Achieving happiness in secondary schools:

an exploration of student and teacher

perspectives

Submitted by

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Declaration

I, Joy Perry, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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Abstract

This thesis is concerned with how happiness is achieved for students in secondary schools and what schooling for happiness might entail. Adopting *happiness* as a critical and subjective component of well-being, this study explores how elements of school life can encourage experiences of happiness for children, an outcome necessary to their becoming full-formed and flourishing individuals.

Relying on qualitative methods of inquiry, this study utilises student and teacher narratives to illuminate both the *realities* and *possibilities* of achieving happiness in secondary education. The most significant findings from the study have been categorised into three core themes: 1) personal connection and a sense of community, 2) language and behaviour exhibited between persons and 3) individual recognition and feelings of self-worth.

In exploring happiness as it occurs in the everyday school setting, this study contributes to a body of knowledge on well-being and schooling, while serving to highlight the significance in understanding and engaging with the lived experiences of students and teachers. The end goal has been to present a holistic account of the phenomenon using thick description, the product of which can offer insight for the secondary school community to further the prioritisation of student happiness, challenging it to reflect on its current practices and to re-examine its fundamental aims.

Impact statement

This study can be appreciated according to two significant domains of impact:

First, this study builds on normative, ethical and scientific arguments for *illustrating the pertinence of personal happiness to schooling*. Emphasising a humanistic perspective of education, or one which classifies human flourishing as an essential purpose, it evaluates happiness as an ingredient to student's overall development and therefore something to which they are entitled. Evidence from this study can be analysed alongside existing research on the mental health and well-being of children and young people in the UK, information which is critical for schooling, educational and research communities in understanding how to best meet the intangible needs of students. The issues it raises are especially relevant for deconstructing and challenging 'norms' of school culture in this country and their sometimes pernicious effects.

Secondly, this study makes methodological and theoretical contributions which are beneficial in *refining efforts to prioritise the happiness and well-being of children*. It critically assesses the 'positive education movement' and well-being curriculums in the UK by suggesting that policies designed to promote happiness may, in practise, impede or compromise this goal. This thesis exemplifies the advantages of exploring student and teacher self-narratives for developing a more nuanced and complex understanding of how happiness is realistically experienced in school. Insights from the data offer important considerations and recommendations for targeting pupil happiness and help advance scholarly understanding of this concept more broadly.

Evidence from this study is also timely to *responding to student needs as a result of the coronavirus pandemic* and reshaping education as a result of this transformative period. Indeed, much of what this thesis argues from a happiness-oriented perspective can be used to support strategies for reappraising the school system and implementing purposeful change following the COVID-19 crisis. That is, students are deserving of an improved education system which satisfies their wants for increased agency and empowerment, meaningful and creative learning and profound social connection.

This study's findings are intended to be disseminated in multiple formats and according to appropriate audiences. In the immediate schooling context, I plan to present a summary of key evidence to administrators and teachers at the London secondary school where I conducted my research. At the scholarly level, I aim to further engage with the educational and research communities through conference papers and presentations; some preliminary findings were recently presented at the Annual International Conference on Education (AICE) 2021 hosted by Waseda University in Tokyo, Japan. Finally, I intend to publish material from this thesis in a series of peer-reviewed journal articles associated with happiness and education.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Beyond the innumerable cultural, intellectual and physical characteristics that differentiate human beings from one another, it seems a common thread connects us all: the desire to live happy and fulfilling lives. As we navigate through our daily public and private activities, we are undoubtedly striving for an existence that emulates feelings of joy, belonging and meaningfulness. Working to articulately capture all the components that together make for such a life, the Greek philosopher Aristotle coined the term *eudaimonia*. Though many rough translations and interpretations of the word exist today, one of its core features is personal *happiness* as part of one's capacity to *flourish* in his or her circumstances (Noddings, 2003; Smith, 2005, 2013). It is this concept of happiness for living well that I find provokes valuable questioning about the education sector's role and responsibility with respect to students' emotional and cognitive development, both now and in the future.

The spirit of this thesis is concerned with how happiness is achieved for students in secondary schools and what schooling for happiness might entail. Adopting *happiness* as a critical and subjective component of well-being, this study is geared towards exploring how elements of school life can encourage experiences of happiness for children, an outcome both primal and necessary to their becoming full-formed and flourishing individuals. Research emphasises that happiness, in addition to being inherently valuable, plays an integral role in how children learn and develop into their adult lives (Layard, 2011b, Martin, 2006; Hallowell, 2003; Noddings, 2003). Deciphering how student happiness can be created and sustained in schools are questions that therefore deserve attention from the educational community. Committed to building its legitimacy as part of the educational language and discussion, this study draws from various social science disciplines to present a theoretical and practical framework for understanding happiness in the school context.

In short, if we accept that happiness for flourishing 1) is a chief concern of human life and 2) ought to be an explicit purpose of education[1], we must consider how it is realised in schools. This specific study recognises formal education as a special platform for

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[1] Though subject to debate, these ideas are the basic assumptions of this thesis as opposed to arguments it attempts to altogether demonstrate.

fostering happiness, the success of which may rest in interpreting the subjective experiences of those directly involved: students and teachers. Accordingly, it aims to answer the question: *What do the narrated experiences and perspectives of students and teachers reveal about achieving happiness in secondary schools?*

This study maintains that an appreciation for these individuals' testimonies can help illuminate both the *realities* and *possibilities* of achieving happiness in secondary education. Its chief objectives are to explore and interpret the following: According to pupil and teacher insights,

> *RQ1. What elements of secondary school life are most influential to student happiness, either as contributors or inhibitors?*
>
> *RQ2. To what extent is happiness valued or prioritised by the secondary school community? What do its practices and discourses convey to children about the relevance of happiness to their education?*
>
> *RQ3. What might a secondary school look like if it were designed with student happiness in mind?*

1.1 Selecting and problematising 'happiness'

Before proceeding, it is important to clarify why the term *happiness* has been explicitly selected for this thesis, and the strengths and limitations of using it in the ways we speak, think and behave. A constructive way to do this is to first situate happiness within a brief discussion of neighbouring expressions: *well-being*, *mental health*, *flourishing,* and *the good life.*

The word most conventionally featured in conversations about happiness is *well-being*. In academic literature, this concept typically refers to a quality-of-life mixture of external factors (e.g., income, marital status and education level) and emotional or mental conditions. Happiness' conceptual overlap with well-being is highly contested philosophical territory and, though they are occasionally used in synonymous fashion, it is helpful in this thesis to demarcate the two. Here I find Haybron's (2013; 2008) explanations of well-being most useful, and from which I carve out happiness as a broadly distinguishable concept. When we are ascribing well-being (or lack thereof), he says, we are making a kind of value judgement about an individual's life. This entails asking questions such as, what is ultimately best for him or her? What allows them to thrive, and what does not? Are they healthy in both mind and body? Discussions of well-

being therefore usually entail the examining of some objective life circumstances in conjunction with how individuals themselves assess or describe their life. As the latter accounts for personal perspective, it is sometimes referred to as *subjective well-being* (also *psychological* or *emotional well-being*). Some authors, including myself, prefer to use the more evocative *happiness* to capture this significant and subjectively measured human condition (see Dolan, 2014; Layard, 2009; Noddings, 2003**)**.

Though happiness is sometimes exclusively attributed to one's psychological (e.g., life satisfaction) *or* emotional (e.g., enjoyment) status, it is used in this thesis for both. This is quite different from *mental health*, a term I use to denote an absence of, or the correcting for, mental illness. As I explain later in the literature review (see section 3.1.2), mental health and subjective well-being, though related, stem from different sets of factors and should not be conflated. As many theorists contend, happiness alone is *not* sufficient for total well-being; there are objectively measured contributing factors, of which mental health is included (de Ruyter, 2015; Dolan, 2014). Rather, happiness can be appreciated as a key component to a larger theory of well-being and pathway to personal *flourishing*. Drawing from Shah and Marks' (2004) definition, flourishing can be used to describe a person of both well-being and who positively functions within his or her society. Rather than examining theories of happiness and flourishing under the umbrella of well-being (see de Ruyter, 2015), I agree with Seligman's (2011) idea that authentic happiness, when paired with other pillars of well-being, makes for a flourishing individual. And with added moral and normative considerations, happiness can be evaluated in accordance with one's values and the acquisition of good habits and dispositions. Where a person's life is both well lived (i.e., of well-being) and well worth living (i.e., is virtuous), such may be called *the good life* (Haybron, 2013; 2008). It is my best understanding that these affiliated notions of *well-being*, *mental health*, *flourishing,* and *the good life* all presuppose some degree of objective evaluation. This study, while generally contributing to research in these areas, is a focused investigation into the subjective life experiences of children. Though imperfect, *happiness* is well suited for this purpose and thus the selected concept for my inquiry.

My decided attempt to explore the labyrinthine landscape of happiness is, to borrow Haybron's (2008) expression, "an elaborate form of ostension, pointing to the phenomenon without fully elucidating it" (p. 42). Embracing this subject in all its nuance

and complexity, I remain devoted most of all to foregrounding pupils' voices and shedding light on their subjective school lives. As I explain in the next chapter, my conceptual framing of happiness is itself interdisciplinary while my research approach is interpretivist and educational; this thesis does not prove nor disprove theories of happiness but adds to an extensive and dynamic inquiry into, simply phrased, how schooling emulates the substance of a good human life.

While there exists a plethora of definitions for *happiness* to consider, I find Dolan's (2014) interpretation of the term as a subjective measure of well-being to be most appropriate for my purposes. More specifically, happiness can be understood as "*experiences of pleasure and purpose over time*" (p. 3). Viewed in this way, happiness relates to more than a fleeting moment of gratification or contentment; it is rooted in a general sense of meaning and optimism throughout one's daily life. Integrating the hedonic and eudaimonic approaches to its understanding, this study embraces happiness as a multidimensional phenomenon, one uniquely achieved according to person and context. As such, the definition adopted is meant to be interpreted in a broad sense, open to exploration; doing so allows me to ask questions relating to student satisfaction and enjoyment as well as experiences they find rewarding and valuable. Conceptions of happiness as well as its origins are important matters that are carefully addressed in the literature review chapters.

As with other subjective constructs, there are benefits and challenges to using happiness as a lens for exploring students' experiences of school. While there is no sweeping theory of what is *always* or *necessarily* meant by happiness, this does not diminish the word's importance or usefulness in speaking and thinking about what matters most for students and whether school is a happy place for children to be. The working notion of happiness presented here is a kind of communication tool for interpreting these areas, and is used to illuminate a broad domain within which the quality of students' school lives can vary. Subjective and objective elements of well-being are not always clearly correlated, though conceivable links are discussed in section 2.4. The aim, however, is neither to identity these explicit relationships nor determine their proportionate importance to overall well-being. Rather, the conclusions which are ultimately drawn in this study illustrate the intricacies of student happiness and its associations in the school setting. I agree with Haybron that a useful theory of happiness faithfully reflects our verbal and mental

associations with it, and "best enables us to satisfy our practical needs as ordinary individuals trying to lead good lives" (2003, p. 327). The purpose of articulating happiness in this thesis as experiences of pleasure and purpose is not to propose a fixed framework but to employ a manageable concept which encourages reflection and dialogue around students' life-worlds.

Using an interdisciplinary and relatively liberal interpretation of happiness enables me, the researcher, to explore a wide range of subjective human experiences and to reconstruct this notion according to the meanings individuals bring to it. Importantly, I approach this phenomenon from the perspective that teaching and learning are fundamentally emotional practices (Denzin, 1984), and that, as with other forms of human interaction, our emotionality colours how we contemplate situations and ultimately choose to respond (Hargreaves, 2000). More than using the term to merely describe sensations, *thinking* about happiness encourages us to make calculated decisions, gauge how well a life (our own or someone else's) is generally going, and to anticipate and reasonably explain others' behaviour (2008). This study therefore considers differences between *being* happy and only *feeling* happy, aiming to understand the phenomenon in relation to individuals' affections, convictions and ways of being. Finally, as will become clearer in the literature review, my preconceived notion of happiness is beneficial in part because it permits me to evaluate the implementation of happiness and well-being curriculums. Strategies associated with these can be inefficient and superficial, while also tending to discount important situational issues. In chronicling how student happiness is genuinely achieved in school, this study helps to unveil nuances which may be overlooked as part of a widespread 'happiness agenda', pivoting the discussion to factors which are inherently sociocultural, atmospheric and attuned to specific school contexts.

I must restate that defining happiness is an ambitious task, one that is not this study's foremost objective. My preferred conception is but one interpretation and is not comprehensively or focally weighed against others. Rather, I attempt to provide sufficient conceptual background for appreciating its use in a significant and complex way, distinguishable from lay terms. There is a certain sophistication to recognising happiness as it relates to both pleasure and purpose throughout one's daily life that propels me to investigate it within the realms of the educational community. As the literature illustrates,

human beings are primed to pursue sources of joy and fulfilment, the experiences of which fulfil the "universal feature of mankind that [is] to live a flourishing life" (de Ruyter, 2015, p. 93). Happiness, when understood from this rich perspective, best encapsulates the phenomenon this study aims to dissect in the context of school behaviour and discourse.

1.2 Motivations for this research

Of motivation for this study is the apparent scarcity of research linking philosophical and psychological arguments surrounding happiness and education with actual pedagogical implementation. Furthermore, while there is extensive literature addressing the effects of *negative* emotions and their consequences for learning, far less exists on the power of *positive* emotions and why students are entitled to activities that elicit them (Rantala and Määttä, 2012). This study builds on the work of the following researchers from the perspective that characteristics associated with human flourishing, including pleasure and fulfilment, are to be especially valued in education.

For the sake of this particular study, theoretical debates on happiness and education are relevant insofar as they translate to what is *actually* occurring in the community today. To that end, Strom's (1981, cited in Pring, 2014) notion that schools should "help students become human" (p. 4) can be examined in light of present teacher practices and how they "educate the emotions" (Fielding, 2012, p. 654). Such is John Macmurray's core idea that educators serve to teach children within the "deeper context of how we learn to live good lives together" (ibid). This "good", Griffiths (2012) argues, ought to be pursued through the present, integral experiences of happiness in the classroom.

Of particular importance to this topic is the idea that students are *naturally* inclined to strive for joy in their learning and a greater sense of well-being (Rantala and Määttä, 2012). Equally instinctive is their desire for relationships and shared learning experiences, both of which Macmurray (2012) argues lie at the cornerstone of our humanity. Similar themes of social connection and cooperation permeate literature on happiness. Consequently, it is essential to grasp which elements of school life reinforce or discourage these so-called innate tendencies. Particularly applicable to this study is the evaluation of school communities as natural spaces for safe, productive and joyful interaction (Macmurray, 2012; Fielding, 2005; Noddings, 2003). With the critical role of human relationships in mind, particularly that of teacher-and-student, this study aims to

analyse how students experience feelings of happiness and how others' behaviour perpetuates these feelings. Guiding this research is Rantala and Määttä's (2012) suggestion that professionalism and academic excellence can, despite popular opinion, co-exist with enjoyment in the classroom. Moreover, the Finnish researchers insist that educators have a *human responsibility* to ensure that it does.

Necessary to understanding happiness in this context is a discussion of the fundamental aims of schooling and how societal structures have, for better or worse, greatly informed the fluctuation of those aims. Particularly relevant to this study are what literature indicates are trickle-down effects of Western neoliberalism and increasingly materialistic culture, and how they construe happiness. Modern notions of prosperity, for instance, present challenges for educators in preparing children for a genuinely happy life apart from these ordinary measures of success, namely wealth and status (Seligman, 2011; Noddings, 2003). While it is of enormous importance that students are awarded every opportunity to thrive in their adult lives, traditional compulsory education has placed great value on economic contribution without paying equal attention to the intrinsic purposes of learning. Authoritarian, teacher-led instruction and high-stakes testing procedures have sometimes replaced feelings of satisfaction and creativity in learning with feelings of fear and competition (Moore, 2013). The unsettling consequences of these practices must be addressed and corrected for if we are to provide students with the education they are entitled to; one that genuinely invests in their well-being by involving and supporting them (Devine and McGillicuddy, 2016; Griffiths, 2012; Reay, 2012).

This study on happiness can be examined alongside the contemporary 'positive education movement' that seeks to *measure* and *enhance* elements of human flourishing in children (Curren, 2015; Seligman, 2011, 2012). The introduction of 'happiness curriculums', as they are sometimes called, has been in part a response to decreasing trends in young people's mental health and well-being in the UK (Good Childhood Report, 2020). An especially starting statistic is that while economic growth among developed countries, including the UK, has steadily increased over the past 50 years, life satisfaction has not (Shah and Marks, 2004). School practices which prepare students not just for career or professional endeavours but also in how to make sound decisions that bring them authentic joy and a sense of purpose are therefore argued to be urgently required. Noddings (2003) for instance warns that the illusory connection society draws between

happiness and financial success is evidenced in the way we educate our youth and, rather, "education should help people to develop their best selves" (p. 23). With the priorities of today's schools so regularly guided by immediate results, reflection on the greater, long-term aims of education must ensue. Namely, as Noddings suggests, affirmations of human flourishing and a concern for happiness must lie at the heart of policy and pedagogical discussion if these institutions are to perform their most essential tasks. However, the extent to which *teaching happiness* to pupils is the best course of action to achieve these rich and humanistic purposes of education is a controversial matter I closely critique in this paper.

Central to all these ideas on happiness is the notion that learning should be enjoyed for the process itself, not just the result. It is in these moments that children experience an essential value of education: growth of the mind and spirit that enables them to a live a fruitful and flourishing life. Of chief concern to this study is not whether schools are already achieving this kind of learning, but the *degree* to which they are achieving it and how to improve. While themes of performance and comparison that permeate today's institutions run the risk of depressing students' happiness (Rantala and Määttä, 2012; Smith, 2005, 2013), there is encouragement for all parties, perhaps, in keeping a broader perspective. It is in "[seizing] their educational opportunities with delight", says Noddings (2003), that children "will contribute to the happiness of others… [and ultimately] contribute to a happier world" (p. 261). Though outside the remit of this study, this last purpose sets the tone for placing happiness at the centre of educational endeavour.

In exploring happiness as it occurs in the everyday school setting, this study contributes to a body of knowledge required on emotions and learning, a topic traditionally and mistakenly undervalued (Moore, 2013; Rantala and Määttä, 2010). Equally important, it serves to highlight the significance in understanding and engaging with the lived experiences of students and teachers with regard to their own perceptions of happiness in schools. The end goal is to present a holistic account of the phenomenon using thick description and interpretation[2], the product of which can offer insight for the secondary schooling community to encourage the prioritising of student well-being, challenging it to

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[2] This terminology derives from anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973), whose approach for generating meaning in qualitative research is addressed in Chapter 4: Methodology.

carefully reflect on its current practices and to re-examine its fundamental aims. Finally, it is my sincere hope that by inviting children to actively participate in the discussion of their own education, this study has in itself served as an opportunity for *happiness*.

Chapter 2: Literature review I

There is a splendid myriad of literature pertaining to the subject of human happiness and how it intersects with other facets of life. Examined against the backdrop of educational research, this issue is especially gripping and contentious. To delve firmly into such a notoriously capacious concept demands an exhaustive survey of perspectives and, equally important, the deliberate decision-making about how to apply them. This sizable literature review reflects this process and is intended to convey my deep-seated academic engagement with questions regarding *what happiness is*, *why it matters in education* and *how it is realised for students*. A logical break helps to structure this material: Chapter 2: Literature review I details a theoretical framework for understanding personal happiness and its relationship to education, and Chapter 3: Literature review II orients this framework within a more pragmatic discussion of UK schooling and ways of promoting the happiness of children and young people in this country.

Allowing for the sheer scale of happiness-related literature, I must address the selection of authors who feature most prominently in this review and convey my philosophical assumptions underpinning this research. In this thesis, I am cautious to align myself with any single discipline or field of work. This is to account for the very nature of the topic under investigation, happiness, of which I find no discipline to independently deliver a comprehensive explanation. As this literature review demonstrates, strong arguments for understanding and prioritising student happiness in schools are both *normative* and *descriptive* in nature. In other words, there are distinctively philosophical questions surrounding the phenomenon which, for instance, bring attention to how educational decision-making ought to be concerned with specific aims, motives and ethics. Meanwhile, questions of *when* happiness is experienced lend themselves well to the study of psychology and human behaviour, the field primarily credited with the growing number of happiness and well-being programmes among UK schools today. Strong empirical evidence illustrating the objective benefits of happiness (e.g. high achievement, health and positive societal functioning) can be used to further highlight why the empowerment of students' subjective well-being is an issue for the educational sector. Taken together, philosophers raise significant questions about many psychologists' approaches to fostering happiness in schools, and the former draw attention to the

normative features of happiness which the latter discipline often avoids (Nussbaum, 2008; Noddings, 2003). Similarly, in sketching the larger picture of what schooling for happiness entails, philosophical and psychological perspectives must be evaluated alongside related social, cultural, economic and political structures. Dissecting school norms and values, for instance, can be instrumental in recognising and tackling barriers to student happiness. These closely related social science disciplines of *philosophy, psychology* and *sociology* are each critical to gaining a full appreciation for the topic. However, my commentary on current or influential views is necessarily contained to encompass those most relevant to my research objectives. Key theorists whose work I frequently consult in this thesis and on which my reasoning most strongly depends include:

- *Paul Dolan*, behavioural scientist whose conceptualisation of happiness best encapsulates my understanding of the topic and sets the foundation for this study's theoretical framework.

- John *Macmurray*, educational philosopher whose ideas on human nature and flourishing examine schooling for the personal life and how it reflects a shared humanity.

- *Richard Layard*, economist, and *Martin Seligman*, psychologist, whose theories of happiness and well-being are among the most widely cited in academia and influential to public policy in the UK and USA.

- *Nel Noddings*, educator and philosopher whose exceptionally thorough account of happiness and education approaches this relationship from many key and interdisciplinary angles.

- *Judith Suissa,* philosopher of education whose viewpoint on happiness curriculums is instrumental to how I analyse their potentials and limitations.

- *Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi*, psychologist whose theory of *flow* informs my understanding of child development and why engagement in meaningful activity and self-determination are key contributors to happiness.

- *Catherine Burke* and *Ian Grosvenor*, leading educators in England whose illuminating book featuring children and young people's reflections on education for the 21st century demonstrates how children convey meaning in the ordinary events of their school lives, and that the lived experiences of children have gone unchanged over decades.

- *Alex Moore*, professor of education whose work on love and fear in the classroom is critical to my appreciation for children's affective needs and responses in school and, most importantly, the influence of their teachers.

As the present study's aims and objectives focus on exploring the phenomenon as it exists for the *individual* (i.e., teacher and student) with respect to his or her *social context* (i.e. secondary school), it might reasonably be characterised as a form of *sociological research* (Macionis, 2001). Yet to adopt this disciplinary position explicitly would be at odds with what Bassey (1999) describes as a distinctive form of research: *educational*. "Educational research", he says, "is critical enquiry aimed at informing educational judgements and decisions in order to improve educational action" (p. 39). Rather than contributing to theoretical knowledge pertinent to any one specific field, this thesis is geared towards challenging the secondary school community with respect to its practices and discourse. My intention is largely to invoke thought and discussion among educators, using empirical research to emphasise perspectives of students and teachers in a way that is constructive and practical. To commit to the study of happiness from a purely philosophical, psychological, or sociological perspective is, perhaps, an injustice to the topic, particularly with respect to the dynamic context of education. It is for these reasons that, though I approach the phenomenon empirically from a *generally* sociological perspective, I have chosen to draw also from other disciplines in my understanding of happiness itself. I remain, first and foremost, an *educational researcher* in orientation; doing so has encouraged me to remain open-minded and non-biased as to what data I have generated and how that data may be more broadly interpreted by others.

2.1 What is happiness?

The theoretical task of defining *happiness* stems from the perpetual search for life's meaning that has plagued humankind since its very inception. Academic disputes on what amounts to a good life and how to achieve it are constantly evolving, bridging old philosophies with new scientific developments. The past ten years alone has produced a tremendous spike in literature on well-being, happiness and flourishing as they relate to both personal and professional endeavours. These publications have sparked widespread debate and discussion on what it *actually* means to be a happy individual in today's world. Still, no matter the school of thought to which one subscribes, history is telling of happiness as a natural and inevitable human pursuit. In light of this assumption, the following provides a framework for 1) understanding happiness as a serious and worthwhile goal and 2) applying increased recognition of that goal to one of society's most precious institutions, education.

2.1.1 Conceptualising happiness

One classical conception of happiness derives from the Greek philosopher, Aristotle, and his writings on ethics. His conviction holds that regardless of life circumstances (e.g. social class), the highest attainable good for which one can hope to achieve is that of happiness, or *eudaimonia* (Aristotle, 2009). In other words, everything a person possesses, be it wealth, power or friendship, is ultimately a means to achieving happiness; it is the greatest purpose and end goal of human existence. A key to Aristotle's theory is the notion of functionality; there is an optimal way to live one's life, not according to any religious purposes, but to the very nature of belonging to the human species (p. 10). As such, human beings must aspire to be virtuous creatures and perform their best functions. He maintains that in so doing, one can achieve a life well-lived, or eudaimonia.

It is here that a special note on language must be made: Aristotle's notion of *happiness* varies greatly from modern connotations. It is clear that Aristotle refers to happiness not as episodic pleasure, but a life of productive and purposeful activity. Self-fulfilment, for instance, is paramount to this definition of happiness, requiring the optimisation of born circumstances as well as strong personal initiative (p. 15). It is for this reason that eudaimonia can more properly be interpreted today as *human flourishing* (p. x) or, as Kenny and Kenny (2006) maintain, the *worthwhile life*. According to Aristotle, our capacity to flourish is contingent upon learning through experience and developing a habit for virtuous pursuits (p. 15). Central to his interpretation of happiness is the belief that exercise of contemplative thought is superior to all others (p. 194-7). While suggesting that practice and proper training allow individuals to reach their maximum potential, Aristotle's hierarchy of human activity is arguably worrisome for the educational community. Such is American philosopher Nel Noddings' (2003) view that the division Aristotelian logic makes between a person's theoretical and practical contributions to society still influences schools today. There is a palpable superiority associated with subjects of maths and physics, for instance, over the humanities and life skills (e.g., parenting) (p. 11). Noddings suggests that schools ought to help students develop "intelligent use of their intellectual capacities in both personal and public life" (p. 260), not coerce them into pre-determined academic activity that may fail to recognise their legitimate aptitudes and interests (p. 87). Educational discourse that encourages a preferential divide among human attributes and talents, she insists, drastically shapes

students' happiness and sense of worth. This notion of better-than learner traits and comparison are critical themes which I revisit in this chapter.

Like Aristotle, the nineteenth-century philosopher John Stuart Mill maintained that wisdom and contemplation were important for the happy life. For, he says, it is "better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied" (1879, p. 14). However, while Aristotle emphasises *meaning*, the key word in Mill's analogy is *satisfaction.* In short, Mill's definition of happiness derives from pleasure, and, consequently, the absence of pain. Evaluated in this sense, comparisons can be made to another Greek philosopher, Epicurus. Rather than asking what makes life *good*, Epicurus' theory of personal happiness rests on what makes life *fun* (Irwin, 2011). He challenges us to reflect on things we *think* will make us happy (e.g. sex, money and luxury) and re-focus our efforts towards nature's lasting pleasures, like friendship (ibid). Mill's predecessor, Jeremy Bentham, also stressed the value in relationships and community; he believed that for society to operate at its best, its members must be happy (Layard, 2011b, p. 5). According to Bentham, it is therefore essential to "create all the happiness you are able to create: remove all the misery you are able to remove" (1830, cited in Parekh, 1993, p. xvii). This seemingly simplistic view of happiness is adopted by one of the world's leading researchers on the topic today, British economist Richard Layard (2011b). His findings on societal trends and traditions as they relate to happiness are among the most famous and regularly cited in the field. In keeping with Bentham's Enlightenment philosophy, Layard says on 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" (p. 12).

But a limited concentration on pleasure in the interpretation of happiness warrants considerable critique. In his authentic happiness theory, American psychologist Martin Seligman (2011) presents engagement and meaning as equally essential components to happiness as positive emotion. Mere hedonism, he points out, "is a far cry from what Thomas Jefferson declared that we have the right to pursue" (p. 11). Rather, Seligman makes the case that being *authentically happy* involves developing one's character strengths and virtues, not unlike the teachings of Aristotle. While this definition of happiness offers a degree of complexity less afforded by Mill or Layard, Seligman critiques his own theory as ultimately one-dimensional; the end goal is still to maximise

good feelings (p. 24). Refining the original aims of what he calls *positive psychology* for improving life circumstances*,* Seligman concludes that happiness, as defined by life satisfaction, is inadequate in achieving what he says is the quintessential good: *flourishing* (p. 26). Although he ceases to explicitly establish the connection, Seligman's descriptions of flourishing, including elements of self-determination and accomplishment, closely resemble the eudaimonic well-being Aristotle promotes.

While welcoming Layard's (2011b) argument that humankind is "selected to feel good" and that its behaviour can eventually be explained by the desire for such (p. 26), I do not accept happiness as he defines it as the end-all of well-being. Rather, I agree with Seligman's conception of happiness as it relates to human flourishing; good feelings alone are not sufficient to flourish, but must be examined in relation to other pillars of well-being. Nozick's (1974) famous example of the 'experience machine' helps to illustrate this point: consider the possibility of plugging yourself into a sophisticated simulation device indistinguishable from reality, and in which all experiences were forever positive. Would you forgo your real life for its virtual counterpart? The answer for most people is 'no', indicating that they instead seek happiness that is authentic and embedded in their actual lives (Haybron, 2013, p. 78-9). Pleasure as sensation, says Nussbaum (2008), is not enough for genuine happiness; activity in the real world matters deeply (p. 86). In other words, human beings want to *do* and to be or *become* someone.

Additionally, the Benthamian view that happiness cannot be connected to or derived from pain carries doubt. On the contrary, research suggests that episodes of distress, however unpleasant, *can* generate forms of happiness later (Dolan, 2014; Noddings, 2003; Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Choosing to give childbirth or to join the armed forces, for instance, may require sacrificing pleasure or experiencing pain in the present to achieve something perceived as worthwhile. Nussbaum (2008) argues it is neither possible nor wise, in living a good life, to avoid all painful emotional experiences. Feelings of anger, grief and fear, for example, may contribute to acts of justice, compassion and love (ibid, p. 94), while "sharing the suffering of others contributes to our own fulfilment as human beings" (Noddings, 2003, p. 15). In the educational setting, Suissa (2008) suggests, to minimise challenging or uncomfortable learning opportunities is to "deny [students] the excitement—and the risks—of a truly educational experience" (p. 588). In school, as in life, there are valuable opportunities and activities that in their immediate context may or

may not be accompanied by positive emotions. Emphasising skills such as perseverance and the importance of fulfilling one's obligations, for example, can help children achieve their goals, even when the tasks involved appear on the surface to conflict with their happiness.

These scholarly debates on happiness can generally be classified as a preference for 1) a life of pleasure and positive emotion or 2) a life of meaning and contribution. As Kahneman (Dolan, 2014) reminds us, prioritising one over the other is costly:

> A preference for joy over meaning gets you labeled a hedonist, which is not a compliment. On the other hand, you are properly called a scold if you proclaim that pleasure is frivolous and that only virtue and meaning matter (p. vii).

It seems, then, that adopting a solely hedonistic or eudaimonic viewpoint does not altogether satisfy a just discussion of happiness. What does remain clear, however, is that happiness is intimately tied to the intrinsic feelings an individual holds. Rather than adhering to the traditional categorisation of emotions as either positive and negative, British behavioural scientist Paul Dolan (2014) refers to *feelings as sentiments*, or ones that also include capacities for experiencing purpose (p. 8). This robust definition of what constitutes feelings considers both cognitive and affective components, allowing for greater flexibility when evaluating happiness in the subjective sense it demands. Dolan does not purport to prove the superiority of pleasure (i.e., hedonic happiness) or purpose (i.e., eudaimonic happiness), but uses them together to explain the volatile nature of happiness. Here the terms *pleasure* and *purpose* can be conceived as overarching terms, encompassing both judgements and feelings relating to notions such as 'joy', 'fulfilment', 'meaning', 'delight', 'worthwhileness' and 'satisfaction'. His theory is particularly attractive as it accounts for human distinctiveness; the balance one seeks between pleasure and purpose changes constantly, depending greatly on his or her personality and surrounding circumstances (p. 13). In other words, happiness may manifest under a variety of circumstances and in multiple forms. I therefore contend with Haybron (2013) that we cannot expect any single account to altogether satisfy our understanding of it (p. 9). "Rather", as he recommends, "we can reconstruct ordinary notions of happiness and [sharpen them] into a form that helps us to think clearly about matters of importance" (p. 10). It is for these reasons that I uphold Dolan's relatively progressive interpretation of

happiness, or "*experiences of pleasure and purpose over time*" (p. 3), to be most suited for the purposes of this research.

Understood in this way, personal happiness matters deeply for one's quality of life, or well-being, and capability to flourish as a human being. Regarding both its inherent and instrumental value, happiness ought to be explicitly and persistently prioritised by the schooling community (Noddings, 2003; Martin, 2006). Fortunately, happiness is not solely influenced by external conditions, but can be learnt and exercised (Dolan, 2014); this is especially true of children, who can acquire skills and attitudes that underpin their long-term happiness during their school years (Martin, 2006). Under the broad themes of *engagement*, *autonomy* and *relationships*, I have identified what may be conceived as authentic sources of happiness, each with distinctive connections to and implications for school practice. These must be examined in light of what are present threats to happiness and how they infiltrate the school setting; namely, neoliberal ideals of competitiveness and individualism and materialist societal messages for success. By focusing primarily on teachers' and students' own evaluations of their lives, I hope to provide rich material for appreciating how the schooling environment encourages or discourages experiences of happiness, and what those experiences most commonly consist of.

It must be made clear that while this study seeks to understand and explore the phenomenon of happiness in schools, its conceptualisation is *not* the crux of this thesis. That is, my own definition and discussion of happiness put forth in this literature review is not *imposed* upon the school setting but is intended to *grow* and *change* according to the meanings individuals bring to the topic. As I later illustrate in Chapter 4, this approach originates from my methodological orientation as an interpretivist researcher. Happiness and its achievement in the schooling context are therefore *co-constructed* between myself (the researcher) and teachers and students (the participants). Here I firmly concur with Noddings' (2003) view:

> Educators need not agree on exactly what constitutes happiness in order to agree that students should be given opportunity to learn about the variety of views. What could be more important than sorting through these views to find or modify one's own? (p. 3).

Still, I must have some preconceived ideas about the phenomenon, or else I have no groundwork on which to build my understanding (Weber, 2004; Lincoln and Guba,

2013). It is appropriate, therefore, to offer a *conceptual geography* of how I have chosen to construe 'happiness' for the sake of this study.

To supplement the theoretical framework and discussion presented in this chapter, Figure 1 visually illustrates happiness within a broader depiction of well-being, as well as its general composition of pleasurable and purposeful life experiences. The arrows shown are used to indicate pathways of contribution[3]. In the following sections, this discussion of *what happiness is* progresses to 1) why properly distinguishing subjective from objective well-being is necessary in the context of education and 2) general sources of happiness (i.e., engagement, autonomy and relationships). This conceptual geography is therefore intended to help the reader make sense of new concepts as they are introduced, and to recall how the elements of happiness fit together for the purposes of this thesis.
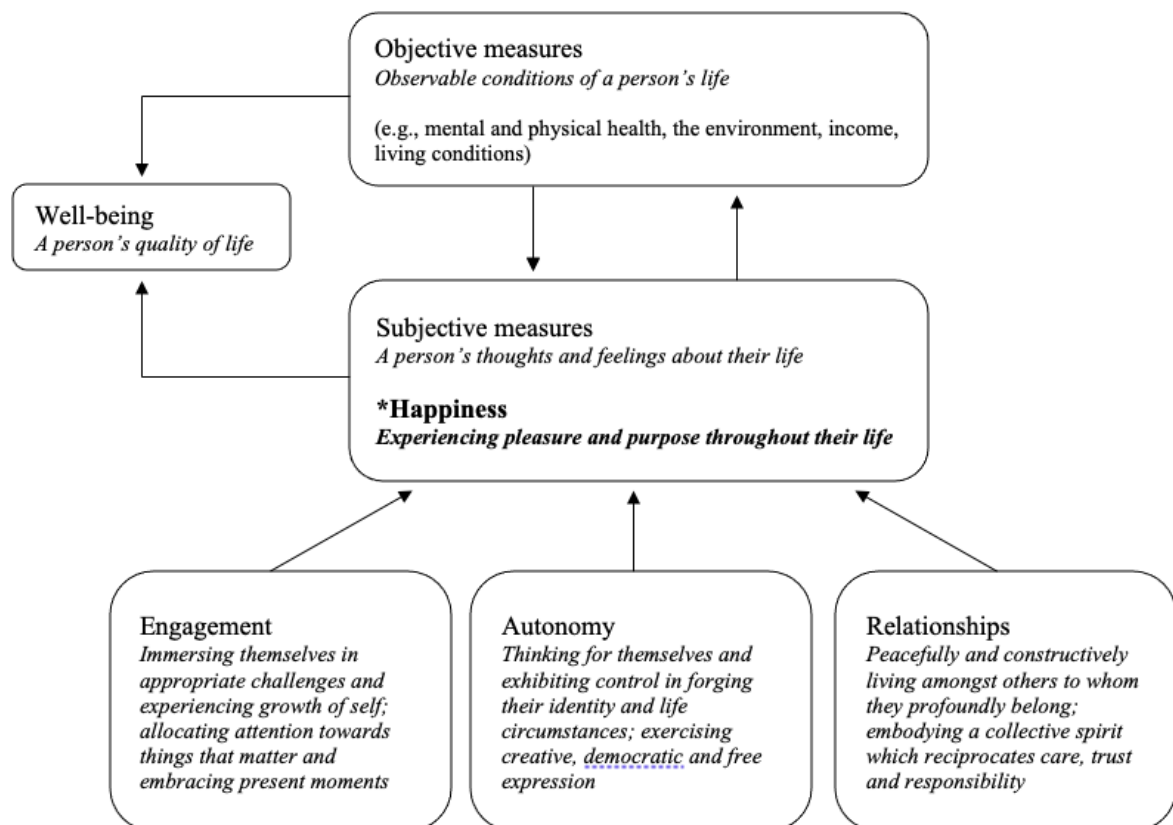
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*Happiness

Experiences of pleasure   **Experiences of purpose**

joy	amusement	fulfilment	perseverance
satisfaction	relish	meaning	devotion
contentedness	gladness	hope	zest
comfort	liveliness	commitment	dignity
ease	triumph	determination	pride
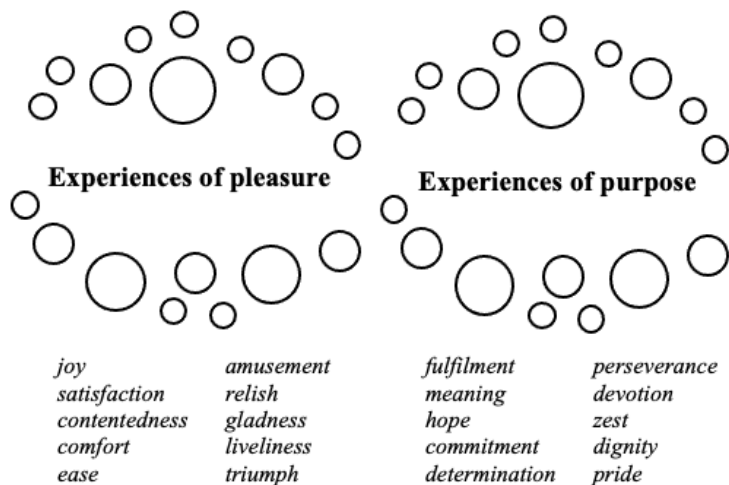
Figure 1: Conceptual geography of 'happiness'.

2.1.2 Measuring happiness

Contemporary efforts to measure happiness rely heavily on quantitative methods, such as surveys. Unsurprisingly, the majority of large-scale and longitudinal data on happiness is derived from generic life satisfaction questions; for example, "On a scale of 0 (not at all) to 10 (completely) overall how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?" (Dolan, 2014, p. 35). This approach allows for a degree of correlation (*not* necessarily causation) to be drawn between feelings of happiness and other key figures, such as income level and marital status (ibid). While aiding researchers' understanding of the associated traits happy individuals possess, this method faces scrutiny on the basis that it is entirely subjective. Simplistic language and participant biases leave these quantitative experiments vulnerable to individual interpretation (Haybron, 2013), arguably failing to capture the complexity of human emotion and how people experience things like happiness (Nussbaum, 2008). Regarding the practical implications for increasing overall well-being, Seligman (2011) warns that policy reflecting solely subjective measures "is vulnerable to the *Brave New World* caricature in which the government promotes happiness simply by drugging the population with a euphoria…" (p. 26). In other words, there are objectively measured factors that must be considered as part of living well apart from what elicits favourable emotion or disposition. Haybron (2013), recalling Nozick's (1974) 'experience machine' concept, agrees that "happiness nor any other state of mind can be the sole measure of human well-being" (p. 79). For these reasons, one must

exercise a degree of caution when navigating statistical data on happiness, especially that which influences political decision-making.

For Dolan (2014), the challenge of assessing personal happiness begins with recognising the distinction between *evaluation* and *experience* (p. 4). Drawing a comparison to having your photograph taken versus being filmed, he says there is a substantial difference between a person's evaluation of life and his or her actual experiences. Dolan asserts that, in playing to the former, happiness surveys record snapshots of satisfaction without capturing the everyday feelings of their subjects (p. 5). Moreover, life circumstances such as employment and age are given much more weight to one's evaluating self than their experiencing self (p. 41). This internal conflict casts doubt on happiness research that fails to clarify its form of measurement (ibid, p. 42; Kahneman, 1999). What is required in our appreciation of happiness, argues Dolan, is serious endeavour into the *subjective experience* over time.

According to Csikszentmihalyi (2002), the "subjective experience is not just one of the dimensions of life; it *is* life itself" (p. 192). Luckily, scientific breakthroughs have assisted the way we examine subjective phenomena, like happiness. Modern electroencephalogram (EEG) technology, for example, reveals patterns of electrical brain activity that correspond directly to the expressed feelings of participants (Layard, 2011b, p. 17). Such physical measurements of emotion help to objectify characteristics of happiness (ibid, p. 20) while adding credibility to the ancient theory that "no man is happy who does not think himself so" (Marcus Aurelius, cited in Diener, 1984, p. 543). Also notable is Israeli psychologist Daniel Kahneman's (1999) definition of *objective happiness,* or aggregation of self-reported feelings over time. Relying on ultimately subjective data, this method records real-time experiences along a Good/Bad (GB) dimension over a selected period, the average of which, he argues, allows an outside observer to reasonably assess how happy an individual is. While Dolan (2014) suggests that forms of experience sampling are "a huge step forward in the measurement of happiness" (p. 25), others point to the apparent bias these models allude to, particularly towards learning. If every pleasure and pain on Kahneman's GB dimension is treated equally, says Michalos (2008), then "the pleasures of the uneducated can be at least as intense and plentiful as those of the educated… [and] it would be irrational for anyone without an education to pay any price for education" (p. 352). On reflection, he says,

human beings can certainly "recognize the difference between a good time and a good life" (ibid). This assumption supports Dolan's (2014) argument that happiness is not solely based on the *quantity* of an experience, but also the *quality* (p. 16). This refined understanding of the value that an experience holds, says Pring (2015), is a primary benefit of receiving a sound education.

This discussion on measuring happiness is relevant to the present study as it has serious implications for the educational community. Positive psychology and its principles have given way to what is now considered *positive education*, or a model for increasing overall well-being for students. Some schools across the UK have adopted its language and ideas to design their own "happiness lessons", or timetabled programmes aimed at teaching the core components of what social theorists say constitute a happier life (Suissa, 2008, p. 575). While these practices, such as those at Wellington College, will be addressed more extensively at a later point in this paper, it is important to first situate this trend within the stated purposes of this study. I agree with Suissa's argument that empirical findings on happiness, while offering tremendous strides in the treatment of mental health and sound economic policy-making, cannot by themselves set the bar for how to increase well-being in schools. As she suggests, it is highly problematic to assume that even the leading happiness research translates exactly in meeting educational needs or aims. Suissa carefully critiques these well-being programmes as potentially "anti-educational" insofar as they deliver a "pre-packaged list of techniques" in lieu of encouraging *genuine* experiences in living a happy, worthwhile life (p. 582). She explains:

> In a liberal democracy, it is not for economists, ministers of education or teachers to decide what our 'routes to happiness' are, but to allow schools to be the kinds of places that open up the questions and give children tools to answer them for themselves (p. 588).

It is in learning to be human, says Pring (2014), that students develop this sense of autonomy, or the ability to decide for themselves what creates pleasure and meaning in a life they perceive as worth living (p. 6). When young people are told by teachers and parents when and why they should be happy, confusion and frustration can ensue (Noddings, 2003, p. 25). As Dolan (2014) notes, there is no one-size-fits-all guide to achieving happiness. Furthermore, children should not attribute their personal worth to the type of work they pursue, as "there are no objective criteria… for saying that one lifetime pursuit is more worthwhile than another" (Pring, 2014, p. 7). It is in developing a

mature understanding of subjective happiness that children can celebrate their life choices while respecting those of others (Noddings, 2003), a critical skill for building tolerance. Schools play an enormous role, Pring (2014) argues, "in opening up possible interests to young people, in enabling them to pursue these interests more intelligently, in showing what further interests they might lead to" (p. 9). With these considerations in mind, this study does not examine happiness as a designated curricular objective or prescribed series of tutorials, but as a primal desire capable of influencing every-day school and learning activity. Equally, happiness for flourishing can be appreciated as a natural and living phenomenon, one in which educational institutions are awarded special opportunities to both relish and optimise.

In investigating happiness as it exists in the schooling environment, this study aspires to uncover truths about the subjective experiences of the parties involved. This is particularly significant to discussion of educational aims, for, as de Ruyter (2015) notes, those dominating school culture today are primarily concerned with objective forms of well-being and an "ideal conception of flourishing" (p. 94). While objective outcomes must not be neglected, de Ruyter argues that greater attention to the subjective experiences of children can inform educators' realistic expectations and practices. On reflection, it seems schools today largely emphasise well-being for pupils in the tangible sense while awarding little focus to the unseen, subjective forces shaping their learning experiences. As is detailed in the methodology chapter, the present study highlights happiness in secondary schools via qualitative inquiries and analysis. Rather than yielding a statistical report or measurement, its findings help bring meaning to this phenomenon using extensive interview and observational data collected in the field. Realising the benefits and disadvantages to each approach, I have intended to produce densely descriptive material that works in conjunction with and refines quantitative efforts, such as experience sampling, to better understand happiness in schools.

