countries had higher degrees of happiness compared to those in poor countries. He also showed that if only the rich population was accounted for as an isolated unit of analysis, the increase in economic growth did not seem to increase the levels of happiness (1974, 118). Moreover, American economist Tibor Scitovsky, Easterlin's contemporary, published *The Joyless Economy* in 1976, which had a similar critique of thinking of populations as mere rational consumers, overlooking any psychological needs that went beyond simple consumer decisions. Scitovsky argued that the hard-working American population had begun consuming more and more, but had not become happier. Rather, despite the material successes, they had instead become unhappy (Scitovsky 1976).

The use of objective indicators has long been standard in the so-called welfare states, particularly, the Scandinavian countries. In the 1960s, before empirical research began on happiness, Swedish sociologists and political scientists were conducting surveys on levels of living, based exclusively on objective indicators (see Noll & Zapf 1994). By then, social scientific knowledge had been co-produced with political imaginaries of what constitutes values in a welfare state. A close relationship between the state and parts of the social sciences has endured in Scandinavia, although the ideal of a free and independent role for scientists has rarely ever been questioned (Fridjonsdottir 1991, Erikson & Uusitalo 1987). Still, politicians continuously point out areas in need of further knowledge and often turn to social scientists to assist with research.

In happiness studies, quantitative research is conducted more frequently, with surveys playing an important role, while the number of qualitative methods is scarce. The main reason for this is, as Kullenberg and Nelhans have shown, that disciplines with a strong tendency towards quantitative methods, especially psychology, medicine and quantitative sociology, have come to dominate happiness studies (Kullenberg & Nelhans 2015). Viewing this tendency through the lens of co-production, our conclusion is that precisely these disciplines are particularly convincing at meeting society's need for generalisable quantitative data, and this partially explains the uptake of happiness studies in broader social contexts.

Moreover, one perceived advantage of collecting quantitative data is the assumed possibility of making comparisons. A starting point in making comparisons is to find out more about what makes people satisfied with life, in terms of different countable variables. Education, profession, living conditions, economic standing, family size, friendships, health conditions and so on are quite convenient to study through questionnaires and then relate to questions of subjective life satisfaction. When a great number of happiness studies reaches the same results as to which nation scores the highest in happiness, it is possible to further analyse what matters most to its inhabitants. As always with surveys, without direct contact with the respondents it is hard to know whether the answers are accurate, the categories are exhaustively structured, or the comparisons between countries or nations are sufficiently refined.

While the scales that were discussed during the 1980s are still widely used, there have been recent suggestions for measuring happiness, for example, Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999) and Kahnemann et al. (2004), where the former is a brief scale for measuring 'subjective happiness' (SHS) and the latter designates the 'Day Reconstruction Method' (DRM), in which respondents are asked to reconstruct their experienced feelings on a daily basis.<sup>2</sup>

Since the turn of the millennium, journals with a happiness theme or focus has increased in general social science publications. In addition, the establishment of special journals directly addressing research on quality of life demonstrates how this subject becomes of greater interest in different research fields. In 2000, the interdisciplinary *Journal of Happiness Studies* was founded, followed by *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes* in 2002, *Journal of Positive Psychology* in 2003, *Applied Research in Quality of Life* in 2003, *British Journal of Wellbeing* in 2010, *Psychology of Wellbeing* in 2011, *International Journal of Wellbeing* in 2011, *International Journal of Happiness and Development* in 2012, and *Journal of Happiness and Well-Being* in 2012.

Today, various measurements of happiness are frequently used in cross-national comparisons outside academic research, for

<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, we are unable to analyse these two scales in this short article. Lyubomirsky et al. is interesting because it is a light-weight scale that connects to the field of positive psychology. The Day Reconstruction Method of Kahneman et al. is also relevant because Kahneman (Kahneman et al. 1997) has made explicit attempts elsewhere to connect his concept of 'experienced utility' to Bentham's original vision. Nevertheless, it is our intention to return to them in-depth elsewhere.



example, in the *United Nations' Human Development Report* (UNDP 2013) and the *World Happiness Report* (Helliwell et al. 2012), a trend which dates back to the first interim report by the United Nations in 1961, where new indicators of welfare were established, including subjective measurements. Happiness and well-being are becoming increasingly important issues in policymaking, which could be regarded as a return of the 'greatest happiness principle', as outlined by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill in the nineteenth century. In the UK, the Office for National Statistics provides regular nation-wide measurements of various aspects of well-being and happiness, as a complement to GDP (Powell 2014).