In light of scholarly efforts to both define and measure happiness, it is necessary to appreciate the imperfections that accompany the study of this ambiguous term. There are, in fact, no guarantees that researchers' best efforts will ever fully resolve the elusive nature of happiness, and, as Csikszentmihalyi (2002) suggests, "one could argue that we have made no progress at all" since the time of Aristotle (p. 1). Adding to these complications is what Schkade and Kahneman (1998) call the *focusing illusion*: one

cannot fairly evaluate any feature of well-being without inadvertently distorting its weight in reality (p. 340). Despite these limitations, this study accepts that happiness as a pillar of well-being is valuable and *must be considered* as a means of promoting a flourishing society. Educational policy, in particular, must not dismiss "the somewhat frustrating nature of such avowals… [but] must acknowledge their potential significance" (Petch, 1986, cited in Coldron and Boulton, 1991, p. 170). In so doing, says Noddings (2003, p. 17), it is worth shifting focus on happiness from questioning *what it is* to *when it occurs*.

2.1.3 Sources of happiness

Most significant to this study are not the differences distinguishing theories of happiness, but rather their commonalities. Among these are what researchers agree to be underlying sources of both pleasurable and purposeful experiences, the appreciation of which has informed my own ability to recognise and interpret them within the schooling context. As such, the purpose of this section is to outline reoccurring practices literature suggests, while not necessarily applying to all persons at all times, are relatively conducive to true and lasting happiness: *engagement with the present*, *exercise of autonomy* and *relationships with others*.

Engagement

Many authors contend that at the core of one's experiences of happiness lies the degree to which he or she is *engaged with the present*, or aware of the here and now. Too often, in a desperate effort to capitalise on each and every opportunity, individuals fall victim to what Layard (2011b) calls "continuous reoptimisation", or "the real enemy of happiness" (p. 198). When we become so fixated on the next best thing or hypothetical outcomes, we cease to savour the everyday pleasures afforded to us (Dolan, 2014; Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). One must carefully reflect on happiness sacrificed in the present for something that may or may not occur in the future, Dolan (2014) argues, for "lost happiness is lost forever" (p. 76). He suggests that, provided our worries concern things from the past or things yet to come (p. 162), it is best for the sake of our happiness that we pay attention to what we are doing *now* and the people we are doing it with. Disruptions are many, but in terms of happiness, little compares to being seen and heard by other conscious creatures.

In a world of technological distractions, social media and instant gratification, it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain focus on our social surroundings, much less a single activity. Yet, according to Hungarian-American psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2002), it is being totally engrossed in something in the present moment (e.g. writing, reading or playing a musical instrument) that allows one to experience a heightened form of happiness: *flow*. The concept of flow forms the basis for Csikszentmihalyi's theory of *optimal experience*, or the experience of losing oneself in an activity so enjoyable that nothing else matters in that moment. He suggests that a person in a state of flow experiences rich, intrinsic rewards and motivation without being consumed by potential gains or losses. For Csikszentmihalyi, the key to achieving flow rests with striking a balance between boredom and anxiety and in practicing skills adequate for the task at hand (p. 52). His studies on flow suggest that immersion in an appropriate challenge allows for greater inner clarity and a sense of discovery resulting in "strength and complexity of the self" (p. 70). *Complexity* in this context reflects the joint exercise of *differentiation* and *integration*, or growing in one's individuality and uniqueness while also succeeding as part of a union or larger entity (p. 41). Csikszentmihalyi concludes that, as a result of these deeply meaningful and pleasurable activities, a person enjoys living in the present while building self-confidence to improve their skills and "make significant contributions to humankind" in the future (p. 42).

While engagement with the present allows for awareness of ourselves and of our environment, this component of happiness requires more than simple mindfulness. Similarly, it is "not the same as killing time by watching television or taking recreational drugs", but about living more deliberately and learning to use one's time wisely (p. 171). The optimal experience is not obtained by reverting to a hedonist lifestyle and neglecting one's talents or sense of purpose, but derives from concentration and determination (ibid). In essence, the extent to which we do or do not lead happy lives considerably depends on how we allocate our *attention* (Dolan, 2014; Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Given the brain's mental capacities at any one time, says Dolan (2014), attention is a finite resource (p. 156). Thus, it is the ability to harness attentional energy which enables people to live "happier, more efficient, and healthier lives" (p. 167). Central to evidence on happiness is that one's frame of mind possibly shapes his or her life apart from objective circumstances. It is how we direct our attention that offers us some control of a situation and profoundly influences our subjective state (Dolan; 2014, Layard, 2011b;

Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). This theory is promising when applied to learning opportunities for children. Considering the varied personal and academic situations students contend with, lessons in history and literature might illustrate ways of channelling attention in response to life's ups and downs, so to speak. Additionally, teachers themselves can model and embrace being present and cultivating attitudes for thinking clearly about what is important. Attending to the now in this way may result in their own re-engagement with what they know to be good classroom practices, not necessarily with those dictated to them (Watkins, 2013).

Adding to the relevance of happiness through engagement in education is recognising that we often *tell* children to pay attention without teaching them *how.* Slowness, says Seligman (2011), is a grossly underrated virtue linked to both intelligence and high achievement (p. 110). Psychologists Blair and Diamond (2008) draw a crucial connection between promoting children's executive functioning with overall school success. In getting students to slow down, they are more likely to focus, process information and practice revision, leading to better behaviour, less anxiety and higher attainment (ibid). Teachers and students operate within a growing culture of fear that permeates today's learning institutions, says Watkins (2013), influencing both parties' ability to think and behave most reasonably. In a fast-paced environment with high pressure to perform, it becomes increasingly difficult to concentrate on one's immediate context and presence (ibid). Therefore, if we want to ensure that students are both happy and productive, we should afford them the opportunities to experience a sense of genuine engagement while equipping them with the skills to do so. In the end, says Csikszentmihalyi (2002), the optimal experience of flow requires "a sense of mastery – or perhaps better, a sense of *participation* in determining the content of life" (p. 4).

Autonomy

It is in acting freely, or *exercising autonomy*, that we grow in self-knowledge, learning more about what brings us individual happiness and thereby seek to attain it (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 42). This idea closely relates to Frederick Nietzsche's (1974) philosophy that human flourishing is associated with thinking for oneself and structuring one's life accordingly (cited in Grosz, 2017). He refers to this self-reflection as *amor fati*, or love of one's fate: rather than wishing things were different, a person confronts reality and devises a course of action. Happiness as it relates to experiences of pleasure and

purpose most certainly requires an element of control and forging one's own identity. For Noddings (2003), serious discussion of happiness in a liberal democracy means forms of coercion are off the table (p. 88). Rather, there is evidence that the most effective ways to be happier include deciding *for oneself* what brings happiness and subsequently constructing their contexts (Dolan, 2014). As Csikszentmihalyi (2002) notes, "however well-intentioned, books cannot give recipes for how to be happy… each person has to achieve it on the basis of his [or her] own individual efforts and creativity" (p. 5).

Approaching happiness from an economist's point-of-view, Dolan (2014) explains how it might be improved through what he calls the "three Ds": 1) *decide* sources of personal happiness*,* 2) *design* one's environment to maximise those sources and 3) *do* the actions that promote them (p. 101). Of course, these recommended steps depend greatly on the *opportunity* one has to practise them, a point worth noting as the discussion shifts to the educational community. According to Dolan, learning to exert control over one's surroundings is a tremendously valuable skill, considering that much of what we do is dictated by "contextology" (p. 192). The task of doing so, says Csikszentmihalyi (2002), becomes ever more necessary in the fast-paced world in which we live (p. 22). Autonomy, then, requires a degree of deliberation about life conditions and exercising some dominance over those which are most pertinent to happiness.

There remains a difference, however, in having a *sense* of control and actual *exercise* of control, the latter of which elicits genuine enjoyment, particularly in challenging scenarios (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 61). Adopting an active autonomous role in shaping our happiness encourages us to *create*, not merely *consume* (p. 162). This applies to both our professional and private lives in that we must work to make efficient use of our time. On leisure, Csikszentmihalyi explains: "Instead of making art, we go to admire paintings that brought in the highest bids… We do not run risks acting on our beliefs, but occupy hours each day watching actors who pretend to have adventures, engaged in mock-meaningful action" (ibid). He cautions against too submissively absorbing life events which, to his view, are potentially wasted opportunity to experience genuine happiness through hobbies requiring skill and discipline. Though passivity itself is not on all occasions inimical to happiness, this perspective, as further evidenced by Dolan and Metcalfe (2012), emphasises that creativity and innovation are explicitly linked to our subjective well-being and must therefore be pursued.

Autonomy's contribution to happiness sparks discussion as to how children exercise control and express themselves in the school setting. While emphasising the importance of laws and limitations to overall happiness (p. 179), Csikszentmihalyi (2002) builds the case for affording adolescents the freedoms they deserve. "Teenagers are physiologically mature beings", he writes, yet for both poor and affluent groups "most activities, including school, recreation, and employment, are under adult control and leave little room for the youths' initiative [while] lacking any meaningful outlet for their skills and creativity" (pp. 182-3). Such social arrangements are troubling considering their potential toll on pupils' happiness. Joy in the classroom, Rantala and Määttä (2010) found, strongly associates with an environment of freedom, whereby students make decisions about how they will achieve certain tasks. The teacher, they maintain, does not forfeit ultimate authority, but orchestrates safe opportunities for autonomous choice.

On the topic of student freedoms, Noddings (2003) makes the provocative claim that it is an infringement on such to exclude children in the development of their own learning objectives. Specifying exactly *what* and *how* children will learn before they ever enter the classroom, she says, undermines their ability and willingness to participate. Reflecting on aims-talk, Noddings poses the question: "Is it sometimes appropriate to describe what the teacher will do and leave open what the students might learn?" (p. 78). The autonomy she calls for is at the heart of what Suissa (2008) says is in danger when imposing criteria-led lessons on happiness in schools. Such structured courses, she says, "risk conflating education with therapy" and downplay what many school communities claim as an educational aim: to develop autonomous individuals (p. 585). It is our own perception of reality, argues Suissa, that represents our innermost selves and must therefore be respected in the learning environment. Allowing for degrees of flexibility and experimentation in the classroom can help children better understand their learning needs, desires and aspirations. Such self-knowledge, says Csikszentmihalyi (2002), is an essential component to meaning-making and thus to our capacity for happiness.

Beyond questions of entitlement is the indication that children ordinarily *yearn* for greater autonomy. Such is Fisher's (2011) finding in exploring the pupils' perspective: expressions of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in the classroom revealed a desire for more creative opportunity, flexibility, breadth and support for independence (p. 132). She explains that all items considered, students displayed an appreciation for autonomous

experiences. Similarly, Affouneh and Hargreaves (2015) found children to especially value dialogue in their learning, while moments of what they categorise as "not learning" involved authoritarian-style teaching methods and little time for critical reflection (p. 231). The latter, says Csikszentmihalyi (2002), has implications for the good life, as "activity and reflection should ideally complement and support each other. Action by itself is blind, reflection impotent" (p. 226). According to Affouneh and Hargreaves (2015), students respond more positively when creativity, personal perspective and free, open conversation are encouraged in what they view as a trusting environment (p. 234).

Active student involvement, according to Alex Bloom (1953), leads to an enriched sense of community and pride in the school to which they belong (p. 175). Concerned with themes of democracy, shared responsibility and free expression, the educational pioneer founded St. George-in-the-East Secondary Modern School (Fielding, 2005). The institute *The Times* (1955, cited in ibid) called "a great educational experiment" was later portrayed in E. R. Braithwaite's acclaimed memoir *To Sir With Love* (1959). Student voice, in particular, was heavily ingrained in St. George-in-the-East, whereby children were encouraged to vibrantly interact with teachers and peers as well as to write regular reports on school operations without the fear of reprisal (ibid). The school design was that of a shared, collective space meant for exploratory debates and discussion; contemporary counterparts exemplifying this kind of cooperation, such as Hyman's (2017) School 21 and its methods for dialogic learning, are reviewed at a later point in this paper. Praising Bloom's radical approach to compulsory schooling in England, Fielding agrees that "education must be driven by the creative energies of young people themselves and realised through a lived understanding of and joy in partnership with others" (pp. 6-7). Bloom's commitment to student voice is crucial, says Fielding, as education is ultimately concerned with *relationships* (p. 11). Herein lies the intimate connection between exercising autonomy and growing as a fully-formed, interesting individual by means of a positive, productive community. In relation to happiness, this last point lays the foundation for exploring how and why connecting with others is so influential, particularly in the school context.

Relationships

Among relevant literature, perhaps the most agreed-upon factor in achieving happiness is a person's *relationships with others*. This leading component comes as little surprise in

light of what research indicates is our human nature; we are inherently emotional and social creatures who actively seek out other members of our community (Seligman, 2011, p. 23). Humphrey's (1986, cited in ibid) evolutionary studies, for instance, illustrate that the larger brain we possess is designed for social problem-solving and sustaining "harmonious but effective human relationships" (p. 22). Due to our social inclinations, says Dolan (2014), we habitually strive to become more like those around us. This unconscious assimilation of emotions leads us to evaluate happiness as both "contagious and a social phenomenon" (p. 137). Contrary to this finding is the pervasive individualism Griffiths (2012) says Western culture emphasises as an alternative pathway to joy and fulfilment. The rich eudaimonic experiences Aristotle so describes, she argues, do not belong to the isolated among us, but the socially-connected (p. 662). While not all individuals are equally disposed to be social, the power of human relation is evidenced in stories of personal trials and tribulations[4]. So critical are relationships to our well-being, that they may be examined as what Halpern (2010) explains as the *hidden wealth* to our prosperity and progress as a people.

The idea that we are deeply social beings is evidenced in research on when and how we experience happiness. Consistently, social science surveys indicate that people are happier in the company of others (Sandstrom and Dunn, 2014; Csikszentmihalyi; 2002; Okun et al., 1984). So dependent are we on friends and family that they are, as Seligman (2011) says, "the best antidote to the downs of life and the single most reliable up" (p. 20). The people we love can bring us the greatest joy and, equally, the greatest pain, the difference depending on mutual investment in and shared appreciation for one another (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 177). According to Harvard's Study of Adult Development, an 80-year-long study of mental and physical well-being, good relationships keep people both happy and healthy in their adult lives (Waldinger, 2016). Specifically, it suggests that social bonds support brain function, memory retention and resilience to pain.

Fortunately, there are proven ways to build and support the relationships our happiness requires. Acts of kindness, for example, have been found to elicit the greatest momentary

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[4] Take, for instance, a note from Chris McCandles, the young adventurer who famously abandoned society and social connection in pursuit of independence and solitude. Far from human contact and trapped in the Alaskan wilderness, he wrote soon before his death: "happiness only real when shared" (Krakauer, 1996, p. 189).

increase in well-being (Seligman, 2011, p. 20). If we want to be happier, suggests Dolan (2014), we must take initiative to actively care for others, as the distribution of happiness *in itself* contributes to our own (p. 176). There are limits, nonetheless, as some types of care work might be found especially difficult or dull. Similarly, Layard (2011b) says practising compassion is easier said than done, as we are heavily driven by what he calls the *status race*: the desire to keep up with and/or surpass others' successes (p. 7). Yet, he argues, this social message is largely self-defeating to our capacity for happiness and we should celebrate, rather than compare ourselves to, the achievements of others. Friendships and what researchers call *social capital*, or quality of community, influence greatly how secure we feel in our environment (Putnam, 2000; Halpern, 2004, cited in ibid, p. 68). This, in turn, leads to a degree of reciprocated trust, something Knack (2001) found associates with happier groups around the world, particularly in Scandinavia (cited in ibid, p. 69). When we cultivate relationships and learn to get along with one another, says Csikszentmihalyi (2002), we inevitably improve our quality of life, "mak[ing] it possible to transform unpleasant interactions into tolerable, or even exciting ones" (p. 167). Through friendship, he maintains, we have opportunities to express ourselves in ways that everyday life events rarely afford. To practice freely one's expressive skills, or "attempt[s] to externalize [his or her] subjective experiences", is one of the most intense and essential advantages of being intimately tied to another person (p. 188).

With companionship believed to be one of the most crucial elements to both objective and subjective well-being, we must ask how schools reinforce this human condition and whether technology, in providing progressive educational tools, may simultaneously undermine it. Such is London headteacher Peter Hyman's (2017) concern that, ultimately, teaching and learning is about the real inspiration and passion that transpires between actual people. Dissecting their responsibility to help children *learn to be human*, Scottish philosopher John MacMurray (1958) calls on teachers to gain pupils' trust and admiration through positive, caring relationships. Beyond mere intellect, he argues, teachers serve to bring life and creativity into the classroom, sparking the imaginative tendencies of students. For MacMurray, the criticality of relationships means that education as a technical activity "is as stupid as it is ineffective" and the institution's "greatest threat" (pp. 673-4). Rather, we would do well to encourage authentic and positive pedagogical connections as a matter of meeting children's needs (Noddings, 2003) and emphasising joy as an educational value (Griffiths, 2012).

In practice, relationship-building in schools can spawn from shared experiences and responsibilities. Investigating productive and unproductive coping mechanisms of students in secondary school, for instance, Salavera et al. (2017) found that greater happiness and ability to overcome stress resulted from group-related strategies as opposed to pupils' lone efforts. These findings, they maintain, indicate "that we face a gregarious belonging phenomenon as opposed to our young people's individual capacities and competences" (p. 1314). This study demonstrates a genuine desire students have to belong, supporting other literature highlighting the significance of individual happiness at the group-level (Uchida and Oishi, 2016) and the association between social support and coping styles with adolescents' well-being (Zeidner, Matthews and Shemesh, 2016). Yet, contrary to these findings are the subliminal messages children in Western society often receive. In teaching them to look out for their own interests and to get ahead, says Seppälä (2017), we encourage children to become increasingly self-involved, rather than to exercise their capabilities for kindness and compassion. He explains: "It's true that it's a tough world out there. But it would be a lot less tough if we all emphasized cutthroat competition less, and put a higher premium on learning to get along" (no pagination). Not only will emphasising relationships prepare students for a successful future, but it will also help them experience happiness as it occurs in their everyday educational endeavours. "Social relationships", say Rantala and Määttä (2010), "are not just resources for learning but are also the object of learning" (p. 98). It is only reasonable, they argue, that the educational community reinstitute human relationships, as *the joy of learning* is best when shared.

By their very nature, schools can teach children how to live successfully and happily as part of a collective body. According to Bloom's (1952) philosophy, we must question to what extent formal education promotes individual flourishing by means of community, for "he is educated who is able to recognise relationships between things and to experience just relationships with persons" (p. 136). For MacMurray (2012), our ability to enter into relations with others is the "principle of mutuality", the core measure of our humanity and thus the foremost priority of education (p. 670). From this perspective, schools serve a fundamental role beyond their commitments to transmit knowledge and skills. These organisations, as natural communities of profoundly relational creatures, offer unique and indispensable opportunities for individual relatedness, and therefore growth and happiness.

2.2 Happiness and society

An honest account of happiness as it pertains to education requires reflection on the greater social and political trends at play. This involves recognising the powerful obstacles to happiness, both natural and ideological in origin, and how they reveal themselves in today's educational practice and discourse. Societal norms and how they construe happiness are inevitably tied to the perceived purposes of the educational community and roles of its players. As Griffiths (2012) contends, "Education always *affects*, and *is affected by*, the society in which it occurs [emphasis added]" (p. 657). The objective of this segment, therefore, is to dissect this critical relationship as it applies to achieving happiness.

2.2.1 Evolutionary considerations

Happiness is difficult to attain in part because the universe in which we live neither revolves around our personal needs nor interests (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 8). Though human beings have largely conquered their environment, research implies we have yet to fully conquer our emotions (Layard, 2011b, p. 9). These "evolutionary tragedies", argues Buss (2000, p. 18), are apparent when evaluating the discrepancies between modern and ancestral living conditions, giving significant weight to our quality of life. As our species has adapted over time, emotions such as jealously, anger and depression that once served different evolutionary purposes now at times leave us in subjective distress (p. 17). Similarly, he says, the close kinship that characterised our ancestors' lives has given way to increased mobility and a changing family dynamic, straining the social ties on which our happiness greatly depends. Most relevant to the present study, however, is what Buss describes as our inherently competitive nature; we are driven to succeed while simultaneously welcoming the failure of others (p. 18). We might combat these tendencies, which generally run counter to our happiness, through practising cooperation and reciprocity. He identifies the concept of "shared fate", or the collective success or failure of a group, as especially motivating for individuals' cooperative behaviour (p. 21), an idea that lends itself well to school practice.

Also influential to our happiness is our evolutionary ability to adapt to our environment. Faced with a given situation or set of circumstances, Gilbert (2004) explains, we adapt more easily than our "impact bias" leads us to believe [no pagination]. In other words,

human beings are poor predictors of the overall impact any single event, whether positive or negative, will have on them in the future (ibid). In moments of pain or suffering, our capabilities for adaptation serve as "a wonderful insurance policy" (Layard, 2011b, p. 48). However, in the search for happiness, individuals may find themselves fixed on a metaphoric "hedonic treadmill" (Diener et al., 1999, p. 286; ibid). Adjusting quickly to experiences of pleasure, particularly those of material items, we continuously struggle to maintain the feelings they produce.

Coming to grips with how our official institutions might reinforce, or even exploit, our natural dispositions is valuable to evaluating happiness as it exists in today's society and, consequently, education. Elements of socialisation, or how individuals are prepared to operate within a larger system, provide clues for what research indicates are threats to our happiness. Much of human activity, for instance, no longer consists of zero-sum interactions, while the Darwinian notion that only the fittest can survive is largely inapplicable to daily Western life (Layard 2011b, pp. 95-6). In fact, Logan (1985) argues, a most common trait of survivors of extreme adversity is that they are not narcissistic, but concerned with interests beyond their own. Not only are trust and cooperation crucial to individual happiness, but society and its establishments depend on them to fully flourish (Layard, 2011b).

2.2.2 Happiness in the Western world

Studying flourishing as defined by personal satisfaction and positive functioning within society, Shah and Marks (2004) maintain that many individuals today are instead *languishing*, or living unhappily and unfulfilled (p. 5). When considering the unprecedented levels of wealth and power that characterise the West, it is reasonable to expect that the well-being of its members would reflect these affluent circumstances. Alas, there exists what Layard (2011b) describes as "a paradox at the heart of our lives": although the First World has experienced great economic growth over the past 50 years, its people are no more happy (p. 38; Seligman, 2011, p. 223; Shah and Marks, 2004). Here an important note on wealth must be made: the means to afford basic necessities (e.g. food, clothing and housing), achieve financial security and ensure the health and safety of one's family are all factors critical to our happiness (Noddings, 2003, p. 22). But research consistently shows that, after alleviating the perils of poverty, income contributes less to happiness with each additional increment of wealth (Haybron, 2013, p.

73; Layard, 2011b, p. 230; Seligman, 2011, p. 224; ibid). In other words, once our essential needs are met, things like buying the latest fashionable accessories or a new automobile will not necessarily make us happier. Our threshold for satisfaction has diminished, says Csikszentmihalyi (2002), while our expectations have risen. As our pockets grow, so to speak, we find it increasingly difficult to feel comfortable and content with what we have, as "the sense of well-being we hoped to achieve keeps receding into the distance" (p. 10). That our happiness has remained stagnant in an objectively-improved and developed world, suggests Seligman (2011), is less a matter of human biology or ecology, but of modern notions of prosperity (p. 80).

The materialistic world in which we live can be hard to wrestle with, especially when we attribute happiness to possessions or status. We often adhere to a societal message that is reinforced through our schools, workplace and communities: "if you work hard, you will be successful, and once you become successful, *then* you'll be happy" (Achor, 2011, p. 3). Success in this context refers to more than sizeable professional or financial achievements; it includes small personal victories, such as losing a few pounds or finishing a home project. According to Shawn Achor, an American psychologist, much of human behaviour and the choices we make can be explained by this formula. However, given the mild correlation between income and happiness, we would do well to take caution of what Csikszentmihalyi (2002) describes as powerful, yet deceptive, symbols of happiness: "wealth, status, and power" (p. 44). The idea that happiness always *results* from these measures of success is fundamentally flawed, argues Achor (2011), as research now indicates that happiness is a *precursor* to success (p. 3). He suggests that the state of happiness works to fuel performance by encouraging things like motivation, resiliency and creativity (p. 4). Supporting what Achor calls the "The Happiness Advantage" is the work of positive psychology researchers Lyubomirsky, King and Diener (2005). Their research analysing over 200 studies and 275,000 participants suggests that happiness and its contributions to success are evident in the domains of work, relationships, health, originality and energy, among others. Though beyond the scope of this particular study, these findings give cause to question how society might develop a healthier perspective on happiness in relation to success and, for that matter, educational institutions.

Ordinary practice and discourse are, to a large degree, reflective of societal attitudes and ideologies. In the last few decades, western countries have become increasingly individualistic, namely the UK and the USA (Layard, 2011b, p. 232). Heavily influenced by Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory and Adam Smith's "the invisible hand" economic concept[5], today's political and cultural climate has arguably given rise to decreased trust and increased competitiveness (ibid). Neoliberalism teaches individuals to maximise their personal benefits and that, theoretically, the market will raise standards in the public sphere by means of competitive human activity (Metcalf, 2017). As is discussed in more depth later in this paper, neoliberal principles, including performance and assessment, have contributed to education policy reform in the UK with significant implications for teachers and learners (Ball, 2003, 2008; Stobart, 2008). The application of neoliberalism to almost all aspects of Western life, including the classroom, is evident in our perspective on happiness. As we have seen, modern notions of wealth centre around objective goods, as opposed to meaningful contact and experiences. We are driven by consumerism to the extent that, according to Layard (2011b), our income represents more than our purchasing power; people interpret it as a measure self-worth (p. 44). This wave of egocentrism has brought with it increased social comparison and distance from others, both of which take their toll on personal happiness (Smith, 2005, 2013). On the damaging effects of market economics, German social psychologist Erich Fromm (2008) writes:

> Modern capitalism needs men who co-operate smoothly and in large numbers, who want to consume more and more, and whose tastes are standardized and can be easily influenced and anticipated…. What is the outcome? Modern man is alienated from himself, from his fellow men, and from nature (p. 77).

While it is beyond the remit of this paper to prescribe what an appropriate dose of competition for society entails, I do contend with Layard (2011b) that, when it comes to achieving happiness, the belief that individuals must work *against*, rather than *with* one another is indeed a fallacy (p. 169). As the famed economist Lord John Maynard Keynes (1930) once proclaimed, "we have been trained too long to strive and not to enjoy" (cited in ibid, p. 164). We are encouraged to be effective and high-achieving, while constantly looking to the future for the best yet to come.

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[5] These are distinct and longstanding ideas for which there is not space here to elaborate or interrogate. See Darwin, C. (1906) and Smith, A. (1991) for context.

Why is it that, despite having achieved previously un-dreamed-of miracles of progress, we seem more helpless in facing life than our less privileged ancestors were? The answer seems clear: while mankind collectively has increased its material powers a thousandfold, it has not advanced very far in terms of improving the content of experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, pp. 15-6).

It is my understanding that, through education, we might reclaim experiences of happiness, contributing to what literature suggests makes for a more flourishing life.

2.2.3 Prosperity: a new perspective

Research implies that achieving happiness, both individually and collectively, involves a degree of commitment. With fewer serious or immediate threats to our survival, the concerns of our ancestors ought to be largely unwarranted in developed countries (Layard, 2011b, p. 235). This is not to downplay the very real and growing issues facing society, for instance terrorism or climate change, but to suggest that, generally speaking, individuals in the Global North live safely in their day-to-day activities. We can afford, perhaps more than ever, to actively invest in our well-being, pursuing experiences of happiness in a "life [that] is for living" (ibid). An economic lens of human nature and development might therefore be expanded to include the many channels by which to realise happiness, with support from academia and government bodies (ibid, pp. 145-7).

The success of a nation has long been assessed in terms of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross National Product (GNP), both monetary values. Yet, according to the most recent World Happiness Report unveiled at the United Nations, a state's wealth does not necessarily correspond to how its people evaluate their quality of life, among richer countries (Helliwell et al., 2017). A new standard for prosperity, then, would include measures of well-being, not at the expense of existing policy values, such as "justice, democracy, peace [or] tolerance", but in *conjunction* with them (Seligman, 2011, p. 240). Echoing Benthamian philosophy that the greatest communities are those which are happiest, Csikszentmihalyi (2002) suggests that a fair judgement of a society might encompass the kinds of experiences afforded to citizens (p. 78). Money, it is well-evidenced, contributes more to well-being when spent on experiences versus material items of the same cost (Van Boven and Gilovich, 2003; Van Boven, 2005). Though we enjoy opportunities incomparable to those of even the past few generations, the challenge arises to pause and reflect on things that bring us happiness and whether they are at odds with the means in which we seek to attain it. In a democracy where people have the

freedom to choose their own pursuits, how might we better recognise and encourage the activities and skills researchers suggest conduce genuine happiness? For Noddings (2003), the answer may lie in "intelligent and sensitive education" (p. 21).

2.2.4 Implications for education

In recent decades, UK educational policy has adopted an increasingly marketable approach to formal schooling, with the underlying assumption that these institutions will contribute to a strong, competitive economy (Coldron and Boulton, 1991; Noddings, 2003; Wright and Pascoe, 2015). Education policy, to an extent, embodies the societal narrative that a good life is one of wealth and competition (Francis and Mills, 2012). Yet, Noddings (2003) argues, education's role is undoubtedly greater than teaching children how to make money and get ahead, for "there is more to individual life and the life of a nation than economic superiority" (p. 84). If we consider the foremost priority of education to ensure employment, say Wright and Pascoe (2015), then its chief function amounts to an economic unit supplying the market (p. 295). The result has been what Hanna et al. (2011, cited in ibid) label the "McDonalisation" of the formal school system, the default philosophy of which Noddings (2003) says is to achieve economic equity via standardisation. Enforcing the same curricula and expectations on all students, however, is especially damaging for those who simply do not fit into a narrow academic path (p. 157). Noddings explains the misconception in assuming that academic preparedness necessarily leads to university, which necessarily leads to gainful employment; this idea does not always support students in finding what, for them, are realistic forms of success. What is more, she argues, educational culture and discourse that values one learning track over another can be "soul-destroying" for children (p. 86). In exploring their personal interests and what brings authentic happiness, children are prone to feelings of unworthiness if said pursuits are deemed less desirable by the educational community (p. 92). Guilt, fear, and pressure might well deter students from engaging with subjects that give them the greatest sense of joy and fulfilment.

Of course, it must be said that earning a living is a common reality and necessity for individuals to function in society. The point here is not to dismiss education's role in preparing youth for the work force, but to suggest that this feature alone does not fulfil its richest aims (Fielding, 2012, p. 654; Macmurray, 2012, p. 662). Equally, the purpose of this section is not to imply that the foremost of these aims is to increase happiness in

society, as does Layard (2011b). Rather, I share Francis and Mills' (2012) viewpoint that, while existing educational framework promotes an all-too-narrow understanding of success and human flourishing, there are special opportunities for educators "to generate conversations around thicker, or richer, notions of the good life [including] learning, friendship, health and *happiness* [emphasis added]" (p. 582). While this thesis focuses on the last of these, it recognises happiness' value in relation to the others, viewing it as only one important ingredient for a life that is 'good'.

On the topic of education for the good life, Griffiths (2012) makes the case that eudaimonic principles ought to be encouraged by state institutions as a matter of social justice, suggesting that "educators should indeed be thinking about what we are doing in education to find hope, love, rejoicing and joy" (p. 662-3). Endorsing a similar perspective, Noddings (2003) argues that the school, at its best, serves as an impartial "advocate for the child" distinctive from parental or other government influence (p. 250). There is a clear role for educators to combat some of the challenges of living in today's capitalistic society, namely competition and individualism (Smith 2005; 2013). One way of doing so, Fielding (2005) recommends, is by instilling in school culture the value of community. Reflecting on Alex Bloom's St. George-in-the-East Secondary School, he remarks that students gradually appreciated and invested in the school's ethos that was "not just anti-competitive, but proactively, imaginatively, extensively and actively communal in its daily work" (p. 4). Limiting the societal "rat race", says Layard (2011b), comes from attributing less value to status and more value to human connectedness and shared success (p. 228). It is neither unreasonable nor naïve to presume that elements of well-being, including happiness, can be fostered *alongside* skills for academic and career achievement in schools (Seligman, 2011, p. 78). As instruments of democracy, schools can model for the rest of society how to celebrate "all of its honest workers, not just those who finish college and make a lot of money" (Noddings, 2003, p. 86). To do so is a chief example of what Cavanagh (2008) describes as a moral responsibility of the educational community: to help mould societal aims and values (p. 21). Schools, he proposes, should function to some degree as forums for societal critique, whereby students are regularly encouraged to reflect on and challenge its norms. In rethinking the aims of education, we might emphasise a culture of care and cooperation, one that "values happiness as being at the core of what helps us flourish as part of the natural world" (ibid, p. 22).

2.3 Happiness as an educational aim

This paper, in exploring perspectives, practice and potential in secondary schools, is motivated by the strong normative, ethical and scientific arguments for why empowering students' pursuit of happiness ought to be an explicit purpose of education. The conceivable links between schooling and elements of well-being are extensive; what follows here is a breakdown of how to appreciate happiness as an educational aim with respect to how I have chosen to interpret the term. Similar to Noddings (2003), I have presented a sizeable discussion on the nature and context of achieving personal happiness, with the presumption that the concept is meant to remain open for interpretation and exploration. As she suggests, educators *do not* need to entirely agree on what happiness is, as its makeup is largely self-defined (p. 3). The intention of this segment, rather, is recognising happiness' powerful relationship to schooling, and situating it within a suitable discussion of aims. The theoretical positions reviewed here are therefore contained insofar as they serve the weight of this thesis: how and when pupils realise happiness.

2.3.1 Happiness and education

The case for featuring happiness at the forefront of the educational agenda is growing increasingly persuasive. What exists, explains Martin (2006), is a mutually-reinforcing relationship: education influences positively individuals' happiness, while happy individuals derive more from their educational experience (p. 205). Again, while these are *general* claims, research presented in this literature review demonstrates happiness as both an inherently-valuable pursuit and precursor to healthy, successful living (Layard, 2011b; Martin, 2006; Hallowell, 2003; Noddings, 2003). Even if grade marks, employment or economic prosperity were the sole considerations for education, students' happiness should inform schools' objectives and operations (Martin, 2006). Put simply, says Noddings (2003), the universal desire for happiness is one education ought to perpetually reflect (p. 74). She too describes a kind of parallel between the subjects: "Happiness and education are, properly, intimately related: Happiness should be an aim of education, and a good education should contribute significantly to personal and collective happiness" (p. 1); this collectiveness, says Cavanagh (2008), applies to all persons involved with schooling, including teachers, pupils, educators and parents. As discussed previously, education has in recent decades been driven and judged by its

concrete, measurable outcomes. Happiness, comprised of intangible thoughts and feelings, has rarely been considered a specific aim of education (Martin, 2006, p. 205). In correcting for the seemingly implicit belief that happiness and education are not considerably related (ibid), we might re-evaluate schooling's greater functions and engage in educational aims discourse, or *aims talk* (Noddings, 2003, p. 4), that takes seriously the notion of supporting children's subjective well-being in schools.

2.3.2 Identifying a space for aims talk

Aims talk for schooling, says Pring (2015), should extend beyond any single individual or personal preference; on the subject of what is a greater societal issue, educators must ask: "What are we trying to do in compelling all young people to undertake full-time education, especially one which is so rigidly timetabled into totally distinct subjects?" (p. 5). Enshrined in the English secondary school curriculum, he explains, lay a handful of traditional forms of knowledge (e.g. reading, writing, arithmetic and science) which, on their own, can fail to prepare children for successfully navigating and flourishing in the world today. Pring warns that hyper-focusing on such a narrow range of subjects in school does not necessarily allow young people to make realistic or purposeful connections with the curriculum; for example, how to maintain a healthy lifestyle or find work that elicits satisfaction and self-worth (p. 7). We would do well, he proposes, to widen the discussion of aims to include the topics of human flourishing and personal well-being, "while never ignoring the ever deepening understanding of [traditional] forms of knowledge through which [these] aims might be more fully realised" (ibid). In the research world, suggest Rantala and Määttä (2012), this includes establishing *emotion* as a legitimate academic subject. They explain that, though emotions are a part of the entire learning process for children, the relationship between emotionality and schooling has been investigated very little; this is especially true for *positive* emotions, such as those associated with happiness (p. 87). For educators, allowing emotionality into our understanding of teaching and learning, and prioritising the affective needs of learners, means we work to better understand students and the impact of our own language and behaviour, adjusting pedagogical practice appropriately (Moore, 2013, p. 283). To do so fulfils what Moore describes as a "duty of care" that values both conventional wisdom and pupils' growth as "happy, socially secure subjects" capable of exercising effective and meaningful use of knowledge (ibid).

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The matters above help illustrate the necessity of revisiting the purposes of education and reappraising school aims for developing an increasingly-improved vision for students. Education requires aims talk, says Noddings (2003), the way democracy requires freedom; failing to engage critically with aims, both stated and perceived, is a dangerous approach associated with standardisation and high-stakes testing procedures (p. 76-8). Constructive principles and pedagogies for the provision of schooling where, in this case, pupil happiness is regularly achieved, demands a degree of reflection and vigorous discussion. A point to reiterate is that happiness as it is interpreted in this thesis is by no means a technical activity and cannot be *prescribed* to children. Though desired end aims are often used to justify standardised educational means of meeting them, attention to happiness involves *empowering* children in ways relative to time and place. In other words, in meeting goals pertaining to happiness, we might ask what is best for students in their specific schooling environment today.

2.3.3 Conceiving happiness as an aim

Educational debate on how to address children's well-being, including their happiness, is sometimes difficult and stigmatised. There are several arguments, in fact, against the idea of placing well-being as a leading educational aim. The first of these, says de Ruyter (2015), deals with how to define the term *well-being* and others associated with it (p. 85). Again, it is important to note that de Ruyter's conception of *well-being*, similar to those of John White (2011) and Haybron (2008), is comprised of objective and subjective theories to its understanding; *happiness*, as it is used in this thesis, distinguishes the latter. Her discussion of well-being as an educational aim is therefore appropriate here and encompasses the discourse within which happiness resides. Though my selected interpretation of *happiness* differs from Dearden's (1968) wholly hedonistic description, I share his opinion that, though philosophers dispute over defining the term, they might agree that achieving happiness comes via "the modification of our nature which is progressively accomplished by education" (p. 25). In the context of schooling and "being happy in life", it may be useful to adopt a richer interpretation of happiness that can be pursued, promoted, and protected (p. 18).

In essence, *the things we talk about* when we talk about happiness (e.g. belonging, mastery, joy and meaning) are perhaps more revealing and pertinent to conversations of educational aims than any particular definition. This is not to say that efforts to define

happiness are redundant, but to emphasise again the notion of subjectivity and the individuals' frame of reference. Any single account of happiness, while on its own will not capture all of the thoughts and feelings the word is used to articulate, can be reconstructed among others to unveil matters of significance (Haybron, 2013, p. 9-10). Rather than aspiring for an unequivocal explanation for what happiness consists of, educators have a kind of obligation to "help students understand the wonders and complexities of happiness, to raise questions about it, and to explore promising possibilities responsibly" (Noddings, 2003, p. 23). In keeping with this argument, this thesis presents the view that happiness depends not only on one's circumstances, but how he or she makes sense of, and responds to, those circumstances (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002; Dolan, 2014). Among the many internal and external factors which influence our subjective well-being, education in the form of a school community can encourage students to take initiative and exercise their capacities for happy living (Michalos, 2008, p. 357). There is a distinction here to mention: how individual researchers assess the element of education in part determines whether they perceive an effect on happiness. Layard (2011b, citing Helliwell, 2003), for instance, writes that education level has little bearing on a person's happiness apart from increasing his or her income (albeit to an extent) (p. 62). In Diener and Seligman's (2004) overview of contributing factors to happiness, or subjective well-being, amount of education is not presented as a significant factor. On this Michalos (2008) raises an important point: studies such as these suggesting that education has little bearing on happiness frequently simplify the relationship into what can be evaluated on a causal, linear scale (p. 360). He suggests that a person's happiness, when considered in a "robust *eudaimonist* sense of overall human wellbeing", is affected by the quality, not mere quantity, of life experiences, and hence enormously impacted by education (p. 358). This is especially true if we aspire to achieve rich educational aims, such as Macmurray's (2012) and Bloom's (in Fielding, 2005), viewing the institution as a fundamental process by which we learn to live positively and productively amongst others, or *to flourish*.

A second point of contention with respect to well-being as an aim of education is whether or not it can actually be achieved as a goal (de Ruyter, 2015, p. 86). This argument relates in a sense to compulsory education's apparent favouritism towards fulfilling its *extrinsic* purposes before its *intrinsic* purposes. A blind fixation for what can only be mathematically and systematically calculated perhaps disregards what are some of the

most special features of schooling for children. In her argument for emphasising joy in education as a matter of social justice, Griffiths (2012, citing Hogan's terminology, 2010) distinguishes these intrinsic purposes as *inherent*, or pertaining to the future, and *integral*, or pertaining to the here and now. Formal education serves individuals, she explains, through the cultivation of inherently-valuable outcomes "such as autonomy, citizenship, imagination and critical thinking" (p. 656). Similarly, education is valuable for its integral experiences and processes; in other words, "[it] may be seen as good in itself… not just as part of what is needed to produce a good life" (ibid).

White (1991) reminds us that a shift in focus to the intrinsic purposes of education does *not* mean ignoring or downplaying its extrinsic purposes (cited in Siegal, 2015, p. 117). There are clear *instrumental* values at hand, such as entry into a professional field or occupation, higher education or wealth (Griffiths, 2012, p. 656). Rescuing aims talk to include concerns for happiness and flourishing, more specifically, does not mean neglecting vocational and economic factors; rather, it entails evaluating them alongside other extrinsic life goals (Smith, 2005; 2013, p. 9). With White (2011), de Ruyter argues that "well-being *can* [emphasis added] be conceived as an aim of education [and is] one of the final justifications of the aspirations of parents and teachers" (2015, p. 87). Though it may not be achieved directly, or even predictably, happiness can still *function* as an aim in the form of reflection, discussion and evaluation of educational practice (Noddings, 2003, p. 78).

Lastly, it might be suggested that while student well-being is a praiseworthy goal, its promotion lies beyond the responsibilities of the school (de Ruyter, 2015, p. 86). As with the issues discussed above, this argument takes a more traditional position on the purposes of education. However, the line separating children's schooling and their personal lives is often blurred. Csikszentmihalyi (2002) goes as far as to call it delusionary to assume that home life, in its natural course, will simply take care of itself (p. 185). He explains that maintaining the family unit, as with other complex commitments or activities, will break down without the effort and attention of the individuals involved (ibid). Learning how to engage meaningfully and effectively with one's time and with other people are central to Csikszentmihalyi's theory of *flow* and have been presented in this thesis as both key ingredients for happiness and skills that can be cultivated while in school. It is true, says Macmurray (2012), that, in preparing young

people for life's many dimensions, schools are but one component of a child's whole education (p. 668). While they cannot be expected to compensate entirely for the kind of upbringing and intimate bonds parents or guardians theoretically provide, schools, in the interest of their own success and that of their students, should rise to the task of addressing which aspects of education are lacking in their students' home lives and how to respond (ibid). Educational aims, in preparing students for happy living, might therefore embrace the personal facets of life, emphasising the human experiences we all share.

2.3.4 Morality, equity and the humanistic perspective

The dichotomy presented in this chapter between proposed extrinsic and intrinsic purposes of education derives from what might be understood as a liberal, humanistic approach to education and corresponding notions of morality and equity, or what is *good* and what is *fair*. There are social justice implications, argues Griffiths (2012), for failing to emphasise what she refers to as "joy" in schooling. Current government policy, she says, displays strong extrinsic motivations for educating UK citizens, while making little mention of education for education's sake (p. 661). Without taking a purely individualistic viewpoint, Griffiths calls for an improved policy framework aimed at ensuring children's integral experiences of education critical for their pursuit of a good life (p. 667). In a just society, she explains, children are not told by policy-makers what said good life entails, but are rather awarded opportunities to discover it for themselves. To address a system which expects students to perform highly on standardised tests, gain admittance to good universities, secure lucrative careers and, ultimately, circulate currency, aims talk in education must routinely contemplate what school communities aspire to accomplish, for whom and under what justifications (Noddings, 2003).

A good and equitable society, in addition to supplying resources for individuals' objective well-being, also encourages them to explore and appreciate, through its education system, the possibilities for achieving happiness; to reduce this endeavour to merely measures of prosperity is a disservice to both students and society (Noddings, 2003, p. 23). Vigorous emphasis on STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), Nussbaum (2006) argues, while critical for the 21st century, must not come at the expense of emphasising other capabilities such as empathy, critical thinking and imaginative learning in schools. In connection with Griffith's (2012) argument for stressing the

integral worth of education, Nussbaum draws attention to what she says is education's foremost endeavour: to foster the child's curiosity, growth and freedom of the mind. While reading, writing and arithmetic do not necessarily translate into a learnt humanity (Fielding, 2013), by virtue of emphasising the whole, happy child, education is capable of producing individuals of "pleasing talents, useful and satisfying occupations, self-understanding, sound character, a host of appreciations, and a commitment to continuous learning" (Noddings, 2003, p. 23).

Helping students become the happiest versions of themselves through liberal, progressive education, says Noddings (ibid), not only sustains the health of our democracy, but is a component by which we might judge the system as *moral*. The notion of morality to which she refers, and this thesis accepts, can be appreciated within the realm of *humanism*. According to White (2015), the humanistic perspective works to shed the religious lens through which much of Britain's structures were conceived, concerning itself with human flourishing in what is "one short life, with nothing beyond it" (p. 245). It is the role of our education system, he says, to help us identify features of what makes that life fulfilling and "to live it abundantly" (ibid). This is in keeping with what, for Noddings (2003), defines a moral education: one that is committed to happiness, all while averting "fear-based admonitions to be good" and the "glorification of suffering" in a world traditional Christian doctrine presents as temporary (p. 1-2). At the core of a humanistic approach to schooling is a certain self-awareness that life entails often unavoidable troubles and uncertainties, but also carries with it the potential for great, and often shared, experiences of joy (White, 2015, p. 234).

White (2015) draws comparisons between Britain and other once Protestant countries to challenge existing school practices he says in part evolved from a past culture firmly implanted in religion. Among others, these include: a bias towards transmission of knowledge from teacher to pupil, apprehension towards the topics of sex and relationships, sorting students according to individual variances in learning ability, heavy concentration on examinations and career-planning, and rigid scheduling. While this is not the forum to dissect the historical context of education, it is useful to acknowledge how the humanistic perspective seeks to remedy some of the aforementioned school features, broadening a discussion of aims to include a stronger emphasis on pupils' well-being. Especially pertinent to this thesis is what humanism offers as the primary purpose

of education: human flourishing. Pupils flourish in school, says White (2015) by way of "wholehearted, enjoyable, and successful engagement in self-chosen, worthwhile relationships and activities" (p. 241). This language aligns closely with what this paper has presented as core elements to happiness: autonomy, engagement and relationships.

Humanistic education for well-being, says White (2015), aims to equip students with opportunities for autonomous decision-making, encouraging their desire to learn and to participate in self-fulfilling activities. On wholehearted engagement, he explains a kind of gross absorption, similar to Csikszentmihalyi's (2002) concept of *flow*, in a prominent feature of one's life; for example, work, social life or extracurricular pastimes (p. 247). Neither of the above traits, White suggests, are akin to promoting selfishness, as one can most certainly find fulfilment and satisfaction while also displaying a concern for others (p. 243). Individualism, on the other hand, is inherited from more traditional educational arrangements which regarded each child "atomically - as a lone learner in a room of other lone learners" (p. 249). According to White, humanism in fact rejects this notion, especially the idea that morality must conflict with autonomous self-interest or engagement in personally-fulfilling pursuits (p. 243). Comparable to Macmurray's (2012) philosophy that our humanity rests on developing among others within an educational community, White's overview of the humanistic perspective welcomes our social nature, aiming to target and enrich relationships in school. This brings me to an important point of clarification: all of this is not to say that a person's held religious convictions, such as Macmurray's himself, cannot align with the principles of humanistic education. Nor am I implying that secular visions of education *only* or *necessarily* serve to promote children's happiness. Here is but a brief overview of a modern interpretation of achieving moral and equitable aims in education, and why schooling must be a place for prioritising the whole of pupils' well-being.

2.3.5 Prevailing pastoral concerns

Educational discourse on aims must naturally involve the adults who are invested in and share concerns for students. On the topic of happiness in particular, says Dearden (1968), parents and educators find a common focus; while their understandings of the word may differ, they agree that it is something they sincerely want for children (p. 18). For both groups, he explains, happiness is often stated explicitly as a top benchmark on which to judge a school, for instance in terms of the overall atmosphere and emotional well-being

of its pupils (p. 17). In their investigation into the criteria parents abide by when selecting schools in Sheffield, Coldron and Boulton (1991) found emotional and security considerations to be the most significant factors, while academic standards were often downplayed (p. 169). Dominating these determinants of choice, they realised, was *happiness of the child* (p. 178). Their data suggests that, for parents, happiness in school depends on elements of mental and physical security. Parents valued what they perceived as fair discipline, for example, built around mutual relationships, not according to strict rules and regulations (p. 174). Happiness, the authors point out, does not breed in fear and frustration. Furthermore, results from the study indicated that parents wanted their child to attend the school he or she themselves preferred, their priorities often aligning with one another (p. 176). Among these, the most important factors were close proximity to home and where friends and siblings were attending, or planning to attend, school, demonstrating a desire for continuity. Pastoral care and community ethos, Coldron and Boulton conclude, matter deeply to parents with respect to their child's education, and it is the responsibility of the schools to reflect this (p. 178).

While parents and educators together outwardly long for the children they know and love to be happy in life, why, as Noddings (2003) asks, do distress and boredom permeate today's schools (p. 1)? Are adult attitudes and behaviours possibly counterproductive? A misconception persists, she explains, that future success necessarily involves suffering in the present. This is not to say, of course, that struggle is not part of the learning process, nor that students must constantly be in good spirits; rather, adults need not add to what may be construed as unnecessary or outdated hurdles students face in school (ibid, p. 2). On the topic of aims, de Ruyter (2015) is right to remind us that well-being, of which happiness is a key ingredient, is not just something to be achieved in the future, but also regards the here and now (p. 84). Parents who become preoccupied with what their child needs to ensure his or her future happiness, she explains, may in fact fail to consider what is needed presently. Again White (2011) relates this back to the orthodox religious perspective he says emphasises the afterlife as more significant and worthwhile than the lives we lead today (p. 18). Citing White's philosophy, de Ruyter (2015) suggests that, although school years are indeed a time for development and learning how to live independently in adulthood, childhood itself can, and must be, a happy chapter of life (p. 84). Parents and teachers perhaps pay "lip service" towards the subject of pupil happiness, says Martin (2006), when the bulk of their effort and attention continues to

revolve around tangible matters, like performance or qualifications (p. 5). Yet we must realise there is no actual conflict between achieving happiness now and retaining these kinds of successes as educational goals; the two, he suggests, are married concepts (p. 6). As is explored in the next sub-chapter, studies suggest that happy children make for both better learners and employees. On the relationship between happiness and success, says Martin, it is not a competition; "you really can have your cake and eat it" (ibid). Therefore, he argues, we need not subject children to unhappiness *now* for the sake of what we believe will bring them happiness *later* (p. 8). How, then, do we ensure that the pastoral concerns of parents and teachers translate into what should be an "explicit and praiseworthy goal" (p. 6) to foster happy pupils who will subsequently mature into happy adults?

2.3.6 Reflection and practice

A consistent theme here is the ongoing examination of what education seeks to achieve. Considerations of teaching and learning, specifically, should incorporate the affective needs of pupils as a matter of ethical concern and professional necessity (Moore, 2013, p. 283). Failing to question the purposes of education, Cavanagh (2008) argues, reduces school practice to "the technical role of delivering an education based on what works and what is effective, and do[es] not allow each school to answer the moral question of 'what is appropriate for these children in these circumstances?'" (p. 20, citing Biesta, 2007, p. 11). Arguing for a *culture of care* in schools, Cavanagh (2008) makes the valuable suggestion that even the best curriculum may not succeed without strong and supportive relationships (p. 21). What a privilege, he contends, to teach, and also learn, through positive and constructive interactions with students, viewing them fittingly as individual "treasures" (ibid). Again, I must emphasis here that happiness with respect to the aims of education is, as Dearden (1968) suggests, only part of the overall equation. While it is outside the scope of this paper to review and prioritise all of education's many objectives, this thesis upholds Noddings' (2003) perspective that, while not the sole aim of education, happiness can be evaluated as a vital reference point from which to judge our decisions and actions (p. 5). Aims talk in education might therefore concern itself with, among other matters, how the quality of life in schools generates happiness for the present *and* future experiences of children, evaluating school practices in light of this goal (p. 251).

2.4 Happiness and its contributions to learning and life thereafter

In supporting the notion that happiness is of fundamental concern to the schooling community and a determinant in the lives of children, it is worthwhile to address how it has been recognised for its tangible life benefits. Here my discussion of happiness as a measure of subjective well-being broadens from how it may be appreciated as a valuable *end* in itself to a *means* by which individuals can improve across other life domains. While this study explores happiness according to the experiences and perspectives of individuals, this condensed survey of its objectively measured outcomes is intended to complement and support the normative and ethical reasonings for prioritising happiness in schools I have presented thus far.

2.4.1 Objective rewards of subjective well-being

A number of studies have demonstrated how happiness is important for generating forms of life success in areas including physical health, work performance and relationships. Among those most widely cited is Lyubomirsky, King and Diener's (2005) comprehensive assimilation of cross-sectional, longitudinal and experimental data on happiness and its correlates. Their meta-analysis of over 200 studies across the globe concluded that many of life's desirable characteristics, assets and outcomes are not merely associated with happiness, but also consequences of. Other researchers have since confirmed this notion, for instance De Neve et al. (2013), who argue that subjective well-being results in real, objective benefits, including individuals' capacities for achieving their goals and physiological support for bodily health systems (p. 2). I should note again that happiness in the context of this thesis is understood as an ingredient to one's total well-being, comprised of a fusion of feelings and self-evaluations and therefore achieved uniquely per person (Dolan, 2014; Haybron, 2013). As De Neve et al. (2013) explain, happiness from this perspective is not a "cure-all" solution nor a guarantee to improve one's functionality in any particular area (p. 2). Rather, they suggest a "dynamic relationship" whereby happiness and other essential facets of human life intersect and influence one another, with a compelling *likelihood* that happiness breeds desirable behavioural traits and life outcomes (ibid). Acknowledging that there are exceptions to these benefits of subjective well-being, I here apply the notion of *ceteris paribus*, or "all other things being equal", to this discussion of happiness and its objective associations.

Health and longevity

There is compelling scientific evidence to suggest that happiness both directly and indirectly improves a person's physical health; for unhappiness, the reverse is true (De Neve et al., 2013). At the physiological level, researchers have established causal links between happiness and decreased cardiovascular, inflammatory and neuroendocrine illness (Steptoe et al., 2005), as well as improved immune function and cancer prognoses (Rasmussen et al., 2009). In children more specifically, Kubzansky et al. (2012) found that adversity and stress predicted higher levels of inflammation in their later lives, a circumstance which threatens cardiovascular health. There is also evidence to suggest that happy people are more likely to practice healthier lifestyles, while unhappy people are more likely to engage in destructive behaviours that can exacerbate health problems (De Neve et al., 2013). For example, in Pettay's (2008) study of nearly 800 university students, individuals who reported higher life satisfaction were more likely to adopt healthier diets and exercise regimens. Conversely, in their widespread study of the adult population in the United States, Strine et al. (2008) found that persons who exhibited depression and anxiety were more likely to be medically obese and smoke.

In addition to leading relatively healthier lives, happy people have been found to live longer than their unhappy counterparts. This was most famously illustrated by Danner et al.'s (2001) study of 180 elderly Catholic nuns, a sisterhood who had long shared the life conditions of their convent. When analysing the women's handwritten journals, researchers discovered that those who had expressed more positive emotions and perspectives in their early twenties were significantly more likely to still be living nearly sixty years later. Similarly, Chida and Steptoe (2008)'s systematic review of 70 longitudinal studies examining healthy and diseased populations found that, among both groups, subjective well-being predicted lower risk of mortality. Studies have also demonstrated an inverse relationship between increased risk of suicide and decreased levels of happiness (Daily and Wilson, 2009; Koivumaa-Honkanen et al., 2003). Depression in particular has been identified by The World Health Organization as a serious health condition which may lead to suicidal behaviour, and as a primary cause of disability and contributor to disease worldwide (2020b). In the UK, topics of suicide and mental health have garnered increasing attention to discourse concerning the public's well-being. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), 19.7% of Britons aged 16 and older display symptoms of depression and anxiety (2016), while the rate of suicide

among teenagers alone has increased by 67% between the years of 2010 and 2017 (ibid, 2019). The prevalence and severity of issues related to the mental health of young people, specifically, and subsequent responses by school communities are matters to which I revisit later in this thesis. Here, the purpose is to provide some preliminary information on how scientists have linked levels of subjective well-being to physical health and longevity as part of a larger discussion of how happiness intertwines with other important life outcomes.

Character and behavioural traits

As well as enjoying on average healthier and longer lives, happy people have been found to exhibit an array of favourable character and behavioural traits, several of which beget personal and professional successes (Achor, 2011; Martin, 2006). As part of her *broaden-and-build* theory, Fredrickson (2001) suggests that, while negative emotions can trigger an evolutionary fight-or-flight response to stimuli, positive emotions often work to open and expand the mind, prompting us to think more critically and creatively. Achor (2011) explains that 'happy' chemicals released in the brain, including dopamine and serotonin, reinforce and amplify neural connectivity, thus broadening our cognitive and behavioural potentials (p. 44). As a result, he says, positive emotions in particular aid in the constructing of "intellectual, social, and physical resources we can rely upon in the future", thus offering "a real chemical edge" in navigating life's varied domains (ibid).

In the context of workplace success, higher levels of subjective well-being have been illustrated to provoke productivity, efficiency, cooperation and collaboration (De Neve et al., 2013; Achor, 2011). Peterson et al. (2011), for instance, found that happy workers were more likely to display resiliency, optimism and self-confidence, while Harter et al.'s (2010) study of 10 large companies found that those whose employees were most satisfied reaped greater financial rewards. For individuals themselves, increased happiness has been linked to higher levels of income (Judge et al., 2010), including income earned later in life (Diener et al., 2002; Graham et al., 2004). In their study of young people aged 16, 18 and 22, for example, De Neve and Oswald (2012) used sibling fixed effects to determine that positive affect and life satisfaction correlated significantly to higher earnings at age 29. High subjective well-being, say De Neve et al. (2013), positively affects one's capability for sound decision-making, placing he or she in a better position for evaluating possible scenarios and assuming appropriate risks (p. 12). Happy

individuals, they suggest, are more likely to exhibit self-control and to resist the temptation of immediate gratification in order to pursue what they perceive as more rewarding, longer-term goals (ibid, citing Aspinwall, 1998). Primed for creative and innovative thinking, explains Achor (2011), happy people are more likely to seek novel resolutions to problems, identifying new courses of action and applying fresh perspectives to existing ideas. The wealth of data to support "the happiness advantage" fuelling performance and productivity, he argues, gives cause for organisations, including schools, to invest in and cultivate happy working environments.

The notion that happiness pays, so to speak, applies also to the realm of social activity and relationships. Individuals with high subjective well-being have been found to partake in several forms of prosocial behaviour, for instance practicing inclusion and sympathy towards others and contributing to their communities (De Neve et al., 2013, p. 14). Experiments in social psychology have demonstrated that people who are primed for positive moods are more likely to offer assistance to those around them (Carlson, Charlin and Miller, 1988), while other studies have shown that happy individuals spend more time engaged in meaningful conversation (Mehl et al., 2010) and are generally seen as more attractive to their peers (Boehm and Lyubomirsky, 2008). In addition to exercising greater sociability, happy people have been found to enjoy relationships of both increased quantity and improved quality (Diener and Seligman, 2002; Michalos, 1991). This is especially important for, as detailed previously, *relationships* and a natural longing for social connection is often considered the most profound source of a person's happiness (Seligman, 2011; Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). High subjective well-being, therefore, can be understood as a *producer of* and also *produced by* improved social relationships (De Neve et al., 2013).

As I examine in the following segment, many of the qualities of happy people are the same needed for successful learning and performing in school. And while genetic makeup and other forces of nature certainly help shape a child's capacity for happiness, it is a mistake to assume that this capacity is entirely pre-determined or unchangeable. Neuroscience research has long demonstrated the brain's adaptability and potential for rewiring and growth, a concept referred to as neuroplasticity (Doidge, 2007; Schwartz and Begley, 2003). Additionally, advances in the field of positive psychology maintain that the building blocks of happiness in particular can be learnt and practiced (Seligman

2012; Achor, 2011; Seligman, 2011). In other words, there is scientific credibility to the notion that we exercise some control over our subjective well-being. One implication of this evidence, suggests Martin (2006), is that adults, especially teachers, can exert profound influence on how children realise their capacity for happiness (p. 175).

2.4.2 Learning and performing in school

As is reiterated in this thesis, cementing happiness as an aim of education ought not to be misunderstood as diminishing its special extrinsic purposes, including preparing young people with skills and knowledge for successful working lives. On the contrary, researchers have established happiness as a significant contributor to children's capacities for learning and performing and school (Moore, 2013; Achor, 2011; Martin, 2006). As Achor (2011) suggests, "our brains are literally hardwired to perform at their best not when they are negative or even neutral, but when they are positive" (p. 15). Happiness and academic achievement exist together in harmony, with the former serving to facilitate, not squander, the latter (Ng, Huebner and Hills, 2015; Quinn and Duckworth, 2007). To suppose theoretically that the sole aim of education was to merely maximise attainment outcomes, it remains in schools' best interest to nurture a happy environment for students.

Studies have shown that students who are primed for feelings of happiness significantly outperform their peers on learning-related tasks, controlling for other factors (Bryan and Bryan, 1991; Master, Barden and Ford, 1979). Among the likely explanations for how happiness contributes to academic achievement are that students with higher levels of life satisfaction cope better with stress and anxiety when confronted with challenge and adversity (Suldo and Huebner, 2004), exhibit better classroom behaviour (ibid), and possess general self-esteem (Moksnes and Espnes, 2013), academic self-efficacy (Diseth et al., 2012) and engagement in school (Lewis et al., 2011). Investigating love and fear in the classroom, Moore (2013) found that affective factors, both positive and negative, influenced the extent to which a child participant learnt at a deep level and enjoyed the learning process. Positive feelings of being valued and cared for, he explained, led to increased motivation, confidence and joy in classroom activities. In their analysis of 3000 students in England, Gorard and See (2011) suggest that enhanced enjoyment and interest in school, in addition to being inherently valuable, yields increased pupil attendance, participation and attainment. As with happiness and socials relationships, a reciprocal

causality has been illustrated between happiness and school success (Ng, Huebner and Hills, 2015; Quinn and Duckworth, 2007; Lyubomirsky, King and Diener, 2005). This is to say that higher subjective well-being enhances a child's learning and performance in school, and success in school also leads to higher subjective well-being. Though this is not the place to explore these particular connections in depth, I share Ng, Huebner and Hills' (2015) opinion that findings such as these present practical implications for schools seeking to increase academic achievement. Energy expended on improving students' learning and performance, they suggest, most logically includes a focus on subjective well-being.

Misconceptions of happy people

In applying happiness research to student populations, it is beneficial to clarify what researchers say are some misconceptions about how happy individuals necessarily think and behave. First, it is important to recognise that a happy schooling experience is not devoid of negative emotion or of experiencing failure. Says Noddings (2003), "challenge and struggle are part of the quest for knowledge and competence" and account for a natural and inevitable part of the learning process (p. 2). What distinguishes generally happy children, she suggests, is that they are better equipped to derive a sense of purpose from a difficult learning situation and overcome it with some degree of contentment (ibid). From a biological standpoint, says Martin (2006), negative emotions such as fear, sadness and anxiety serve to elicit spontaneous responses and protect us from harm. It is unrealistic to assume that we will not encounter these emotions at various times throughout our lives, and an attempt to entirely avoid them is perhaps to our detriment. A more appropriate perspective, Martin (2006) suggests, is one that accepts these emotions for their occasional protective functions. Happy people are quite rarely persistently blissful or jubilant, explain De Neve et al. (2013), but in most instances are "merely pleasant" and exhibit a positive demeanour (p. 17). At the same time, the negative feelings happy people experience are typically periodic and warranted by real instances of distress or misfortune (ibid, Martin, 2006).

A second misconception worth mentioning is that happiness necessarily implies a rosy or illusory worldview. One does not achieve authentic happiness, says Achor (2011), by forcing a smile and fantasising one's problems away, nor by denying that those problems exist (p. 24). Happiness is not about ignoring a situation, he explains, but taking control

and maximising one's potential. According to Achor, "happiness is not the belief that we don't need to change; it is the realization that we can" (ibid). Martin (2006) shares this viewpoint, arguing that happy people are neither blinded nor complicit to the harsh facts of life; they are not contented fools, but in fact are better at attending to sometimes difficult information or events. One experiment by Reed and Aspinwall (1998) found that happy individuals, when dealt threatening health-related information, assumed a more objective and receptive standpoint, and were better able to recall the details at a later point. Another way happy people are rooted in reality, says Martin (2006), is that they better manage practical problems and make decisions about whether to change course of action. When presenting participants with a set of mental tasks, some of which were unsolvable, Aspinwall and Richter (1999) found that individuals with a more optimistic frame of mind were quicker in redirecting their focus to the problems that were possible to decipher from the ones that were not. Martin (2006) uses this experiment to infer that happy people are generally more realistic about what is achievable. As these misconceptions relate to this thesis in particular, it is helpful to clarify that the prioritising of happiness in schools does not signify a scenario in which children are sheltered from any and all conflict, nor are they distracted from the realities of learning and of life. Instead, through supporting their general happiness, schools might help place children in better positions to brave life's obstacles, reaping valuable lessons from their experiences and growing as individuals.

Purposeful play

Among the ways in which happiness has been tied to learning and personal development, perhaps the most underestimated is the profound purpose of play for children. Teachers need not forfeit high expectations or educational objectives in making school life enjoyable for students, but through imaginative pedagogy can create learning opportunities pupils experience as intrinsically rewarding (Stobart, 2014, p. 156; Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde and Whalen, 1997, p. 219). People are more inclined to investigate subjects they take pleasure in, suggests Noddings (2003), and when students work towards challenging tasks which they also find fun or intriguing, a deep sense of satisfaction is likely to ensue (p. 244). Said the Renaissance philosopher Michel de Montaigne (1580), "children at play are not playing about; their games should be seen as their most serious-minded activity". It is this pairing of play and seriousness in one's work which, according to American educational reformer John Dewey (1933), constitutes

"the ideal mental condition" (p. 236). Such is the mark of an 'expert' school, says Stobart (2014), to pair demanding, but also achievable, goals with playfulness in the learning context, leading to increased internal motivation and performance among pupils. He recommends that schools promote these activities by deliberately placing more control in the hands of young people, allowing them to think more creativity and pose questions for themselves. Studies by Bloom (1985) and Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde and Whalen (1997) found that academically excelling students derived more enjoyment when given opportunities to seek out personal solutions to problems, and lost motivation when following scripted instructions provided by the teacher. Bridging this connection between play and autonomy, Burke and Grosvenor (2015) infer that "learning will happen with ease when it is allowed to be fun and when children are regarded less as 'herds of identical animals', but as individuals who are made comfortable in mind, body and spirit" (p. 69). This 'comfort', they maintain, manifests in the exercise of choice and direction in one's own learning.

There is a wide array of skills associated with playful practice, the more sophisticated of which are attributed particularly to game play. As mentioned above, play inspires children to think for themselves and contributes to their creativity. Says Martin (2006), "play is a form of safe simulation which allows children to experiment with their own capabilities in a variety of situations" (p. 222). As children age, suggests Bettelheim (1972), they gradually transition from play which is spontaneous and unstructured to games which are characterised by a set of rules. In the context of education, he argues, game play is essential for introducing children to "specific skills in living" and for teaching them how to derive greater meaning from both their education and in life (p. 13). Games prepare children to live successfully as social beings, Bettelheim suggests, by encouraging them to observe and obey sets of rules with consideration for others, promoting a setting of respectful and friendly competition. Engaging with others in this way is also important for developing children's emotional intelligence, teaching them to how to cooperate appropriately with others as well as how to control their own egos and deal with feelings of aggression and disappointment (Martin, 2006; ibid). Finally, in learning what pleases them – in this case through playful activity – children might better recognise pleasure for others (Dearden, 1968). I will conclude by reiterating that the evidence on play as an instrument for learning encompasses themes which have been emphasised in this thesis as

the core roots of happiness: engagement in meaningful activity, exercising autonomy and positive social interaction.

Childhood origins of adult happiness

As indicated above, this discussion of happiness as a contributor to learning is pertinent to how children will develop into adults and the future lives they will lead. Says Martin (2006), we must recognise that it is through their schooling experiences that children amass the knowledge and skills which lay the foundation for their long-term happiness (p. 204). To offer children the best chances of happy adult living, Hallowell (2002) writes that their present experiences must aid their "ability to create and sustain joy" and "capacity to deal with pain and adversity" (p. 5). In essence, what I have addressed as characteristics of happy people in this chapter are equally those which are most influential to future happiness. Gorard and See (2011) elucidate this relationship, explaining that enjoyment in education, while contributing to learning and attainment in the present, also impacts how children go on to navigate wider society and thus is valuable for what it brings to their current *and* later lives. Macmurray (2012) reminds us that part of education's purpose in society is to emphasise that which makes us collectively *human* and to promote disciplines which can be enjoyed for the process. In promoting creativity and emotional intelligence, for instance, schools uphold the "birthright" of children to exercise their imagination, allowing them to freely contemplate topics without necessarily adhering to an agenda (p. 672). A major international report by Osborn (2001) comparing secondary school students' experiences in England, France and Denmark found that, while young people across cultures desired for schooling to be more self-active and pleasurable, those in England enjoyed school the least, expressed the least amount of enthusiasm towards learning and the most readiness to depart from the system. As I discuss in the next subchapter, these trends have steadily increased in recent years, with the UK lagging behind its European counterparts in creating happy schooling environments for children. As this poses a considerable threat to young peoples' learning and life thereafter, we must now take a closer look at the extent to which happiness is prioritised in UK schools and consider the specific challenges at hand.

Chapter 3: Literature review II

Building upon the ideas presented in Part I of this literature review, this chapter pivots attention to how children typically experience schooling in the UK and efforts to target their subjective well-being. Here is where the theoretical underbelly of happiness and its implications for our lives and tenants of society is used to critique more practical approaches to promoting happiness in schools and those inspired by positive education philosophy. A concluding summary which links the principal elements of Parts I and II is provided at the end of this chapter.

3.1 The UK education system and its consequences for happiness

This section directs this discussion of happiness to the more specific context of what is occurring across UK schools today[6]. Having previously addressed more general trends in Western education, I here more closely examine how schools are operating and the special challenges they face in prioritising happiness for their students. This is not an exhaustive outline of explicit policies which have garnered criticism; rather, I have attempted to capture the familiar nature of UK compulsory education according to the relevant literature, and to present a fair depiction of modern schooling for the sake of recognising how pupil happiness factors into its fabric and function.

3.1.1 Characterising school culture in the UK

A serious commitment to pupil happiness entails coming to terms with how school culture strengthens or curtails this component of their well-being. Collective descriptions and evaluations of the UK education system, while demonstrating an arguably troubling scenario at present, bring into focus some of the systematic issues impeding children's potential for happiness in school and offer clues for how to reconcile them.

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[6] The challenges presented here do not include the implications of remote or distance learning as a result of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic but, rather, focus on longstanding patterns of schooling behaviour and reflect the timeframe within which this research was conducted.

The growing weight of performativity and assessment

Many prevailing cultural facets of schooling in the UK can be attributed to the longstanding neoliberal ideologies which have branded Western society in recent decades. As explored earlier in this thesis, some of the market-oriented values at the crux of neoliberalism have been linked to trends in societal unhappiness, bringing especially adverse effects when applied to our educational institutions. Principles of managerialism and performativity have transformed assessment policy in particular, introducing standardised testing and the publication of league tables by which to determine a school's productivity and worth (Stobart, 2008). In initiating a state-wide, statutory curriculum, Burke and Grosvenor (2015) suggest, the 1988 Education Reform Act in England and Wales effectively marketized British schools and reinforced the subordinate positioning of pupils in the classroom. So revolutionary has this neoliberal education reform become, says Ball (2003), that it "does not simply change what we, as educators, scholars and researchers do, it changes who we are" (p. 215). Rejecting the theoretical notion that a comparison of schools based on examination results raises the stakes and, thus, the standard for pupils, Ball argues against "the terrors of performativity" which neoliberalism has triggered. To his appraisal, schools have become regulated to the point that teachers operate primarily according to targets and ongoing inspections, less likely to deliberate what a quality education entails and which tenets of teaching and learning they most value (p. 216). The justification for incorporating material into the curriculum ought to be because teachers themselves have deemed it logical and worthwhile for students to learn, not simply "because it's on the standardised test" (Noddings, 2003, p. 258). Speaking from his experience as headteacher of a London secondary school, Hyman (2017) condemns "the exam factory" of regimentation and compliancy he believes has resulted from adhering to a taut accountability framework: "When a single exam is high stakes on three levels (the student, the school and the system) it affects the dynamics and motivations of everyone so profoundly that the system as a whole is distorted and perverse incentives will start to flow" (no pagination). Stobart (2008) warns that bending the curriculum to meet assessment expectations invites "teaching to the test" pedagogy (p. 125), an outcome which Hyman (2017) insists undermines teachers' *subject expertise* in favour of their *exam expertise*. Limiting teachers' authority to oversee their classrooms as trained professionals can precipitate a low trust environment (Watkins, 2013; Bottery, 2003) whereby adults who often feel drained and unfulfilled engage in defensive and formulaic teaching practices (Bullough, 2012, p. 282).

The clout of performativity and assessment in schools arguably demands the most of pupils, reconstituting them as "a collection of programmable skills" and threatening the richer educational experiences crucial to their happiness and personal growth (Smeyers, Smith and Standish, 2007, p. 4). While an appropriate degree of assessment and organisation is expected and beneficial, education for the sake of efficiency is neither sustainable nor purposeful in improving children's learning (Macmurray, 2012; Martin, 2006; Noddings, 2003). The ways in which education has become increasingly 'business-like' is evident in much of today's school rhetoric; for instance, students are expected to acquire 'work' habits and parents are primed to 'invest' in their child's future (Burke and Grosvenor, 2015, p. 65-6). We have come to perceive learning as more of a commodity, perhaps, than an activity, something to be "amassed and measured, the possession of which is a measure of the productivity of the individual within the society" (ibid citing Gajardo, 1994). But a school system which supports the well-being of children cannot be compared to the operation models guiding much of the business, and also political, worlds (Sardoč and White, 2017, p. 11). Says Macmurray (2012), to become so technically-mind or succumb to the "illusion" that issues in education can invariably be resolved through organisation and a "know-how" approach is to corrupt this deeply personal institution (p. 674). Unlike marketable objects, Csikszentmihalyi (2002) explains, an individual's consciousness cannot be institutionalised through an established set of rules or by means of some equation. The ability to think independently, he insists, requires quality learning experiences that have far less to do with routine procedure or pre-decided expectations. Understanding the criticality of self-determination and discovery to a person's happiness, one begs the question: "What possibly could be more foolish than to quest after certainty and to long for guaranteed outcomes and predictable results from education?" (Bullough 2012, p. 281).

Characteristically defining UK schools is the extraordinary speed at which they operate, with much of the day devoted to teacher-initiated, compulsory activities. A quicker pace and busy schedules, however, do *not* imply that more or better work is being accomplished (Martin, 2006). Education for well-being, say Sardoč and White (2017) is a time-consuming endeavour which must allow ample time for pupils to enthusiastically pursue subjects and achieve a deep sense of mastery. "This is essential", they maintain, "if they are to learn what it is to lead a flourishing life" and is a process which cannot be hurried (p. 11). Children cannot be expected to behave as miniature adults but must be

afforded the time and space they biologically require to develop and thrive as autonomous individuals (Martin, 2006, p. 225). Learning must not become so methodically imposed onto children that reverence for the *process* is lost. Says Martin (2006), a school culture so absorbed by quantitative measures of academic attainment divorces itself from an ethos which celebrates learning as inherently valuable. This "insidious" reverberation of placing such remarkable emphasis on grades, he argues, discredits schools' function to instil a love of lifelong learning in children (p. 209), whose intrinsic motivation and creativity are cultivated through joyful learning experiences. The proclivity for learning that children naturally possess is unfortunately at risk as they enter school systems of this nature (Burke and Grosvenor, 2015; Csikszentmihalyi, 2002) and, as I shall illustrate, the consequences extend to their identify formation and mental health.

Environments of fear, competition and drudgery

Academic discussion surrounding the normalities of 21st century education in England and elsewhere increasingly emphasise *fear* as a worthwhile topic. Encompassing emotions such as anxiety, pressure, panic, and dread, fear in the school setting presents itself in a myriad of ways and can have profound influence over children's capacity to learn and flourish (Affouneh and Hargreaves, 2015). In his observations of classrooms in the UK, for instance, Moore (2013) found that pupils sought to complete activities as quickly as possible and held less regard for deciphering the best answers or learning something of meaning. This behaviour, he explains, is fuelled by a desperation to gain teachers' love and approval, what Affouneh and Hargreaves (2015) categorise as a "fear of social failure". Working as an educator, Lahey (2015) discovered that children feared failure to the point that they took fewer intellectual risks and, above all else, craved validation from parents and teachers. She argues that schools, in teaching children to value their progress by the grades and awards they receive, have inadvertently shattered their love of learning and weakened their resilience for growing into intellectually brave and autonomous individuals. Sharing Lahey's concern for how schools are meeting children's longer-term needs, Macmurray (2012) warns:

> The appeal to fear sacrifices the future to the present; for what is learned for fear of consequences is improperly learned if not soon forgotten; for it remains associated with fear, and so distasteful and to be avoided if possible (p. 670).

According to Watkins (2013, borrowing the phrase from Hargreaves), "stories of negative consequence" which are consistently communicated and exemplified in schools reinforce a *culture of fear* (p. 28). Under such pressure, he says, a power dynamic whereby teachers assert dominance and control over the learning process has persisted for decades in England. Thriving on fear, traditional authoritarian pedagogies sustain structures of coercion and conformity (Hargreaves, 2015). Dictating the *what, when,* and *how* of learning, so to speak, impedes pupils' opportunities for genuine transformation, teaching them to fear falling outside the 'norm' and instilling in them harmful habits of, for instance, being too afraid to ask questions in class or worrying about being placed in a less worthy ability set (ibid). It would appear, intentionally or otherwise, that a school culture of fear situates students as passive, compliant bystanders in their own education.

Recognising its contribution to many of education's failures and limitations, Macmurray (2012) suggests that fear's presence corrodes what instead ought to be a singular purpose of schooling: the emergence and embracement of our common humanity. But herein lies a fundamental paradox: we cannot successfully instil in children a motivation to co-operate *with* their peers while rewarding them to continuously compete *against* one another in school (Bloom, 1949, p. 171). Fears of academic failure and teacher disapproval can encourage students to embrace a spirit of competitiveness in school (Affouneh and Hargreaves, 2015; Moore, 2013). Though competition itself is not necessarily a negative activity, the fierceness of today's testing regimens has led to a dangerous degree of comparison among pupils. Says Martin (2006), school children are repeatedly reminded of how their individual performance ranks among their peers, a process which can undermine their intrinsic motivation for learning and become demoralising over time. Giving credence to Theodore Roosevelt's famed expression that "comparison is the thief of joy", Martin explains how children's self-confidence and dignity can suffer as a result of performing relatively poorly on exams. He refers to one study by Davies and Bremer (1998), which illustrated that students who performed lower on the national curriculum tests ('SATs') began exhibiting decreased self-esteem when compared to those who had performed better (p. 217-8). The consequence of frequently subjecting lower-attaining children to "hard evidence of their failure", Martin argues, is that it can actually hinder their performance and demotivate them to strive for improvement (p. 218). He maintains that, in the long-term, individuals with low confidence can dismiss entire disciplines of

work and career opportunity that they regard, justifiably or not, as beyond those which they are capable.

In her research on projects which promote happiness and well-being of pupils in the UK, Hulme (2017) discusses how school culture which feeds competitiveness and favourability can subsequently allow bullying and oppression to thrive. While school culture has a profound effect on how children treat one another and the messages they receive about appropriate behaviour, she says, these issues pertaining to children's well-being can fortunately be addressed in part through normalising practices such as inclusion and compassion for all. This kind of community-healing to which Hulme alludes pairs with the Macmurrayan philosophy that *care*, not competition, lies at the heart of teaching and learning. From this perspective, "fear has no place in education" (p. 662) and it ought to be among the richest aims of schooling to help children overcome that which exists (Macmurray, 2012). To this I will add that, in the context of a broadly benevolent and supportive learning environment, there is arguably some limited purpose of negative emotions. As will become clearer in this chapter, dispelling a culture of fear does not infer the unequivocal absence of challenging experiences which constitute a rich human life.

The "depersonalisation" of schooling and struggle for identity

I have explored in this thesis how a child's happiness in school relies considerably on how their learning community supports them in realising their individual capabilities and sources of fulfilment. In trusting social environments, children can express degrees of freedom and creativity which spawn introspection about who they are and wherein their happiness lies. But opportunities for self-exploration and exercising agency are compromised by the UK's steadily compartmentalised and standardised compulsory school system, an outcome of which Burke and Grosvenor (2015) refer to as "the institutionalisation of childhood" (p. 93). The performance-oriented agendas which govern our schools, warns Pring (2012), have contributed to the apparent objectification of learners, who are often manipulated for purposes heedless of which outcomes are most beneficial or meaningful for them. This *depersonalisation* of education, he says, fails to respect learners as persons and to support them in developing their different capacities for living distinctive human lives.

Performance norms which characterise today's schools sustain a social order which can undermine students' self-esteem and, consequently, their identity formation (Burke and Grosvenor, 2015). Children are highly aware of which learner attributes and behaviours their schools seek to normalise and resent performance expectations which do not account for their individual preferences or abilities (ibid, p. 94). Noddings (2003) writes extensively on this topic, arguing that it is against the equitable aims of education to treat children as academically equivalent and thus hold them to equivalent standards. She questions the justice in coercing students who do not take legitimate interest in standard school subjects to compete against those who do (p. 87) and considers how school messages about 'success' affect students' subjective well-being. While "we need not denigrate the gift of mind", she argues, we mustn't allow children to evaluate their worth by how they "measure up" academically or the career paths they so choose (p. 12). Noddings reminds us that society vitally depends on a diversity of occupations not requiring college-level study, and while schools ought to ensure the opportunity to pursue higher education, students should not garner the impression that alternative vocations "are only for those who aren't up to the work that really counts" (p. 35). This limited conception of successful learning, argues Pring (2012), is one of the ways in which schooling fails to respect how learners develop as *persons*. Through entering education, he explains, young people are bestowed an "inheritance" of ideas and skills for understanding their surroundings, to deliberate which ends are worthwhile and to act productively towards obtaining those ends (p. 751). Citing Oakeshott's (1975) philosophy that "man is what he learns to become" (p. 17), Pring maintains the perspective that schooling must not condition young people to perform as certain types of 'learners' but should enable them to engage in various "realms of meaning" to whichever extent their capabilities allow (p. 751). A primacy of persons in education, he says, empowers students to exert some command over their futures lives and, in so doing, helps them achieve a greater sense of personal dignity and well-being.

Riley (2017) contends that, in orchestrating the interplay between external pressures, students' lived experiences and the inner realities of their schools, school leaders today must commit to ingrain in these places a sense of shared and worthwhile engagement (pp. 128-9). Her work explores how the physical and emotional spaces which comprise a school and the agency possessed by its persons characterise these institutions as places of *belonging*. Students must feel secure in their identities and that school is a place where

their participation matters, Riley argues, otherwise they may struggle to realise their individual potential and how they can shape the world of which they are a part. She explains that the need to feel 'rooted' is emblematic of the rapidly evolving and uncertain global context, and that schools are in a privileged position to nurture this sensation for young people. Writing in response to declining pupil well-being in the UK, Riley remarks that forcing children "to conform to a school ethos which denies who [they] are" or in which they are ignored or bullied "is to deny young people their identity and start an unfolding chain of exclusions" (p. 38).

School discourses commonly classify students' personal identities according to oversimplified stereotypes, such as 'bottom set' or 'ethnic minority', contributing to power imbalances and segregation (Armstrong, 1999). Assorting young people according to factors such as measured intelligence or socio-economic standing, argues Pring (2012), negates the "common culture" schools serve to create, diminishing the social experiences pupils require to develop fully as persons and undermining their self-worth and sense of well-being (p. 754). The experience of being grouped by ability in particular, McGillicuddy and Devine (2020) found, evokes strong emotional and psychosocial responses from children, affecting how they both negotiate and internalise their learner identities. Having classified this practice as a form of symbolic violence[7] (McGillicuddy and Devine, 2018), the authors argue that ability grouping restructures the physical, social and emotional spaces of a school by placing individuals along a scale of 'worth'. This segregation is detrimental to children's academic and social learning experiences, McGillicuddy and Devine (2020) suggest, as they come to deeply embody their hierarchical positioning. The power of this affect, they explain, is especially evident among children assigned to lower-ability groups, whose psyches are steeped in shame and fear; for these students, there is a misperceived fixity of their assignment and capacity for engagement in school, and thus their aspirations for academic and social mobility are profoundly impacted (p. 568). The phenomenon of separating of young people based on ability, wealth, ethnicity or class, says Pring (2012) is unfortunately growing more common due to the increasing competition and marketisation of schooling in the UK. Rightly functioning, he argues, schooling for a common humanity and respect of persons

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[7] The concept of symbolic violence originates from French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (see Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990), who uses the term to describe how imbalances of power among persons and groups manifest and are normalised according to social hierarchies.

would enable students to benefit from the cultural and intellectual differences between groups. With an understanding that identity formation and personal development depend on one's learning to interrelate with others and to appreciate various points of view, Pring contends that

> Education of the whole person must take seriously the formative experiences, emotionally charged, and subjected to critical scrutiny within the community... Narrow the membership of that community and you narrow the experiences as a basis for growth (p. 757).

Concluding comments

These general trends of schooling in the UK might suggest, as does Moore (2013), that educational aims and practices are increasingly antithetical to what meets children's socio-affective and instinctive needs. High-performance school cultures which beget fear, standardisation and exclusion threaten children's sense of well-being by denying them places where they belong and are valued as part of a diverse learning community: one which respects learners as individual persons with minds and capabilities of their own. Children's affective responses are inextricably tied with their identity formation in school (McGillicuddy and Devine, 2020) yet emotionality features minimally in pedagogical practice and discourse (Moore, 2013). Emotions do not threaten our potential for creating successful schooling communities but are essential to understanding the *whole* learner and how they think about and understand the world (Pring, 2012). To revisit Macmurray's (1941) philosophy, education for human flourishing distinguishes between how individuals function in society and how they become persons, bearing in mind that "the functional life is *for* the personal life... the personal life is *through* the functional life" (p. 822). Exploring the interrelationship of these two 'lives' as applicable to modern schooling in England, Fielding (2013) advocates for re-modelling its *high-performance organisations* to instead resemble *person-centred communities*. Persons and relationships are worthwhile not only because they contribute to the effectiveness of a school, but because they bring legitimacy to and transform the ways in which we work together to obtain humanly fulfilling goals (ibid). Whilst still maintaining a dedication to excellence, schools can accomplish their aims through more innovative practices considerate of how we develop as persons (Fielding, 2000). Such is Pring's (2012) conviction that the rightful positioning of persons in education is one in which "the child becomes the sun around which the appliances of education revolve; he [or she] is the centre about which

they are organized" (citing Dewey, 1910), *not* the reverse (p. 760). These conceptions of person- and relationship-centred schooling communities will feature later in my discussion of creating and maintaining happiness in schools.

3.1.2 Addressing the mental health and well-being of young people

Over the past decade, the safeguarding of children's mental health and well-being in the UK has been presented as a matter of urgency[8]. The National Health Service reports that one in eight children aged five to 19 years old in England has at least one diagnosable mental health disorder, a rate which has steadily accelerated since the late 1990s (NHS Digital, 2018). Within this age bracket, suicide has become the most common cause of death among both girls and boys, accounting for 13% and 16% respectively (Office for National Statistics, 2017). Three-quarters of lifelong mental health difficulties present before the age of 20 (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2010), and among the 47% of 17- to 19-year-olds who have experienced them, nearly half have engaged in self-harm or attempted suicide (NHS Digital, 2018). Research and advocacy groups have launched large-scale efforts to decipher the causes and consequences of poor mental health and well-being in children, spurring debate about how the government and statutory schooling should respond.

The Millennium Cohort Study

Following the lives of 19,517 children across the United Kingdom who were born at the turn of the new century, the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) at UCL has provided rich longitudinal data for understanding this generation's development over time. Evidence from the study suggests that mental health often declines during the transitional period between ages 11 and 14, at which point almost one in four of girls and one in ten of boys report significant depressive symptoms (Patalay and Fitzsimons, 2018). Mutual determinants for both sexes included struggling to get along with peers, having been bullied and being overweight (ibid). In its most recent 'sweep' of participants at age 17, the MCS identified several inequalities related to mental health, reporting an increased risk most generally associated with those who are female, ethnically white, LGB+ and from a lower income household (Patalay and Fitzsimons, 2020). Outlining alarming trends in psychological distress and self-harm among these children, MCS researchers

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[8] All data featured in this segment was collected prior to the onset of the coronavirus pandemic.

have called on increased government interventions and access to support services as vital measures for preventing serious mental health outcomes (ibid).

As part of its comprehensive review of UK children's health, defined by the World Health Organization as "a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (2020a), the Millennium Cohort Study has illustrated that correlates of subjective well-being and mental illness are largely dissimilar[9], suggesting that, though related, these concepts should be considered individually and conflation avoided (Patalay and Fitzsimons, 2016). While possessing personal well-being reflects some of the positive elements of overall mental health, including positive emotions, engagement, meaningful relationships and a sense of achievement, it cannot simply be categorised as the mere opposite of mental *ill*-health (ibid, citing Holder, 2012, and Seligman, 2012). Investigating the predictors of both constructs, MCS researchers concluded that for a considerable percentage of young people, an absence of depressive symptoms is not analogous with high subjective well-being, while a small number of individuals battling depression simultaneously reported good well-being (Patalay and Fitzsimons, 2018). This study suggests that while these two domains may intersect and overlap, they are not affected by the same set of factors at opposing ends of the mental health spectrum (ibid, 2016). The point here is not to delve into these particular distinctions, but to emphasise two relevant conclusions of the MCS for the purposes of this thesis: 1) efforts to improve young peoples' subjective well-being need not depend on those which are centred on the prevention and treatment of mental ill-health and 2) engagement with school is important for both.

The Good Childhood Report 2020
Having established the prevalence and severity of children's mental ill-health in the UK, research findings which focus on their subjective well-being are especially applicable to this discussion of happiness. The Good Childhood Report from the Children's Society provides a comprehensive annual review of children's self-reported well-being in the country, drawing from a range of national and international datasets which rely predominantly on individuals' self-assessments and experiences. Its 2020 edition

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[9] See Sharp, et al. (2016) for similar findings on the relationship between self-reported mental illness and quality of life in children.

showcases temporal trends in children's subjective well-being, how these findings compare alongside those of other European countries and, finally, patterns in children's happiness with their friends.

Using survey data from Understanding Society gathered between 2009 and 2018 (University of Essex, 2019), the Good Childhood Report (2020) illustrates how happiness for children aged 10 to 15 has evolved according to six important life domains. Happiness with family and schoolwork remained relatively consistent, while the number of children who reported being unhappy with their appearance and with school life increased. Boys were consistently happier than girls with appearance, though by a steadily slimming margin, while girls were consistently happier than boys with schoolwork. Among both genders, there was a significant decrease in happiness with life as a whole and with friends. The authors of the report maintain that to better understand these patterns in children's subjective well-being, it is beneficial to consider these statistics within a broader context. With data collected in 2018 by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) measuring 15-year-olds' life experiences across 24 European countries (OECD, 2019), they reveal that those in the UK ranked lowest for purpose in life and lowest for life satisfaction. The report hypothesises explanations for these results, including rates of digital technology usage and child poverty. It ultimately identifies a strong correlation between life satisfaction in these countries and *fear of failure*, of which UK children expressed the greatest. It references the recently published results of the 2017-2018 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) survey of children aged 15, which found that in relation to 44 comparable European countries and Canada, England, Wales and Scotland were among the highest six in level of schoolwork pressure (WHO, 2020c). Says Richard Crellin, one of the authors of the Good Childhood Report:

> Children and young people talk a lot about the pressure that get placed on them to do well… We reflected this could be linked to a pressure in British society to take things on the chin and have a stiff upper lip. Young people across the UK told [how] they feel judged if they don't succeed first time (Topping, 2020).