The questionnaires are designed to capture both positive and negative conditions and experiences. The results can be compared across a wide range of categories, such as generation, gender, class, education and countries, allowing the level of happiness in one context to be contrasted to another. Since 2012, *The World Happiness Report*, published by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, has annually ranked the happiness levels of 155 countries. Countries scoring high on these measures are considered as inhabiting a happy population, or at least a happier one than those scoring lower. Measurements of subjective well-being have multiplied after the turn of the millennium, and prominent organisations such as the OECD

(2015) and the United Nations (Helliwell et al. 2012) have not only begun measuring various subjective aspects of well-being, but they also actively promote it as an important value in societal development.

In looking at the growth and establishment of happiness studies, the use of the co-production concept sheds new light on how the multi-disciplinary increase in studies of happiness occurred. Following the co-production concept, both the emergence and stabilisation of a new phenomenon and the modification of the cultural practices where research on the new phenomenon is done are of significance. Happiness has emerged and been stabilised through academic (and also societal, see below) processes. Happiness now has a significant identity in many social sciences, as being possible and valuable to measure. The social sciences, as institutions, take on the representation of this identity through various discourses: journals, conferences, seminars, results and outreach. Hereby, the cultural practices within the social sciences are modified (i.e. the representation of the happy identity and the ascending discourses create possibilities for new academic posts, externally funded projects and individual career building). The rise of happiness as a researchable identity has been well received in influential areas of the social sciences and brought about a new research object. However, some reluctance still remains, particularly among sociologists and critical scholars.

## Happiness, identity and culture

Equally important as the emergence of a science of happiness is that during recent decades, happiness has apparently come to the forefront in contemporary society and culture. Conceived as being the opposite to suffering, happiness is thought of as worth striving for, in most parts of the globalised world. This turn to happiness in our culture has been critically analysed by Ahmed (2010). She argues that happiness is a promise that directs us towards certain life choices and away from others, particularly in popular culture and discourse.

Furthermore, popular culture and mass media widely report on happiness. They offer magazines and books with appealing titles on how to have a happy life, become a more satisfied person and achieve fame, wealth or power, thereby representing what a happy identity is. Happiness signals success: white teeth, healthy cooking, close relationships and a slim body are presented as means to come closer to a happier self. The beauty industry is keen on helping with smart advertisements on anti-ageing substances or even plastic surgery to model the body, to feel better and to gain a younger and more pleasant look. Although the products and practices are often expensive, sales of them seem to be flourishing.

Mental and psychological states are particularly visible in the popular happiness culture. There is even an International Day of Happiness, March 20, which is celebrated in many parts of the world. One finds a wide range of (westernised) Buddhist thoughts in both philosophical and more popular writings and on websites, and in commercial advertising, where inner peace, meditation and mindfulness are all related to the road to happiness (Haidt 2006). In the western world, yoga has become popular and also an industry with its focus on bodily control, meditation and balance, attracting both men and women (Singleton 2010). In contrast, but with the same goal of achieving happiness, there has been recent bestseller literature written by academic researchers on systematic and evidence-based methods of changing one's life to become happier. Notable examples include Sonja Lybomirsky "The How of Happiness" (2007), which is marketed as drawing 'on her own groundbreaking research with thousands of men and women'<sup>3</sup> and Paul Dolan's "Happiness by Design" (2014), which 'combines the latest insights from economics and psychology to illustrate that in order to be happy we must behave happy.'<sup>4</sup> Thus, feeling well and being satisfied with one's life situation seems like a prerequisite to a happy identity, regardless of whether you turn to meditation and yoga or research-driven self-help books.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://thehowofhappiness.com/> (retrieved 2018-05-08)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Happiness-Design-Change-What-Think/dp/150463243X> (retrieved 2018-05-08)