According to the report, significant decreases in children's happiness with their friends is especially concerning. It estimates that 132,000 children aged 10 to 15 in the UK have no 'close' friends, a category of individuals who can provide the greatest degree of support in one's life. Referring again to the international HBSC survey (WHO, 2020c), it states

that there has been a significant drop in the percentage of children reporting high peer support in England and Scotland between 2014 and 2018; this downward trend is observed across nearly a third of all participating countries. The report suggests that friendships are an integral part of children's development, with implications for their mental health and subjective well-being. Echoing what this thesis has argued as authentic and intermingled sources of happiness, it states that social relationships are tied with one's autonomous growth and identity formation. The report demonstrates that this decline in happiness with friends has been consistently observed since 2009 and across different age groups, genders and ethnicities. Although mean scores of happiness with friends were found to vary according to social media usage and experiences of bullying, these factors did not account for the changes in this trend over time. The report also notes that number of friends was only weakly correlated with how happy a child was with his or her friends, signifying that the *quality* and expectations of these friendships may be an influencing factor. Consultations with 150 children aged 8 to 19 across England appeared to partially confirm this idea, with participants describing the 'ideal' friendship as one reflecting reciprocity, intimacy, solidarity and agency. Popularity or quantity of friends was not among the most common responses, while a desire for inclusiveness and genuineness was frequently mentioned. What children say about their friendships, the report concludes, reveals the complexities of these relationships during adolescence and how crucial the development of meaningful and supportive social connections is for maintaining happiness and subjective well-being.

The place and potential for PSHE education

Discussions concerning children's mental health and well-being often address the role of Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education, broadly defined as a "planned programme of school-based learning opportunities and experiences that deal with the real-life issues children and young people face as they grow up" (Department for Education, 2015). With provisions for all key stages of schooling, the PSHE Association Programme of Study targets three principal areas: health and well-being, relationships and living in the wider world (Barksfield, 2017). According to PSHE subject specialists, this curriculum is best delivered in an open and positive learning context, wherein students can explore and discuss difficult issues, develop healthy coping strategies and learn to recognise their own and others' emotions (ibid).

The Department for Education (DfE) suggests that PSHE or similar school-based health education programmes are beneficial for improving students' health and well-being and academic achievement, between which "a virtuous circle can be achieved" (2015). Having previously discussed happiness and its contributions to learning and personal development in this thesis, I will not comment further on this reciprocal relationship. I will instead reiterate that evidence linking elements of subjective well-being with health and educational outcomes is mounting, and in this context is used to lobby for the incorporation of PSHE education in schools. Drawing on data from 3,731 young people aged 11, 13 and 15 across England, Chester et al. (2019) found that students who received some form of PSHE education were more likely to display pro-social behaviour, greater self-esteem and better care for themselves and their peers. They argue that these benefits are positively associated with children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC), which schools are obliged to promote (Education Act 2002). The effects of quality PSHE education have been documented by the Office for Standards in Education Services (Ofsted), which reported that schools grading highly in their delivery of these programmes were more likely to receive an 'outstanding' rating for overall effectiveness (2013).

Though lessons in PSHE education have been demonstrated to promote children's health and well-being, it has been observed across English secondary schools that support for PSHE education 'on paper' is not always exhibited by its implementation 'on the ground' (Formby and Wolstenholme, 2011, p. 11). There is an obvious discrepancy, says Hulme (2017), between government messages about the merit of emotional well-being and character education in schools and the practical measures taken to ensure children receive it. PSHE education has long held non-statutory status in the UK, allowing individual schools to decide for themselves which components of its curriculum to teach and how to teach them (Chester et al., 2019). But today's educational climate has compromised schools' investment of time and resources in these lessons, say Formby and Wolstenholme (2011), whereby motivation for maximising students' academic achievement is at odds with a responsibility for facilitating their well-being. They found this to be especially true at the secondary level, when examinations take centre stage and the skills developed through PSHE education may be categorised apart from, and fall secondary to, other measurable learning outcomes. As a result, PSHE lessons are generally delivered less regularly and maintain an even lower status than at the primary

level (ibid). In its report entitled *Not Yet Good Enough*, Ofsted (2013) judged PSHE education as 'inadequate' or 'requiring improvement' in 40% of schools, citing issues related to school leadership, teacher expertise and time devoted to its curriculum. Rather than specifically training in PSHE delivery, teachers in the UK are assigned to lead its sessions according to the school's discretion (Hulme, 2017). Poster-clad and pushed aside, these lessons may be bumped from the timetable entirely to devote more attention to higher priority subjects (ibid).

The campaign to make PSHE education mandatory achieved some success with the introduction of new government guidance for health and relationships and sex (RSE) education in all UK secondary schools, beginning September 2020 (Department for Education, 2019). While the PSHE Association welcomed these amendments, its chief executive Jonathan Baggaley emphasised that teaching these topics in a vacuum without covering the whole of PSHE curriculum "is a missed opportunity to address a range of issues in a holistic way" (Hayes, 2017). The skills, language and understanding which underpin PSHE lessons ought to be modelled throughout the school and reinforced in other classrooms, otherwise students may not view them as realistic (Hulme, 2017, citing interview with previous chief executive Joe Hayman). According to Formby and Wolstenholme (2011), students are likely to derive meaning from PSHE education when it is delivered at a consistently high standard, and schools are more likely to do so when they explicitly associate pupil well-being with attainment. A concern with making elements of PSHE compulsory, they explain, is that schools might attempt to fulfil their responsibility for supporting students' well-being via tokenistic, 'ticking-the-box' pedagogy; doing so undermines its purposes to be steered by the needs and opinions of young people and immersed within the ethos of the school. The House of Commons Education Committee, in their official report to Parliament, acknowledge the limitations of applying statutory status to these topics (2015). While they recommend that the government monitor schools' compliance with these amendments, they stress that accountability measures alone will not guarantee that high-quality PSHE lessons are taking place. Rather, the committee report suggests that incentives to prioritise PSHE programmes might contribute to a general 'system change' in schools, one where the subject obtains higher status and is afforded more time and resources. Though the effects of these curriculum changes on children's mental health and well-being remain to be seen, the prescription of what are intended to be meaningful, thought-provoking and

inherently personal learning experiences relates to a broader trend in education: targeted well-being interventions and services in schools.

3.1.3 Positive education and the 'enhancement agenda'

This study on happiness can be examined in light of the 'positive education movement' that seeks to shift the goals of education from ones solely concentrated on academic attainment to those that cultivate learners' character strengths and greater well-being (Curren, 2015). In this sense, students are not just prepared for their career or professional endeavours, but also in how to make sound decisions that bring them authentic joy and a sense of purpose. Based on the work of American psychologist Martin Seligman (2011, 2012), this philosophy contends that elements of human flourishing can be both *measured* and *enhanced.* Seligman maintains that applying the principals of positive psychology to education, or *teaching well-being* to young people, offers solutions to growing rates of depression, helps increase life satisfaction and complements learning and creativity. Labour economist Richard Layard (2011b) has championed this idea as a means of shaping public policy in the UK. Education, he argues, must serve to develop capacities which increase the happiness of pupils and of society generally, a purpose which is not currently fulfilled through PSHE education. Endorsing Seligman's theory of prevention as the most cost effective and humane approach to addressing trends in mental health, Layard has been instrumental in bringing positive psychology, or 'the science of happiness', to schools and igniting the rapid development of happiness-focused policy and research in the UK.

The idea of teaching happiness has sparked considerable interest and debate in recent years, with schools across Britain undergoing an expansion of services and programmes modelling the tenets of positive psychology. Esteemed independent school Wellington College was the first to introduce timetabled lessons in happiness and well-being in 2006, with the aim to "promote the flourishing and excellence of young people under [the school's] care" (2021). Students receive the equivalent of one hour per fortnight of subject devotion, which features skills for dealing with adversity and practicing mindfulness (ibid). The school's former Master Anthony Seldon remains among the most prominent defenders of teaching happiness to students, and together with Richard Layard

spearheads the international Action for Happiness[10] movement. In the years since Wellington launched its renowned course, 'happiness curriculums' have gradually infiltrated mainstream education. In 2007, three local education authorities piloted the UK Resilience Programme (UKRP), a school-based cognitive-behavioural intervention aimed at improving children's psychological well-being (Challen et al., 2011). Workshops delivered to Year 7 students for "building resilience and promoting accurate thinking" received generally positive feedback from pupils and facilitators, though only minimally and temporarily affected academic attainment and scores for depression; no impact was found on life satisfaction (ibid). The same year, Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) was initiated, a voluntary course situated within the realm of PSHE education and designed to stimulate pupils' social and emotional intelligences (Humphrey, Lendrum and Wigelsworth, 2010). A national evaluation of SEAL programmes in secondary schools found that factors inhibiting their success included superficial application, or 'box-ticking', delivering the content in clusters rather than via 'big picture' processes and, finally, limited 'will and skill' of staff (ibid). It is worth noting that 'school climate' data from the evaluation revealed significant decreases in students' trust and respect for faculty, fondness of school and feelings of supportiveness throughout SEAL implementation. Finding no significant impact of SEAL on either social or emotional skill development, evaluators recommended allocating increased time and resources for executing a consistent and whole-school approach.

Since authorising these initiatives, the DfE has continued to pursue methods of delivering 'the science of happiness' to schools and, in 2017, invited bidders for multimillion-pound contracts to trial mental health programmes at upwards of 200 sites (Walker, 2017). In view of the influences and attitudes branding school culture and staggering statistical evidence on young people's mental health and well-being in this country, it is unsurprising that the *business of making people happy* has captivated the education sector. Having amassed momentum in the UK and other Western countries, the 'happiness industry', as it were, now commonly showcases in contemporary political and social discourses (Bailey, 2009). "As a measurable, visible, improvable entity," says Davies (2016), "[happiness in its many guises] has now penetrated the citadel of global

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[10] Further information about Action for Happiness and its objectives can be found at
https://www.actionforhappiness.org

economic management" (p. 3). Educational policies stemming from this ideology, or those which broadly comprise the 'enhancement agenda', aim to help children *feel* better in school and, subsequently, to perform more successfully and lead generally improved lives (Cigman, 2008). Acknowledging the sincere and immediate threats to students' happiness today, one must think critically about whether placing happiness on the curriculum in this way is both necessary and appropriately guided. It is important that a determination to improve elements of pupils' well-being has not manifested, in this entrepreneurial age, into a production too far removed from what achieving happiness in school actually requires. However well-intentioned in their objective to better children's lives, attempts to teach happiness to students have been met with some reproach which is worth here underscoring.

The trouble with 'teaching' happiness

A central criticism of positive education and the 'enhancement agenda' in schools deals with the obscurity of that which is being measured and enhanced. Cigman (2008), for instance, suggests that while seeking to reliably measure 'something affective', proponents of this movement are not necessarily concerned with understanding just what that 'something' is. She explains that "… the commitment to measurable outcomes means that the *nature* of what is being enhanced is not the first priority. The first priority is to measure *something* that can be correlated with behavioural and other variables" (p. 546). A key issue with targeting happiness in the educational context is that, in keeping with my earlier discussion of how this term has been conceptualised, its multiple interpretations are sometimes difficult to distinguish between writers on the topic. And, as Bailey (2009) illustrates, the layers and marvellous complexities of this phenomenon are not always reflected in the language of its policy. The purpose of this segment is not to argue precisely which theories of happiness or well-being ought to be applied as part of implementing these programmes, but to draw attention to how the muddling and simplification of these concepts and others, such as mental health, is potentially problematic. Without a solid appreciation for these notions, programmes to increase happiness in schools are subject to spurious methods and may, in some cases, divert attention away from children's genuine needs (Suissa, 2008).

When 'happiness' is presumed to be quantifiable, whichever characterisation is being used in its teaching is theoretically applied directly to pupils; here the dissimilarity

between *delivery* of content and learner *development* in a subject is important to bear in mind. While there are some well-established correlates of happiness and degrees of control one is capable of exercising over them, the treatment of happiness as an exact science is troublesome. This thesis has asserted from various positions that general trends in happiness research *must* be evaluated in light of the distinctive perspectives and experiences of the individual. In the educational setting, it is especially important not to undermine the value of students' autonomy in discovering happiness as it pertains to their own lives (Noddings, 2003; Suissa, 2008). Education which respects students as autonomous agents does not impose on them a uniform understanding of 'well-being' or 'flourishing', just as it does not shape them to serve predetermined social or economic ends (Siegel, 2015). The aim ought to be *liberation* through the development of sufficient competences with which students might "envision possible lives and possible concepts of well-being, consider the various ways in which well-being can manifest… and evaluate the desirability of the conceived alternatives critically" (p. 122, borrowing from Scheffler, 1989). Giving credence to the subjective quality of well-being, or what 'happiness' may be used to denote, helps to reconcile our expectations of children with what they can realistically achieve (de Ruyter, 2015). On this point, Noddings (2003) draws an important distinction: administering educational lessons in happiness does not necessarily guarantee happiness *in* education. Students have an active role to play in this process, whereby they are empowered to apply what they learn not according to a list of techniques, but an evolving conception of happiness with which they can develop and inform (ibid; Suissa, 2008).

A third tier of criticism towards defining happiness for whole student populations draws attention to the emotional and psychological onus it places on children. The 'enhancement agenda' errors, says Cigman (2008), not only in quantifying happiness as something which can be 'higher' or 'lower' but also by orientating it in such a way that 'more' is always preferable. This would imply that achieving happiness depends on progressing along a specified trajectory, and that, much like maths or science, students can actually be 'better' or 'worse' in this subject. Others maintain that the self-management techniques of positive psychology, in demanding a great degree of personal willpower, may neglect the broader issues at play. Lurking beneath 'happiness science', says Davies (2015), is a tendency to blame people for their own misery and failures. "Psychology," he suggests, "is very often how societies avoid looking in the mirror," and

the incessant urge to measure happiness might consequently distract from contextual constraints which contribute to people's problems (p. 10-11). Davies questions how merely introducing happiness techniques in schools can be expected to improve students' lives without accounting for the roots of their distress (interviewed in Bloom, 2017). We might therefore consider to what end the responsibility lies with schools to attenuate some of these stressors, rather than to teach children strategies for enduring them. Here an evaluation of children's subjective well-being is again significant, for by reflecting on the actual circumstances in which children are developing, educators can cultivate their ideal conceptions of human flourishing as an aim in education (de Ruyter, 2015). Teaching happiness alone will not satisfy such a rich objective, but "*the quality of life in schools must yield some happiness* [emphasis added]" (Noddings, 2003, p. 5). Positive psychology's canons of self-determination and harnessing positive energies to achieve one's goals (Davies, 2015; Achor, 2011) in conjunction with the sometimes-conflicting messages children receive about emotions' relevance in school (Noddings, 2003) prompts the question: do pupils feel *deserving* or *obliged* to be happy?

A need for nuance and contextuality

Happiness or well-being programmes which draw from the insights of positive psychology, some authors contend, are in danger of sidestepping necessary degrees of conceptual and normative enquiry. Perhaps even more problematic than its theoretical framework, says Suissa (2008), is that itemising happiness in such a way allows little space for educators to discuss or prioritise things which are not quantifiable. The discourse of positive psychology, she argues, espouses methodical solutions to traditionally *philosophical* questions about what it means to be happy and live a good life, a discrepancy which undermines core educational values. Suissa's position, which I have endorsed in this thesis, is that concepts such as happiness need not be approached from a purely empirical standpoint for them to be appreciated or hold significance to our lives. Yet in touting incongruous measures of happiness, these curriculums can place a limited perspective on character and emotional development. This is because, Suissa explains, the techniques they offer do not altogether account for the subtleties of a human life, including the principles one embodies as a result of particular events and experiences. In her words:

> If happiness or well-being means something like 'living a worthwhile life' – or even 'living skillfully as a human' – then to achieve this, surely one has to have some understanding of what it means to be human; what makes one's life worthwhile; what values one cherishes, and why (p. 582).

As I have expounded in this paper, schooling must not neglect this normative dimension of happiness, for there is certainly hope that children will derive some happiness from practicing ethical behaviour (Noddings, 2003). We should not forget that the emotions which the 'agenda' in question seeks to enhance involve a key *cognitive* component encompassing one's beliefs, attitudes and judgements (Dolan, 2014; Cigman, 2008). Happiness, then, quite plausibly entails some moral reasoning. Although positive psychology is said to draw considerable inspiration from the ideas of Aristotle, says Cigman (2012), it crucially underappreciates the ethical framework within which the Greek philosopher situated his concept of well-being. Living well, by an Aristotelian account, involves "taking pleasure in thinking, feeling and acting well"; it is about practicing appropriate, contextual judgement for how to respond in a given situation (p. 449-50). A moral education is not accomplished by instructing children how to behave, but in helping them "… to understand *why* certain responses are deficient or excessive, why *this* response is more appropriate than *that* in *this* situation…" (p. 452). For Aristotle, preparing young people to trace the 'proper bounds' of experiencing life's many emotions - including anger, pride, shame and hope - is key to their living a virtuous life, and hence their well-being (ibid). But while this philosophy encourages the cultivating of children's emotions, Cigman explains, it provides no *general* account for categorising these as objectively right or wrong (2008). Aristotle's notion of well-being therefore reflects a normative element to monitoring students' emotional development, "tak[ing] us only a certain way towards the situations and happenings of everyday life" (p. 544). This perspective, she argues, captures the complex relationship between reality and value setting which has been lost on empirical psychology and educational policy (2012).

It is argued that the sharp polarisation positive psychology distinguishes between positive and negative emotions accounts for neither an ordinary nor wholesome human experience. Programmes to 'enhance' children suppose that emotions such as happiness can be "reliably measured by 'tick behaviour', as though it has never occurred to anyone to attribute ambivalent or complex motives to human actions" (Cigman, 2008, p. 555). A

person's disposition to think and respond in particular ways results from a myriad of environmental, cultural, genetic and historical circumstances possibly unbeknownst to whomever is 'teaching' them to be happy (Miller, 2008). And it is surely a better indication of *wisdom* to maintain some appreciation for the thrills, misfortunes and absurdities of life, rather than to behave unequivocally positively or negatively (ibid, p. 606). As discussed earlier in this paper, experiencing 'bad' emotions cannot nor *should* not necessarily be avoided in education; doing so would forbid children opportunities to engage with "the messy, unclear stuff of which our humanity is made" (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 260). Reverberating Aristotle's idea of exercising context-laden emotions, Nussbaum (2008) speaks of "positive pain" to address how feelings such as heartache, alarm and worry are valuable sentiments which certain circumstances reasonably call for. Seligman and positive psychology need not attribute failure or danger to particular attitudes and emotions, she argues, but should better recognise when they are constructive and lead to positive outcomes. Calling for greater scrutiny of happiness education, Kathryn Ecclestone says that medicalising all adverse emotion and immediately turning to well-being and counselling services is patronising and unhealthy practice (interviewed in Bloom, 2017). In making schools happier places to be, we might caution against pathologizing children in such a way that the stress and anxiety they experience may be entirely warranted yet vaguely or mistakenly classified as mental health issues. Asking whether positive education is indeed *too positive* for the UK, Robson-Kelly (2018) suggests that an evolving, "second wave" approach to its application must embrace a more nuanced understanding of well-being and the importance of both 'positivity' and 'negativity'. Doing so might help distinguish its promotion from the prevention or treatment of mental illness in young people (ibid).

Potential consequences for life development

The lessons which positive education instils in young people should be evaluated in light of other educational goals for their career and personal development. At the heart of positive psychology is the contention that sufficiently positive attitudes and a necessary degree of *optimism* will allow anyone to become goal-achieving (Seligman, 2011). But until you have engaged in some self-discovery and reflection about your own life within a broader social and cultural context, says Miller (2008), you cannot entirely fathom what your goals are. The particular personality which positive psychology promotes appears to

be "little more than a caricature of the traditional extravert" who is ambitious, cheerful and outgoing (p. 600-1). We had better guard against this archetype of well-being and mental health or else we are at risk of blindly or insensibly accepting things we should not and wallowing in abstraction (Cigman, 2012). Positive education needs to appreciate that growing in self-knowledge and wisdom demands exploration of values, capabilities, and interests – all of which surely inspire a person's conceptions of happiness and the good life (Miller, 2008). Its formulas for happiness and success might otherwise avoid the contextual measures needed to genuinely improve children's lives, preparing them to become "bland, shallow, goal-driven careerist[s]" who actually lack important qualities for true learning and maturation (ibid, p. 606).

Critics of positive education seem to agree that its assumption about enhancing happiness through hard work and cultivating 'positive' characteristics simply does not mirror the realities of a human life, nor the experiences and perspectives which give it meaning. Applying managerial techniques to all of life's situations and encounters insofar as they serve one's goals, says Miller (2008), is both naïve and potentially harmful. He uses Wellington College's approach to teaching 'productive relationships' to illustrate this point. As part of its happiness curriculum, an ideal partner is defined for students as "someone with whom you can achieve positive outcomes" (2007, cited in ibid). While this is a sensible parameter to adhere to at times, Miller argues, approaching relationships from this perspective is antithetical to the degree of connection needed to elicit reciprocal understanding and knowledge-building which make our social interactions worthwhile. "By turning life into a series of goals and people into functionaries," he insists, "life itself is diminished" (p. 597). This is because the human story is more than an empirical or prescriptive one, and it is perhaps not for education to deliver recipes for happiness but to acknowledge the "full wonder, horror and richness" which constitute our lives such that children can discover it themselves (Suissa, 2008, p. 589).

3.2 Creating and sustaining happiness in schools

Having reflected on how UK school culture potentially threatens students' happiness and some of the nationwide initiatives to address the mental health and well-being of young people, I devote this segment to how happy schools might be holistically distinguished. This discussion does not necessarily feature specific interventions or how approaches to

well-being are directly applied to school settings, but rather what the literature implies can allow these communities to create and sustain happiness more organically. Much of what follows is based on research of how children learn and behave and, perhaps most crucially, *what they say* about their relationship with and perceptions towards schooling. I supplement these theories with arguments for why evaluating the insights of students and their teachers is essential in understanding how schools are, or might become, happy places to be.

3.2.1 Whole-school visions and approaches to pedagogy

The scale of research pertaining in at least some respect to what contributes to students' happiness and flourishing in school is enormous. A wealth of often captivating and multifaceted discussion addresses in tandem the topics of how education ought to serve children's well-being, pupils' natural inclinations for happiness and ways of generally *bettering* the schooling experience. However, insofar as some findings on, for instance, 'what children enjoy in school' or 'the effects of friendship' conceivably apply to how pupils achieve happiness can be tricky to determine. This is especially true if these connections are not explicitly or thoroughly demonstrated by the authors themselves. In keeping with the deliberately broad interpretation of happiness which guides this thesis and the information I have heretofore presented on the subject, I have selected strands of the literature which illustrate a particularly relevant concept: schooling experiences which support pupil happiness are often the by-product of whole-school philosophies and customs. The ideas in this section for establishing entire school visions and practices may therefore be evaluated 1) in juxtaposition with approaches for 'teaching happiness' to students, such as those belonging to positive education and 2) with the understanding that while some do not mention 'happiness' as a specific goal or outcome, they very much align with the building blocks and nature of happiness accepted in this thesis.

What the school setting communicates

Student happiness in part depends on how children situate themselves physically and psychologically within the spaces of their school and the messages these settings project. Analysing students' reflections on education for the future, Burke and Grosvenor (2015) found that children want their schools to be places they are proud to belong to, places of beauty, comfortability, safety and inclusivity. Their data illustrates that children not only

have the capability to critically evaluate the ordinary attributes of their schooling environment but from these draw inferences about their own well-being. The influence of what has been called "the third teacher" (Edwards, Gandini and Forman, 1998) is evident, Burke and Grosvenor maintain, in students' expressed needs for pleasant spaces to socialise and take necessary breaks throughout the day. While schools typically maintain recreational fields and facilities for physical education and sporting activity, the authors say, many students desire other greener and more interesting spaces where they are free to play and enjoy each other's company; this is especially true at the secondary stage. Arguing for the significance of these "forgotten spaces" and how students internalise their surroundings, the authors reference similar observations put forward by Titman (1994, cited in ibid):

> The appearance of school grounds was also symbolic for children of the way the school valued them – a reflection of self. Because most children believed the grounds had been created – 'put there' – for them, if the place was 'ugly' or 'boring' or 'gross', this was read by the children as a reflection of the way of the school felt about them (p. 40).

According to Burke and Grosvenor, children also appear to associate the quality of their edible landscape - the meals they are provided, the service they receive and the time and flexibility they are permitted - with the level of respect the school affords them, both individually and as a group. Lunchtime was often described as a dull and unwelcoming affair, while many envisioned calmer and more inviting areas where they were entrusted by adults to consume their food, sit with friends and revise before the afternoon's lessons. The authors suggest that these attitudes towards dining spaces involve a degree of perceived social inequality for students, who "have readily associated the serving of school food with institutions such as hospitals and prisons which emphasise authority, control and the regulation of bodies" (p. 28). Moreover, pupils view school meals as important exemplars of how their school community recognises its diversity; for instance, acknowledging the food traditions of various cultural groups is for them indicative of a considerate and just schooling environment (p. 27).

The desire for inclusivity is a recurring theme in Burke and Grosvenor's research, wherein students challenge the conventional social order of schools to reflect a more cohesive and cooperative "whole learning community" (p. 95). Pupils emphasised the importance of exercising mutual respect and impartiality for instilling an aura of unity

between all staff, teachers, and students. These aspirations for the future of education, however, were coupled with a conveyed sense of powerlessness, vulnerability and a pressure to conform. The researchers suggest that for many students the school environment leaves much to be desired and does not generally reflect the place of refuge and harmony they wish it to be. Their participants' mental constructs of an ideal school setting bear a likeness to Noddings' (2003) conviction that "the best schools should resemble the best homes" (p. 260). The structures and processes of learning can be harrowing, writes Palmer (1993) in *To Know as We Are Known*, and so an "air on hospitality" is a vital dimension to cultivating school spaces of this kind; this means that members of the community are received, along with their particular afflictions and ways of thinking, with friendliness and courtesy (p. 71-74).

It seems that for schools to be the joyful and dynamic places children crave them to be, the places themselves should be ones that they can connect and identify with. Here it is helpful to revisit Riley's (2017) research on place and belonging in schools. As introduced before, her argument for prioritising belonging in education is that it necessitates students' senses of self and agency, therefore crucial in enabling them to explore possibilities and purposely forge a path for their lives (p. 134). Welcoming students into the school and demonstrating that they are cherished members of its body, she says, helps to fulfil young peoples' needs to be 'known' and comfortable in that place. Riley maintains that, among the cardinal services schools provide, "one of the most precious gifts they can give to the young people in their care is to see them for who they are" (p. 141). The importance of constructing such a culture of fellowship and belonging is evident among student voices, which convey not only a collective mentality but also solidarity and empathy towards other learners they feel the school might somehow be neglecting (Burke and Grosvenor, 2015, p. 68).

Riley (2017) suggests that reshaping schools into the places they *can* and *should* be - exciting, inquisitive places where students feel they belong and therefore thrive - involves surveying the school lives of children and incorporating that knowledge into an overarching vision (p. 7). Her ideas for whole-school reform rest on mutual understanding between individuals, and specifically bringing into frame the views of students and teachers. Such an approach employs these persons in researcher-like roles, empowering them to add to conversations about what is important and to take active measures in

improving their school. Engaging with students and teachers not only helps to bring about positive and impactful changes in schooling, Riley says, but also strengthens their sense of agency by integrating their perspectives into the process. She emphasises that young people in this way behave as "active agents of change" rather than passive recipients of education (p. 125), capable of offering inspiring and uniquely informative insights into the schooling experience (p. 41):

> The perceptions, the humour, the creativity, the energy of our students are rich resources which can be harnessed. Coupled with the insights of their teachers and the aspirations of the leaders, schools have an invincible force (p. 109).

Breeding a culture of enquiry, says Fielding (2005), was precisely what headteacher Alex Bloom strove towards in promoting radical democratic schooling at St. George-in-the-East. Progressive education by his measure required a holistic process of vibrant and open-ended exchanges between young people and adults, one which constituted reciprocity between personal growth and the collective good. Fielding explains that this notion of collegial individuality, or the situating of one's own capabilities and imagination within community engagement and action, rests on spaces which are wholeheartedly shared. In these, people of the school listen to and challenge one another "in a nested, cumulative way that is informative, stimulating and celebratory" (p. 6). As I delve into in the following segment, a school environment which empowers individuals to work together and value each other's differences is just as important as *how* these daily encounters are conducted (ibid, p. 12). These ideas on deliberately *involving* pupils, as well as their teachers, in exploring, reforming and fulfilling the aims of education are consistent with what this thesis has identified as areas for school culture improvement and what children are arguably entitled to in living a life of happiness and well-being.

Socio-affective needs and influences

In this thesis I have addressed how relationships affect personal happiness and how education aimed at happiness might cultivate children's social and emotional competencies in school. Contrary to the 'happiness curriculums' I have discussed, some of the literature points to possibly understated school practices which can enable students to exhibit these skills. As researchers Rantala and Määttä (2010) proclaim, "a school is not a desert of emotions," and most people will have undergone moments in school which were, in one way or another, coloured by the likes of triumph, embarrassment or ego (p.

87). In this environment, whichever social and cultural perspectives towards emotionality are embodied will be relayed to children, thus influencing to a great extent how they convey their emotions (p. 100). The authors maintain that, in supporting students' varied dispositions and personalities, education can help weld their tendencies in ways which allow them to learn and flourish. As explored previously, this does not mean shunning at times constructive 'negative' emotions, such as failure, but allowing for feelings of all sorts to be expressed in the school context (p. 87). Owing to the infectious nature of human emotion and how it is usually heightened when experienced simultaneously between people (citing Schutz and DeCuir, 2002, p. 128), Rantala and Määttä say schools should employ methods that supplement the creation and maintenance of social relationships. They explain that camaraderie with peers and the genuine attentiveness of teachers, for example, not only to contribute to pupils' experiences of 'joy' in school (citing Csikszentmihalyi & Hunter, 2003, p. 198) but interacting socially in a pleasant setting helps develop their skills for listening to and being cognizant of others.

Opportunities to socialise and collaborate significantly affect children's enjoyment in school (Gorard and See, 2011), and they are inclined to want to share their experiences with those around them (Barth, 1969). In his evaluation of British schools, Barth (1969) writes that children are more likely to experience enjoyment in 'open' school environments, whereby the spreading of students' ideas and enthusiasms is not immediately perceived as disruptive or perhaps 'cheating' behaviour but rather potentially valuable learning opportunities (p. 197). In these situations, he says, the degree to which students feel entrusted by their teachers becomes enormously important. Trust in the first instance ought not be something students need to earn, Barth states, but rather a benefit of the doubt which they are afforded. This is critical for maintaining a pleasant schooling environment, as "children respond to lack of trust and confidence with destructive, hostile, surreptitious, immature behaviour" (p. 198). Gorard and See's (2011) survey of secondary schools in England substantiates Barth's claim, indicating that where such rebellious conduct and a lack of rapport with teachers occurs, student enjoyment lessens and disengagement breeds. The student testimonies they gathered revealed that poor relationships are not only a major determinant of stress in school but were also commonly referenced by children as a *rationale* for behaving poorly (p. 682). By some pupil accounts, teachers sometimes conduct themselves in ways which dampen students' ambitions and inhibit the feelings of happiness that arise from collaborative learning

(ibid). The authors found that often simple courtesies exhibited by adults, such as making eye contact and speaking with civility, mattered in maintaining a respectful "working partnership" between students and teachers (p. 679). Students flourish in an atmosphere of trust not built on laissez-faire strategies but through establishing rules which are consistent and guided by an appropriate degree of authority (Barth, 1969, p. 198). What is important is that when students view their education as a kind of *collective investment*, enjoyment of the schooling experience is enhanced (Gorard and See, 2011 citing Battistich & Hom, 1997). The serious role schools play in fostering friendships and teaching children how to live in respectful, fulfilling relationships should not be taken for granted, for this is partly how education equips students for a life of personal well-being (Sardóc and White, 2017, p. 8-9). By means of facilitating playful and cooperative group activities and instilling a strong social ethos, schools can help students to anticipate and prepare for the array of relationships they will encounter, both intimate and professional (ibid).

It needs to be stressed that teachers' attitudes towards their students, or what students at least *perceive* these attitudes to be, are among the most important socio-affective influences on young people's happiness in school. Children over time have consistently conveyed an appreciation for the relational dimension of teaching, and in addressing their most preferred qualities of teachers describe traits such as warmth, patience, and willingness to consider student suggestions (Burke and Grosvenor, 2015, p. 78). The pleasantness of school life, Gorard and See (2011, p. 681) found, certainly depends on the general approachability of staff and extent to which children feel reliably and sufficiently supported. On the expectations pupils have for their relationships with teachers, Moore (2013) describes "the theme of wanting to be loved – and, indeed, wanting *to love* and to feel one's own love rewarded" (p. 276). He suggests that, through their individual testimonies and mutual interactions with each other, students reveal themselves to be especially mindful of how emotions intertwine with learning and performance in school; for children, this socio-affective imperative plainly outweighs the cognitive or goals-based one regularly prioritised by adults (p. 280). Not only do students frequently assume that their teachers *dis*like them, he says, but they also become "habitually convinced of and disturbed by their teachers' apparent aloofness to their feelings and their effects" (ibid). Yet despite many children reporting poor relationships with their teachers, and in some instances quite heavily criticising their behaviour, they can also be teachers'

"greatest advocates" (Burke and Grosvenor, 2015, p. 80). It is interesting to note that students are often quite aware of the intense pressures of the teaching profession, and, in expressing concern about their teachers' well-being, identify quite practical ways of potentially bettering teachers' work lives, such as improved staff facilities and implementing more manageable schedules (ibid). Children are emotionally astute beings who, to Moore's (2013) point above, not only desire and deserve the care of their teachers but are apt and wish to exercise care themselves.

School environments of care which bring about happiness and flourishing, says Cavanagh (2008), allow students opportunities to *be* in healthy relationships, *live* in relationships through a sense of community and *learn* about relationships by virtue of ordinary routines and practices (p. 22). In this sense, students' social and emotional development is underpinned by the ways in which relationships feature in the everyday occurrences and life of a school. In terms of adult behaviour specifically, teachers can model ways of being human for children, and can maintain a good professional identity while also ensuring that their classrooms are places of joy and fulfilment (Rantala and Määttä, 2010). The process of giving assessment which has a traditionally negative reputation can be, for instance, refashioned to resemble something more personal, dialogic, creative and 'spirited' (Stern and Blackhouse, 2011, p. 344). While teacher feedback has the potential to be dispassionate and overbearing, teachers can make honest and challenging assessments while also demonstrating kindness and support, using their position of authority to exemplify friendship and help friendliness thrive throughout the school (p. 339). When wrongdoing or conflict does occur, teachers can respond by means of restoration, as opposed to coercion, helping children learn how to positively mend relationships rather than strictly reprimanding them (Cavanagh, 2008, p. 22). As mentioned previously, teachers can display respect towards their students by valuing and showcasing their ideas in the classroom, encouraging their autonomous growth and sense of self-worth (Gorard and See, 2011, p. 688). And in creating learning spaces where children are prepared to be honest and engage with others in stimulating debate, teachers should be willing to display *their own* feelings and vulnerabilities when appropriate (Jane Powell, founder of CALM[11], interviewed in Hulme, 2017).

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[11] The Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM) is a national charity dedicated to suicide prevention in the UK.

These ideas for more prominently featuring the social and emotional development of young people in schools exemplify John Macmurray's educational philosophy that human flourishing is incumbent upon community. From this perspective, the schooling process is deeply relational and empathetic, concerned with educating the emotions and legitimised whereby individuals realise their most profound and wide-ranging aspirations (Fielding, 2013; 2012). Fielding's typology of schools as person-centred learning communities draws from Macmurray's legacy, specifying that "the functional ways in which we work together in schools to achieve personal, communal and educational ends are transformed by the moral and interpersonal character and quality of what we are trying to do" (2013, p. 469). The physical and interpersonal make-up of these places, he suggests, enable reciprocal learning, genuine and constructive dialogue as well as expressive freedom, while the capacity of teachers to listen and remain broad-minded is as necessary as pupils' readiness to do so (p. 470). Inspired by Macmurray's notion that education ought to be judged according to the kinds of people it helps produce (1931b, p. 581), Fielding's framework includes upholding the integrity between means and ends; decisions about what is taught in school and the outcomes we expect from children, he says, ought to be conducted in ways which are "more explicit, more understanding of how we become persons" (2000, p. 51-4). From this Burke and Grosvenor (2015) ask in earnest: is this not the template of schooling children themselves would select? (p. 97). And if pupil happiness is a serious goal of education, such models of spirited, inclusive communities with magnanimous leadership and rich social exchanges are surely of inspiration.

Teaching and learning alignment

Against the backdrop of a thriving social environment wherein students feel that they belong and can valuably contribute, there are factors related more specifically to the ways in which they learn and acquire knowledge which are worth here mentioning. As I have previously established, happiness has much to do with wholehearted engagement in activities that one finds meaningful. For young people in school, it seems that the experiences which beget engagement of this kind entail a teaching and learning ethos around agency and participation, deep learning and self-understanding.

Until now I have said much about the role of pupil autonomy to achieving happiness, and from this I should underscore the importance of real-world applicability and freedom to

the learning process. Write Burke and Grosvenor (2015), students in the UK typically reject the rigid organisation of their subjects as distinctly confined fields of knowledge and how seemingly inefficient this process is in preparing them to live and function well in society (pp. 54-5). Possessing a rather global perspective and an eagerness to engage with various cultures and histories, the authors found, children seek a much more interdisciplinary and worldly education, one driven by human experiences and curiosities. Burke and Grosvenor argue that students appropriately recognise the structural limitations of the current state schooling system, and in advocating for a more holistic and ultimately fulfilling approach to the curriculum "cry out for relevancy and agency in their intimate relationship with knowledge" (p. 57). Part of establishing this relationship, they say, is reflected in the possibilities students envision for their school and how they desire to critically apply what they learn and contribute to their community in the *here and now*. From Blishen's 1969 publication of *The School That I'd Like* based on pupils' perceptions of learning in the UK, one can see how these attitudes have long existed. Recognising the consequences of a fragmented and detached schooling experience, Blishen observed from students:

> Great hatred of subject barriers simply as devices that break up the school day into a series of small dissociated experiences! Detestation of bells that ring just as you have [sic] may have become interested in what you are doing… [which] makes the day such a frustrating patchwork (p. 83).

He continues to say that,

> when things are chopped like this… you can't anywhere put down real roots. And the children want to put down roots deep into human learning (ibid).

In searching for these instances of deep-seated 'human learning', educators might consider, as Noddings (2003) suggests, which aspects of schooling are necessary to compel, and which are burdening the curriculum (p. 247). We should find ways of ensuring lessons are varied and imaginative by design, argue Gorard and See (2011), as the children who receive them are otherwise likely to disengage. Students are excited by new and unorthodox approaches to learning as well as degrees of *enthusiasm* not always exhibited as part of more 'traditional' teacher-led lessons they perceive as dull, repetitive or insignificant (ibid). Children are more likely to derive joy from stimulating, flexible classroom environments which are to some extent attuned to their interests (Rantala and Määttä, 2010). Students want for and have the potential to propose their own legitimate,

enlightening questions and decide for themselves how they will go about solving them (Barth, 1969; Gorard and See, 2011). Rantala and Määttä (2010) explain that, when granted such freedom and the chance to exhibit 'expertise' among their peers, children will display more inquisitiveness and creativity. It is the teacher's role to explore and expand upon which real-world problems captivate his or her students and use these to intensify levels of interest and autonomy occurring during the learning process (ibid, Gorard and See, 2011). Peter Hyman (2017), co-founder and first headteacher of renowned School 21 in east London, argues that these are some of the attributes needed for revolutionising schooling in Britain. With a focus on real-world learning and well-being, he says, schools should be "noisy" places where what children say is just as important as what they read and write. School 21 maintains that Socratic-style teaching and exploratory dialogue enables children to think about and understand challenging topics, as well as to develop coherent and empathetic arguments. "We need education to be based on trust not compliance," says Hyman, "We need to believe that students can produce work of genuine value to the world while at school" (no pagination). These policies for sprouting engagement and enjoyment are not especially radical or idealistic, and, according to Gorard and See (2011), children's experiences of such do *not* significantly vary according to the type of school they attend when controlling for other factors. This is to suggest that the financial and structural limitations many schools must contend with in implementing new changes do not necessarily apply to variables on which student happiness depends, a cause the authors give to be optimistic towards the future of British education.

These arguments for how to enliven teaching and learning with what excites young people and showcases their perspectives may be considered in conjunction with ways of supporting patient engagement and deep learning in the classroom. The immense pleasure and lasting satisfaction that flows from mastering a skill or concept is a critical component of personal well-being and especially valuable for students in cultivating their feelings of self-respect and resilience (Cigman, 2012, p. 461). Referencing Csikszentmihalyi's (2002) theory of *flow*, Rantala and Määttä (2010) explain that children yearn to feel a sense of accomplishment in their learning and derive great joy from succeeding at difficult tasks through which they have persisted. They emphasise, however, that this 'joy' does not like to rush and often relates to *completion* of one's work. While children are commonly hurried in school and shuffle between subjects and

assignments multiple times per day, the authors suggest that joy can manifest slowly, and that this is perfectly well with respect to the learning process; joy can be found through multiple attempts, making errors and "little, evanescent moments" (p. 101). Rantala and Määttä found that children who display the kind of commitment necessary for gaining the gratification of mastery tend to attribute some personal meaning to the task and express confidence that it is something they can realistically achieve; these situations where the pupil and the subject matter "converge" therefore ought to be facilitated as much as possible in classrooms (p. 96). Still, education for the autonomous well-being of pupils must recognise that this is a relatively slow process and that children's "wholehearted immersion in interesting activities", of which schools are responsible for instilling, requires *time to explore* for themselves what is worthwhile (Sardoč and White, 2017, p. 8; 10-11). When denied the proper space to hold these thoughts and make these decisions, students grow frustrated by the inopportunity to devote themselves meaningfully to a task and see it through to its completion (Burke and Grosvenor, 2015). These children also appear to recognise what deep learning consists of as opposed to surface learning, and how their often inflexible and crammed school schedules disrupt its likelihood (ibid, p. 128).

Lastly, it is suitable here to more closely consider the ways in which taught subjects can promote episodes of self-understanding and growth for pupils. As Cigman (2012) outlines in her critique of 'the enhancement agenda,' we need not concern ourselves with which types of knowledge content categorically contribute to well-being but rather ask how the teaching of knowledge content "*provokes* and *elicits* children's emotional responses" associated with deep thinking and understanding (p. 456). Too often, she argues, taught disciplinary knowledge lacks the thrill and excitement to engage students with "Life in all its manifestations" (p. 457), making it more difficult to realise what is intrinsically valuable to them and leading to potentially toxic feelings of disaffection. Cigman explains that knowledge ranging from Shakespeare to quantum physics can bear importance to peoples' lives in inestimable ways, and so education cannot pre-judge or justify which subjects by virtue are life-enhancing (i.e., an 'enhancement agenda' objective). Instead, she says, it can focus on transmitting so-called *ert* knowledge, or that which contributes to mastery and life enrichment, rather than *inert* knowledge which is uninspired and desiccated. To suppose that lessons which lead to the happiness and well-being of pupils must be compulsory does not necessarily imply that they should be taught as separate

academic subjects, say Sardoč and White (2017). The authors contend that "the aim here is seduction – to get learners caught up in the intrinsic delights of an activity in which much of their life may be spent" (p. 9).

When delivered in the emotionally provoking style Cigman (2012) advocates, school subjects can help young people to envision different ways of living both pleasantly and purposefully. On literature as an example, Csikszentmihalyi (2002) emphasises a potential to explore illustrations of achieving success based around organised and personally meaningful goals (p. 236). Equally, he says, learners can draw inspiration from others' portrayals of pain and perseverance which help place into context the apparent fortuitousness of life. While someone may be incapable of wholly articulating their thoughts or feelings towards a topic, he or she can gain confidence and understanding from reading interpretations of similar emotions or human experiences. Noddings (2003) makes a similar case for poetry, explaining that the existential questions it poses can inform how a pupil feels and thinks about, for instance, spirituality, conflict and beauty (p. 252). History and geography, meanwhile, can offer students principles for establishing connections with their physical and social environments, skills necessary for developing self-awareness and a sense of belonging (p. 254-5). Noddings explains that when school subjects are broadened to such degrees, students are given chances to practise critical thinking about moral and social issues and to confront more intellectually the happenings of everyday life. This dimension of teaching and learning does not come at a cost to their acquisition of academic knowledge or skills but enriches these lessons with what prepares them to better understand themselves and to navigate a personal path towards happiness and flourishing; "Almost any subject matter of genuine interest to students, well taught, can contribute to this end" (p. 260).

And so, part of aligning teaching and learning with an aim to promote pupil happiness in school involves evaluating how typical classroom routines coincide with students' own ambitions and motivations. When thinking about classrooms as places of shared humanity, as Pring (2015) describes, where teachers apply their broader cultural understanding to help pupils refine *their understanding* of experiences, it seems a capacity to listen to young people and respond to their interests in earnest is, again, essential. I am drawn to Hogan's (2009) coinage of the "imaginative neighbourhood" which emerges as teachers thoughtfully and delightfully introduce new topics to pupils.

Upon entering a new neighbourhood of maths or language, for example, a child develops a relationship with that which is being taught, able to explore new intellectual possibilities and experience personal transformations (Griffiths, 2012). He or she progressively becomes better acquainted with the prominent features and voices of a given field, Hogan (2009) explains, confident to engage with and form their own opinions about them. From this perspective, the "habit of innovation" in the form of new neighbourhoods of knowledge being collectively explored is the most important of any classrooms' customs, and one that can transpire from reframing ordinary everyday practices into something more deliberate and worthwhile (p. 80).

Doing what is possible to breathe life into school subjects, so to speak, and to captivate students so that they are primed for the kinds of purposeful and beatific learning experiences described above seems to rely on, to borrow from author Amy Krouse Rosenthal, *paying attention to what we pay attention to*. In a study of happiness and education, this seems especially relevant. Students are exceptionally worthy of the sensation of being utterly engrossed in something they care about, both to conceive what they want out of life and to secure the means to do it; this Dewey once wrote is the "key to happiness" (1916, p. 308).

3.2.2 Cementing the role of student and teacher perspectives

At the heart of this study lies the notion that pupils themselves *must be included* in discussions concerning happiness in schools. If members of the educational community seek an improved understanding and appreciation for how schooling affects happiness and what students need to flourish, it reasonably follows that children's viewpoints inform, as well as challenge, these efforts. As "children's words convey with power their experience of school" (Burke and Grosvenor 2015, p. 111), this study's exploring of student reflections to gain knowledge of the schooling environment is beneficial for gaining a critical perspective and, most deservingly, for providing these voices an elevated platform. And while this thesis centres on *student* happiness and primarily focuses on the *student* perspective, there is great justification for involving teachers in this study. As the literature demonstrates, and my own history as a classroom teacher supports, the student-teacher relationship is one of the single greatest factors in the schooling experience. In this segment I will therefore address the complexity of this

dynamic and how, through extending participation to teachers, data gathered from children may be more appropriately evaluated.

The understated significance of student voice

Though the UK's education system has undergone some remarkable progress in the twenty-first century, evidence suggests that children continue to exercise little influence over school-related debates, decision-making practices or policy implementation (Burke and Grosvenor, 2015). This is especially pertinent to conversations surrounding well-being, where children's voices are noticeably absent despite being often more indicative of their mental health and subjective well-being than the third-party accounts of parents or teachers (The Children's Society's 2018, p. 81-2). The variation between students who enjoy school and those who do not, found Gorard and See (2011), is primarily explained by *individual student experiences of school* and far less by their personal and family background or the school's intake. Their perceptions and attitudes towards schooling therefore hold the "key to our understanding of interest and enjoyment of education" (p. 676). And though it is necessary for adults in fulfilling their traditional schooling responsibilities to exercise appropriate degrees of authority, there is space and opportunity for constructive adult-child collaboration. It is of seemingly little coincidence that themes of autonomy, participation, respect and trust permeate literature on the nature of happiness and how children experience it in school. As Michael Fielding articulates: "Education in its fullest sense is, in good part, a conversation between generations which is mutual, positive and open-ended" (Burke and Grosvenor 2015, p. ix). This vision of schooling encapsulates what this study aims to highlight the promising value of: the methodical *listening to* and *embracing of* students' stories, opinions and ideas.

Considering seriously the views of pupils is increasingly presented as a matter of children's rights and, consequently, their well-being (Devine and McGillicuddy, 2016, p. 425, citing Downes, 2013; Osler, 2010). Fortunately, social research is shifting towards judging children "as social actors in their own right…" (Corsaro, 2015, p. 45), an attitude towards pupil involvement which is reflected, for instance, in the 2004 Children Act requiring consultation of children's wants and emotions when conducting needs assessments (Greig et al., 2007, p. 96). Still, suggest Burke and Grosvenor (2015), while progress at the institutional level is apparent, *the lived experience of students in school* has gone essentially unchanged; this is exemplified by the compelling and consistent

testimonies students gave as part of *The School I'd Like*'s projects spanning a decade apart. The authors explain that,

> [Pupils] reveal, in their passionate responses in words and images, a dynamic which is missing from much exploration into the nature of schooling. How school feels, smells, tastes, its rhythms and rituals, its meaning and significance are revealed… attempt[ing] to capture whole school visions (p. 156).

As I have addressed in this paper, engaging with student voice in educational research is valuable for unravelling the nuances of the schooling context and for envisioning real opportunities for growth and improvement. What is more, their recollections of school life are capable of divulging new or previously underappreciated topics that are worthy of discussion on pupil well-being. As Affouneh and Hargreaves (2015) suggest, these might include unsettling realities or even contradictions surrounding pedagogical practice (p. 226, citing Duffy and Elwood, 2013; Kemmis, 2006). Nevertheless, this presents an opportunity for practitioners to be made aware of and learn from how children perceive schooling situations so that they may gravitate towards those eliciting, for instance, fun, pleasurable and satisfactory learning experiences (Gorard and See, 2011, p. 687). As I will soon discuss, the relationship between emotionality and expression is particularly complex; smiling, for example, does not necessarily relate to a child's inner state of happiness (Rantala and Määttä, 2012). Students' self-told experiences of school may therefore improve our understanding for how happiness is genuinely achieved. Burke and Grosvenor (2015), in their analysis of words and images, found that "children have the capacity to examine critically the normal and everyday spaces in which they learn and can articulate their future in previously unimagined ways" (p. 13). In meeting the needs of young people, the responsibility arises to accept children as individuals capable of conveying their own feelings, judgements and autonomous capabilities (Prout and James, 1990). This is a view commonly endorsed in ethnographic research (James, 2001) from which this study is partially modelled. This thesis on happiness holds in sincere regard the significance of students' views, welcoming their participation as special *contributors* and *co-creators* of new knowledge.

Power relationships between students and teachers

Whether or not it is explicitly apparent, children care deeply about the connections they share with their teachers (Fisher, 2011; Moore, 2013; Rantala and Määttä, 2012). So significant is this relationship, says Moore (2013), that pupils' individual identities are

moulded in part by who and what they believe teachers expect them to be (p. 277); these adults' level of influence over a child's future self is no doubt "a powerful force in society" (Burke and Grosvenor, 2015, p. 78). As I have touched upon previously, children are often more concerned with *how* a lesson is designed and delivered, rather than *what* it covers specifically, meaning that teachers themselves possess the capacity to drive, or diminish, student satisfaction during the learning process and thus deserve consideration (Fisher, 2011; Gorard and See, 2011). The student-teacher relationship is made complicated by the realisation that teachers' authority and behaviour in the classroom help determine the "invisible emotional rules" dictating to what degree pupils express themselves emotionally (Rantala and Määttä 2012, p. 92). Seeking acceptance and affection, children adhere to the "rules" necessary to satisfy their teacher, a reality in sharp contrast to many teachers' described "student-centred" pedagogies and approaches to learning (Moore, 2013, p. 275). Additionally, as evidenced by Fisher (2011), teachers can make wrongful assumptions about students' emotionality based on outward behaviour alone. Her study revealed that students, in an effort to conceal their dissatisfaction, operate behind a metaphorical "veil of compliance" (p. 121). Power relationships and a desperate yearning for approval, she says, lead children to behave in a manner not representative of their true emotions, physically cooperative but "truant in their mind" (Young, 1984, cited in ibid, p. 125). Pupils' concerns over the potential consequences of sharing their thoughts or feelings, Fisher explains, leads to lack of engagement and, inevitably, loss of pupil agency in the classroom. This is troublesome when evaluated in the context of how to support student happiness, the evidence of which points consistently to opportunities for participation and autonomy. According to Moore (2013), this "social/affective imperative" turns learning into a quest for love and validation, with pupils aiming to please their tutors at the expense of real cognitive gain (p. 279). It is in cases like these that a possible disparity exists between needs regularly assumed by teachers and those that may lead to a happier, flourishing life.

Recognising and responding to student needs

There are times when teachers, however unintended, draw false conclusions about how happiness relates to their students' learning; it is therefore necessary to identify sources of confusion or misunderstanding among them. Here the conversation begins with pupil *needs*, the satisfaction of which Noddings (2003) says affects their happiness greatly. She specifies the distinction between meeting *inferred* needs (i.e. those regularly assumed and

imposed by adults) and *expressed* needs (i.e. those displayed by children themselves) in school (ibid; 2005). According to Noddings, students' internal desires often clash with messages received from teachers (2003, p. 89), whose objectives, consciously or not, most often align with needs they infer for students (2005). She stresses that negotiation between the carer (i.e. the teacher) and the cared-for (i.e. the student), as a means of balancing these two different needs is part of what enables a happy classroom (2003, p. 242). She warns that prioritisation of inferred needs is subject to standardisation and authoritarian behaviour in schools and that "by ignoring expressed needs … we sacrifice opportunities to develop individual talents, intrinsic motivation, and the joys of learning" (2005, p. 147).

Though the expressed need of pleasure is a chief component of happiness for students, the extent to which it infiltrates the learning process, says Noddings (2003), depends in part on the teacher's ability to recognise it and its importance (p. 243-4). This is disconcerting when, in light of Fisher's (2011) findings on dissatisfaction in the classroom, teachers may not acknowledge when a student lacks enjoyment but rather accept compliance at face value (p. 136). Alas, teachers are sometimes oblivious to the emotional depth and fragility taking place right before them (Moore, 2013, p. 280), a disconnect which leads in some cases to unintended sources of pain for children, such as cold calling or receiving unhelpful feedback (Noddings, 2003, p. 245-6). Perhaps most alarming from Gorard and See's (2011) study on how to increase student enjoyment of school is that no teacher participant among the thousands of whom they surveyed and interviewed voluntarily described enjoyment as a factor when devising lessons (p. 684). This is unfortunate considering that enjoyment was found to be the basis on which student participants often perceived a lesson's overall success (ibid). In certain instances, teachers' failure to recognise and respond appropriately to students' needs may be tied to their own perceptions of the educator's purpose and of schooling itself. In his studies of love and fear in the classroom, Moore (2013) found that teachers, though professing inclusion and the creation of a caring and empathetic environment, believed student emotion to be a consequence of private life and thus beyond their realm of influence (p. 270-1). Yet analysis of children's testimonies revealed that their concerns were primarily *internal*, or the result of classroom experiences, and not external as their teachers assumed (p. 272). Another surprising finding of Moore's research was that though children's learner identities emerged as both complex and vulnerable, teachers primarily understood them as

"fixed" and straightforward (i.e. fitting into a box such as "talkative", "shy", "interested in this" or "better at that"). It is of little coincidence, he suggests, that students viewed teachers as "adults who did *not* understand their differences or needs, who did *not* care for or about them, and who did little to make learning the enjoyable experience it was supposed to be" (ibid). These examples illustrate an inconsistency between teachers' outlooks and children's realities (p. 273); investigating this relationship is therefore an essential objective of the present study.

In seeking explanations for this gap in perspective, it is helpful to recognise that teachers may behave in certain ways because they are normalised, or even resemble what they themselves experienced as children in school (Moore, 2013, p. 282). The natural tension between empowering students and maintaining order in the classroom that Fisher (2011, p. 126) describes may also lead teachers to exert excessive levels of control, while their oversight of emotionality may be attributed to a greater educational discourse that minimises or excludes the affective needs of learners (Moore, 2013, p. 282). Adults' hesitation to necessarily embrace practices associated with student happiness, says Barth (1969), may be less a matter of disinterest, but a result of the *nature* of schooling and institutional order that regularly impedes enjoyment (p. 200). While I have addressed some of these obstacles in this paper, the importance here is to place the teacher perspective within a larger theme of understanding how to create opportunities for student happiness. As Zhang's (2016) study on well-being-orientated education demonstrates, teachers' reluctance to alter their normal behaviour may be remedied through the prioritisation of *their own* well-being in the forms of training opportunities, support systems and autonomous privileges. Cultivating experiences of happiness for children, says Smith (2005; 2013), "requires the involvement of educators who are happy in what they are doing and are seeking to live life as well as they can" (p. 9). In essence, happy students need happy teachers (ibid; Noddings, 2003). Again, while this study does not feature the promotion of teacher happiness specifically, it recognises their rich purposes and potential with respect to fostering young people's subjective well-being in schools.

Teachers, in "represent[ing] the world to the pupil" (Buber, 2002, p. 110) possess an extraordinary opportunity to draw out and celebrate students' capacities for happy living. By inspiring new meanings, things and people, the educator transitions into a considerable role that, in keeping with their traditional duties, carries profound

implications over the ways in which pupils achieve happiness. Far from merely transmitting knowledge, teachers illustrate "the relevance of [cultural] achievements to the concerns, growing self-consciousness, aspirations and search for a meaningful life of the young learner" (Pring, 2015, p. 11). In what is a positively noble profession, teachers move young people towards, as Wright and Pascoe (2017) convey, the life-*affirming* and life-*enhancing* (p. 304). This facet of teacherhood, as it were, permeates and ultimately constitutes what this thesis has described as a happy-centred education. Personal happiness is indeed tied to our humanity and our sense of *becoming*; by considering how their classrooms offer opportunities for happiness and joy, suggest Rantala and Määttä (2012), teachers show children ways of *being*. On this exceptional aim of education, the question becomes one Macmurray (1931a) so poignantly offers: "who is now concerned to make [the child] a good human being and teach him to live?" (p. 912).

Where teacher life-worlds and school culture converge

It is helpful here to more clearly establish how this study fits within literature on teachers' perspectives and school culture, and why these are so intimately related. Thus far I have presented a sizable discussion of the 'norms' of schooling in the UK and their implications for happiness. How these institutions construe what is meant by successful or quality school practice is important in a study about the experiences of their students. As I have suggested, any prioritisation of happiness and well-being must account for the ways in which human emotion features as part of everyday school activity. Emotional knowledge does not reside in the periphery of teaching and learning but is an integral part of teachers' whole knowledge ecology (Zembylas, 2007). Teachers employ their emotional knowledge on three levels: the individual (e.g., establishing pedagogical attitudes and beliefs), the relational (e.g., monitoring the emotional climate of their classroom) and the socio-political (e.g., navigating power dynamics and curricular discourses) (ibid). But a lacking in authentic human interaction and relationships, says Hargreaves (2000), threatens the health of these "emotional geographies" at the secondary level. He found that teachers often perceive emotions as mini "intrusions" stemming from outside the classroom which disrupt otherwise "normal" developmental and academic expectations; the normalisation or neutralisation of these emotions, in turn, constructs their emotional (mis)understanding of students. But herein lies the more explicit justification for why a study which involves student happiness *must also* consider teachers' emotions and points-of-view. Teacher behaviour and response to the emotional

needs of their students is, argues Hargreaves, a by-product of the "invisible, unstated backdrop" of the emotional energy in their classrooms (p. 822). More than their elementary colleagues, secondary school teachers purported to feel misunderstood and unloved by their students; this is striking considering, as was previously discussed, students themselves long to be 'known' and cared for by adults (see Moore, 2013). The importance placed on emotional connection and closeness, then, appears to be mutual.

What is especially interesting about teachers' emotions and emotionality is that, while these are at least partly affected by their personal backgrounds and dispositions, the influence of workplace conditions is grossly underexplored (Hargreaves, 2000). It is perhaps unfair to attribute the bulk of responsibly to teachers themselves for how they sometimes manage student emotions in the classroom (e.g., dismissing them for the sake of efficiency). A better approach to understanding teachers' influence on student happiness is not only exploring their beliefs and practices but also the contextual and sociocultural factors which affect them (Devine, Fahie and McGillicuddy, 2013). Accounting for these differences helps to explain the (dis)congruence between what teachers share verbally about their understandings of good teaching behaviour, for instance, and how they reflect these ideas in practice (ibid). While the nature of this study is such that no significant demographic claims can be made pertaining to individuals' perspectives, the point here is that incorporating those of teachers can yield relevant information about *why* adults behave as they do and hence convey a clearer overall impression of the phenomenon.

School culture invariably affects and is affected by the quality of relationships within an institution, say Kalkan et al. (2020), informing individuals' perceptions of that place and behaviour patterns. Though this thesis is not necessarily geared on assessing the effectiveness of happiness-related school policies, it directs attention to cultural attributes which may influence institutions' *capacities* to promote these. An example is Van Gasse, Vanhoof and Van Petegem's (2016) hypothesis that the success of policy aimed at student well-being rests in part on differences in school culture and values. They in fact use teachers' perspectives to identify which school characteristics they say make successful promotion of student well-being most likely: a flexible perspective on what is meant by 'effective' teaching and learning, an awareness of and willingness to adapt to new developments in the field, a consensus on well-being's importance and a collaborative

spirit for implementing change. Of course, a school's leadership team and style are crucial to manifesting and maintaining a culture which begets student happiness and well-being (ibid; Kalkan et al., 2020). An absence of leaders' perspectives in this thesis is not to discredit their helpfulness to understanding the issue; rather, I purposely spotlight students and teachers as these individuals are largely recipients of a school system designated *to* them rather than *by* them. If happiness rests on challenging school norms and cultures, then it is my position that a greater emphasise must be placed on the thoughts and feelings of those whose school lives are most shaped by these.

A necessary limitation of this study is that it cannot explore these areas in depth. Rather, it is useful to think of school culture and the subsequent life-worlds of teachers as explanatory variables in how student happiness is achieved in schools. My discussions of both are therefore contained insofar as they aid my understanding of the phenomenon, and should only be evaluated within the context of this case. As I explain in the next chapter, the 'case' of this study comprises of its student and teacher participants, data from whom is instrumental to exploring the greater topic; though a secondary school serves as the empirical setting for this research, its distinct culture does not serve the basis for this case study. There are a multitude of community and organisational characteristics pertaining to this institution which are not included here. Instead, the extent to which I describe the school is guided by my research questions and meant to provide the reader with sufficient information for understanding my findings and interpretation.

3.3 Summary of reviewed literature

Academic arguments on happiness are as many as they are varied, especially when applied to the field of education. The widespan of material presented in Chapters 2 and 3 in part reflects this. To bridge the core elements of each chapter together, I here offer a synoptic and critical summary of the literature I have reviewed. This includes what ideas, for the purposes of this study, are most significant and which I take forward in my research approach and analysis.

Part I of this literature review uses primarily philosophical and psychological perspectives to construe an open and interdisciplinary interpretation of happiness. That is, a subjective dimension to one's complete well-being (i.e., their emotional and psychological states),

which manifests as *experiences of pleasure and purpose over time* (Dolan, 2014). This study maintains that part of understanding subjective phenomena such as this entails capturing the *quality* of experiences, as opposed to isolated snapshots or evaluations of a person's life. For this reason, and as the next chapter details, I employ interview and observational data collection techniques to best capture the rich and multifaceted nature of the topic. Teacher and student perspectives are used here to uncover nuances in how happiness is experienced and not to quantify, for instance, how often or on which occasions students 'feel happy'. While there are no objective criteria for what a happy life necessarily entails (Pring, 2014; Csikszentmihalyi, 2002), determinants of happiness can be examined under the broad categories of *engagement*, *autonomy*, and *relationships*. It is important not to overstate these claims nor give the impression that the material presented here applies similarly to all students irrespective of their personal circumstances or schooling context. And though any conception of happiness will have complications and limitations, the one here is meant to evolve according to individuals' meanings and perspectives. The preconceived and conceptually overlapping sources of happiness identified in Chapter 2 allow me to assimilate new knowledge participants bring to the topic and position it within a wider theoretical framework.

Happiness as interpreted in this thesis is then contextualised within a discussion of Western traits and trends. This is to illustrate how happiness in schools is inevitably shaped by what these societies most value and where its members place the emphasise of their lives and the lives of children. Happiness can be understood from a generally *humanistic* and person-centred perspective, suggesting that it is an essential purpose of education and one which has implications for how children flourish now and in adulthood (White, 2015; Macmurray, 2012; Fielding, 2005). Though there are other key purposes of education which are not thoroughly examined here, this discussion draws from normative, ethical and scientific perspectives to convey the significance of featuring happiness on the educational agenda. While schooling in the West arguably promotes fixed and idealistic conceptions of happiness (de Ruyter, 2015; Francis and Mills, 2012), there are deeply ingrained attitudes and practices which curtail a more nuanced approach to its prioritisation. It is necessary to confront misconceptions, for instance, that a serious devotion to students' subjective well-being comes at the expense of their academic attainment (Griffiths, 2012), or that they need be shielded from negative or challenging life experiences (Nussbaum, 2001). Happiness is both an inherent good of which students

are assuredly deserving and a clear contributor to other life and educational goals (Achor, 2011; Martin, 2006).

Part II of this literature review draws more specific reference to conventional school culture within the UK, setting the stage for the empirical context and focus of this research. Academic criticisms of this system are substantial and paint a rather grim portrayal of how state schooling has come to embody fierce competitiveness and damaging degrees of individualism, generating learning environments of dread and disappointment (Burke and Grosvenor, 2015; Stobart, 2008; Ball, 2003). Structures of assessment and ranking seemingly reign supreme, and their ramifications stretch far beyond the remit of this thesis. What is most applicable here is that a stringent focus on educational outputs comes at a cost to the colloquially deemed 'hidden curriculum' to which happiness is closely associated. Many children and young people in the UK struggle to feel rooted and valued as part of their school communities (McGillicuddy and Devine, 2020; Riley, 2017; Pring, 2012); detrimental observations in their mental health and well-being command re-evaluation as to how their intrinsic needs are being met (Good Childhood Report, 2020; Patalay and Fitzsimons, 2020; 2018). But provisions for addressing the emotional and psychological development of students in school leave much to be desired, and are often regarded as tokenistic add-ons to an already saturated secondary curriculum (Hayes, 2017; Formby and Wolstenholme, 2011). Strategies aimed at 'teaching happiness' in particular raise profound concerns as to whether, as in other subjects, designating exactly what students should do or learn necessarily *improves the quality of their school lives* (Cigman, 2008; Suissa, 2008; Noddings, 2003). The literature strongly proposes that happiness is less an outcome of targeted interventions, but rests on the success of whole-school cultures in breeding qualities such as love, respect, emotional connection, belonging and shared enquiry. To get at the root of how this seemingly elusive and complex phenomenon genuinely takes shape, the fabric of school communities must be explored through the life-worlds of students and teachers.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This study adopts an interpretivist framework when exploring happiness in schools, aiming to provide a rigorous narrative of the human experiences and perspectives surrounding the phenomenon[12]. I specifically adhere to procedures associated with ethnographic and case study research, given they are most appropriate for my purposes. Relying on qualitative modes of inquiry, this study incorporates rich, descriptive material designed to present a coherent representation of the participants' range of meanings, and my best interpretation of those meanings. The end goal is to produce an honest, vivid account of pupils' and teachers' perspectives on achieving happiness in secondary schools, to spark reflective thought, dialogue and action among educators and researchers.

4.1 Research questions and objectives

The central aim of this study is to answer the question: *What do the narrated experiences and perspectives of students and teachers reveal about achieving happiness in secondary schools?*

This study maintains that an appreciation for these individuals' testimonies can help illuminate both the *realities* and *possibilities* of achieving happiness in secondary education. Its chief objectives are to explore and interpret the following: According to pupil and teacher insights,

> RQ1. *What elements of secondary school life are most influential to student happiness, either as contributors or inhibitors?*
>
> RQ2. *To what extent is happiness valued or prioritised by the secondary school community? What do its practices and discourses convey to children about the relevance of happiness to their education?*
>
> RQ3. *What might a secondary school look like if it were designed with student happiness in mind?*

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[12] The term *phenomenon* in this discussion of methodology refers to the focus of study, happiness, and does not imply adherence to *phenomenology* as an approach to inquiry (see Creswell, 2013).

4.2 Biography

Methodological decisions are inevitably influenced by the researcher's own background, beliefs and biases (Creswell, 2013). The relationship between the phenomenon and the practitioner is dynamic, say Rossman and Rallis (2010), with influence running in both directions (p. 384). The expectation is not to escape the researcher perspective or "judge from a 'God's eye view,'" (Siegel, 2015, p. 115), but to strive for a kind of *reflective awareness* of how it informs the knowledge constructed (Gibson, 2017, p. 64)*.* Therefore, in maintaining the integrity of this thesis, it is necessary that I carefully position myself and my role as researcher within this chapter specifically, addressing my most relevant experiences and convictions.

My personal interest in the topic of happiness and schooling is primarily founded on my experiences teaching in an inner-city secondary state school in the United States. Over the course of three years, I taught Advanced Placement (AP) world history, world geography, and student leadership courses. The privileges I had in my own youth became most apparent when working with students from predominately low socio-economic backgrounds, many of whom spoke English as their second language. I found that engagement with the curriculum was particularly limited for those without an appreciation for how it related to their own lives and individual potential. Teaching social studies provided a brilliant avenue to collectively address and dissect the societal norms and structures within which we all must navigate as social beings.

More specifically, I learnt the value of creating a safe and inviting classroom space where students have a platform for individual expression and healthy debate. It was my observation among both high attaining and at-risk cohorts that, when encouraged to express their wants and needs, students exhibited greater control of and pride in their learning. This autonomous participation, however, was a topic of little to no discussion within the educational institution in which I worked. I was disheartened by the discrepancy that existed between the local authority's professed aims and the commonplace schooling practices I observed. Within an education system attributing so much worth to statistical measures and results, testing procedures at both the state and local level consumed an alarming amount of my time and resources. Values of the

profession I had joined appeared at times grossly misguided, as I witnessed students' creativity and motivation diminish and exam anxiety heighten.

Still, I discovered that the schooling environment *is* capable of more than just preparing students for traditional forms of success; it can offer students opportunities to discover what makes for a good and meaningful life. An individual's choices are largely attributed to his or her shared relationships and experiences. Teachers, in this sense, can play a pivotal role in empowering students not just with academic skills, but with lessons for living. Subjects, such as history and maths, can be used as mediums for which to build character and rhetoric; for example, learning to ask the right questions, to be curious and to display respect for other peoples and ideas. At a time when individuals are vulnerable, adolescence, tutors could model empathy, tolerance and grace. I observed the power of positivity and encouragement in propelling students not only for economic prosperity, but for wellbeing and fulfilment. Building authentic connections with learners and, together, expanding their strengths and interests, are moments for which I am enormously proud and will carry for the rest of my career.

These positive teaching episodes directly informed my decision to undertake the IOE's Effective Learning and Teaching MA programme. Specifically, I sought to learn more about the noble aims of education and how current schooling practices reflect those aims. Course sessions surrounding children's rights and lifelong learning helped to form the foundation for my dissertation, *Autonomy in the classroom: an exploration of secondary teachers' understandings and practices*. The goal of this piece was to highlight how teachers perceive and foster a key, yet undervalued, learner trait: autonomy. My findings on the relationship between *understanding* and *actual behaviour* among educators then prompted me to ask new questions about how institutions are meeting the intrinsic needs of students. The success of this study left me with a resolution to explore one greater realm within which autonomy lies: personal happiness. As outlined in the introduction, I investigate this topic as it relates to present educational practice and discourse in the UK, hoping to produce a body of work that is both relevant and constructive.

My career interests ultimately lie with teacher practices conducive to student flourishing and emotional fulfilment. Namely, I aim to become involved in the professional development and support of aspiring teachers; for instance, by contributing to teacher

training programmes or teaching at the university level. With a keen curiosity in the lived experiences of a school community and the perceived purposes of education, I resolve for a balance of teaching and research within an entity focused on pedagogy for promoting student happiness. I aspire to help identify and improve how teachers make sense of and nurture learner attributes and outlooks that, while multi-layered and difficult to define, are key to their immediate and long-term well-being.

4.3 Methodological framework

Social research is always implicitly informed by the ways in which the researcher constructs knowledge (Gibson, 2017). Having communicated my professional and academic history, it follows that I situate this study within a reasoned theoretical framework that best emulates my research position for advancing knowledge of happiness in secondary schools. As a social science researcher whose inquiry lies, at its core, with human experiences and perceptions of specifically intangible phenomena, my methodological position may best be classified as *interpretivist*. That is, I seek to understand the topic holistically, embracing the complex nature of the social world by entering those of participants and interpreting their views accordingly (Lincoln and Guba, 2013). Interpretivism and its metatheoretical underpinnings, though abstract, are deeply ingrained within this research, guiding each stage and forming them into a coherent whole. As I will further explain in this chapter, I do not set out to test theories of happiness but rather to generate them. In so doing, the initial constructions of happiness put forth in the literature review have helped guide my research questions, methods of data generation, interpretations and analysis. The point, I must emphasise, is *not* to claim unequivocal 'truths' about the phenomenon, but to tell stories of real people's experiences and reflections as a way of building a deeper academic understanding of the topic. What follows is an explanation of the interpretivist paradigm and its usefulness within this study of happiness and schooling.

4.3.1 Interpretivist research paradigm

The advancement of knowledge pertaining to worldly phenomena, says Weber (2004), is the end goal of all research (p. xi). What that knowledge *consists of* and how it *ought to be discovered*, however, are matters of subjective preference (Scotland, 2012). Metatheoretical positions, or held beliefs, pertaining to these matters can be grouped

together to form an overarching research *paradigm* (Lincoln and Guba, 2013, p. 59). In an effort to improve our understanding of the world by means of complex and sophisticated sense-making, paradigms can serve as constructive foundations for practice and discourse (ibid). The key, according to Dowling and Brown (2010), is to practice awareness of issues relating to metatheoretical positions without allowing them to distract from the more essential pursuit of actual theoretical or empirical development (143). In other words, one's *epistemological* and *ontological* concerns, or ones relating to the nature of knowledge and reality, need not be entirely resolved when conducting empirical research (ibid). Rather, a broad familiarity with these issues has helped to clarify my patterns of thinking and rationalise my methodological decisions (Bassey, 1999), preparing me for what Gibson (2017) says are common questions for social research discussion; for instance, 'What is the difference between the knowledge produced in *this* kind of research and *that* kind of research?' (p. 70). Most importantly, positioning this study within a research paradigm and addressing its philosophical underpinnings will enable readers to approach the thesis in the spirit in which it is intended to be read.

The present study seeks to explore a real-world phenomenon according to individual perceptions and interpretations of their experiences, and so metatheoretically appeals to *interpretivism*, or the understanding of social reality through the mindsets of others (Gibson, 2017, p. 62). This philosophical paradigm is adopted across a broad spectrum of social research areas, including philosophy, psychology and sociology, a complementing feature to my own multi-disciplinary perspective addressed above (ibid). Contrasting with a positivist worldview that seeks to explain phenomena objectively (Weber, 2004), interpretivism accepts that there are multiple, *socially-constructed* versions of reality as a result of our experiences and interactions (Lincoln and Guba, 2013). While positivism upholds scientifically-verifiable claims to knowledge presumably impervious to the individual observer's involvement (Weber, 2004), the interpretivist researcher "look[s] for the complexity of views rather than narrow the meanings into a few categories… rely[ing] as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation" (Creswell, 2013, p. 24-5). Characterising this paradigm are four core presumptions on the nature of knowledge and human inquiry, each with their own conjectures and implications for research. My discussion of each relies most heavily on the work of Guba, Lincoln and Denzin, three figures with longstanding and considerable impact in the field of qualitative

research within the interpretivist paradigm, or what they also refer to, with particular emphasis, as *constructivism*[13].

Ontological considerations

Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality, or as Scotland (2012) puts more simply, "*what is*" (p. 9). According to Lincoln and Guba (2013), interpretivism's ontological position is one of *relativism*, or the notion that multiple versions of reality exist, each relative to person and context; the individual, in this sense, cannot be separated from what he or she observes to be real. In the human sciences, concepts such as 'truth' and 'fact' are therefore dependent upon the person or persons involved (ibid, p. 46). Our unique worldview, says Husserl (1970/1936) can be thought of as a consequence of our individual experiences and interactions, or our *life-world* (cited in Weber, 2004, p. v). That is, we subjectively associate meaning to our surrounding entities and negotiate that meaning with other people, leading to a kind of "intersubjective reality" (ibid). As interpretivist researcher, this means that how well I observe and interpret the phenomenon under study is inextricably bound to my individual conceptions of how it *exists.* In assuming a relativist ontology, I have taken *happiness* to be a wholly subjective construct, sensitive to the 'reality' of the individual experiencing it.

Epistemological considerations

Questions pertaining to epistemology aim to explore the relationship between the knower and the knowable (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011), or "*what it means to know*" (Scotland, 2012, p. 9). The interpretivist paradigm assumes a *subjectivist* epistemology; in other words, the inquirer's contribution to knowledge cannot stand independent of his or her own subjective awareness (Lincoln and Guba, 2013). Like reality, knowledge is a relative human construct, never entirely certain and ever evolving (ibid); ontological and epistemological presumptions overlap in this sense (Guba, 1990). "Knowledge is not 'discovered' but rather *created*; it exists only in the time/space framework in which it is generated" (Lincoln and Guba, 2013, p. 40). In essence, says Weber (2004), interpretivist researchers "*intentionally constitute knowledge*", aware of how their individual background, goals and values inform their sense-making processes (p. vi).

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[13] Though there is some debate on what differentiates *interpretivist* and *constructivist* research paradigms (see Lee, 2012 and Maxwell, 2012), it is outside the scope of this thesis to dissect this issue and, therefore, any subtle distinctions are left alone.

This epistemological perspective is especially appropriate for the study of intangible phenomena, like happiness, for, as Lincoln and Guba (2013) suggest, it upholds that empirical study encompasses physical as well as *mental* constructions (p. 56). My own constructions, or mental realisations, of the topic are expected to change, becoming increasingly informed and sophisticated through field experiences and social interactions (ibid). To document this process, a reflexive journal has been kept throughout the study for the purposes of "com[ing] to know, continually, the nature and shape of prior constructions, including most especially those which are held tacitly, and which may be previously unknown to the inquirer" (p. 57). This practice of knowledge construction through deliberate and methodical sense-making is, say Lincoln and Guba, the primary purpose of inquiry for the interpretivist researcher (p. 62). Through what they refer to as processes of *discovery* and *assimilation*, this type of inquiry entails 1) building a generous knowledge base of the phenomenon and its context (e.g. drawing constructions from literature, observations and personal experience) and 2) using new discoveries (e.g. data generated in the field) to incorporate into, or even replace, existing constructions (p. 64, 68). Here, the end result of empirical inquiry is to present an understanding of the phenomenon that stands improved and relevant, but remain, importantly, open to challenge and change (ibid).

Methodological considerations

The ontological and epistemological considerations discussed above largely dictate the researcher's methodological approach, or how he or she will attempt to acquire knowledge (Lincoln and Guba, 2013, p. 37). Within the interpretivist tradition, the broad methodological presupposition is *hermeneutic/dialectic*, or one that perceives meaning-making as a continual and interactive process between researcher and participants via verbal and non-verbal communication (ibid, p. 65). As an interpretative researcher, I focus on a particular context in which people live and interact, collecting qualitative data from my inquiry, including open-ended interviewing and observation, to describe and interpret the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2013, p. 25; Biggam, 2015). As is detailed later in this chapter, my strategy for successful methodological practice rests upon techniques more specifically associated with ethnographic and case study research. Ultimately, says Bassey (1999), "interpretation is a search for deep perspectives on particular events and for theoretical insights… offer[ing] possibilities, but no certainties, as the outcome of future events" (p. 44). Subscribing to this form of methodology enables

me to present a close representation of happiness in secondary schools, offering a coherent and detailed interpretation through the mindsets of teachers and students who actually experience it, or, for that matter, its absence.

Methodological implications for interpretivist researchers involve engagement with, and potential influence over, the data generated and new knowledge produced; it is normal practice to use personal pronouns and a rich, literary style of writing (Creswell, 2013; Bassey, 1999). The researcher, as a kind of participant in the inquiry, becomes an *instrument* for interpreting the data (Weber, 2004, p. vii), presenting findings in a manner which conveys rich contextual detail and layered constructions of the phenomenon (Lincoln and Guba, 2013). It should be made clear that the hermeneutic/dialectic methodology does not *seek to,* nor *can it* achieve total consensus among the individuals involved (ibid, p. 69); in other words, shared constructs that emerge between myself and participants do not imply uniform conceptualisation by each person (ibid, p. 53). Still, this conjecture is a fortunate one: "progress requires that there be differences to explore, challenges to meet, conflicts to resolve, and ambiguities to clarify" (ibid, p. 74).

Axiological considerations

The last set of metatheoretical presumptions relate to questions of axiology, or ones that ask: "Of all the knowledge available to me, which is the most valuable, which is the most truthful, which is the most beautiful, which is the most life-enhancing" (Lincoln and Guba, 2013, p. 37). The axiological presumption of interpretivism, which permeates the other three, is that values exist permanently in all human inquiry; consequently, objectivity may be hoped for but is impossible to achieve (ibid, p. 41). Again, the nature of this study demands that I practice a degree of reflexivity throughout each process, giving the reader insight into how my history, intent and convictions inform what is produced (Creswell, 2013). Recognising that knowledge is inevitably value-bound, I make my subjectivity and its implications for the inquiry explicit, negotiating my individual values with those of participants to construct shared knowledge (Lincoln and Guba, 2013). With the aim of objectivity rejected, the *quality* of my inquiry and claims to knowledge applies to notions of c*redibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability* (ibid, 1985, pp. 289-332). Details for establishing the trustworthiness of this study in these four areas are addressed at a later point in this paper.

This axiological orientation, in addition to shaping the basis on which this study may be evaluated, has considerable bearing on its ethical and political context. In *Case Study Research in Educational Settings,* Bassey (1999, pp. 73-74) identifies three arenas of ethical consideration for researchers: respect for *democracy*, *truth* and *persons*. The inquirer, in a democratic society, has the privilege to exercise certain freedoms (e.g. the freedom to explore topics, challenge ideas and publish new knowledge), provided his or her processes are carried out truthfully and with care for involved persons (ibid). My interpretivist alignment has meant I must work to avoid what Lincoln and Guba (2013) refer to as *malconstructions*, or "constructions which overlook available meanings, facts or evidence, or fail to utilize appropriated sophisticated analytic techniques", by performing my research duties in good conscience and with a focused energy (p. 73). In honouring participants' right to privacy, I recognise what Bassey (1999) indicates is their initial entitlement to the data generated (p. 74). For Lincoln and Guba (1989), participants must have authorisation to withdraw information they consider confidential; lack of control over what is disclosed threatens their dignity and exposes them to harm (p. 236). The present study involves vulnerable persons and so accepts this view, simultaneously acknowledging, as does Jenkins (1980, cited in Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 213), that removal or alteration of data by participants may in turn affect the research produced.

From a political perspective, the value-ridden nature of interpretivism implies some exercise of power; for instance, every construction of knowledge will reflect the specific voice(s) that shaped it (Lincoln and Guba, 2013, p. 76). The interpretivist researcher must therefore exercise their "special obligation" (ibid, p. 78) to advocate for all voices involved in the inquiry, not a privileged few. Herein lies the inquirer's "ultimate moral imperative": he or she must welcome and actively seek out constructions that conflict with or challenge those presently held (ibid). This advocacy for participant voice is in the current study built on a foundation of trust and good rapport during data generation. Though one cannot expect to eliminate hierarchical structures, says Seidman (1998), the researcher should strive for *equity*, or "a balance between means and ends… and a sense of fairness and justice that pervades the relationship between participant and interviewer" (p. 93). The quality of my inquiry, in this respect, has depended on my ability to recognise and subvert, as much as possible, inequalities associated with race, class, sex or age (ibid).

4.4 Research strategy

In keeping with an interpretivist framework, the present study design follows an *inductive* approach to generating new data (Swain, 2017a; Creswell, 2013). This method of reasoning is exploratory in nature, whereby researchers produce general, plausible claims based on real-life experiences and observations (Swain, 2017a, p. 38). More specifically, I adhere to strategies associated with both *ethnography* and *case study* research.

4.4.1 Case studies

According to Yin (2003), a research design should logically link the original questions of the study with the data to be collected and analysed. A popular choice for social science researchers is the case study, or what he describes as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 13). The case study format, say Lincoln and Guba (2013), delivers the most authentic representation of interpretivist inquiry, providing the contextual detail necessary for fostering the reader's "vicarious experience" and understanding (p. 79). Though motives of case studies can vary, this particular research conducts one of *instrumental* intent, meaning it uses evidence gathered from a specific case or cases to explore a larger issue (Stake, 1995). The 'case' in this instance is a group of teachers and students within an identified school setting, the study of whom is for investigating how happiness is achieved. This classification of case study may also be referred to as 'exploratory' (Yin, 2003) or 'theory-seeking' (Bassey, 1999). The researcher, says Stake (1995), embraces and reveals to the reader the unique complexities of the case, emphasising nuances and a level of detail with the purpose of understanding. The aim, he explains, is "not necessarily to map and conquer the world but to sophisticate the beholding of it" (p. 43). Practicing what Parlett and Hamilton (1976, cited in ibid, p. 9) refer to as *progressive focusing*, the inquirer modifies research questions to fit new issues or circumstances that arise, remaining patient, reflective and vigorous in interpretation. Adopting the case study design has allowed me to delve deeply into "real-life situations and test views directly in relation to phenomena as they unfold in practice" (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 235). This *in-depth understanding,* says Creswell (2013), is a defining feature of quality case studies and should be accomplished through multiple sources of data (p. 98).

4.4.2 Ethnography and participant observation

From the interpretivist perspective that knowledge is constructed through social interaction with participants (Lincoln and Guba, 2013), my data generation relies most heavily on the processes of interviewing and observation. Ethnographic strategies, in particular, are utilised as a means to understanding individuals and their context more deeply. Also a branch of the interpretivist research paradigm (Bassey, 1999), ethnography is a methodological approach whereby, according to Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), the researcher:

> participat[es] overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research (p. 1).

There is considerable overlap between ethnography and other categories of research, including case study; both are commonly exploratory in nature, seeking a holistic and in-depth account of others' behaviour and experiences pertinent to some social context (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Regularly employed in the fields of education and schooling (Candappa, 2017; O'Connell, 2017), both approaches most logically rely on qualitative data and modes of inquiry and analysis for emphasising participant perspectives (Creswell, 2013). At its core, ethnography involves "significant development [emphasis removed] of the ordinary modes of making sense of the social world that we all use in our mundane lives, in a manner that is attuned to the specific purposes of producing research knowledge" (ibid, p. 4). More specifically, ethnography relies most heavily on participant observation, "where the observer is not a 'fly on the wall', but becomes a participant in the activity which she or he is studying" (Bassey, 1999, p. 43). According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), these participant observations often come in the form of unstructured and informal conversations (108); this method of 'interviewing', they explain, can be especially beneficial for gaining the trust and respect of participants and for refining research questions in the study's early stages. What is more, while the formal interview setting is important for exploring topics as they pertain to a larger number of individuals, it is, by nature, more artificial, capable of constraining what participants are willing to disclose (O'Connell, 2017, p. 154, citing example of Kvale, 1996). Recognising the separate purposes of each method, I use unstructured interviewing as a means of shifting the "locus of control" from myself to participants (Bernard, 2006, p. 210-15), inviting them towards a broad topic of interest and letting

them speak freely (ibid, p. 216). Details of these exchanges and their distinction from the semi-structured technique I adopt during arranged interviews is addressed at a later point.

To record observations and interviews, the ethnographer uses organised fieldnotes that, albeit always selective, involve thoughtful decision-making for *what*, *how*, and *when* to write down the seen and heard (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 142). Notes and phrases taken on the job, so the speak, are later fleshed out as a way of constructing *thick description*: Geertz's (1973) term for contextual description of social behaviour in a way that elicits meaning for the reader. Though methods of notetaking will depend on the researcher's own style and preference, separate, reflective notes for recording one's thoughts and feelings are additionally essential. This is to account for the ethnographer's role as both 'insider' and 'outsider' to the research setting in what is an inherently reflexive undertaking; he or she is simultaneously connecting with individuals under study while deliberately observing and recording details of their lives (Bernard, 2006, p. 342).

These ethnographic principles for studying groups of people are used to engage with, and draw natural responses from, teachers and students. Understood in this way, this study's design may be perceived as an *ethnographic case study*. This approach, say Fusch, Fusch and Ness (2017), is a practical alternative for student researchers who operate according to time or monetary constraints. They maintain that while the traditional ethnographic study requires considerable immersion in a culture or group and can take years to conclude (Storesund and McMurray, 2009, cited in ibid), a *focused* or *mini-ethnography* design allows for a more concentrated investigation, or one bounded within case study protocol. This permits the researcher to situate questions of 'how', 'what', or 'why' within a defined time and space, reaching data saturation far sooner than classic ethnography might allow (ibid; Fusch, Fusch and Ness, 2017). As a doctoral student for whom these considerations apply, it is my understanding that adopting the ethnographic 'hallmark' of participant observation (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) enriches what is more specifically a case study design, adding a valuable dimension to the research.

4.4.3 Researcher roles and responsibilities

To produce a successful study, I have needed to practice specific skills associated with case study research. According to Yin (2003), the case study investigator should

demonstrate: 1) the ability to ask and interpret appropriate questions, 2) good listening skills, 3) adaptability and flexibility, 4) a firm understanding of the topics under investigation, and 5) non-bias, remaining impartial and responsive in gathering data (p. 59). The last of these items, however, may be substituted for *mitigated bias* (Chenail, 2011) as it is neither possible nor expected, from an interpretivist perspective, to remove all bias from inquiry (Fusch, Fusch and Ness, 2017). My personal lens and biographical experience affect significantly how data are gathered, described and interpreted, with the *transparency* of my subjectivity being especially important. Here the interaction between researcher and phenomenon is championed, my purpose being, according to Stake (1995), to "liberate the reader from simplistic views of illusion… [acting as] agent of new interpretation, new knowledge" (p. 99). He further explains that one implication for my position as case study researcher is that I, in effect, serve the role of *teacher* (p. 91). The case study, Stake suggests, should be presented in a way that encourages my audience to engage with the material, forming their own generalisations and questioning its claims to knowledge. My research is therefore driven in part by a kind of dedication to the reader and what I think he or she needs to understand about the topic to make educated judgements.

4.4.4 Style and presentation

The idea in writing a good case study, says Flyvbjerg (2006), is not to summarise findings, but to create an experience akin to "virtual reality", whereby the reader enters and explores the world constructed by the individuals involved (p. 238). Case studies "should be read as narratives in their entirety" (ibid, p. 240), offering meaning to the lived experiences and perspectives of participants while also providing clues as to what the future might entail (Mattingly, 1991, p. 237). As researcher, this means I attempt, in drawing attention to specific theories or specialisations, to leave ample opportunity for readers representing different disciplines to bring a diverse range of conclusions and interpretations to the topic (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 238). My end account of happiness in schools is therefore presented in a way that invites different responses from different people, *open to interpretation* and, by virtue of its interpretivist framework, *guided by my own interactions with the subject.*

4.4.5 Design limitations

The case study, as with any research strategy, must be recognised in relation to its limitations and challenges. As a form of qualitative inquiry, case studies have a reputation for being labour intensive and slow to progress (Stake, 1995, p. 45). Ethnographic methods in particular, including embeddedness and participant observation in the field, require a substantial amount of mental and physical investment and thus may become tiresome for the researcher, even emotionally (O'Connell, 2017, p. 167). Though the present case study integrates these ethnographic tools into its design, it still primarily depends on formal interview data and thus, as Yin (2003, p. 11) suggests, is less likely to be affected by these time demands.

A second and regularly debated criticism of case study research arises from the notion of *generalisability* (Yin, 2003, p. 10). That is, the case study's small population size casts doubt on whether its results can be applied to a wider group or context, threatening its scientific value (ibid). This particular bias, says Flyvbjerg (2006), is a common misunderstanding about case study research. Knowledge, he explains, can be gained and accumulated in a multitude of ways, with formal generalisation only one preferable route (p. 227); "*the force of example*'", he concludes, "*is underestimated*" (p. 228). The case study's in-depth approach, albeit not appropriate for all research purposes, may help to falsify an unjustified claim that is widely believed to be true, and thus appeals to the notion of *falsification* rather than generalisation (ibid drawing on Popper, 1959). Again, interpretivist studies, like this one, are intended to be delivered in a way that is transferable and relatable; how their findings might be applied to other contexts are matters for readers themselves to decide (Lincoln and Guba, 2013).

Lastly, it is a common concern that the case study lacks a necessary rigour and therefore its results may not be trusted (Yin, 2003). For instance, because they allow for a greater degree of researcher judgement, case studies are potentially problematic if they merely confirm, rather than challenge, the inquirer's preconceived notions (Flyvbjerg, 2006). As discussed previously, my capacity as interpretivist researcher has meant I must practice ongoing reflexivity and transparency; reflexivity in this context encompasses both my individual awareness and reflections of the research process, as well as the effect my presence as researcher has on the knowledge produced. To help account for these matters, I have used Lincoln and Guba's (2013) criteria for a designing a credible and dependable

interpretivist case study, the details of which are provided at a later point in this chapter. It is important to remember that, in this kind of qualitative inquiry, "subjectivity is not seen as a failing needing to be eliminated but as an essential element of understanding" (Stake, 1995, p. 45).