In addition, workplaces and employers support the ideal of happy, successful people. Managers encourage fitness and well-being and having employees stay in good physical and psychological shape to cope with what is often expressed as increasingly demanding jobs. The opposite, unhappiness and suffering, indicates difficulties, for people dealing with challenges both at work and possibly in life. People with unfortunate life conditions, combined with having anger management problems or depression, risk having long periods of sick leave and perhaps no final cure. Research has shown that happiness makes people more productive, and lower level of happiness is systematically associated with lower productivity (Oswald et al. 2015). According to Oswald et al., there is a link between human well-being and human performance. It is possible that employers who learn about the suggested connection between happiness and efforts at work would pay more attention to both the working environment and individual prevention, but also avoid taking on unhappy people.

As a consequence, there is a message in the focus on happiness and the matching ideals and slogans about being of sound mind and body because a social order always entails norms about right and wrong, good and bad. Thus, the outcome of the push for a happy identity also has a disadvantage to those not fulfilling the norm. Subsequently, we are all told one way or another from several sectors in society that happiness is a desirable state of mind and that we will be better off in life if happy rather than sad. For those who fail and do not have the cultural markers of success, life could be harsh and miserable.

The joint process in which social science interacts with political, professional and individual motives makes it possible to construct happiness as an identity, as represented by the social sciences' discourses in popular culture and demands from work places and the political sphere. Happiness studies have evolved and become stabilised because they have moved through a receptive culture, one which agrees that happiness is important to achieve. There are many signs that the empirical object of happiness, and the sciences engaged in studying it, has developed in a context where there is a 'constant interplay of the cognitive, the material, the social and the normative' (Jasanoff 2004, 38).

## Discussion

The orientation towards individual success encourages people to learn how to become happy, reach physical and psychological well-being, balance emotions, have a long and healthy life, nourishing relationships, and so on. At the same time, governments want to control the societal costs for life-long comfort and satisfaction, so they support people who can make knowledge-based recommendations on how to reach a good life through changes in

Studies of happiness are not limited to a certain age group. The earliest quantitative analyses of well-being were developed within gerontology, where the imaginative concept of "successful ageing" was launched (Neugarten et al. 1961). In most parts of the modern world, ageing populations are regarded as an acute problem for social policy and stability; moreover, ageing is regarded as a problem for elderly people themselves. Within gerontology, medical research looks for new and seemingly more effective drugs, new and better investigation methods and treatments of health-related problems, and more effective preventive measures. Yet, ageing means more than physical decline and difficulties related to failing health. Through happiness studies, a certain space for collecting data on how elderly people live, feel and experience their lives opens up, and the results from these studies are expected to add valuable knowledge to society.

From these studies, a possibility arises that those who are part of the socio/science interventions can have a change in identity. On the one hand, it seems plausible to suggest that persons who attract interest from researchers and are objects for improved measures of life conditions will feel more included and empowered than when given little societal attention. People's self-image largely depends on the way others look at them and how their position counts in the culture they are a part of. On the other hand, being referred to as a social problem that must be dealt with, does not likely result in one becoming happier. In addition, there is a normative element in the making of a happy identity, say, for example, for the elderly, and accentuating how to be better off through an active life, a close circle of friends, a healthy living, and so on. Those who do not live up to the norms might feel devalued.

Because they add special knowledge, society may benefit from the outcomes of happiness studies. Benefits could be gained, in terms of developing prevention measures and providing care and in planning for housing, social work and daily activities in a community. Conceived as an urgent social problem, ageing populations have to be addressed, and both research and social institutions will have to co-operate. Thus, a new social order concerning elderly care might appear, if the results from these studies have any impact. Whether happiness will increase among the elderly people is, of course, an open question.

lifestyle or other personal efforts.