Limitations acknowledged, it is important to recognise the case study's level of sophistication and recognition among the research community when carried out at its best. The design's close proximity to reality and learning process through human interaction, says Flyvbjerg (2006), means it may contribute to the "most advanced form of understanding" on the part of the researcher, with his or her expertise deriving from context-specific knowledge (p. 236). While no single research strategy is in all instances superior, say Brannen and O'Connell (2015, cited in O'Connell, 2017, p. 168), that which is chosen should be appropriately suited to answer the study's questions and to fulfil its purpose. For the sake of generating rich data and knowledge construction, as in this particular study, it is sometimes most appropriate "to keep our eyes open and look carefully at individual cases – not in the hope of proving anything, but rather in the hope of learning something!" (Hans Eysenck, 1976, p. 9). In this study of happiness in schools, *learning* is indeed the primary motivation, the success of which has depended on the methods described below.

4.5 Methods of data generation and analysis

This study employs interview and observation procedures for collecting qualitative data, designed to answer questions pertaining to participants' experiences and perspectives, as well as for investigating complex topics in great depth. These methods of inquiry are especially appropriate, as I am attempting to make sense of an abstract, intangible phenomenon through multiple constructed meanings of individuals (Biggam, 2015, p. 162). Through use of qualitative data, say Halquist and Musanti (2010) "it is possible to reveal the often invisible but no less real complexities of social structures and venues for knowing human and social life more fully" (p. 449). These tactics are useful for making inquiries and interpretations when rich description, as opposed to quantities or measurements, is the concern of the researcher (Stake, 1995). Consistent with the interpretivist worldview that meaning is socially and subjectively constructed (Lincoln and Guba, 2013), techniques for generating qualitative data have enabled me to explore,

describe and interpret how happiness is achieved in secondary schools via student and teacher insight and behaviour.

4.5.1 Empirical setting

The first task in designing a case study is to identify a case bounded by time and place (Creswell, 2013, p. 98). Sensitive to these parameters, I originally set out to conduct what Stake (1995) refers to as a *collective case study* (p. 4) involving two secondary schools. In accordance with my research objectives, these schools were meant to vary as much as possible in terms of socio-economic and ethnic intake, while remaining similar in size, rating and classification; this was to draw comparisons on the basis of their student body demographics. For reasons discussed below, the possibility of two sites became improbable and one site was ultimately chosen. Still, as this case study is instrumental in understanding the larger issue of achieving happiness and is not intended for generalisation, its typicality and attributes are not my highest priority (Stake, 1995, p. 4). Practical considerations, therefore, were given to the exact location and length of the study, with a London state school serving as the empirical setting. Per Stake's (ibid) recommendations, the strongest decisive factor in selecting this case was where I was likely to learn and observe best; the ideal case would allow generous access and time for fieldwork, display hospitability to my inquiry and involve individuals pleased to participate.

Gaining access to schools

Permission to work on these sites was sought via gatekeepers, or individuals with whom one negotiates access (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 49). I began first with contacts made through my involvement with UCL's KS3 Student Research Competition[14], whereby a relationship and soft research agreement with participating schools was established. Next, I reached out to school employees who granted me visitation during my MA research, as well as colleagues who teach or have taught in London schools. Thirdly, I spoke to researchers in similar fields with whom I became acquainted through my job as Research Impact Evidence Assistant with the IoE Department of Leadership and Learning and through the IoE Mental Health, Well-Being and Education Research group to which I

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[14] This partnership occurred throughout the 2017-18 academic year and entailed connecting postgraduate mentors with London schools to facilitate a unique learning experience for pupils in developing their research-related competencies.

belonged. Finally, in the event these individuals were unable to guarantee access, I began contacting headteachers directly. As a means to securing a site for the study, I volunteered my time in the form of tutorials or other related teaching assistance to reciprocate the school for its cooperation. My hope and intention were to orchestrate a scenario that benefited all parties.

In total, sixteen schools were contacted. Unfortunately, many school personnel either outright declined or, after repeated efforts to reach via email and telephone, failed to respond. After nearly three months of searching, two schools agreed to take part. Though they would have made for excellent comparative cases in terms of pupils' socio-economic characteristics, one school withdrew their participation shortly before fieldwork was scheduled to begin; this was in response to a student's sudden suicide, the aftermath of which the administration felt would conflict with an on-site study on happiness. I of course respected their decision and, while they offered to re-consider for the 2019-2020 school year, it was important that I make adjustments and carry on with my fieldwork during its designated timeframe. At the time, this seemed an unfortunate setback; in retrospect, limiting this case study to one site allowed me to adopt a more flexible schedule, devoting more time and energy to data generation while building a likely better understanding of both the context and participants.

School information

The school, hereinafter referred to as the Academy, is a secondary comprehensive school with sixth form serving the area of northwest London. Opening in 2012, the school reached its capacity of 1150 students in 2017. It adheres to a non-selective admissions policy, welcoming mixed genders between the ages of 11 and 18. The school operates under co-principalship and is separated by five Houses, to which all year groups, including sixth form, and staff are assigned. These House categories exist primarily for tutorial and mentorship purposes and are a hallmark of the school; each is allocated its own wing of the building with separate workspaces and canteens. Students meet with members of their House each day as part of attending to their course schedules. A second feature for encouraging collaboration is the use of Learning Sets. The school, relying on a range of information such as ability and social characteristics, groups pupils together into small sets to which they will belong from Year 7 to Year 11. The intention is that these

groups sit together in most classes and support and challenge one another throughout the entirety of their secondary education.

The Academy specialises in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) and emphasises a Connected Curriculum as part of its ethos to help children make sense of their learning and to create meaning in their own lives. Pupils are required at certain points in the school term to draw together themes, or Big Ideas, between taught subject matters, a practice modelled after universities' Grand Challenges for cross-disciplinary research. By way of promoting the Connected Curriculum and the Academy's greater vision of educating the child as a whole, Self-Directed Learning (SDL) courses are offered at the end of designated school days. The SDL programme comprises of a wide range of activities, both academic and recreational, for pupils to choose from according to their individual interests. These include, for instance: Debate, Table Tennis, Comedy Club, Pottery, Russian, and Acapella. Students are monitored for their learner attributes, in addition to assessment scores, as a way of tracking their overall progress and development. Finally, as an advantage of the Academy's sponsorship status, students are invited to attend seminars, lectures, and summer school events coordinated by the sponsor university's staff, as well as special permission to access its library and resource centres.

The school building is modern and new, designed with the founders' progressive ideas for a learning community and its operation in mind. Large windows seal in most of the school, allowing natural light to pour in and creating spaces that feel fresh and lively. The layout is such that the school building encompasses a two-story concrete outdoor area with tables and basketball courts for students to enjoy during lunch and breaktimes. Though it lacks any green space, this area for social and recreational use is considerably large and open, with access from many parts of the school. External open-air walkways surround the building on each of the six floors and are used for students to travel in-between classes. This structure is meant to keep traffic from interrupting the school's Superstudios, large rooms with tables, chairs, and whiteboards clustered in groups to accommodate multiple, simultaneously conducted classes. There are no walls or fixed barriers to mark where items or people must be placed, but rather change according to the needs of each particular group. Though the school also makes use of more traditional classroom spaces, these studios are used more often. Private classrooms border the studios with large glass windows, creating very visibly open floors. From most locations,

in fact, one can observe multiple individuals in multiple classes. The school is equipped with impressive science and engineering labs, grand theatre halls, a large in-door gymnasium, a dance studio and a bright semi-circular library.

The Academy is situated within a multi-cultural community, therefore attracting students from a range of ethnic heritage and background. According to the last school inspection by Ofsted (2016), 9 out of 10 pupils belong to non-British ethnic groups. Many students I spoke with were either born in the UK or came to the country at a very young age with parents who were attracted to Britain's work and educational opportunities. Ofsted's report also specifies that the proportion of students who are labelled as socio-economically disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium is above the national average, with nearly 40% currently eligible for free school meals. Students identified as having special educational needs also exceeds the average percentage (ibid). Though a large population of the Academy's students practice Islam in their private lives, the school itself remains non-religious in affiliation and encourages tolerance for all groups irrespective of cultural identity, gender or sexual orientation.

The 2016 Ofsted inspection report ranks the Academy in terms of overall effectiveness as 'good', this result an advancement from its 2014 classification of 'requires improvement'. In its key findings, Ofsted praises the school for its high expectations, vigorous assessment system, supportive governing body, academic opportunities and exposure, comprehensive curriculum design, commitment to teaching and learning, safeguarding procedures and steady progression of pupils. There were two key areas of prescribed improvement in order for the Academy to obtain what the organisation deems to be an 'outstanding' school status: 1) clear and consistent teacher feedback and 2) effective assessments for its highest achieving students.

4.5.2 Sampling of participants

As the results of this study are not meant to be statistically generalised to a wider community, convenience sampling was appropriate and therefore employed in selecting participants (Biggam, 2015, p. 165). In total, six teachers and 12 students were chosen and each of whom has been assigned a pseudonym to preserve their anonymity. In an effort to diversify data sources, teacher participants ranged as much as possible according to taught subject area, age, years of experience and teaching philosophy. These

individuals ultimately comprised of three men, Harry, Nate and Don, and three women, Cynthia, Kim and Frieda, who taught between them the topics of geography, economics, Spanish, English and sociology. Student participants were originally selected from Years 7, 9, 10, and 12. The purpose of focusing on these year groups was to capture a broad range of the secondary school experience and how students' perspectives develop over its course; for instance, attitudes towards the transition into GCSEs. Years 11 and 13 were specifically omitted after discussions with my supervisors and school staff concerning these groups' unique schedules and workloads. However, as the study progressed, two Year 11 students expressed interest in the project and, with the support of their teachers, were able to contribute.

Each teacher was asked to help identify two of their own students for participation, the criteria for whom was that they 1) represent different genders and ethnicities, 2) possess few exceptional learning or social characteristics and 3) were able to easily articulate themselves. Though it is true that allowing teachers to assist in the selection of student participants runs the risk of only involving children with whom they get along, it was more important for the purposes of this study that the student sample was demographically diverse, but academically and socially similar. This is because student and teacher responses are compared and analysed holistically based on their experiences and perspectives in general, not on their specific relationship with any one person. Furthermore, pupils' learning and social qualities are matters of which I myself was not familiar. For this I needed to rely on the teachers' guidance, though the final decision was ultimately my own and the result of my best judgement.

Initially, finding the desired number of students who could commit to participation was a challenging task. This was especially true of Years 9 and 10, groups from which six children were first identified but either changed their minds or could not obtain parental permission. As part of a contingency plan, I sought extra students from Year 12, a group from which several pupils were reliable and keen to take part. Fortunately, student participants were eventually identified for Years 9 and 10, bringing the total number of student participants to 12. These individuals ranged as much as possible according to class and ethnicity as a way of emphasising multiple student experiences and perspectives. This kind of diversity is necessary in a study that foregrounds the pupil voice, suggests Reay (2006), as demographic factors in part determine the ways in which

students are included, both academically and socially, in school (p. 172). Again, though the results of this study are not intended to represent statistically a larger student population, it was important in my investigation that I consult to the best of my ability a variety of views, feelings, desires and attitudes. The breakdown of participants was as follows:

Table 1: Descriptive characteristics of participants in the sample.

	Name	Gender	Subject / Year	Ethnicity
Teachers	Harry	M	Economics	White British
	Nate	M	Geography	White British
	Don	M	Geography	White British
	Cynthia	F	English	White British
	Kim	F	Sociology	White British
	Frieda	F	Spanish	Black British
Students	Tyler	M	7	White British
	Patricia	F	7	White Kosovan
	David	M	9	White British
	Olivia	F	9	White British
	Rajiv	M	10	South Asian Indian
	Hannah	F	10	White German
	Adam	M	11	White British
	Natalie	F	11	White Bosnian
	Karim	M	12	White Iranian
	Michael	M	12	White British
	Louisa	F	12	White British
	Sarah	F	12	Black Ghanaian

4.5.3 Data generation

Fieldwork for this study took place during the Spring and Summer school terms of 2019. Observation and interview schedules ran parallel and were dependent upon the participants' preferences and availability. Before physically visiting the school, I spoke on the phone with one of the co-principals concerning my objectives, the expected length

of the study, security access, who I would be working with and the spaces I would require to conduct interviews. After this conversation, I met in person with the gatekeeper, who provided key information about the school along with a tour of its facilities and introductions to staff members including the campus security guard, department Heads, members of the administrative team, and the school librarians. I was encouraged to ask for help or resources when necessary and to come and go according to my research needs.

Observational data

Beginning with a "quiet entry" onto the site, I became steadily and properly "acquainted with the people, the spaces, the schedules, and the problems of the case" (Stake, 1995, p. 59). These initial *nonparticipant* observations were conducted over the course of two weeks as a means of gathering valuable background information prior to actual data generation. The idea was to record student and teacher behaviour occurring among the usual settings of school life, including classrooms, outdoor spaces, libraries and lunch canteens; observing individuals as they behaved naturally gave me a sense of how that specific school community functions and interacts [see Appendix H]. Finally, this practice assisted my describing the context in rich detail, an element necessary "to develop *vicarious experiences* for the reader, to give them a sense of 'being there'" (Stake, 1995, p. 63).

Once participants were identified and introductions were made, I conducted a series of more extensive *participant* observations occurring before, during and after the interview schedule described below. The majority of these took place in classrooms of a diverse range, spanning all year groups and subjects including geography, economics, sociology, English, Spanish, art, computer science, maths, government and politics and psychology. I visited each teacher participant during a lesson of their choosing and accompanied each student participant to a class they themselves decided would be valuable to understanding pupil happiness. It is worth noting here that, while the majority of students opted for a class they generally favoured, one female pupil specifically requested that I attend the one she deemed the "unhappiest", the details of which were especially revealing and are addressed later. These types of observations entailed a degree of engagement on my part, participating alongside students and teachers in classroom and other typical school activities (Spradley, 1980); for example, I was invited during a sociology lesson to brainstorm with students some of the ethical considerations involved during research with

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human participants. One principal area of focus was on the relationship between the two groups, observing, for instance, how students responded to teacher language and behaviour. I specifically attended to the different types of learning activities and schooling practices during which happiness appeared or did not appear to manifest in children. Throughout these observations, I used informal conversations, or what Burgess (1984) refers to as "conversations with a purpose" (p.102), to generate useful data; for instance, these sometimes took the form of brief encounters with students in the schoolyard or in-depth discussions with teachers after a classroom visit. Listening to participants and asking questions about their schooling experiences in real time complemented and refined questions posed during more formal interviews, helping to build positive relationships with participants and facilitate open and candid dialogue. Finally, these types of interactions were useful for exploring variances between individuals' normative speak and literal practice, or what they *say* they do and what they *actually* do (O'Connell, 2017, p. 166-7, on Miller in Baker and Edwards, 2012, p. 31 and Bourdieu, 1977).

Interview data

One-to-one interviews with participants took place lasting about one hour each, but the duration being dependent upon my own analytical judgement so as to not sacrifice the level of detail presented in the study. With the exception of Year 11 students who were interviewed once as a result of their GCSE course load, each student was interviewed three times in total, with each interview scheduled roughly two weeks apart. This timing was to account for the nature of working with people, whose enthusiasm and energy levels, for example, may fluctuate depending on the day. My original plan for the second round consisted of pairing students of the same Year together for a joint interview. The coupling of student participants was meant to encourage more relaxed and forthcoming responses than they might offer individually. Due to some of the challenges described in the next section, this idea was soon abandoned; however, I found that students much preferred to meet privately in spaces where they could speak freely without a third party present. In the likelihood that new questions or topics for discussion would arise from student interviews, one-time teacher interviews were scheduled *after* the second round with children. Data generated from teachers likewise informed my questioning during the third and final meeting with pupils.

The precise date, location and time scheduled for interviews was arranged as much as possible according to the person and his or her needs. The more significant factor was the kind of *environment*; it needed to be a place participants found natural and comfortable with minimal distractions. Though I anticipated meeting teachers in their offices and students in such places as the courtyard or library, both groups took to liking the school's private conference rooms, which were therefore reserved for the majority of interviews. Bassey (1999) notes that interviews, as with observations, inevitably involve a degree of formality; that is, my presence was likely to influence participants' behaviour and responses in some fashion (p. 81). These methods of data generation therefore demanded that I practice certain interpersonal skills, "relating sensitively to the respondent" and "putting the actors at their ease" (ibid, p. 82). One such example was with a student who, while being interviewed in the library, requested to move to another location where she wouldn't be at risk of being heard by passers-by. Also, on a couple of occasions, pupils arrived at the interview visibly distracted and, when asked how their day was going, admitted they had school-related duties they were anxious to address. In these cases, interviews were rearranged, and students were encouraged to attend to their assignments.
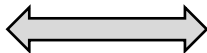
In keeping with Seidman's (1998) recommendations for interviewing in education research, a semi-structured approach was used to encourage in-depth participant reflection and reconstruction of experience while allowing myself room to explore new ideas within the focus of the study (p. 13). Open-ended questions, modified to suit each group of participants, included variations of the following [see Appendices C and D]:

- What does the term *happiness* mean to you?
- What does a 'happy' child look like? What are his/her characteristics?
- How is happiness relevant to schooling, if at all?
- What, to you, is the relationship between happiness and success?
- What do children need to feel happy in school?
- How does the schooling environment support student happiness? How does it not?
- How do students cope with feelings of *un*happiness in school?
- What elements of average teenage life do you think affect pupil happiness?
- What aspects about a student's self-identity (e.g. beliefs or background) affect his/her happiness in school?
- To what extent does schooling empower students to pursue happiness, both now and in their later lives?
- Is there a disparity between what you think *ought* to be occurring and what is *actually* occurring in schools?
- How do you envision a school where student happiness is targeted and regularly achieved? To what degree is this school realistic, or even existing?

To encourage thoughtful and candid responses, small preliminary tasks were requested of participants prior to interviews. Teachers were encouraged to keep a journal recording, for instance, moments they felt they were or were not witnessing student happiness in their classrooms. Similarly, students were asked to partake in a self-reflection activity [see Appendix E]. This entailed highlighting words from a list of adjectives, including 'confident', 'nervous', 'ordinary' and 'bored', that appealed to them either *most* of the time or *some* of the time in school. These words were intended to represent a broad range of feelings and attitudes and, additionally, blank spaces were provided for students to write in their own. The idea here was to generate thinking about their emotions in relation to schooling so they would feel more prepared and engaged with the interview process. I organised for these activities to be completed during my initial observation schedule, so as to give participants plenty of time before interviews began.

During the interviews, participants were invited to tell a story as a way of bringing the above questions and associated topics to life. This entailed, for instance, recalling a particular occasion when something occurred or imagining a new situation. I made comments such as: "Tell me about a time when…" or "Imagine you are responsible for [an issue] in your school/class. What do you do?". Student interviewees were also asked to evaluate a series of statements and indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed [see Appendix F]. For example: "When at school, I feel good about myself", "My teachers understand my emotions" and "School should be a place where students are happy". The purpose of this activity was to draw out students' thoughts and judgements. Students were prompted to explain their choices and, if they wished, to create their own statements. Finally, pupil participants were encouraged to either artistically illustrate their ideas and explanations for a happy school or to write an imaginary diary entry about what a day would entail at said school [see Appendix G]. This activity allowed students to express themselves creatively and was helpful in my understanding their desires and priorities. All student exercises were collected and used as part of the dataset and in conjunction with transcribed audio recordings during data analysis. The following table helps to illustrate the data generation process and timeline of events:

Table 2: Data generation activities and timeline.

Spring and Summer 2019		FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE
Observations (each lasting one hour)	Initial non-participant observations throughout school: **9**	⟺				
	Participant observations with each student and teacher in classrooms: **18**		⟸――――――――――――――⟹			
Interviews (each lasting one hour)	1st round with students paired with 'My emotions' activity (Appendix E): **12**	⟸――⟹				
	2nd round with students paired with 'Agree or disagree' activity (Appendix G): **10**		⟸――⟹			
	3rd round with students paired with 'Imagine a school' activity (Appendix H): **10**				⟸――⟹	
	Teacher interviews: **6**			⟸――⟹		

Challenges to data generation

As to be expected with any large-scale research project, there were challenges specific to the data generation process. In addition to establishing a site for the study and identifying participants, issues of which I have already addressed, there were aspects of working in a school environment that, understandably, required much persistence and cooperation on my part. In arranging interviews with students, for instance, I found that many failed to show up to our meetings because they had either forgotten or had become involved in other school activities; for example, they had gone on a class field trip or were attending a tutorial session. Though I sent reminders to their school email addresses, I found it most

effective to physically locate pupils either the day before, or day of, the planned interview. While this involved a good deal of time and energy, doing so was necessary in keeping the proposed interview schedule.

Secondly, devising a time and place for interviews required diligent organizing. When designing the study, I had presumed that students would be available to meet either before or after school, in addition to whichever class or break periods suited them throughout the day. Once I began to organize individual interviews, however, I learnt that pupils began their school days quite early and, in many cases, attended to after-school jobs and other obligations before carving out time for homework; for these reasons, students were unavailable outside of school hours. This meant I could see them during one of two designated tutorial windows of 50 minutes each day, limiting the number of interviews I could accomplish in a single visit to two. For the location of the interviews, I was given access to a private room, on the condition that it was not already occupied by senior members of staff. There would be, I was told, no way to guarantee this room's availability, and to use the school library if necessary. Unfortunately, of the three interviews I was able to begin in the room, two were interrupted and forced to relocate, this in part disrupting the course of the conservation. While the school librarians welcomed me to use their space, there were random gatherings and passers-by which made this option both unpredictable and noisier than ideal. I eventually gained permission to reserve a small conference room in the school's administration office, that, though it was regularly booked, provided a quiet place for conversation without risk of disruption. While the reasons above compelled me to extend the length of time originally allocated to fieldwork, I was ultimately very pleased with the outcome and, in retrospect, am glad to have painstakingly negotiated time and place so as to best elicit the kind of rich data I was after.

Finally, my original plan to conduct two focus groups at the end of the data collection period, one with pupils and one with teachers, was forfeited. These gatherings were intended, in addition to recognising individuals for their participation, to discuss some of my findings and preliminary analysis. Though several attempts were made to organise these meetings, accommodating participants' variant timetables, compounded with end-of-year commitments and testing schedules, proved especially difficult and rendered this plan not possible. However, anticipating this issue, I located and extended my

appreciation personally to each participant, and addressed with them one-to-one during our last interview my growing impressions of the data.

4.5.4 Data recording and organisation

Thorough field notes were kept as a means of recording observations, a practice for carefully and self-consciously selecting events and interactions I perceived as most relevant to the study (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 142). These notes included, for example, descriptions of individuals' behaviour and places within the school, paired with my own questions and reflections. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed onto digital word documents. I found the process of self-transcribing, though tedious and time-consuming, to be a particularly useful exercise for engaging with the data. Listening repeatedly to these conversations, for instance, led me to appreciate nuances in participants' language and capture their tone of voice in ways that reading text does not always allow. Finally, digital copies of observation notes and interview transcriptions were uploaded to Atlas.ti, a software programme for storing, organising and analysing qualitative data. All material was password-protected and remained secured on my personal computer.

4.5.5 Data analysis

To analyse the data, I continually revisited this study's overarching research question: *What do the narrated experiences and perspectives of students and teachers reveal about achieving happiness in secondary school?* I maintained this curiosity while consulting Miles, Huberman and Saldaña's (2020) cycles of inductive coding and pattern development, as well as their analytic methods for generating meaning. When possible, I followed their recommendation to begin initial analysis concurrently while collecting new data to encourage "an ongoing, lively enterprise that contributes to the energizing process of field work" (p. 62). That is, I alternated between evaluating existing data and reflecting on how my research methods were producing material most valuable for this study's learning objectives. To represent the multiple and rich dimensions of the topic, the pieces of raw data generated were not evaluated in isolation, but in a holistic manner (Biggam, 2015, p. 192). Cross-examination of transcribed interviews, participant worksheets and field notes allowed for relevant comparisons to be drawn, and was accomplished using inductive and open-coding strategies. For qualitative inquiry of this kind, a 'code' may

refer to researcher-generated words or descriptions which capture the essence of, or attribute meaning to, a portion of the data (Saldaña, 2016). The practice of coding was useful for condensing and organising the dense amounts of data, from which I could then group according to similar traits (e.g., evoked questions or concepts) (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, 2020). For illustration, the figure below displays a fragment of my observational field notes (these while visiting a sociology lesson) and corresponding codes:

All students (a smaller than average group) arrive marginally late to class. [1]Each choose to sit towards the back of the room, very quiet and appearing tired and/or bored. Teacher introduces me and offers a few minutes for questions (this is the first instance of this in any classroom I have visited). [2]Today's lesson has a single objective: test improvement (this seems rather dull for an entire period lasting one hour and 50 minutes). [3]The teacher remarks that 'things are about to get very real' in stressing that exam pressure is building, and academic expectations are rising. [4]No group or collaborative work is allowed; students are instructed to work silently and left to their own devices without much structure or direction (but this is not necessarily autonomy). [5]Students are clearly disengaged and gossiping quietly amongst themselves just out of earshot. They are seemingly well-behaved but disinterested in the task at hand. Students only appear to be focused on their exam revisions when the teacher comes around to 'check on' them. She is unsatisfied with their progress.	[1]Pupil attitude/behaviour/interest level changes according to teacher/environment [2]Intense focus on examinations [3]Adult language lacks enthusiasm, encouragement [4]Minimal peer interaction facilitated [5]Cycles of boredom, poor behaviour and frustration

Figure 2: Example of coding technique.

These descriptive codes were assigned to other related pieces of data, and evolved accordingly over the analysis process. Categories for coding were not deduced in advance, but I endeavoured to allow the data to speak for itself, metaphorically (Creswell, 2013, p. 45, 86). My prior engagement with the literature surrounding happiness has undoubtedly influenced my interpretation of the data, however, and so use of inductive reasoning here does not imply absence of researcher judgement. From an epistemological standpoint, this element of researcher subjectivity is expected of interpretative researchers

and their intentional construction of new knowledge (Weber, 2004; Lincoln and Guba, 2013).

Through conducting careful, iterative coding analysis of the material, I identified the greater themes that emerged: *connection and community*, *language and behaviour* and *recognition and worth*. Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2020) refer to this stage as 'pattern coding', or when codes are clustered together to unveil a broader 'picture' of the data. I share their sentiment on Stake's (1995) remark that "good research is not about good methods as much as it is about good thinking" (p. 19). This "good thinking" is demonstrated by establishing thematic patterns which faithfully represent the data and advance knowledge and understanding of the topic. In so doing, I further deconstructed the three central themes into twelve subthemes, each comprising of individual codes for representing pieces of raw data. These ideas and phrases were arranged according to a thematic chart (below) to aid my shaping and portrayal of said themes. Using the patterns that arose during this stage of the research, I was able to make substantiated assertions about achieving happiness in secondary schools.

Table 3: Thematic analysis chart with data codes.

Theme 1: Connection and community	Theme 2: Language and behaviour	Theme 3: Recognition and worth
1. *People over place* - Relationships and attitudes lie at the forefront - In terms of school facilities and design, people want basic things (e.g., faculty room to share coffee with colleagues, a quiet library, a clean mess, peaceful areas for concentration, interactive classrooms, comfortable uniform, shorter lessons, safety and security) - 'Progressive' features such as learning sets and open classrooms can cause more distress than good - School 'image' not always the reality - Sometimes the simpler, the better - The criticality of friendship - Need happy staff to have happy children, more than just knowledgeable - Passionate teachers - Lesson preferences tied mostly to teacher - Sharing personal aspects about one's life as a way of connecting with pupils, influencing their life choices - The benefits of 'checking in' with students - Longstanding relationships	**5. *Decoding discipline*** - Discipline inconsistent and does not address underlying issue - Pupils believe disruptive students are unhappy - Hurtful behaviour not met aggressively enough, tolerated to an astonishing degree - Sometimes only the poorly behaved students receive attention, while others, though well-behaved, are entirely tuned out - Disruption to engagement/flow (and being productive is key to happiness) - Considering the context of the behaviour - Chaos of 'open classrooms' - Time is 'wasted' - Perceived influence of Islamic upbringing - Rewards and punishments in equal measure - Clear, consistent policy regarding cause and consequence - Students need boundaries, ties with security and respect for teacher - Vicious cycle of boredom, bad behaviour, frustration for all - Detention not always productive	**9. *Seen, heard and understood*** - Teachers/staff do not always engage with students individually or consider seriously their opinion - Teachers sometimes misread their students - Pupils make wrongful assumptions about each other (which sometimes turn into lessons in empathy) - Students feel lack of control in school - Respect for varying needs and learning styles - Listening to and supporting students in their decisions - Some pupils don't think teachers care or are aware of their emotions - Some kids who are unhappy don't feel they can speak up - Pupils: some conversation topics (e.g. on social media, bullying) ought to be student-led - Sense of empowerment (teachers want this, too) - Opportunities for political and social expression (the school's attempts to encourage this mostly focus on home/online life) - Pupils want to be able to change their minds and evolve

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- Trust - A department's sense of community inspires students to pursue topics		
2. Outside issues, inside concerns - On happiness, pupils focus mostly on interactions within school (e.g., being disrespected, misunderstood or under-valued); teachers speak more of home life/support and social media/technology and way of the world - Teachers concerned pupils behave as kinds of robots; apathetic, no eye contact or clear communication skills, indifference to major world events, lack of passion - For some, school can be a haven from outside life - Concerns over knife crime/gang activity for young boys - Students express more mature understanding of and control over social media than adults give them credit	**6. Setting the tone** - Constant reminders of upcoming exams bring stress, annoyance - Use of threatening language not motivational - Focus so strong on delivering content, teachers miss opportunities to connect material to real life (e.g., my visit to class studying sociological research) - Keeping perspective - Pupil attitude/behaviour/interest level changes according to teacher/environment - Understanding *when*, *how* and *who* you are teaching - Lack of enthusiasm, encouragement - Intense stress and pressure associated with GCSEs (build-up worse than the actual process) - Poor attitudes by teachers who are meant to be 'role models' stick with and are believed by pupils - Fear is not a motivator; happiness is - Approaching failure from a difference perspective - Enjoyment leads to learning - Emotions are contagious; negativity creates distraction and positivity enhances concentration and motivation - Teachers as role models, leaders - Children adopt cynicism around them - Making positivity more visible - Instilling a culture of respect in the classroom - Perfection does not exist; "we're all human beings out here" - "Pause GSCE, where is respect?" - Adults are stressed - 'People like to complain'; 'They like to say they're miserable' - Harbouring negativity creates certain atmosphere	**10. The person behind the score** - Want to be treated as individuals re: their interests, abilities, reputation, actions, character - Resentment for being represented on paper only - Yearning for dedication, participation, respect, kindness, character to be recognised and valued by school - "Doing good" a source of happiness - Being made to feel there is 'one route' in life - Rewarding the *means*, not just the *end* (i.e., judging students based on progression and improvement rather than single test score) - Students do not dismiss exams entirely, but see that they are overhyped - Pupils need to understand their worth as a human being, to be cared for - Teachers hold preconceptions about ethnic groups and performance based on generalised statistics, which is damaging to pupil - The danger of generalising - Proposed interview/entrance exam to assess person's character - Being realistic about a child's future relative to their needs/desires - Seeing tests as a 'tool', not 'benchmark' - Intelligence does not always align with attitude - Students need practical skills/knowledge for living adult life
3. Health and well-being - School atmosphere has greater influence over well-being than perceived benefits of 'well-being lessons' - Prioritisation of mental health; proper support channels should be 'accessible and accepted' - Happiness as a responsibility of the school - PHSE not taken seriously (but also not orchestrated seriously), new model seen as counter-intuitive - Mindfulness lessons/assemblies entail 'quiet time', are unsuccessful or inspiring - Well-being as mantra embedded throughout school, though properly run course would help give the subject gravitas - Struggle to get well-being on the timetable - Resilience training and pupil transformation	**7. Fairness and communication** - Perceived double standards (e.g., being prepared in class) - Teacher biases and favouritism - Pupils press teachers for explanations that are dismissed or labelled as 'complaining' - Call for classroom discussion - Tradition for tradition's sake? Challenging the norm - Pupils want to be included in their own education, contribute to the curriculum - Student representation and leadership - Perceived justice is critical - Children do not want to be subject to black and white judgements - Being trusted and treated as young adult - Student ideas/suggestions made through Head Boy and Head Girl not effective	**11. Belonging and acceptance** - Not the same as popularity - Being content with yourself, less comparison - Being genuine, not doing things to be 'liked' - Navigating social circles is difficult; kids can judge others' appearances or things one cannot control - Unhappiness stems from not 'fitting in' (e.g., in terms of beliefs, sexual orientation, or academic skill set) - Students are more alike than different - Effects of being alienated as an outsider/minority - Being able to share your opinions and beliefs openly - One 'group' not happier than another in terms of socio-economic or racial makeup - Presence of Islam in school suggested to be source of LGBTQ shame - Normalising inclusivity in the classroom

- Happiness and well-being not addressed in classrooms - Confronting teacher happiness - Allowing for pleasure, humour, fun in conjunction with work (i.e., striking a balance) - Feeling one cannot escape the workload, drained, tired, cannot face the day - Effects of early start time and homework load	- Punishing all for the actions of a few is 'unfair' (teachers remember the feeling and how it put them off in school) - Ethos of respect and fairness (which in turn creates a sense of community) - Unannounced 'visits'/camera recording as ways to see what really occurs in classrooms - Staff fulfilling promises	- 'Sometimes less is more' when addressing issues such as racism, sexuality - School addresses topics of equality and tolerance through formal events/assemblies (which can backfire by introducing negative connotations), but the best way is informally during lessons
4. _Teamwork and camaraderie_ - Students feel forced to compete against one another academically (i.e., having to 'be the best' in school hinders happiness) - 'Togetherness' from primary school is lost - Great joy that comes from persevering with friends (both in sports and in academics) - Lessons that involve interaction, not worksheets - Being human involves joint effort in something - Benefits of sport and collaboration - Yearning for enjoyable, safe social events - Having others to lean on - Taking pride in school (e.g., communal garden) - Community feels fragmented, people don't take part in what is offered	**8. _A call to be kind_** - How people treat and respect each other - Displaying sensitivity to others' personal lives, expressing empathy - Staff appear disinterested in me, don't smile or talk to me – what message does this send? - Aggressive language and behaviour weighs on pupils, affects attitude and mindset - Teachers must model chivalry, basic manners, simple things, such as 'when to say sorry' - 'Kind student body' not seen as realistic by some	**12. _A place for becoming_** - Opportunities to shine/to display knowledge and skills, to be challenged and to learn about themselves - Finding fulfilment and deep sense of accomplishment from difficult work - Good grades are not enough for happiness, and not all high marks are equal - Expression and originality w/o worry of grades - Identifying who you are and what you want to do - School is a 'tool'/'pathway' to create the life you want to lead, to develop your best self - Opportunities for self-directed learning - Opportunities to create, not merely observe - Preparing students to be "positively holistic human beings"

4.5.6 Participant narratives

This study was made possible by the 18 teacher and student participants who made time for me in their busy schedules and allowed a peek inside their social worlds. Over the course of many conversations and observations, I came to appreciate aspects about their individual lives and personalities which I feel must be considered in conjunction with the data presented in Chapter 5. I have therefore provided introductions to each person as a way of bringing them to life, if you will, for the reader. I share here what I learnt about each participant as a human being, including, for instance, his or her character traits, family background, personal convictions, priorities and ambitions. The length of each narrative in part reflects the degree to which participants were forthcoming about their biographical information; some individuals quite openly disclosed details about their personal and professional lives, and those who were less inclined were not pressured to do so.

Here I must offer a caveat: what follows is based exclusively on my interactions with participants in my capacity as researcher and applies only within the context of this thesis.

Descriptions of each individual are based on how they *appeared* to me in person, and the *impressions* they gave during data collection. These narratives should therefore be read with the understanding that they are the result of my best judgement; I am not asserting absolute fact nor attributing peculiarities to any of these persons beyond the framework of my conversations with, and observations of, them in the school setting.

Harry, Economics Teacher

In his mid-30s, Harry is both friendly and approachable, possessing a relaxed and confident demeanour. He is comfortable to speak with and intrigued by the topic of this study. He has a good relationship with his pupils who, based on my observations, appear to admire and respect him. He devotes regular attention to his own physical and mental health and considers camaraderie with teaching staff a priority. His love for social studies, in particular the study of economics, is evident. Harry is concerned far beyond the classroom with respect to growing problems facing our planet, and especially our children.

> How many of these kids have actually gone out and planted a vegetable? Or fed some animals? Or know what composting is? Or know the importance of soil?

He is incredibly thoughtful and candid about how we are preparing students for life. Topics such as the school curriculum, lesson planning and testing procedures, in fact, did not come up in our conversations. He is far more interested in the human element of education and addressing the relevant issues of our time; for example, the consequences of societal inequality. He speaks sincerely when he shares what he wants for his students: to be kind, emotionally intelligent, have a sense of humour, have fun, respect boundaries, practice empathy and to prioritise face-to-face contact over technological communication.

> I want people to just be nice to each other, because it's underrated. And you never know what someone else has gone through, you know? And I want them to just go outside and be more like kids and less like drones on their phones.

When asked how schooling impacts happiness specifically, Harry does not draw attention to the limitations he or other educators face, but instead formulates clear and reflective ideas for how school communities can improve. Of the six teacher participants, Harry's perspective on how to foster a happy school environment correspond most closely with those of students.

Cynthia, English Teacher

Cynthia began her career as a teacher in 2007 and joined the Academy in 2013. She was first employed at what she describes as an "idyllic" private school in London, but left for reasons she attributes to disrespectful leadership and lack of staff empowerment. She is in her late 40s. She appeared in our interview physically exhausted and somewhat bothered, though she expressed interest in participating very early on. I met Cynthia in a shared teachers' workspace when she overheard me speaking to another member of staff about my research. She intervened and said:

> You should really be focusing on *teacher* happiness [as opposed to student happiness]. That's the real problem.

I subsequently asked to hear her perspective to which she agreed. Cynthia is a very busy woman who, in addition to her teaching role, also serves as Head of her department. Though it was difficult to arrange a meeting with her, our conversation, while at times disheartening, captures the struggles some teachers face and the attitudes many unfortunately share. She is not the most personable person with whom I had the opportunity to speak, though it is clear she gives all she can to her job. Her perspective on schooling is somewhat pessimistic by comparison, and she chooses to focus on the more negative aspects of working in the field. On the effects teaching has on her personal life, Cynthia describes a kind of never-ending workload and the subsequent guilt she feels when not attending to it. Without enough money for holidays, or to indulge in other activities for herself, she says, she goes home with the weight of her job responsibilities she feels she cannot escape. She explains:

> So, I stay at home, I try to do other things, but there's always my desk and books sitting there. And the marking isn't done, nor the planning. I feel like it soils my life. That's the metaphor… [the unfinished work] sits in the hallway and it gives off a hideous smell.

Furthermore, she does not discuss happiness as something she often keeps in mind or considers for her students' lives. On the relationship between schooling and happiness she replies:

> Is anyone really happy in school? I wasn't happy at school. Don't know why I became a teacher really [laughs].

As our conversation progressed, and I shared with her my own experiences as a classroom teacher and the ways in which I empathised with her concerns, she opened up and became more comfortable. Later when I observed her during a lesson, she welcomed me with a smile and checked to be sure she was of help to the study. In forging a kind of connection with Cynthia, she voiced what are perhaps suppressed frustrations and a sense of self-defeat. Unpleasant as these may be, they are particularly thought-provoking when it comes to understanding the "toxic environment" other participants describe.

Nate, Geography Teacher

Nate is in his first year of teaching at the Academy. In his late 20s, he is one of the youngest staff members at the school. His background includes working in out-of-school detention facilities and other educational settings including summer camps and Boy Scouts events. Nate is outgoing, enthusiastic, hard-working and very sociable. He came to participate in the study after curiously asking who I was, what work I was doing and if he could be of help. When I told him about my research, he was eager to take part and inquired several times about the study's progress and how I was getting on at the school. It was clear he wanted me to feel welcome and that he hoped for me to have a pleasant experience. Nate describes himself as a generally happy, optimistic person, who tries his best not to dwell on matters beyond his immediate control. On conversing with colleagues and approaching unexpected issues, he explains:

> You get complaints, and you say, 'Yeah, but have you looked at it from *this* point of view? You don't need to be as upset as you are. Or, actually, worrying about this isn't benefiting you at all'.

> I was standing by the printer before my lesson today just really anxious and stressed because the printer is *so* slow. I knew I needed to get [the materials]. But by lunchtime, I will have taught the lesson regardless of whether the printing comes out on time. Everyone will get what they need, it's all going to be okay.

It is clear from his language and behaviour that he cares deeply about delivering quality learning experiences to students and puts his best effort forward. He is incredibly organised and prepared, conducting his lessons in a very structured and deliberate manner. He enforces a clear and consistent disciplinary protocol in his classroom, a feature he believes is essential for children in school. He expresses a quite down-to-earth perspective regarding the curriculum and how it connects to the lives of students; for instance, when learning about contributors to climate change in his class, a student might

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feel inspired to eat less red meat. However, adopting a more plant-based diet at home is a matter beyond their control; simply having a meal, he says, is what some children must worry about before they can be expected to care about the environmental impact of the food industry. Nate is sensitive in this way to pupils' personal circumstances and wishes to help them identify their individual goals in life, irrespective of exam scores. He is not afraid to challenge the norm when he believes it is necessary and seeks out leadership opportunities at the school.

Kim, Sociology Teacher

Kim is calm, collected and caring. One of the original faculty members when the school was founded in 2012, she recalls with fondness the initial "ad hoc" period of collaboration, experimentation and support among colleagues. She works to maintain these workplace relationships and tries to promote staff well-being by teaching yoga at the school once per week. In her early 30s, Kim is concentrating on building her career as a cognitive behavioural therapist with specialities in mindfulness and resilience coaching. Happiness and the general well-being of children weigh on her mind and heart. When asked about how to encourage pupil happiness, Kim stops to ponder what she would want for her own child, and also reflects on her personal experiences as a student. She wants children to develop a love of learning, and for schooling to focus more on their individual needs and preferences. It matters deeply to Kim that her students are content and develop positive memories of school so that they are likely to continue to grow and learn in adulthood.

> I want to bump into my students in fifteen years and they just tell me what they're doing with their life and that they're really content with it. And they have nice relationships with their family, and that they remember school fondly, that they had a nice experience, rather than 'I couldn't wait to get out of that hell hole' or 'I hated school so I never went on to do any other education'. That would break my heart.

She speaks frankly about how attitudes amongst staff negatively affect the school atmosphere and opines that teachers especially should take ownership of their own happiness despite workplace unpleasantries. Kim, who has frustrations of her own, admits that leaving the profession is an idea she entertains, but ultimately cannot do; children need advocates, she says, and support as individuals in an educational system that attempts to direct them down a singular path.

Don, Geography Teacher

In his early 40s, Don has been working in UK schools for over ten years. In addition to his teaching responsibilities at the Academy, Don serves a prominent administrative role in curriculum development. Although, of the six teachers, Don's responses during our interview struck me as the least profound. While I do not suspect he was attempting to mislead me, his answers painted an unusually rosy view of the schooling experience reminiscent of something one might read from the school brochure. As well intentioned as he was, he spoke to me as if I was there to conduct a formal evaluation of the school itself, stressing repeatedly its special programmes and offerings. When thinking about what children need in school, Don admits he does not regularly take pupil happiness into consideration.

> Do I personally ever think of happiness as a concept? Or if students are happy? Probably not… In terms of my teaching, in terms of my relentless focus on learning, and love of learning, I'd say that happiness would be an outcome from that.

This 'love of learning', he says, is supported by the school's curriculum model.

> Certainly, when I teach, I want students to be able to connect their learning with their own experiences outside the classroom.

However, at another point during our conversation, Don made somewhat contradictory statements. He described a discussion he had shared that week with an English teacher who stressed the importance of incorporating material produced by a diverse body of people. At the time, her class was reading *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, an African American novelist whose work highlights issues related to race and segregation, primarily from a black feminist perspective. In response, Don replied:

> It's good really 'cause they've [the teachers] got kids of lots of racial backgrounds. Rather than just teaching white authors and so on… I've never thought consciously about that, but I think that, as we design curriculum, we've got to really think about how students identify with what they're [the teachers] teaching, for instance.

In his own classroom, Don lacked a certain degree of engagement with his students, who were neither well-behaved nor appeared particularly interested in the topic. These comments and observations aside, it is obvious that Don has a solid appreciation for the school's official ethos and its objectives for preparing students for their future lives. However, as will become clearer later in this chapter, his points of emphasis and pride

with respect to how the Academy fosters elements of well-being for children at times conflict with pupils' own accounts and perspectives.

Frieda, Spanish Teacher

Frieda is the kind of person who beams with enthusiasm, attracting attention in a room. Her colourful personality is contagious, her voice loud and animated. She is alert, confident and undoubtedly passionate about her job. Frieda is remarkably down-to-earth, speaks carefully and with considerable vulnerability; to say I enjoyed our conversation is an understatement. In her early 40s, she is a single mother of three with a background in social work. She believes she was called to work with children in an interactive and meaningful way, often referring to her own experiences as a mother when explaining what she expects of pupils.

> I really want them to be just good, kind human beings who actually care about where they're going in life. And how they affect other people. That's why I came into teaching.

Frieda praises the staff at the Academy as "amazing", and though she cannot normally attend after-work social gatherings because of her home commitments, she is proud of the positive relationships she has built with many of her colleagues. In her classroom, she works tirelessly to instil a kind of culture built on mutual respect and discipline.

> I am seen as 'no-nonsense' and 'doesn't have behaviour issues'. I do have that reputation. But not one student could tell me that I'm unkind. I will always say at the beginning of class: 'I'm firm, funny and fair'.

Her students appear to hold Frieda in high esteem, coming to class energised and obedient. There is a notable degree of humour exhibited amongst them, though without forms of teasing or inappropriateness. Her class is indeed a very 'happy' place to be, a sort of haven where learning occurs alongside laughter and what can arguably be characterised as love.

Tyler, Year 7 boy

A soft-spoken child, Tyler describes himself as "not good at socialising". He is sweet-natured and puts forth strong effort in school, although he is not amongst the highest-achieving students. Tyler is of white British ethnicity and has close relationships with his family; his older brother, who studies at Cambridge, is his hero. He spends a lot of time

alone, something he says he prefers. During our interviews, Tyler sometimes avoided making eye contact and struggled to communicate his feelings. He displays little concern for understanding himself emotionally or sharing his feelings and thoughts with others. When asked how happy he feels in school, Tyler replied:

> Most of the time I just feel okay.

In class, Tyler sits at the front and attempts to ignore misbehaving students. He opts to sit next to pupils who share his work ethic and attempts to answer questions in class, though he is often incorrect and subsequently shouted over by other students. He keeps almost entirely to himself during what are meant to be collaborative activities while holding an apathetic expression. Though it was challenging to draw responses from Tyler initially, I found he simply needed more time to reflect than other student participants I interviewed. I listened more than I spoke, and in turn learnt a great deal from a boy who perhaps needed a patient ear.

Patricia, Year 7 girl

Bubbly and engaging, Patricia is what many would call a "star student". She grinned from ear-to-ear when I passed her in the hallways, always making the effort to say "hello". She both enjoys and is good at school, approaching her subjects with interest and positivity. When she does struggle with a concept or task, she unapologetically asks for assistance from her teachers or peers. Patricia devotes considerable time to revising, describing challenges as opportunities for improvement. Using time wisely and being productive are important skills to her, whether they are for homework, learning piano or socialising with friends.

> It may seem like I have a really long time, but compared to the rest of my life, [school years] are miniscule.

Patricia comes from a large family and is of white Kosovan heritage. She lives in a flat with her parents, sister, aunt, uncle and two cousins. Though they make for a busy household, her family is especially close-knit and spends frequent, quality time together watching films, cooking or playing board games. She adores her parents, especially her father, who encourages her to familiarise herself and to take pleasure in practical, everyday knowledge, regardless of how it relates to school curriculum. She says with a smile:

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> Every time I ask him for a question, he knows it straight away. It's fascinating for me.

Friendship is a priority for Patricia, and she takes care to spend time with those she says she can trust. In class, she sits up straight, feet tapping, ready for the day. When her peers become frustrated or need help, she enjoys lending a supportive hand. On her future, Patricia looks forward to discovering different career paths and possibilities for higher education. She sees the world as her oyster, so to speak, and displays at once a child-like curiosity and maturity beyond her years.

David, Year 9 boy

David is a serious, contemplative boy. He is taller than most of his peers and somewhat lanky, his school uniform too small to cope with his apparent growth spurt. His cheeks blush when his pubescent voice cracks, and, like other teenagers going through bodily changes, he is rather self-conscious. Of white British ethnicity, David comes from a tight-knit family who he describes as unconventional relative to those of his classmates; for instance, one member is transgender, and they collectively share agnostic views. His mother is his confidant and source of encouragement when he struggles socially or is teased by other students. For David, navigating secondary school has been challenging academically as well, as he often worries if his "best" will be "good enough" to secure a place at a desirable university. With a dream to work in computer programming and design video games, David sees school years as a sort of necessary hurdle one must overcome before reaching adulthood.

> You just have to push through it until you get out into the real world and then everything just kind of slows down a bit. But while you're a teenager, it's kind of a rush of emotions and a very stressful time. And you have to do the best you can.

Above all else, David values kindness and hard work. He is quick to express sympathy for others who are going through a difficult time, school "bullies" included. He yearns for love and respect from both his peers and his teachers and tries to abide by what he describes as a kind of personal credo: to treat others as he wishes he were treated.

Olivia, Year 9 girl

What immediately struck me about Olivia was her matter-of-fact attitude. She accepts things as they are and is generally quite content in school. Her emotions are not easily

rattled, and she attributes her overall satisfaction to the kinds of individuals she surrounds herself with. To Olivia, friends are a saving grace and the most important aspect of her well-being. She therefore invests in people who make her feel good and who she believes she can rely most heavily on.

> Say if you're upset and your friend comes along and makes you laugh. You get happy from that and you're thankful that they're there for you and you know that nothing can break them apart from you.

In class, Olivia sits with her friends who smile and greet one another in a warm embrace. She enjoys the social aspects of learning, taking every opportunity to consult and collaborate with table partners. When it comes to schooling, Olivia sees the value in perseverance. She regularly seeks help from her peers and revises best in a study group setting. When faced with a particularly challenging task, she opts to take a break and clear her head. Olivia is of white British descent and displays remarkable maturity and reliability for her age. Though she does not volunteer much information about her family background, it is clear that she is cared for and supported.

Rajiv, Year 10 boy

Hailing originally from India, Rajiv has lived in the UK for most of his life. He is bright-eyed and decidedly ambitious, his focus always on the prize. He aspires most of all to play professional cricket, a game he learnt at a young age on the subcontinent. He says with seriousness and consideration:

> Because I'm a red passport holder, I have to play for this country's [the UK] team. But that's fine, I want to play for the flag. It doesn't matter for what flag; I want to be the best in the world.

> Cricket is a game where 99% of the time you will fail. Like 1% you succeed. But then when you do well, it's the best in the world. You never get that feeling anywhere else. When I get there, I just want to keep on getting it.

For Rajiv, the difficulty or unlikeliness of this dream is not relevant; he believes wholeheartedly that working hard to realise your goals matters more than privilege or luck. And, he says, if you are unsuccessful in this feat, it is likely because someone else put forth more effort than you.

> If you've worked hard enough for something, you don't need luck. So, when people tell me 'Good luck' or 'Go out and play well', I say 'Yeah, thanks', but it's

about work. People call you lucky, but they don't know how hard you have worked.

Rajiv adheres closely to a sort of rags-to-riches mentality that anybody, despite their born circumstances, can truly achieve anything with the appropriate degree of determination. Therefore, he abides by an incredibly demanding schedule for a young person his age, revising for long hours after school and devoting his weekends and holidays to cricket practice. Though he has time for little else, he does not complain. He was thrilled to take part in this study, for instance, despite always dripping with sweat from running to meet me in-between his sport and academic commitments. Rajiv embodies confidence and optimism unlike any other 15-year-old I have ever met. He speaks with a noticeable stammer, a characteristic he appears entirely unphased by. His devotion is admirable, his positivity captivating.

Hannah, Year 10 girl

Known by many as "the smart one" in her classes, Hannah is a timid and deeply introspective girl. She is of white German ethnicity, and while she enjoys a pleasant home life, it is clear from the start of our conversations that she is aggravated in school. An academically gifted child, Hannah often feels constrained by her environment. She yearns to be productive and challenged in class, wishing others shared her respect for the learning environment.

> If I'm not learning something, if I'm not getting anything out of time, I feel it's just wasted. That makes me very frustrated because you're having to go in for so many hours at school and not getting anything out of it.

Hannah is under tremendous pressure from herself and others to maintain her above average academic record. She is quite anxious about the future and speaks shyly about her aspirations for attending university.

> Well, it sounds kind of stupid to say, but I kind of want to go to Oxford. I don't know, it seems… Since it's so competitive I feel quite apprehensive about it.

While Hannah says she wishes she had more friends in school, she admits she makes little effort to bond with her peers. As with her educational goals, her personal relationships are inhibited by the possibility of disappointment and a lack of confidence. Other pupils don't understand her, she says, and often take her for granted, for example, by inviting her to their study group for the purpose of copying her work. Because of this, she keeps

primarily to herself, using any break time to sit alone in the library and revise. It was clear that Hannah wanted me to truly understand her school experience, and frequently paused to formulate her ideas on paper before responding to my questions. When I asked to visit her in class, she specifically requested that I observe her *un*happiest class, a setting which unfortunately captured many of her said frustrations in school.

Adam, Year 11 boy

Amid preparing for his GCSEs, Adam is keeping a very tight schedule and is generally optimistic about the upcoming exams. When observed in a group, he appeared rather quiet; however, in our private meeting space, he was more forthcoming. Adam comes from a white British family and enjoys what he describes as a stable, satisfying home life. Though he is uncertain of what he wants to pursue in terms of a career, he focuses much of his revision on school subjects, such as maths and science, that he believes are important for successful university applications. He sees his school experience as "normal" and says he anticipated what has been a greater degree of stress and difficulty during Year 11. For Adam, his selective group of friends is his primary source of happiness in school. He speaks mostly of the evolution of these kinds of relationships and considers what it has been like for himself and others over the years.

> Maybe to some people it may be hard to find actual true friends. Maybe not now [in Year 11] because everyone's a bit older, but especially before. People were like… petty. I guess people have found their way probably. But even now I fall out with some people. It's kind of like finding friends you actually care about. And people you actually like being with. I think if you find that, then you'll be happy.

In class, Adam is attentive and completes his work alongside his friendship group, who seem to genuinely support each other. His teacher describes him as "a lovely, responsible boy".

Natalie, Year 11 girl

Born to white Bosnian parents who fled the country's armed conflict in the 1990s, Natalie was raised and educated in the UK. Strong-willed and deeply passionate, she volunteered to take part in this study primarily as a means to share and discuss her English research project addressing what she refers to as "the toxicity of the school environment".

> We have an English-speaking exam as part of our GCSE. And we were told to do it on something we feel strongly about. And I decided, because we're going through stress during that exam period, there's a lot of difficulties and schools don't necessarily know how to manage that as well as they probably should. So I decided, because I have an opinion on it, to do a presentation on it.

Natalie has much to say about addressing students' mental health to the same degree as their physical health in school. She sees potential for school improvement particularly pertaining to how students are prepared for examinations.

> I found that mental health was just very disregarded. And in school we have physical education. It was compulsory up until Year 10. So, I feel we should have also had some lessons where we could [discuss mental health]. It's not really taboo, but people might not want to share it because they'd be embarrassed, or they might be looked down upon. So, I feel we should have had some education on mental health as well as physical. I think it should have been prioritised, because this year was so stressful. For probably 99% of my [peers], it probably affected them stress wise.

Having just completed her GCSEs, Natalie is concerned for the well-being of younger students yet to undergo what she describes as an awfully strenuous process in Year 11. Having lost a parent, she also calls for a more compassionate and empathetic school environment. She exhibits strong self-motivation, charisma and emotional intelligence.

Karim, Year 12 boy

Karim immigrated to the UK with his family from Iran when he was a young child. He presents himself with a kind of bravado and, although Sixth Formers are not required to wear a uniform, he is always seen in a suit and tie. Karim's favourite activity in school is debate, particularly in government and politics; the more controversial the subject, the better. He speaks at length, for example, about what he perceives to be unfair and outdated educational and social systems. On the emphasis of test scores and competition in schools he says:

> It looks like every school just cares about looking good. Looking as if they are powerful. That's what every country wants as well. They want to be the best in education and all that. You want to be as good as them, but they may not be good at some of the things we are! We just always want to achieve more, and that makes peoples' lives harder.

What I learnt over time about Karim was that, behind the confidence he carries, there is a sense of self-doubt and an inability to cope with elements of his school and home

environments he believes he has no control over. Wanting desperately to make an impact on society, he feels he will not be able to pursue certain career paths on account of his poor exam performance; the exams in question do not showcase his strengths in oral argumentation and presentation, he suggests, but give weight solely to his display of knowledge on paper. This, coupled with his family's high expectations, leave Karim feeling distraught and defeated.

> I have strict parents that continuously tell me 'You need to get As and A*s'. I'm scared to tell them I'll never be able to do that. I will in a couple of subjects, but not all of them. I try, but no matter how hard I try I'm not gonna achieve that.

> If I start working [after graduation], I will do more change and more progress. If you give me a job right now, done. I promise if I finish A-Levels and I got a job instead of going to university, I would do more things. But, unfortunately, I can't do that because it's all based on that criteria that people need you to be ticking.

Karim feels strongly that students should be encouraged to discover various paths to success, paths that sometimes don't include attending university.

> In a school, it should be about a person being able to explore their options. Not only grades. It's like people want you to follow this one straight line. Why?

> My mom's like 'Oh, you should never go to college, that's for bad people', when I know people who have gone to college and become some of the best.

Though he is naturally inquisitive and displays a strong work ethic and devotion to his studies, the message Karim says he most receives is that he should be working harder. There is much to unpack from his interviews particularly, as they illustrate the power of inclusion and support, or lack thereof, and how they might influence a child's happiness in school. Says Karim:

> For me, school time is not necessarily the best moments of my life. I personally want to get secondary school and A-Levels over and done with because my childhood, in my opinion, is not great. Absolutely it has its ups and downs every now and then and, ya know, you deal with it. If I work hard now and show some dedication now, I can at least do something about my future. Currently… nothing is going the way I like it.

Louisa, Year 12 girl

Private and reserved, Louisa is most comfortable within her small social circle. Though she is pursuing A-Levels, she is surprisingly indifferent when discussing academics or her

plans after graduation. For Louisa, enjoying her youth in the present moment is far more interesting. On her future aspirations, she replies with a care-free expression:

> I don't really think about it that much. Let's see what happens.

Of white British ethnicity, Louisa is a relatively small girl and often difficult to spot among a group of bustling teenagers. She is refreshingly honest in the sense that she speaks her mind without concern for what others, myself included, might think of her. Ingenuity and being true to oneself are deeply valuable traits to Louisa. On her fellow classmates, she remarks:

> A lot of people fake being happy. Like, [by] over-reacting. Faking enjoying things, I guess, to be more likeable.

Though her responses were often short and challenging to elicit elaboration from, Louisa clearly prioritised her participation in this study. According to her Head of House, her inclusion was important as "her voice is not one often heard" at school. Always early and happy to greet me, her direct language and self-assurance helped distinguish her.

Michael, Year 12 boy

Born and raised in London to white British parents, Michael is a delightful and well-accomplished young person. In addition to revising for his A-Level exams, he works part-time as a tutor for primary-aged students; he emphasises that this is not because he necessarily needs the money or must help support his family, but because he believes holding a job is a good experience for someone his age. Michael's favourite school subject is psychology, which he intends to study further at university. When asked if he feels good about the future, he explains:

> Not so much in the sense that I feel as if I'm gonna become a millionaire and live in a mansion. But I'm just gonna be very enthusiastic about it. There's a lot of stuff I want to do. A lot of jobs that seem interesting to me. I'm excited.

Reflecting on his secondary schooling experience, Michael questions some practices he describes as merely traditional for tradition's sake; for example, enforcing a school uniform and foreign language requirements. He opposes certain teachers' "rigid" mentality he feels runs counter to the progressive ideals of the school. There are some authority figures, he says, who are "stone-thinking" and are not always open to new ideas

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or ways of doing things. This is frustrating for Michael and his peers, who he says want to be trusted and treated as young adults. On modernising the school uniform, he explains:

> There's trainers. A shoe thing. They're always wanting us to wear 'smart' black shoes. Then it got to the point where everyone could wear black trainers. In order to get this to work they had to be black. But like two or three people were wearing white trainers, or different colour trainers. Straight away they were like, 'No! Back to smart casual!'. And it's kind of like, [sighs] that wasn't necessary.

Michael has much to say concerning the differences between compulsory school years and attending sixth form. Though there are certain privileges that come with Years 12 and 13, including selecting the subjects one studies, he perceives a lack of student cohesion and shared "enjoyable journey" experienced in other year groups. Though he describes his schooling experience quite positively, he admits he is ready to move on to something new.

> I feel a bit tired of being busy in school. Just tired of the same old stuff. It feels like I'm just replaying the week over and over again, which isn't ideal. With [A-levels] I feel like I'm waiting for it to finish in a sense. I feel like this is a stepping- stone to [university] or the next part. It's not as if I'm crying on a Sunday night because I'm dreading school, I just compare it to before.

Sarah, Year 12 girl

Born to black Ghanaian parents, Sarah is well travelled and considers herself a sort of global citizen. She lived in Ghana and Texas, USA, before moving to the UK at the start of her secondary school education. She draws interesting comparisons between the three countries' respective school systems, in particular those pertaining to pupil enjoyment.

> I think in Ghana definitely the students were not really happy. Because I think of the type of school… like [its] rules and regulations. They're really strict sometimes and they want you to focus on your work. And, in the States, students are generally happy because there's just lots of things we were doing, lots of activities and sports. Whereas, in Ghana, it was more about like reading and learning.

Perhaps a product of her multi-cultural background and upbringing, Sarah exhibits great adaptability and open-mindedness. She approaches the topic of education and pupil needs with a special kind of perspective; no system is perfect, she says, and there are lessons to be learnt from all experiences. Her exposure to varying levels of societal wealth and well-being have encouraged her to pursue a future career in healthcare.

I'm actually positive in thinking about my opportunities and plans I want to do. I really want to help other people and solve lots of diseases that go around, especially epidemics like Ebola and HIV. I mean I'm interested in doing medicine, so in terms of that field, I want to help other people.

4.5.7 Establishing trustworthiness

A body of social research is usually considered 'academic' insofar as it demonstrates both *reliability* and *validity*, or that it can be reproduced and the knowledge it generates is accurate (Gibson, 2017, p. 55). These constructs of trustworthiness, however, have long been contested among qualitative researchers conducting more naturalistic inquiries (Rossman and Rallis, 2010). Though many perspectives on how to approach the issues of reliability and validity in qualitative research exist (Creswell, 2013), I have chosen to rely primarily on Lincoln and Guba's (1985) alternative terminology of *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability* (p. 300). The trustworthiness of this study, therefore, has been established through each of these four criteria using techniques including prolonged engagement in the field, triangulation of data sources and methods, member-checking, thick description and auditing.

Credibility

The legitimacy of this study rests with whether its findings and interpretations may be judged as credible; arriving at objectivity or uncontested truth is *not* the aim, and thus conventional notions of validity do not most suitably apply. This distinction, argues Hammersley (1992), does not imply that research of this kind is of more or less quality. Absolute validity cannot be guaranteed, he suggests, and ought not to be confused with whether or not a study can be discerned as valuable or relevant. In evaluating a study, Hammersley says, one should ask if the assertions made are trustworthy "beyond reasonable doubt" (p. 200). He stresses the criticality of dialogue between researchers who, in their contributions to knowledge, must rise to challenge one another and work towards improved understandings of a phenomenon, always practicing a "willingness to revise views about previously accepted assumptions and adjust [their] beliefs accordingly" (ibid). Though colleagues need not agree entirely on a study's claims to knowledge, establishing confidence in interpretivist research means that readers ought to be able to accept those claims as plausible (Weber, 2004, p. viii).

The credibility of this particular study may be examined in light of my *prolonged engagement in the field* (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), whereby I spent an estimated 65 hours at the site spanning a five-month period. During this time, I practised persistent observation of participants as a means of gaining a better understanding of happiness in the schooling context. Secondly, this study involved *triangulation of data sources* by relying on multiple data sources of the same kind as a manner of converging information (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). For instance, I posed analogous questions about the phenomenon to numerous participants in order to identify discrepancies and which topics to explore more thoroughly. By interviewing student participants on three separate occasions, I was able to further verify information and follow up on ideas or concepts that emerged during the data collection process. This study also demonstrates *triangulation of methods* by diversifying its forms of data collection (Lincoln and Guba, 1985); by its design, observational and interview data coincide to form a faithful portrayal of the phenomenon. Lastly, to test out my interview findings, I set aside time during the interview process to share notable threads in the data as they presented themselves. These informal discussions were a way of gaining valuable participant feedback while helping to resolve any gaps in my understanding of the phenomenon. Without referring to specific information pertinent to any single individual, I addressed the most significant themes that I was able to draw from the data as a whole. By sharing and discussing my preliminary analysis and interpretations with participants, these conversations served a special role in clarifying the meanings I had constructed, thereby enhancing this study's accuracy. This technique, called *member-checking*, is paramount for establishing the credibility of a study (Lincoln and Guba, ibid, p. 314) and an opportunity for participants to fulfil their "major role directing as well as acting in case study" research (Stake, 1995, p. 115).

Transferability

For the interpretivist researcher, the ability to generalise his or her findings and interpretations to a new group or context is not a primary objective (Weber, 2004). By virtue of incorporating *thick description* of time, place and the individuals involved, this study concerns itself with providing sufficient detail so that readers themselves can make informed decisions on whether its conclusions might be transferred to another setting (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In addition to the intricate participant profiles listed above, much of this thesis' use of thick description features in Chapter 5, where I provide

comprehensive commentary on our conversations and my observations of them in classrooms.

Dependability

In positivist research, a study establishes trustworthiness through the reliability of its results, meaning they are replicable and consistent across repeated trials (Weber, 2004). In interpretivist research, however, this criterion is fulfilled when readers are able to infer that the findings and interpretations have derived from a dependable research process (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This dependability is achieved by logically chronicling each phase of the research and ensuring that it is presented in an organised and accessible manner. (Tobin and Begley, 2004). Producing what is referred to as an *audit trail* entails providing readers with the necessary information for comprehending the theoretical and methodological decisions guiding the study, as well as my rationale for each (Koch, 1994). Generating a coherent audit trail for this study has also included reserving raw data in the forms of observational field notes, interview transcripts, participant worksheets and a reflexive journal; the last of these relates to my practice of researcher reflexivity to which I have raised earlier in this chapter as a central feature of interpretivist research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Confirmability

Bearing in mind that efforts to retain objectivity are not a priority for the interpretivist researcher, this study concerns itself with whether its findings and interpretations can be reasonably confirmed to have stemmed from the data. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), confirmability is accomplished by means of satisfying each of the other three pillars of trustworthiness in interpretivist research: credibility, transferability and dependability. Therefore, the techniques of prolonged engagement in the field, triangulation of data sources and methods, member-checking, thick description and auditing which I have employed intersect to convey to the reader how I have reached my research conclusions (ibid).

4.5.8 Ethical considerations

Central to establishing the trustworthiness of any study is a deep engagement with ethical practice (Rossman and Rallis, 2010). In conducting empirical research, particularly that pertaining to human well-being, it has been of paramount importance that I abide by

proper ethical standards across all stages (ibid). Prior to establishing contact with any school, teacher or student, I submitted the appropriate application for ethical approval to the UCL Institute of Education Research Ethics Committee. This documentation included Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) confirmation, a regular background check necessary for gaining visitor access to UK schools. Taken together, the committee's guidance for student research and The British Education Research Association's (BERA, 2011) ethical recommendations have continuously informed my decisions and actions.

As the study involves elements of human participation, procedures to protect the individuals under study, especially children who are minors, have been appropriately adhered to. Letters detailing my own background, the study's aims and the implications for participation were sent to all students, teachers and parents [see Appendix A]. Individuals were made aware of my strong attempt to ensure their anonymity throughout the course of the study as well as their right to withdraw at any time. Verbal and written forms of consent were obtained from all participants and guardians before moving forward [see Appendix B]. These measures served to ensure voluntary opt-in and informed consent by all individuals. Teachers and parents were contacted first, and students approached only *after* consent from adults had been granted. Questions of meaningful consent to participate on the part of children and young people is complex and hotly debated. Drawing on what may be called 'Gillick competence', or a child's capability to offer personal consent without that of a parent or guardian, Williams (2006) suggests that "a consensus is emerging", among social science researchers, "about the need to let young people speak for themselves, subject to appropriate safeguards" (p. 19). There are potential negative consequences in seeking parental consent, he says, as some children may feel patronised or undervalued in the process. Masson (2004, cited in ibid) illustrates this point well:

> Where children can understand enough to distinguish research from other interventions, and to understand the impact on them of participating, it may be more ethical to act on their consent than to require the fully informed consent of a parent. Such an approach gives children the maximum opportunity to have their views and experiences recorded and avoids the exclusion of children whose parents would not respond to a request or would wish to control whom their child speaks to (p. 20).

These emerging viewpoints raise very important methodological considerations for the present study, as student voice and autonomy have been largely emphasised in this thesis

as matters critical to student happiness. Furthermore, in my own experience teaching young people, I found many to be responsible, insightful and greatly in-tune with their own feelings and behaviour. While I welcome and agree with the research community's increasing recognition of children as "highly informed experts on their daily life" (Alderson and Morrow, 2004, cited in ibid, p. 23), my position as novice researcher, and recommendations received from the relevant research ethics committee, persuaded me to adopt the still widely encouraged practice of obtaining parental consent. This was to protect both myself and participants and was, under present circumstances, the most appropriate course of action. With the realisation that parents or guardians could have declined participation on their child's behalf, I attempted to identify a larger number of potential children than was ultimately required for the study.

Data generated has remained solely with myself, and I have changed names of participants in written documents, while avoiding detailed description that could compromise their anonymity. Given the tight timetables and administrative procedures under which many students and teachers operate, I was sensitive to participants' schedules and respected their boundaries. When interruptions or rescheduling occurred, I remained positive, adaptable and responsive to their needs. It was important for both the sake of the individuals under study and the accuracy of the findings that I remained non-intrusive and avoided measures that provoked unnatural schooling behaviour. My hope was to blend into the learning environment as much as possible and facilitate a fruitful experience for everyone involved. Lastly, in keeping with BERA's (2011) principle of 'good practice', I offered a brief summary of the study's findings and conclusions to participants (p. 8).

According to Rossman and Rallis (2010), the rigour of a study should be judged not only on instrumental or procedural matters, but also ethical considerations for individuals involved. In conceptualising the relational component of ethical inquiry, they emphasise Nel Noddings' (1995) *ethic of care*, which:

> gives only a minor place to principles and insists instead that ethical decisions must be made in caring interactions with those affected by the discussion. Indeed, it is exactly in the most difficult situations that principles fail us. Thus, instead of turning to a principle for guidance, a carer returns to the cared-for (p. 187).

This perspective on ethical practice closely resembles the *embedded approach* Whiteman (2012, cited in Swain, 2017b) describes: the researcher makes his or her decision according to immediate, and sometimes unpredictable, context and issues, rather than strictly abiding by a set of principles (p. 93). Understood in this way, research is a dynamic process, subject to continual moderation and critique (ibid), whereby the researcher assumes a *situational relativist* approach, reflexive and ready to respond appropriately (Robson, 2011, cited in Swain, 2017b, p. 80). These philosophical and moral assumptions, emphasising both professionalism and flexibility, are deeply in line with my disciplinary perspective and methodological framework for exploring happiness in schools.

Chapter 5: Findings and interpretation

The purpose of this chapter is to present in a clear and methodical fashion this study's most significant findings. This is achieved, with the support of participant narratives in Chapter 4, through the categorisation of what were realised to be three central themes: *connection and community, language and behaviour* and *recognition and worth*. The data presented within these over-arching topics is then further arranged into 12 subthemes, ideas of which, though organised separately, are intended to form a comprehensible whole. Attempting to uphold Stake's (1995) recommendation to "ruthlessly winnow and sift" through the data (p. 121), I offer descriptions and interpretations of the material to the extent I feel build reader understanding and are applicable to the study's research questions. To help the reader navigate this chapter and its different thematic components, the figure below depicts and briefly summarises each subtheme:

People over place	Outside issues, inside concerns	Health and well-being	Teamwork and camaraderie
A school's social and relational features are more influential than its physical ones	Happenings within a school matter more than those beyond its often-supposed influence	General happiness is a responsibility of the school and associated with its typical atmosphere	A fragmented community and academic pressures threaten pleasures of 'togetherness'

Theme 1: Connection and community

Decoding discipline	Setting the tone	Fairness and communication	A call to be kind
Clear, productive behavioural policy is needed amid cycles of boredom and frustration	Teachers establish often negative classroom settings, breeding stress and discouragement	Happiness hinges on level of respect for students and justifiability of adult decisions	Basic courtesies of friendliness and empathy are significant and yet undervalued

Theme 2: Language and behaviour

Seen, heard and understood	The person behind the score	Belonging and acceptance	A place for becoming
To be authentically 'known' depends on empowerment to evolve and express oneself	Character strengths and personalised goals matter apart from performance; generalisation should be resisted	Embedding inclusivity within everyday practice allows students to connect with school community	Challenging and self-directed learning begets discovery of fulfilling work

Theme 3: Recognition and worth

Figure 3: Snapshot of individual subthemes.

5.1 Theme of connection and community

The first major theme to arise from the data is a clear emphasis on personal *connection* and a sense of *community*. Forging close bonds and instituting a shared ethos within a cohesive school body are what participants maintain are essential ingredients for breeding happiness, while pupil and teacher perspectives on the influence of outside-of-school factors differ and, sometimes, rebut one another. Collectively investing in staff and student well-being as well as striving for a healthy balance with regards to each individual's workload is a concern for many, and the criticality of teamwork and collaborative opportunities are evident.

5.1.1 People over place

It was strikingly apparent that, for participants, relationships and interactions with one another lie at the forefront of notions of pupil happiness in school. Though elements of *place* were addressed, it was the makeup of *people* that was consistently recognised. Kim [Sociology Teacher], for instance, recalled the attention the Academy has received for its new equipment and amenities, impressing visitors but not necessarily highlighting the human components she implied constitute the beating heart of a school.

> I remember when this building first opened, they always had so many people touring. [People would say], 'Oh, we have this big jazzy lecture theatre [and] these new MacBooks'. And, honestly, if it's four walls, a couple of happy teachers and people feeling part of a team, it wouldn't matter.

This perceived imbalance between emphasising the tangible assets of a school over the *in*tangible was also noted by David [Year 9 boy], who spoke with a degree of regret:

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I think at this school they prioritise the building and facilities, and how it's all fancy and things… and then left a lot of the teacher and student elements to last.

Other students commented on how, regardless of what a school may boast, a happy learning environment depends most crucially on interactions between pupils and teachers and how these individuals conduct themselves on a typical basis. Rajiv [Year 10 boy], in particular, captured this idea using a tender analogy between school and home:

For me, it doesn't depend on the school you go to, it comes with yourself and your friends. Not where you are, but who you're with… The school is not just made 'cause it's got books. It's made with students. Like a *house* is just a floor and four walls, but the *home* is how the people live in that house. That's why they say 'home sweet home', not 'house sweet house'.

One teacher, Cynthia [English Teacher], drew from her collective teaching experience a thought-provoking similarity between two quite *dis*similar schools as a way of highlighting the overwhelming significance of human relation:

[In] the school I was working in before, a private school, there's no uniform, it's designed like a village [with] beautiful green and houses around it, there's a lot of emphasis on play time, fresh air. Teachers are called by their first names. There are barely any rules to speak of. At lunchtime the food would be salmon, *fresh* salmon…

… Those children, if you were to go there, I bet you would find that they were no happier than the children here. Because many of them spoke about how unhappy they were. They didn't like school. I couldn't see why they would think that, because it was like a paradise almost. And sometimes I think it just boils down to that you're dealing with people in a school environment in a way you never really do afterwards. And whether you're in a beautiful school with no rules or [one] with rules, you have to cope with people. It's the thing that's the most difficult.

Her observation of a seemingly idyllic school campus is particularly intriguing when compared with what participants said children fundamentally need to be happy in school. When asked about school facilities, resources and overall structure, pupils and teachers focused on otherwise basic privileges; for example, cleanliness of the washrooms and canteen, quiet spaces for study and contemplation, and room to decompress when necessary. Though participants expressed appreciation and gratitude for what the Academy was aiming to achieve through some of its 'progressive' practices, such as learning set grouping and use of the open classroom model, many found them to be a source of much distress, and even annoyance, a topic that is further discussed in the next

theme. In one of her interviews, Hannah [Year 10 girl] expressed displeasure in what she explains are side effects of the school's mission to promote 'open' learning and social spaces:

> In this school they have a lot of methods of teaching and things that are progressive, but then not all very effective. In the open classrooms people are a lot more noisy and it doesn't feel too much like a classroom… people move around more and get up from their chairs… Even the library can get noisy, which is so annoying… I really need silence to work.

She continued, concentrating on details that, while conceivably plain on the surface, account for the majority of her discomfort and distraction during school and thus her capacity for happiness. On the things which trouble her most days, she said:

> Probably no uniform, because I find it's very uncomfortable. I get that it's supposed to 'mimic the workplace' but I find it a lot easier to concentrate when I'm wearing comfortable clothes…
>
> … I think of canteens – [they] can get very hectic. People leave their food and trash everywhere and it's just so noisy.

Her frustrations with respect to what she describes as a regularly chaotic environment relate to what some participants suggested children both deserve and require to be happy in school: calm spaces for self-reflection and to collect one's thoughts and emotions.

> Having space to be wherever you need to be, whether it's going to the library where students can go to be quiet and on their own, or having the scope to let off steam. That creates happiness, too… And moments of *peace*. I think above all we don't have peace in schools. There is no moment when everyone is just chilling and relaxing and talking. That was my feeling when I first started teaching: 'Wow, no one has a moment for themselves'.
>
> Cynthia, English Teacher

> General space. Just where you feel comfortable. So you have your own space at times. Space for when you just want to feel something and be by yourself.
>
> Rajiv, Year 10 boy

The data suggests that, far more relevant than what children *have* in school, it is how they *feel* living and working amongst their teachers and peers that carries weight with regard to their happiness. Most especially, this entails having a person to go to in times of need, within a space they perceive to be both physically and emotionally safe. Michael [Year 12 boy] summarised what he believes to be the most indicative feelings of happiness for pupils in school:

It's weird because it seems so basic. You feel comfortable. You don't feel out of place. You don't feel lost as such. You know why you're there.

The word 'comfort' was used frequently by both teachers and students, both to recount the literal space pupils reside in school as well as their feelings and impressions. Being able to approach and speak with an adult on campus, whether a teacher or other staff member, was specifically referenced.

Students feeling safe, feeling comfortable with the stuff they're involved in, with the people that surround them, is essential to their happiness. If you don't feel safe, you don't feel like you can talk to a teacher or your peers about an issue that you have, you're not going to be happy in the place that you are.

Nate, Geography Teacher

[Happiness is when] you feel like you're in a nice space and its comforting. And you always have people that are there for you if you're feeling doubtful or down.

David, Year 9 boy

[Happiness comes from] making students feel comfortable. Actually talking to them. So maybe having different people in school that you could talk to.

Louisa, Year 12 girl

The value of having others nearby with whom one can be truthful is further evidenced by Hannah's [Year 10 girl] sobering admission when explaining the causes for her general *un*happiness in school:

To be honest, there isn't really anyone I feel like I could confide in.

Frieda [Spanish Teacher], who is cherished by her pupils and who prides herself on drawing purposeful, personal connections to the topics she teaches, remarked:

If a child doesn't feel safe at school… it's very hard to be happy. I think of my kids [at home]. I know that irrespective of whatever moods they are in, they feel secure enough to approach me about things that trouble them.

These feelings of comfort, security and safety recounted above stem from what further analysis points to as a resounding reverence for friendship. Countless were the mentions of friends and friendship, as every single participant, teacher and student, made note of its worth in relation to happiness in school. Friends, it was said, offer advice during a tough situation, a way of coping with feelings of *un*happiness, support for being one's best self and acceptance.

As the following two quotes illustrate, pupils hold dear the friends with whom they can behave honestly and make known their innermost thoughts and emotions.

> If you're feeling quite low about yourself, then you can go and talk to your friends… My close group of friends, they know how I am.
>
> Rajiv, Year 10 boy

> [Friends offer] reassurance and being able to let out what you're feeling.
>
> Louisa, Year 12 girl

Patricia [Year 7 girl] in particular offered a clever and delightful metaphor for possessing friends she finds trustworthy:

> I can share my real feelings with my friends, my close friends… 'cause I trust them. *They're like a safe I can keep all my secrets in* [emphasis added].

From the adult perspective, Nate [Geography Teacher] shared his observations of students who, while not necessarily having the greatest number of friends in total, derive strong self-esteem from a select few peers who are reliable and genuinely encouraging:

> I find that students who don't have at least one or two peers they can really rely on tend to be a lot more insecure and they don't seem as happy. When you're watching them in the classroom, when you see them around school, they're the ones who tend to look a little bit more down or putting on a front.

The kinds of bonds that breed happiness in school, says Natalie [Year 11 girl], do not always form automatically and, as is ordinarily the case among social circles in secondary school, can involve both trial and heartache. For her, real friendships embody loyalty, guidance and positivity.

> I think I was happiest in Year 8 when I found a friendship group that I knew I could depend on. And in secondary school, you go through stages of not having friends and finding the right people. And I think surrounding yourself with people you know are there to support you rather than pull you down or get you into trouble. It makes you content. You feel okay. That was the foundation: having people around me, and knowing that if anything was to happen, I knew I had people who could help make me happy.
>
> Natalie, Year 11 girl

It must be noted here that several participants were careful to explain the distinction between having friends in school and its contribution to one's happiness, and being forced to interact with others; for instance, when you don't get along with your learning set or when you grow tired from constant socialisation.

If you are somebody who doesn't particularly want to socialise, and you're happy like that, to be *allowed* to be like that [is important].

Cynthia, English Teacher

I need social contact. But, also, the alone time can be good if I've spent a lot of time around people… It's nice just to spend some time alone to work myself.

Patricia, Year 7 girl

I do get drained… just having to interact with people for so long, even if you don't feel like it. I like to be alone for some time.

Hannah, Year 10 girl

Apart from their peers, participants argued, students feel a need to connect on a deeper level with their teachers through longstanding, trusting relationships. According to the data, not only are a child's lesson preferences and interests mostly tied to the teachers themselves, but a sense of personal relatedness can help him or her achieve greater success and sense of well-being. As the following examples encapsulate, participants drew a direct correlation between pupils' level of interest and devotion in a subject with their attitude towards the instructor; the more favourable they find the teacher, the more enthusiasm and effort they will likely display in class.

Human relationships is the most important thing… It's not the subject that makes them happy, it's the people. When you ask a child, 'Why do you do English A level?' they say, 'English teacher' [not] 'I love reading'. It's usually about *the teacher*.

Cynthia, English Teacher

If they feel at ease, and cared for, they're going to work harder, and they're going to be more invested in you *and* in the subject. And if you don't have that personal relationship, that's breaking that loop, isn't it?... [Personally], I don't have these memories of school being great, but I do have a fondness for the teachers that I had good relationships with… If I don't have a personal relationship with a student, they're not going to care what I say to them. And they're not going to really value it.

Kim, Sociology Teacher

I'm not that good at Spanish, but it's still fun 'cause Ms [Frieda]. She's our teacher and she's extremely nice… So in different classes I'm quite different due to the teacher.

Rajiv, Year 10 boy

According to participants, children are drawn to teachers who remain open and authentic. Just as in any relationship, drawing connections to each other's personal lives and experiences invites individuals to better see and know one another. It is common for

pupils to want to learn about their teachers *as people* and to feel that they are cared for much in the same way that a parent cares for his or her child.

> I'm very open about my [own] children and I'll talk about them all day long and use them in examples. And there are teachers that say you shouldn't talk about your personal lives, but come on, students respect it! Kids always say to me, 'Tell us a story, tell us a story'. So I tell things that I've talked about with my [own] children.
>
> Frieda, Spanish Teacher

> [I am happy when] teachers are very friendly and treat you as like if you were their own instead of just a student in a classroom… [and] they get on a more personal level with you.
>
> David, Year 9 boy

Again, descriptors of comfort and trust were used to explain practices most necessary to establishing this kind of alliance:

> Being comfortable enough to disclose information and have those conversations and work towards a happier, more successful end goal is really valuable and really important.
>
> Nate, Geography Teacher

> [I would like] more staff you can trust… Just like getting to know them and what they're like.
>
> Olivia, Year 9 girl

In instances where the roles were reversed, and reliance and responsibility were projected onto the students, children's feelings about the relationship with their teacher were solidified and strengthened. Michael's quote illustrates this point well:

> [When teachers] use me as a representative, whether it's doing tours or people coming in from [the Academy's sponsor university], I feel as if the teachers respect me, and I kind of feel loved by them.
>
> Michael, Year 12 boy

Drawing a reference to parental-like care, Don [Geography Teacher] called for greater *consistency* as a key ingredient for ensuring longevity of teacher-pupil relationships and the child development they most suitably aid.

> An advisor who follows them all through their journey through that school, who really knows that kid. So it's almost *like a parent inside the school* [emphasis added]. I don't think large comprehensive schools like this do enough of that advisory stuff and relationship building.

One teacher, Nate [Geography Teacher] elaborated on what he describes as the massive impact of 'checking in' with students on a regular basis in order to foster meaningful relationships, a simple method he says invites students to approach their teachers. He explained:

> I tell all of my students that I value and care about them, but I only see them for an hour a week. It gets very difficult to reinforce that. That distance and time make you seem aloof and that you don't care. Presence and having that time spent is important…
>
> … Using lunch time as community time is a good idea. I know some schools do family lunch where you sit with a group of students in a small group. And I think that really fosters a sense of relationships. It means there's care and love. It also means you're being asked how you've been doing in school this week, how you are doing on your homework, what you are struggling with, etc.

Of course, students and teachers alike made the case that, in order for children to be happy in school, consideration for the happiness of their *teachers* must also be prioritised. The sort of bond-building and perception of community many described, in fact, were emphasised as strongly dependent on the existence of a happy school staff.

> Having teachers who are happy themselves. 'Cause at the end of the day being a teacher is not just about knowing your subject. It's about being a good influence. And caring for these students and trying to provide some kind of positive support and nurture for them.
>
> Harry, Economics Teacher

> I think the first thing to do is start with the teachers, obviously, because the teachers need to give a positive impact on students to make them work hard and make them feel like they're enjoying the lesson. So I think you need to employ teachers that have a passion for learning [and] they do it because they want to teach kids and they have a really nice personality that people can easily get along with.
>
> David, Year 9 boy

> I think a lot of time it's [about] how teachers are. That changes things in schools.
>
> Louisa, Year 12 girl

As with contributors to pupil happiness, teachers referenced similarly straightforward conditions they say make for themselves a happier experience in school. These included, as illustrated by the examples below, teacher mobility around the building as a result of conducting lessons in various locations and spaces to socialise with colleagues and engage in private, productive conversation.

It's a big school, and if I was just in one place the whole time I wouldn't engage with the greater community. Now I'm seeing people all the time 'cause I'm moving through these corridors and I see everyone. All students, all staff. And I think that creates a sense of 'we're all here together' rather than 'this is my space, that's your space'.

<div align="right">Harry, Economics Teacher</div>

I do think there's something really special about one classroom that everybody passes through for coffee in the morning. And just chat. And if you've had a hard day, as an adult, sometimes you just need to vent. Like in a productive way, not in a constant complaining way. That way you get to know each other, but you also get to know more about the students.

<div align="right">Kim, Sociology Teacher</div>

These desires to be well-acquainted with colleagues and to operate as part of a unified whole relate to later subthemes of increasing opportunities for teamwork and staff well-being.

5.1.2 Outside issues, inside concerns

Student narratives on happiness and what affects it, either positively and negatively, focused primarily on events and interactions *inside* of school. While teachers tended to shift the conversation to issues surrounding students' private lives and the impact of structures *outside* of school, the issues that students suggested exert the greatest sway over their potential to be happy in school were applicable to their real-time experiences and encounters during the school day. For one student, Patricia [Year 7 girl], such was the ability to self-select her seat in the classroom:

When I have control over simple things like where I want to sit, 'cause usually if I sit at the back of the classroom, like, usually the misbehaved children sit at the back. [And] also to choose whether I sit next to someone that will help me in my learning.

For Karim [Year 12 boy], happiness could be compromised by something such as a difficult exchange with a classmate; for example, one he learnt was engaging in drug use. He described his distress and struggle with how to handle such sensitive information:

For example, I'm worried about the kid next to me who does drugs. And I just care so much. I just [think], 'Why is he doing this?'.

Unlike students, teachers repeatedly directed the discussion towards comparatively large-scale, systemic and societal problems, which, they maintained, while having a profound effect on children's happiness, most generally fall beyond the realm of school influence.

These included, for instance, socio-economic status, degree of parental support, overexposure to media and the way of the world, so to speak. Overall, teacher responses exhibited a more sinister, even frightening, perspective. For Don [Geography Teacher], equipping children with the skills they needed to navigate adulthood and gain employment was especially worrisome:

> We talk about the future - and the immediate future is quite scary, isn't it? - when you talk about xenophobia and Brexit and all that, it's scary, isn't it? It's also scary when you're thinking about the job market and artificial intelligence and all that sort of stuff. How do you get students to buy into a curriculum and have a curriculum that's gonna help them be successful in this rapidly changing wider world?

Harry [Economics Teacher], meanwhile, attributed some of the poor behaviour he observes in his students to the prevalence of the smartphone and other technologies which, from his point of view, come at a cost to learning and mental health. On attention and anxiety, in particular, he remarked:

> I think attention spans are just going down the drain. You know, it's tough enough anyway, the way the world is moving fast and the fact that everyone's got a little computer in their pocket and it's full of things that are especially designed to zap your attention and your time. It's like crack cocaine for the next generation…
>
> … I think there's more to be anxious about than before. Even on a personal level, I feel more anxious now than I did in school.

A few teachers commented on the significance of supportive, present parents or guardians and a stable home life where basic necessities are fulfilled. For some children, they say, home is not always a place of security or joy, but a nidus for anxiety and negativity.

> I think there's a very strong correlation between home life and school life. And I think that if you've got quite a happy or positive home life, that that transcends over into your school life… [Having] parents that turn up to parents' evening, parents who get in contact. It's hard being a working parent. It's hard grinding that grind. But there's certain basics you're supposed to do.
>
> Frieda, Spanish Teacher

> [Happiness in school] depends on what's going on at home and how happy they can be, in a way. Because you've got some kids with really difficult things going on at home and that's ultimately going to play a part in [their] thinking, 'Should I be happy? How can I be happy when this is going on?' …
>
> … The particular factor with these kids is that external life. It's difficult being a teenager in the city of London when you come from a deprived background.

> We've got nearly 70 percent of our kids from [such]. The kids that don't often have nicer stuff.
>
> <div align="right">Nate, Geography Teacher</div>

Reflecting specifically on the impact of adult language, attitude and behaviour, Kim [Sociology Teacher] hesitantly remarked:

> I think happy children are surrounded by happy people. And I don't know how many happy people children have in their life anymore. Is that dark to say?

She became quite emotional recounting her frustrations with students who do not share her curiosity for current affairs, some of which she considers a detriment to public happiness and well-being. Like other teachers, she divulged her efforts to achieve happiness *herself*, and marvelled at how pupils can appear so apathetic towards the very issues which weigh heavily on her own thoughts and emotions. She explained:

> In sociology you can throw out any subject and talk about what you think. I've brought some really controversial things to [my students] and I've just gotten nothing… There's no *fire* in their belly! There's no outrage for the way things are, or excitement about the way things are changing.

As Kim considered what she describes as a battle to engage with pupils, she pondered over her capacity to connect with them and how, notwithstanding outside influences, learning suffers without the presence of strong relationships in schools. She explained what she sees as a discouraging trend in classroom conduct:

> This is where I think we're actually losing the skill to build relationships… I think we're becoming more and more removed from it. So, I'm struggling. [Students] don't seem to interact terribly well with one another. They're not interacting with me. I don't know what to do.

According to teacher testimonies, among the greatest threats to children's happiness, one they believe greatly impacts both their personal and school lives, is the presence of social media. Adults spoke at length about the dangers of the internet, for instance, and how vulnerable it has made young people. Some teachers expressed genuine fear of online activity they maintain can trigger both emotional and physical damage. Cynthia [English Teacher], for example, drew a connection between struggling for self-acceptance, a conceivably normal facet of teenage life, and the enticement to harm oneself brought on by perverted corners of the internet:

> I would say social media has a big impact on all sorts of things: girls' perceptions of themselves, that fear of missing out, fear of the way you look compared to other people, access to awful things that can encourage you to be anorexic, for instance, [and] self-harming. Once you put something out there like that, on the internet… it becomes normalised. It gives students an idea. Whereas, if it weren't quite so out there, [such things] might not occur to them.