Happiness studies have grown notably in both number and power during the last two decades. From other research fields, it is well-known that changes in the world, due to natural disasters, epidemics, floods, financial crises, war, migration, and so on, require social interventions based on experience

5 Ageing is but one example of how the co-production process between social science and social order occurs and has impact on identities. Modern society is full of such examples to explore, for example, psychiatric diagnoses, transgender politics, immigrants, refugees and unemployment.



and knowledge and normative regulations adherent to correct processes. Society wants knowledge for many reasons, one is to guide in making difficult decisions, and with few exceptions the production of knowledge needs social support. Different sectors in society experience and face different challenges and if scientific support, evidence, results from research on a particular challenge exists, society wants it. Co-production is a general way of describing and understanding these processes, but, like any other analytical concept, it needs concrete examples to show its empirical usefulness and value. The growth and stabilisation of the interdisciplinary field of happiness studies have served to illustrate how ideals, norms and requirements in society interact with what researchers put on their agendas. Without public-, political- and peer support, there would be no respect for the research, nor for its results, and therefore no funding.

'Co-production is something that is going on in the world, like it or not', as expressed by Jasanoff in an interview ten years after *States of Knowledge* was published (Turney 2014).<sup>6</sup> Science and society, knowledge and social order are constantly intertwined and cannot be separated if we are to fully understand the world we live in. The idiom of co-production has served us well in analysing happiness studies; it is an assemblage of interdisciplinary research, where the sciences involved in interaction with society co-produce knowledge and social order. Both within and outside the research community, there is an attractive force in happiness.

Still, there are some internal disciplinary differences and tensions among those sharing engagement in happiness studies, which arguably escape the co-production umbrella. One example is the above-mentioned tension between objective and subjective indicators. Another wider discussion is whether *measuring* happiness is good or bad or done well enough to capture what makes people happy, which is a different issue; furthermore, the practice has both advocates and critics within various research groups. Exactly why disciplines have evolved, having a preference over one or the other indicator and why different disciplines put more or less emphasis on identity remains unclear. Among the social sciences, economists and psychologists, in particular, have produced a significant body of knowledge on the topic, while sociologists, with some notable exceptions, have so far been more reluctant to embrace the measuring of happiness (Bartram 2012).

Sociologists' reluctance to study happiness might have to do with the sociological tradition, which has long been concerned with social facts, (i.e. social and economic life conditions, independent of individual experiences). Classical sociology, in the vein of Durkheim, has maintained the classic divide between facts and values. Moreover, deeply rooted in sociology is a practice of suspicion.

Things may not always be what they appear to be. For these reasons, happiness, if not directly rejected as a relevant research object, has probably attracted few sociological analysts.

One well-recognised opponent to the happiness trend in the social sciences is the Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman. In a conversation with Michael Hviid Jacobsen, published in the *Journal of Happiness and Well-Being* in 2014, Bauman discussed the merits and pitfalls of happiness studies and critically diagnosed the contemporary culture of happiness. Here, Bauman stated: 'Happiness is anything but an exception among the objects of sociological inquiry', and he referred to sociology as the social science of social facts. According to Bauman, the notion of happiness is not a social fact but rather refers to an individual experience, feeling, state of mind, psyche, emotion, hence fully and truly an individual phenomenon (87).

Bauman is not alone among sociologists on this view, as pointed out by Hviid Jacobsen (2014) and similarly by Bartram (2015). Yet, despite the cautiousness among sociologists about studying happiness, as social scientists they are well aware of what goes on at the policy level. As a result, when the public discourses move in a certain direction and influence political outcomes and processes and the reverse happens, and happiness becomes both an optional and a desirable object in our common culture, sociologists, to a higher degree than before, might include empirical studies of happiness in their range of concerns.

The answer as to why economics, cognitive science, psychology and so on, have developed into specific academic fields, and why other disciplines in the social sciences have remained reluctant requires further analysis. Some of these fields are all more or less close to politics and power, sometimes arbitrarily, sometimes due to beliefs about how the world is and how it therefore should be explored. Their histories will tell which one of them, if any, have been more closely connected to the state, and in the end how the co-production of a particular social science and social order comes about.

Our article on happiness studies set out to find out more about the interplay between social science and society. Without using co-production, we would have missed identifying the mutual links that occur between knowledge, people, professionals and power when happiness advanced in both science and society, in short, how science and social order encountered and strengthened each other. Expanding knowledge and insights from STS to the social sciences and humanities is of fundamental relevance for understanding how identities, institutions, discourses and representations shape the world we share.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.futureearth.org/blog/2014-jul-23/be-inclusive-you-need-more-voices-qa-sheila-jasanoff>



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