Again, in speaking about students' happiness, some teachers reverted to their own struggles to cope with changing times and, in this case, the mounting pressures of the digital age. Said Nate [Geography Teacher]:

> Social media is a big one. You create a digital version of yourself, which is the best version of yourself… I switched off from Facebook five years ago. I don't use it, because every time I go on [the platform] I see people getting engaged and having babies, etc. I don't need to be bombarded with people I'm not really friendly with. Whereas, when you're younger, it's difficult to disassociate because *everyone* is using these apps. [It's all about] *who* you're speaking to and *why* you're speaking to them and *how many* followers and *how many* 'likes' [you have].

Interestingly, I discovered when speaking with students that they expressed a much more mature understanding of, and degree of self-control over, social media than what their teachers alleged. While it is possible that students opted to reserve aspects about their personal lives with me or downplay the extent to which they *actually* participate on online platforms, their take on the matter was delivered quite convincingly. I should also note that, while teachers in most instances alluded to this topic of their own accord, students themselves did not; in each case, children offered their perspectives on social media usage only *after* I specifically inquired about it and its relation to happiness. Their feedback in this respect was surprising. Displaying an awareness of the façade of social media and how it contorts reality, David [Year 9 boy] remarked:

> [Some] people look too much at models and people who are much better looking than them. And then they say to themselves, 'Oh, why aren't I as good looking as them?'. But they use a bunch of filters and are looking at something that they'll never get because *it's not real*.

Two other students acknowledged that while some young people are unquestionably afflicted by the falsified images and ideas social media can manifest, and to which David and the teachers above were alluding, the issue is often overblown by adults and in the press. In their own words as to why they themselves do not always feel compelled to participate:

I don't think social media necessarily has as much of an impact as a lot of people make it out to… I just see a lot of people talking about how teenagers care so much about getting 'likes' on Instagram and how it's so bad for mental health. And while it might be true for some people, I feel it's exaggerated a bit. Because, for a lot of people I know, they just use social media to look up funny things and not necessarily to try and get as many followers as they can… Like, if I just spent the whole day on my phone, I'd feel like I wasted time. It's not very fulfilling.

Hannah, Year 10 girl

Personally, I really can't see the fuss about it. I think it's really blown out of proportion [and] a lot of older generations [worry]. There's always the option to delete the app or turn your phone off. When you're looking at the negative aspects of it, they're very easily avoided in my opinion… I could quite easily go without social media.

Michael, Year 12 boy

More pupils gave this impression of restraint, and even rejection, for sharing details of their private lives online and with people outside of their close family or friend circles. Again the notion of social media as 'wasted' time appears:

To be honest I don't have Instagram or WhatsApp. It's honestly my choice. As soon as my mom and dad gave me my phone, I [did not] straight away [think], 'Oh, I've gotta get everyone's contact, I've gotta know everyone'. No, I'm only gonna use it for the important things. I've done this thing where during the week I'll spend as little time as possible on my phone… because I want to use that time productively.

Patricia, Year 7 girl

It's not that [social media] is negative. I just only want my friends to know what I do in my personal life. They can know how much I scored at the match, or how much I got on the test, that's fine. I don't have time for [social media]. It's a waste of time.

Rajiv, Year 10 boy

In addition to reporting loving and supportive family upbringings and, by their own accounts, a healthy approach to social media usage, children conveyed a different interpretation from adults in distinguishing happiness occurring at home and in school. Whereas teachers perceived home life to be the greater influence over happiness in school, students often described the reverse: happiness in school, they said, often affects their relationships and stress levels at home. Natalie [Year 11 girl], for instance, recalled a period when mounting school pressure, specifically that associated with Year 11 testing, spilled over into her otherwise contented personal life:

I was happy with everything else in my life. Everything else was fine – family, friendships. But then [GCSEs] came along and it was just a shock. I was kind of

distant from my friends, I was getting into arguments with my family. When I was down, the mood in the house would go down.

For pupils, it seems that *positive* school experiences can even serve as a sort of productive distraction or haven, so to speak, from outside troubles or concerns. This is not to refute their suggestions that their home lives are *generally* pleasant, nor to suggest that their experiences in school are *always* positive; it is to mention that *on the occasions* when an outside issue arises, attending school can serve as an antidote. School is a place pupils spend most of their time, and thus feel incredibly connected to.

> [At school] I might be away from the problem and what caused it… Being busy can take your mind off it… If you're upset in like a nice lesson that you think will be fun it can help you.
>
> Olivia, Year 9 girl

> If something negative happens [outside of school], I may focus more in school. If anything, it may boost my academic performance. It's just something totally different to focus on, the structure.
>
> Michael, Year 12 boy

Later subthemes reveal the immense power of students' physical and emotional attachment to their school, a tie that is sometimes for better and sometimes for worse.

5.1.3 Health and well-being

Participants identified pupil happiness as a highly relevant category of school responsibility, one that holds special ramifications for their mental health, development and overall well-being. Student participants, in particular, emphasised a notable incentive and enthusiasm for attending school when it was a place they felt happy. Considering that hours spent in school constitute a significant portion of their young lives, they expressed a degree of entitlement to said happiness and the *excitement* for schooling it perpetuates.

> I think the school should be quite concerned with happiness because the school is responsible for the child five days a week. I spend more time here than I do at home, so my happiness at school is just as, if not *more than*, important as it is at home.
>
> Natalie, Year 11 girl

[Being happy in school] is the most important thing… If you're happy, then you don't wake up every day and go, 'Ugh'. You're not dreading Monday morning or Sunday night before school. You're excited to see your friends and go to the subjects you enjoy. And, if you're happy, then I think everything comes so much easier as well.

Michael, Year 12 boy

[School] should be a place where you can be happy to wake up every day and say, 'I'm going *there*!'.

David, Year 9 boy

Several participants offered the perspective that happiness directly affects students' *attitudes* towards learning and their *abilities* to both perform well academically and maintain positive relationships in school. By the same token, feelings of *un*happiness were associated with episodes of distraction and decreased motivation in class and during revision.

The happier you are, the less tension, the less worry you [feel]. And, so, you can concentrate and focus more… With that comes more desire to learn, a desire to help other people, and just a more generally positive attitude within a social group.

Nate, Geography Teacher

I think [school] should be a place where students are happy because if they are always miserable, like, 'Oh, I don't want to do this' or 'Oh, I don't want to do that'… it's not going to help them in the future. You're gonna want them to be happy in school so they learn more [and] they reach higher standards…

… If I'm not happy, I can't learn. Like, I'll just be focusing on that rather than getting on with the worksheet or listening to the teacher.

Patricia, Year 7 girl

You need 100% brain power to focus on what you're doing. And if you have something that you're upset about or whatever, that can disrupt your [performance]…

… If everyone's happy, everyone's gonna perform well. Everyone's gonna be nice to each other and it's gonna be a positive environment. And you don't want a school where everyone is negative.

David, Year 9 boy

Supporting pupil happiness in school, participants said, involves proper support channels that are both readily accessible and socially accepted. Again, themes of communication and trust between students and staff emerged as key components to serving children in this way. Whether by formal or informal means, participants saw a need for guidance of

this kind; a special forum, perhaps, for uncovering and addressing a student's source of unhappiness in a manner both encouraging and constructive.

> Just talking to someone [to] help them and kind of pinpoint what's making them unhappy. Because I think some people actually don't know what's making them unhappy... It doesn't have to be a one-to-one session or anything like that. But just maybe to get them thinking about it and, also, just to encourage them.
>
> Adam, Year 11 boy

> I think every [school] should have an expert in that field [of well-being] who could help that child. And it should not be so looked down upon like its bad... It's not all about needing help because there's something *wrong* with you, but it will benefit you.
>
> Natalie, Year 11 girl

Efforts to promote student well-being by the Academy have included lessons in Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) as part of fulfilling curriculum requirements and delivered most typically by students' form tutors during a tutorial period. It became exceedingly clear from pupil interviews and observations, however, that this window devoted to PSHE is taken as a sort of joke by students, who see these lessons as superficial and forced. This attitude was observed during a classroom visit when I heard a group of girls laughing about and mimicking a teacher who wants them to treat PHSE with importance. According to pupil participants, there is little that is *personal* about these lessons; they are held on rare occasions and are not made meaningful or with any connection to their own lives.

> Just the way it's done [laughs]... it's kind of done for just the sake of it being done. [Teachers] just show us the slides and swap through them... What I've experienced is [a focus on] the actual subject itself. Like, gaining the content. Apart from that, nothing really gets *talked* about.
>
> Adam, Year 11 boy

> No one takes it seriously. We had it once last year, a PSHE day.
>
> Natalie, Year 11 girl

According to Kim [Sociology Teacher], the new and supposedly improved model of PSHE requires teachers to rotate in conducting the lessons; this practice, she maintains, does not reflect what ought to be a school's mission to support longstanding relationships or thorough appreciation for a topic.

> I think the model they're moving towards, I would argue, is counterintuitive. But, I don't have a say in that. What they're doing is they're gonna move lessons so

that a different teacher will be teaching it every week. So, that instantly destroys that [pupil-teacher] bond.

Apart from PSHE, the Academy has organised self-directed lessons (SDLs) and whole school assemblies targeted at mindfulness. From the pupil perspective, these were equally unproductive and uninspiring. On what they said consisted primarily of 'quiet time', students expressed little interest or respect for these extracurricular activities, indicating that they neither grasped what mindfulness actually meant nor were invited to discuss it.

> Mindfulness [SDL] was more of a 'relax your mind and be in a quiet space'. And, I think, that definitely helps to an extent. You're just turning off. But I think sometimes people need to have an outlet to speak instead of being quiet. Sometimes people need to be loud, to be heard. And if they have issues going on, instead of being like, 'Now, be silent and close your eyes', be like, 'Shout! What do you need to say?'.
>
> Natalie, Year 11 girl

> [Teachers] don't *teach* it, they just have us take a 'mindful moment'. I don't know, like being quiet [laughs].
>
> Louisa, Year 12 girl

Though these efforts to improve pupil well-being have left much to be desired, some participants agreed that a properly conducted course would help give related subjects the gravitas they deserve. The key, they indicated, is to *legitimise* these lessons and to carry them out with greater preparedness and attention.

> Yeah, absolutely, there's potential there! I think obviously a lot of it depends on how it's orchestrated. I definitely think it's a great idea… And I think if it can be done in a way where it can be respected and appreciated, then all the better... The one thing I'd be concerned about is if it's taken as a bit of a joke and then there's a sort of cynicism around it. Then it could be sneered upon.
>
> Harry, Economics Teacher

> I think it should be a genuine lesson, like English, like maths... And I think that, if you have a group of people, and they're all in the class and you're all reading the same thing and listening... it [begins to feel that] you're all as one, and you feel less pressure on yourself…
>
> Natalie, Year 11 girl

From the excerpts below, it is evident that participants believe that *being well* is critical to, and even a pre-requisite for, achieving happiness. Attention to pupils' mental health, in particular, was seen as an issue that very much aligns with these discussions of well-being education. Words like 'stable' and 'content' appear, suggesting that, in order to be happy, one must be in a satisfactory mental condition. Whether they themselves had

struggled with this or knew of others who had, participants noted how carefully and urgently the subject of mental health ought to be attended to, not just for happiness in school, but also in life more generally.

> In [Western] culture, we look at mental health disorders a lot less than, like, physical illnesses... [Schools] should teach children about it because I don't think people really understand the actual dangers of mental health. And I think some people that struggle with mental health will never tell you they struggle because that's the battle they're fighting in their head…
>
> … It's literally about the foundation of yourself. If your mental health is deteriorating, then as a person you're not going to be content with anything. You're always going to feel like there's something missing. And I feel that's the most important thing to just be *happy*. To be able to say, 'I'm content with what's going on in my life right now'.
>
> <div align="right">Natalie, Year 11 girl</div>

> You can't just do anything with our minds and bodies. We are, for want of a better word, *caged* inside our own consciousness. And you've got to look after that. It can rip you to pieces.
>
> <div align="right">Harry, Economics Teacher</div>

> It has to do with your well-being. That, physically, you feel alright and also emotionally and mentally – mostly mentally – stable. I went through some issues of anxiety myself.
>
> <div align="right">Sarah, Year 12 girl</div>

Kim [Sociology Teacher], who previously ran the mindfulness SDL, shared that it was cut from the extracurricular programme when her teaching schedule grew too demanding and there was no other staff member available to lead the class. While admitting its limitations and challenges, she has since advocated for courses centred on pupil well-being to be placed on the Academy's timetable as a regular part of the curriculum. This stems from her experience that there is much to be gained for some students, even if it is not initially apparent. To help emphasise the potential for these kinds of classes, she shared one story of resilience training and pupil transformation that made a lasting impression on her as an educator:

> The difficulty with this work is that you don't get to see the fruits of your labour straight away... But, it was really enjoyable doing it and it feels like you're teaching them something about themselves that they didn't really know...
>
> … There was this one boy, in particular, who was just doing my head in. Like, a nice enough boy, but very loud, can't sit down, wired, really disruptive, really enjoyed winding people up around him who were less likeable sometimes. I

finished that course thinking, 'I dunno, maybe I was just babysitting. Who knows?'. Then about a year and a half later I bumped into him and he [said], 'You know what, miss? That mindfulness totally changed me. I decided that I didn't have to react the way that I did'. We had done a whole lesson on our choice to respond. He [said], 'So I just stopped getting into fights'. He just made that decision. Amazing! So that was incredible... Two weeks ago, he spoke at the Mindfulness in Schools Conference in Friends House. And that one boy will probably get me through the rest of my career, quite frankly, [and also] the idea of having had a positive impact... He was really honest and said he still used things from the course that worked well for him. And that's kind of our job, isn't it?

Still, Kim was quick to argue that, if a school positively affects the well-being of its students, it is *palpable throughout* that institution. The school atmosphere, she suggested, has far greater influence over pillars of pupils' well-being, including happiness, than what these lessons or assemblies are likely to provide.

I want well-being on the timetable and mindfulness to be part of that. I think that's really important. However, I don't think that makes you a 'well-being' school or a 'mindfulness' school. I think what makes you a 'well-being' school, or a 'happiness' school is that there is an *atmosphere* of that. And there are very small reminders throughout the day [such as] being kind to one another [or] a mention in an assembly where it doesn't feel like a big deal. You don't roll it out; it's just *there*. There are visuals around the place. There are students reminding one another during their learning. I think that's what makes the difference.

Don [Geography Teacher] shared a similar opinion about featuring well-being as a taught subject versus incorporating it into the foundation of everyday practice:

If it's just a one-off class a week, it's gonna be soon forgotten about. I mean [the Academy has] done that kind of stuff before. There was one a few years ago where we tried to teach children these dispositions and so on, but then we forgot about the rest of the curriculum so they didn't get the chance to practise those dispositions and practise how to work with other people [or] how to be resilient across the school and so on. So, those kinds of things have to be embedded across the *entire* school and it's got to be a systematic thing that everyone buys in to. Happiness as a concept – everyone's got to buy in to that. But, the best schools in the world will have those systems embedded and have that vision, that mantra, across the whole school.

For this across-school 'vision' of happiness and well-being to manifest, teacher participants said that a school must confront a building block on which it depends: *teacher* happiness. They said there are persisting difficulties of their job, for instance: lack of necessary support systems, administrative rifts and what can seem to be an

unmanageable workload. According to Nate [Geography Teacher], these are issues not unique to the Academy and are unfortunate realities endemic in the profession.

> There's a lot of things I think with [the Academy] that really wind people up, that make people dislike working here... There's a lot of issues in terms of how things are run [with] systems, how people want things run, or that people just want something done about an issue that hasn't been solved...
>
> … My friends that are teachers in other schools – people I did my training with – we all get together and complain about the same nonsense. And we deal with it...

The idea that teachers are deserving of a happy work environment and that fluctuations in their well-being directly influence that of their students, said Kim [Sociology Teacher], is shared between staff and parents alike. The problem, she maintains, is that, in targeting teacher well-being, schools sometimes focus on pampering their staff and highlighting what is going *well* while overlooking or failing to correct for the *causes* of their distress. Kim explained that, when the underlying sources of teachers' *un*happiness at work are not tackled, teachers are reluctant to participate in well-being activities put on by the school. The outcome, she said, is further frustration for both parties; teachers do not attend what the school offers, and administration does not investigate the reasons why.

> I had a conversation with a parent actually who wanted [to] talk about staff well-being. Because it was her feeling that, unless staff were happy and being taken care of, they'll have nothing left to offer to young people, which I totally agree with. So, I think a school needs happy staff to begin with, and that trickles down to students and feeds back up again...
>
> … We had a staff well-being event last Tuesday after school instead of training, but lots of people used the opportunity to work instead. And that's disappointing, because I feel like people obviously don't know how to make themselves happy and how to look after their own well-being...
>
> I don't think it's a secret. I think there's a lot we need to admit – that staff are unhappy – before we can start making them happier. Because if we don't acknowledge that people are struggling here and we're trying to put these things in place, and then say, 'There's all this on offer, so why are you complaining?'. That's what it feels like sometimes.

The fact that teachers opted to finish work in their offices rather than attend a staff well-being event, as Kim recalled, relates to what the participants below suggested is a significant challenge to teaching: achieving a healthy balance between work and private life. From their testimonies, it seems that they experience feelings of guilt and confliction when carving out time for themselves within what feels like an endless cycle of planning

and marking. Whether this comes from a place of commitment and wanting to support their students in their learning or a fear of falling behind schedule, they appeared to recognise the toll it takes not only on their happiness, but on their ability to perform their job at their best.

> What makes me unhappy is when I have no private life, hardly at all. And I'm either working or feeling guilty because I'm not working… It's always there [and] almost unbearable sometimes. And it's the thing that makes teachers leave teaching, I think.
>
> <div align="right">Cynthia, English Teacher</div>

> As a teacher, you tend to get quite good at managing yourself [and] managing your time. Because if you *don't* get good at that, you crumble. Or you leave the profession. Or you take a leave of absence for your own well-being. So, work/life balance is really important... [For example] if I go and have a meal with a friend after work instead of marking those books, I know I'll be happier. And if I'm happier, I'll do my job better. If I cancel the dinner and do the marking, by the time I go to bed, I'm wiped. I get up the next day and I'm tired. Not necessarily resentful, but not as happy as I would be. And, so, my teaching suffers.
>
> <div align="right">Nate, Geography Teacher</div>

It is worth noting that these struggles were felt even by the most positive of teachers I interviewed, Frieda [Spanish Teacher]. During our conversation, she expressed sincere appreciation for my feedback after visiting her classroom, joking that she sometimes thinks she would be happier working in a grocery store. After telling her how apparent it was that her students valued her and enjoyed her class, she said through tears:

> It's nice to hear sometimes, you know. Because sometimes I walk out of here and think, 'Why? Why am I here?'. I constantly joke about going to work in Sainsbury's and stock shelves, that that'd be a great thing to do. But really, it is nice to know that a snippet of what you do is seen and acknowledged and appreciated, so thank you.
>
> <div align="right">Frieda, Spanish Teacher</div>

The notion of maintaining a 'balance' described by teachers was also explicitly mentioned by students. It was children's understanding that happiness, while not to be expected *all* of the time in school, involves attention to multiple facets and responsibilities of life. Analogous to Nate's [Geography Teacher] story of deciding between marking papers and enjoying dinner with a friend, some students said that, even when reaching desired academic outcomes, spending too much time on revision can involve sacrifices which affect their happiness *overall*.

I feel it should be a balance... I don't think [happiness] should be prioritised above everything else, but I do definitely think that students should be able to be happy at school...

… If I had to summarise what happiness would be about, I feel like it would be about having a balance between the sense of accomplishment [and] also having a bit of pleasure... Not having too much work or too much pleasure.

Hannah, Year 10 girl

Happiness is more when you are fulfilled [and] is everything coming together. If you're fulfilled education wise, but when you're with your friends you're not fulfilled, that's an imbalance. You're [satisfied] in one thing, but you're not happy as a whole... And I think that, in Year 8 and when you're younger, it's less difficult to be content because you haven't really got much to think about. But as you get older, you have to manage everything and make sure everything is balanced. And I think that plays a big part in how happy you are.

Natalie, Year 11 girl

[Happiness is being] happy *most* of the time. So, not just in some parts of the day, but *wholly*, throughout your life.

Louisa, Year 12 girl

Part of what makes for this kind of balance in school, students indicated, is allowing for things such as pleasure, humour and laughter in conjunction with learning. Phrases that included the word 'enjoyment' permeate pupil descriptions of happiness during lessons, while they used similar terminology to describe their 'happiest' classmates. Michael [Year 12 boy], for example, characterised peers he perceives as being most happy as exhibiting a joyful, optimistic demeanour while also fulfilling school duties:

[They are] always smiling, laughing. They find work difficult, but, at the same time, they've got it under control. They don't really seem stressed… [They are] 'healthy' happy.

Posing a considerable challenge to achieving happiness in this way, pupil testimonies revealed, is a persistent feeling of tiredness and drained energy, often before the school day even begins. This was observed in a sociology classroom, where students appeared fatigued and struggled to maintain focus. One pupil was overheard saying, 'I'm so tired. I was falling asleep on the train'. The group she was sitting with proceeded to discuss how overwhelmed they were feeling by their mounting list of homework assignments and exam preparation. According to some participants, students are chronically sleepy at school due in part to the early start time, which they recognised as affecting their capabilities for both learning and happiness.

Other people I've heard of walk half an hour to school, [and some] taking an hour ride to school. And I'm just mind blown as to how they have that much energy to go through that...

<div align="right">Patricia, Year 7 girl</div>

I honestly think that for a lot of people waking up at 7:30am is quite early, and we're really tired and your brain hasn't woken up... We don't get enough sleep.

<div align="right">David, Year 9 boy</div>

So last night I came back at 9pm and I still had to study, eat and sleep. Then I came back to school... Sometimes it's hard for me and I think, 'Take a rest day, chill'. It's a 12-hour day. Mentally and physically, it's exhausting...

<div align="right">Rajiv, Year 10 boy</div>

Contributing to this fatigue, other participants suggested, are lengthy lessons which exceed a teenager's capacity for engagement in a learnt subject. Some thought it unreasonable, in fact, to expect that classrooms can function productively for such an amount of time and that pupils, or their teachers, benefit from such a demanding schedule.

It's exhausting. A double lesson is an hour and 50 minutes. And with a bunch of teenagers? Like, come on, really?!

<div align="right">Harry, Economics Teacher</div>

If [a teacher] sees the students feeling tired and low down and they're not really engaging with the class, [he or she] should say, 'You know what? Let's take a break'... My economics teacher [Harry] is the best at it; he teaches for an hour, then gives us a 10-minute break time, then we get back to work...

<div align="right">Rajiv, Year 10 boy</div>

Most of our days are eight hours long, and it's just really tiring. And it's really difficult. I wouldn't mind a productive eight hours, but it's not really, because no one can concentrate a full eight hours straight.

<div align="right">Hannah, Year 10 girl</div>

Finally, some students noted feelings of isolation and an inability to 'escape' from the academic pressures and routines of school. During what some describe as a marathon of exam preparedness, students say they become quite bored and lonely in school.

If you're constantly surrounded by work, and you're not having that separate time to be with your friends or something, that can take a toll and you can feel anxious and alone. Even if you're not alone, you can still *feel* alone.

<div align="right">Natalie, Year 11 girl</div>

[Happiness is affected by] a lot of things piling up. Feeling like it is all getting on top of you. You feel like you can't really escape…

… I'm just tired and bored of the same old same old… It feels like I'm replaying the week over and over again.

<div align="right">Michael, Year 12 boy</div>

The findings in this segment will relate later to participants' discussions of school priorities and re-shifting school practice to reflect the many ways in which students, they say, ought to be prepared for a happy and fulfilling life.

5.1.4 Teamwork and camaraderie

Pupil interviews revealed a kind of tension between a longing for collaborative opportunity and a need to compete against one another in school, particularly in terms of academic achievement. Students said they strive to perform 'the best' across their subjects and on exams, and as the two examples below illustrate, spoke frankly about what can feel like forced rivalry. Though they acknowledge it is not necessarily a welcomed quality of peer-to-peer relationships, they accept this degree of competition as an unavoidable element of compulsory education.

> The only way to succeed is for the rest to fail. Yes, it's a bad thing, but that's life. For example, in maths class, the guy who talks a lot, he thinks that the night before [a test] he'll just cram and do well. If they do well, well done. But, if they don't, it's their loss and it's my win.
>
> <div align="right">Rajiv, Year 10 boy</div>

> You have to be kind of selfish in a school environment in order to be successful… We all want to be the best in the world and all that. We all try and compete, and then things become harder.
>
> <div align="right">Karim, Year 12 boy</div>

Karim continued on to describe a sort of 'togetherness' experienced during primary school and how, from his perspective, it has been lost with the transition to secondary. From his recollection, earlier school years were hallmarked by inclusivity and joint determination, characteristics of schooling he wishes had persisted on through Year 12.

> Primary school for the win! Best time of my life… [Teachers would] say, 'Guys, in SATs, we're gonna work *together* [and] make it work really well [for everyone]' … No one ever made me feel like I am separate from the rest. We were all pushed together, no matter how bad the kid at the back of the class was, he was also pushed… You went [to school], it was fun, it was enthusiastic, you learnt things [and] you actually enjoyed learning.

On this topic, it was Harry's [Economics Teacher] view that shared endeavours and committing to a task or interest as part of a group are precisely what being human beings is about and help constitute a happy school experience for children.

> I really do believe strongly – and I know it's personal to me – [that] some sort of team activity where you're doing something together, whether it's music, or choir or sports… I really think those foster a sense of community and camaraderie and sort of celebrate what being human should be about.

This notion of teamwork as it relates to happiness is well represented by Michael's [Year 12 boy] story of deriving joy from persevering with his classmates as they prepared for GCSEs. While admitting that Year 11 was comparatively difficult with, for instance, its hefty workload and lofty expectations, he speaks fondly of this period for the pleasures it brought him in overcoming the exams as part of a shared and purposeful undertaking.

> Ah, Year 11 was my favourite year of school… I'm just not as excited [in Year 12] as I was in GCSEs…
>
> … I mean, there was the studying part and everyone knew they had to study and everyone *would* study. But, it's like everyone knew it was coming to an end… I think the fact that it was in a group made it so much better… Whereas, [in Year 12], you get people doing completely different subjects and wanting to do different things. It's more independent.

A strong consideration for students, one that was less explicitly mentioned by their teachers, was the amount of peer-to-peer interaction they receive during lessons. According to children, moments allocated to student dialogue and the exchanging of ideas helps to spark interest and make learning more enjoyable. Viewing the secondary classroom as somewhat outdated, some called for a more dynamic and inviting space, one that promotes participation.

> I think classrooms should be more interactive. So, like, I watched this video where it's talking about schools and how the classroom has barely changed over the past few decades. We think we've moved on, but we're still living in the same environment as people did back then. So, like, cars are changing, everything is changing around us, but we're still in the same classroom. So, I feel like it should be a bit more dynamic. [For instance], instead of being on separate tables and the teacher at the front, I think it should be like a table around the teacher and you're quite close [together].
>
> David, Year 9 boy

> I [would] definitely change the classrooms. That's the first point of contact a student goes to and where they spend most of their life. So, I think that needs to be

worked on. I [would] make it more interactive [so that] you feel more welcome in the classroom [and] it's not too quiet… Just generally more time to interact with others.

<div align="right">Sarah, Year 12 girl</div>

Occasions for said interaction and collaboration were described by other pupils as part of their happiest moments in school and what characterises some of their favourite classes. For instance, Karim [Year 12 boy] noted:

My happiest times are [in] politics class, and specifically in debates. It's just a lovely thing to have in a class. It's great because you get to debate with people, you get to argue with them and it's quite fun [smiles].

For Olivia [Year 9 girl], being inventive with her fellow classmates proved more important than necessarily being the best performer in her drama class.

Some teachers, they just give you sheet after sheet after sheet. And some teachers actually make it fun and let you interact with [the topic] … [For example], even though I don't count myself a good actor or actress, I just like doing it [and] making up the scenes as you go… [the whole class] contributing what could be better to it.

Reflecting on their own happiness in the workplace, teachers expressed a similar appreciation for cooperation and having co-workers with whom they get along personally and can depend on professionally. Recognising that the adult community can sometimes feel fragmented, teachers said they benefit from supporting one another, in both formal and informal settings.

We were a very small group to begin with [when the Academy was founded], so we had that space to invest time in one another. And we really helped each other out because we didn't have a building, it was all kind of ad hoc, and we were all just kind of in each other's space looking after one another. And that was brilliant. I think there's less of that now.

<div align="right">Kim, Sociology Teacher</div>

Moments in my department when everyone's working on a project together and they get really excited – that makes me really, really happy.

<div align="right">Cynthia, English Teacher</div>

One of the best traits of [the Academy] is actually the camaraderie among teachers. And I know it's not all the teachers, but there is a strong community. And teachers, they hang out or go for a drink on Friday and play football together and socialise.

<div align="right">Harry, Economics Teacher</div>

According to Michael [Year 12 boy], facilitating socialisation and teamwork amongst pupils can be fulfilled in part by prioritising sport activity on campus. For him, joining a football team in Year 7 had a remarkable effect on his attitude towards schooling and motivated him to remain enrolled.

> I'd say just get a half-decent pitch. And, although it seems like a small thing, I think that'd improve happiness massively. And more games would be played and teams [getting together]. It'd be something people had in common. And you can carry that on into Sixth Form, and then mates are made quicker…
>
> … I mean I enjoyed it and it's really what kept me at this school. I didn't enjoy school for the first term. But the fact that there was a football team, I enjoyed that…

Michael continued to explain how the benefits of highlighting sport would extend beyond immediate team members. Doing so, he believes, would encourage the entire school body to physically come together when it otherwise may not, joined in school spirit and sense of identity. It was Michael's opinion that, for many of his peers, attending a sporting event would allow them a safe and positive social gathering outside of their homes.

> A lot of people don't kind of come out. Like, they're not really allowed out on the weekends. So, if there's a reason – like, every Friday everyone's going to the match or whatever – then it's another way to make mates. Honestly a sports field would increase the happiness of students.

By virtue of promoting sport, two other participants noted, a school can also support pupils' ways of coping with stress and anxiety. Physical exercise, they explained, can provide an outlet for students wishing to release frustration or negative energy accumulated during the school day. They can play and exercise not just as part of a team or to maintain their physical health, but also to improve their emotional state.

> I think sports helps [pupils] not think about anything else but just the sport they're playing. It balances everything so you're relieving all of the stress and helping yourself. 'Cause some people don't like to talk about their issues, and I think sport is a way for people to [cope].
>
> Natalie, Year 11 girl

> I feel sport is so key. *Exercise* is so key. For myself, when I was in school, if I didn't have exercise every day after school, I would just implode on myself. And even now, when I do my job, if I don't regularly exercise, I just feel my whole mood going completely to pot.
>
> Harry, Economics Teacher

These concepts of shared pride in one's school and engaging in communal activity as contributors to student happiness relate very much to participants' call for creative expression and recognising one another for the different talents and abilities each person brings, topics that are both addressed later in this chapter.

5.2 Theme of language and behaviour

The second major theme to emerge from the data is how happiness is affected by the *language* and *behaviour* exhibited by both staff and students in school. Comprising this theme are four key subtopics on which to elaborate: 1) the devising of and adhering to a proper code of disciplinary conduct in the classroom, 2) teachers setting an environmental tone for their pupils according to the ways they speak and behave, 3) addressing students' perceptions of fairness and their desires for participation and communication and 4) placing kindness at the forefront of in-school relations.

5.2.1 Decoding discipline

On the challenges to pupil happiness in school, one issue was universally agreed upon among participants: discipline. Each individual mentioned to some extent the handling of poor behaviour and the attention and energy it absorbs on a near-daily basis. This problem is primarily evident in classrooms where, says Cynthia [English Teacher], teachers struggle to maintain control of large numbers of students. Speaking with noticeable irritation, she described the particular toll disciplinary issues take on the classroom climate:

> When you've got 30 in a room [it's like], what's that game? Whack-a-mole. Where you've got *one* there and *one* there. That poisons the atmosphere.

This situation is exacerbated, Hannah [Year 10 girl] suggested, by the 'open classroom' model the Academy adopts.

> The open classrooms are worse in terms of student behaviour and how people behave. I feel like there is a difference between how students will behave in open classrooms compared to the closed ones.

I gathered from participant interviews that many felt that hurtful or inappropriate action was not met aggressively enough in school. Classroom observations confirmed this notion, where the poor behaviour I witnessed was tolerated to an astonishing degree. The

incidents observed included pupils teasing their teachers, pupils shouting over their classmates, arguments between teachers and students in the exposed walkways between the 'open' classrooms, pupils refusing to do their work and teachers turning a blind eye to other forms of misconduct.

For two teachers, Harry and Frieda, lack of consistent disciplinary action breeds a kind of school culture where misbehaved pupils are not incentivised to change course, and those who *do* abide by the rules are left to endure their conduct.

> I think that [discipline] comes from a general *ethos* in a school, a general *culture* in a school… When people feel like you can do or say something to affect the welfare of another student, and then there's no real repercussions for them, or there's no real community for [the victim] to feel safe, I think that's a really damaging thing for a school, and for happiness.
>
> Harry, Economics Teacher

> What I feel happens here is there is not enough consequential action to actually hinder particular students who will continue to offend. For me, it starts breeding a culture of 'couldn't give a [expletive], because what's actually going to happen to me at the end of the day?'.
>
> Frieda, Spanish Teacher

The want of swift response to misconduct may be partially understood by reviewing the Academy's disciplinary policy, a system that relies on a series of colour-coded 'warnings', each with their own degree of severity and retribution. Nate [Geography Teacher] explained the steps teachers are *advised* to follow:

> First transgression, yellow warning. I'm giving them a yellow warning because [they are] talking while I'm talking and that's disrespectful. Amber warning [means] even though you've been told earlier on in today's lesson that you shouldn't be talking over me, you're still talking… If you continue to do this, you'll be on red warning and [then] detention.

Nate further explained that, while keeping track of each child and the number of warnings they have accumulated that day can be tedious, he tries his best to comply with the policy. When visiting his classroom, I realised that much of the lesson indeed involved pausing the activity, addressing the issue and recording on the blackboard a list of names and their associated colours. No child was dealt with individually or beyond these measures, and those receiving the warnings appeared undeterred.

This seemingly mild treatment for poor behaviour does not go unnoticed by pupils, like Patricia [Year 7 girl], who, while attempting to concentrate in class, grows frustrated by her teachers' actions, or lack thereof.

> I've seen some of my teachers – they're trying to be nice – giving [the misbehaved children] five chances and they're *still* not sending them out of the class. And everyone's trying to learn, and those people are just messing with their heads, winding them up…When I'm angry I keep it to myself [because] I can't tell the teacher to do their job, like, 'Can you please send them out of the class?'.

The prospect of detention, the final and most serious result in the procession of colour warnings, did not seem to concern pupils. Though the reasons for this could vary, it seemed that detention itself was not regarded as a worrisome or shameful outcome. Teachers elaborated on this observation, explaining that little is accomplished by assigning detention and that doing so ultimately adds to *their* workload.

> If you give a student detention, it almost feels like you're giving yourself detention. It's a bit of a mess.
>> Harry, Economics Teacher

> Detention here is sort of free time and lunch time, five to 15 minutes conversation with a teacher and cleaning up the space… [I myself] try not to give out too many detentions because it's time consuming for me.
>> Nate, Geography Teacher

Said Kim [Sociology Teacher], playing the role of disciplinarian can also lead teachers to internalise the poor attitudes exhibited by their students.

> When students' behaviour is bad, we feed into that quite a lot by being negative as well.

Among pupils, there was a shared perspective that misbehaved children demand a considerable amount of class time, interfering with their ability to concentrate and general productivity. This is important, as is detailed later, because students' feelings of accomplishment are quite closely tied to their happiness in school. These disruptions, many said, make them feel that lessons are "wasted" and perpetuate a cycle of boredom and frustration for all.

It's difficult with the misbehaved children and the way they always talk back, which means it elongates the process of the teacher trying to get them to focus, which makes it more difficult for me to do the task on the board and actually learn new things.

Patricia, Year 7 girl

I don't feel happy when other people disrupt the lesson, and so I don't learn as much as I could. I have this teacher, and she can't really control her class. So, like, no one really listens to her, 'cause obviously there's loud people who aren't listening. And when she *does* get her class silent, she just gives us sheets. And it just goes back to being loud again because we don't want to do sheets… And it gets to the point where it's just boring and we don't want to do it no more.

David, Year 9 boy

People in my classes don't really give a chance for the teacher to actually teach, and I feel there's just a lot of time spent doing nothing, not really learning or taking anything in. And even in my top set classes, there are quite a lot of people who are badly behaved… I feel like I can't really do anything to solve it and it just feels like time wasted…

Hannah, Year 10 girl

For a couple of students, anxiety brought on by classmates' poor behaviour transcended beyond their immediate classroom setting; they were afraid for how these children would affect their future successes.

I can get annoyed at school when people don't allow me to work [and] they carry on misbehaving and I don't get as far as I should be going… I only get four years until I do a really important test that will choose the rest of my careers and the rest of my life, so I'm trying to use that time wisely.

Patricia, Year 7 girl

It's just, the actions they take… I'm scared they're gonna affect, in some way, me in the future. And I don't like that. That's what puts me off. I'm scared they're [going to] affect me and what I'm going to [be able to] do.

Karim, Year 12 boy

In managing behaviour, teachers said, there must be procedural *consistency*. What students require, some suggested, are clear messages regarding cause and consequence.

[There should exist] a sense of structures that are very clear-cut for students [because] if you're confused by cause and consequence, then often you'll find yourself in a situation where you [receive] a negative consequence. And [we need] really clear guidelines for the staff to implement.

Nate, Geography Teacher

I'm very matter-of-fact with [students]… They know I will give as good as I get, and I will not put up with [it]. So, I think students have learnt very much how to

manage me. And I think that also is key. There's consistency. I am consistent with the same things over and over again. [For example,] students will come in [wearing] hoodies. Not having it. Headphones? Not having it. They just *know*… And I think if there's a clear message being sent on actions [this school] would be a completely different place of learning.

Frieda, Spanish Teacher

Frieda continued to explain that, in her experience, students respond positively to boundaries, the appreciation for which intertwines with their feelings of security in school and respect for their teacher. To illustrate the importance of consistency when correcting for poor behaviour, she told the story of a particular male pupil whose attitude shifted as a result of such practice.

There were times I left that class and I wanted to bawl my eyes out. He had done my head in. He wouldn't quit. But, actually, he's a very sweet boy [and has] actually gotten better. And I think that's because I've been consistent with him from day one…

… There was a turning point one day when I thought, 'This boy hates me'. But, I think things have changed. One day [he looked at me] and he just says, 'You like Haribo [candy] don't you, Ms?'. [The boy] just pulls out a bag of Haribo and I'm trying not to cry… He bought me these sweets and says, 'Well, Ms, I bought them for you 'cause you're my favourite teacher. You know, Ms, you just do so much for us, and you're such a good teacher'. And I thought this boy hated me because I'm [always] having to correct him. Always, always on him…

…And it compounded for me how much students need boundaries, and how much they get from me. Because when they know their limitations with you, they know what they're allowed to do and what you're not allowed to do. They feel *secure* in that space. If I was constantly giving this kid different messages all the time, he'd be so confused. And, actually, there is much to be said for having those set expectations, having those boundaries, and having that firm stance with [pupils].

Frieda, Spanish Teacher

To evidence Frieda's point, David [Year 9 boy] remarked on her specifically in explaining how happiness is affected by proper classroom management.

So, like, I really enjoyed today because it was Spanish today and my teacher is really nice, and she can be quite aggressive if she needs to be. And that's what I like, because if someone gets out of line, they can't really because my teacher [won't allow it].

David, Year 9 boy

For several participants, considering the *context* of the behaviour and addressing any underlying issues ought to be key considerations for disciplinary policy and practice. For Nate, this means reaching out to other members of staff and collectively getting to the

root of the problem, while Frieda believes some teachers unfortunately deflect such measures.

> I don't always know a lot about my kids, but there are behaviour issues a lot. So, [if] I'm reporting it frequently and having conversations with Heads of Houses, I understand the context more. It doesn't necessarily help me make them learn better [and] it doesn't necessarily make them happier, but it does mean that I'm not making it worse in terms of my interactions with them.
>
> Nate, Geography Teacher

> Some teachers flout it and just want kids removed, when, really, they could try to actually deal with the problem.
>
> Frieda, Spanish Teacher

Pupils held similar opinions about uprooting the causes for student disruption, rather than administering punishment alone, as a means to resolving the issue. It was Natalie's [Year 11 girl] impression, for instance, that students misbehave in school precisely because they are *unhappy,* and that more "productive" methods of improving students' behaviour might include conversation.

> I think [teachers] see a child that is maybe troubled or is misbehaving [but] I don't think they realise that some people act out because they're unhappy [and] I think they should be more wary. [They should say], 'Okay, let's have a meeting. Not because you're in trouble, but let's see what's actually going on. Why are you acting out? What is the behavioural issue?'…
>
> …I guess some teachers don't think about you… Instead of giving them detention, you could give them something else… [Teachers ought to be] doing something productive. You're not wasting their time or your time.

While discipline poses a challenge to school operation and inhibits the happiness of pupils *and* their teachers, this issue is likely tied to a second subtheme of language and behaviour: the general *tone* teachers set in their classrooms.

5.2.2 Setting the tone

A common thread connecting participant testimonies is the notion that pupil attitude and behaviour fluctuate according to their *teacher* and the particular *environment* that teacher helps cultivate. While most examples of these subjects came from student interviews, it should first be noted how teachers described colleagues who are often quick to speak ill of their jobs and direct attention to the negative aspects of working in a school.

> People don't like to say they're happy. They like to say they're miserable.
>
> Cynthia, English Teacher

> People want to complain. And I don't think you'll go to any school and not have anyone say, 'Oh, no, this school is a perfect school, all systems work, we all get along, kids are brilliant, [etc.] …'. You'll *never* get that. I think we get lost in our own nonsense.
>
> Nate, Geography Teacher

> I think as teachers we can be very quick to highlight when things aren't going well or when things are negative… I think by nature we want to be happy, but there's so much going on that kind of feeds into our negative bias.
>
> Kim, Sociology Teacher

From some descriptions, it appears these tendencies for cynicism and "negative bias" have palpable effects throughout the school, spreading to other individuals who both sense and assume them.

> Sometimes I do get the feeling there's an awful lot of unhappy people [at this school].
>
> Cynthia, English Teacher

> A happy [person] feels anger, sadness, frustration [and] recovers from them. And if we're all feeling those things in this building and recovering from it, it's fine; if we're all feeing it and harbouring it, that creates a certain atmosphere, doesn't it?
>
> Kim, Sociology Teacher

Though I cannot speak with certainty on the thoughts or feelings of some of the teachers I observed, there was adult behaviour occurring during my classroom visits that may be classified as unprofessional. In a Year 10 maths class, for example, the teacher appeared flustered and dismissive towards many of her students who asked for help with a worksheet. One boy, for instance, asked for a replacement pen - to which she replied a definitive "no" - and proceeded to sit silently with his hands on his head unable to work for the remainder of class. There were few signs of respect in either direction, and neither teacher nor pupils displayed much enthusiasm for the lesson. At one point, she turned to me and said in a voice loud enough for the children to hear, "They are terrible. Just terrible". In a separate Year 9 English classroom, the teacher behaved rather apathetically towards both his students and the topic, virtually ignoring children who were playing games on their phones or talking amongst themselves. One student was even sleeping. As I got up to leave, he turned towards me and rolled his eyes as if to communicate his annoyance. The fact that this was in front of his pupils made this gesture especially

disappointing. I should add that, when entering a classroom as part of a scheduled observation, most teachers did not introduce me to their students or explain why I was joining their lesson that day. Though they were not necessarily required to do so, I took notice of pupils' curiosity that was often left unattended and the general tension it created.

While some discussion of teacher unhappiness in the workplace has been covered earlier in this chapter, I will focus here on how adult actions and attitudes establish the tone of a classroom, thus affecting *pupil* happiness. Interview and observation data suggest that, for instance, teachers miss opportunities to connect lesson material to the real lives of their students. This was the case in a Year 12 English class, where the teacher was lecturing on Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, a provocative novel with themes of love, race, murder, betrayal and violence. These applicable and thought-provoking topics are rich with potential in the classroom context; however, no class discussion or questions were encouraged. In another scenario, when visiting a Year 12 sociology lesson on observational research in school settings, I was surprised that the teacher did not pause to illustrate for her students the relevancy of my project or how my practices in their school related to the precise methods she was attempting to teach. At one point, a female student commented, "Researchers should study teachers as well [as students], because they have a unique perspective. Everyone's been a student, but not everyone's been a teacher". I was encouraged to hear that students value their teachers' point of view, and would have been eager to share, even briefly, my own justification and strategies for incorporating the teacher perspective in educational research. While it is possible that the teacher in this case either missed the connection or was simply uncomfortable with the idea of my participation, this too seemed an unrealised learning opportunity.

As Kim [Sociology Teacher] explained, teachers can become preoccupied with 'to-do' lists and seemingly mundane matters that cloud their focus. She described her own recurring thoughts throughout the school day:

> How do I get this entire class to just be quiet? How can I make sure the results this year are good? What's coming next? We're always thinking, 'Oh gosh, I've got this group at this time' or 'Have I done this thing?'.

Among the reasons why classroom teaching has become, in Harry's [Economics Teacher] words, "formulaic" and "technical" in its delivery is what he and other participants view

as the UK education system's increasing value on standardised testing and academic marks. Many described with disdain the amount of stress and pressure associated with exams, particularly the GCSE qualifications in Year 11. "Testing", said Nate [Geography Teacher], "is the bane of every teacher's life".

The extent to which testing dictates individuals' tasks and attention was observed in two classrooms. In the first, Harry's own, students were meant to be taking written notes during a PowerPoint presentation. Watching closely, I realised that they were much more concerned with recording the information they would *specifically* require for an examination, dismissing the rest. Similarly, in a sociology classroom, the single objective of the period was to "focus on test improvement"; students were given their latest exam and told to review it individually and in silence. The teacher said, "Things are about to get very real" and then left the students to consult their exams without much structure, direction or collaboration. They appeared particularly bored by this assignment and stared quietly at the paper before them for the entirety of my visit.

Cynthia [English Teacher] reflected on the impact high-stakes testing has had on happiness in school and how the strain placed on teachers, and subsequently their students, has progressed during the course of her career. She described the dilemma of holding teachers to a certain standard while attributing so much energy to exams that it generates, as one of her pupils put it, a "toxic environment".

> [As part of an assignment, a pupil] talked about the 'toxic environment' that teachers create by their own anxiety of putting pressure on students to do well in exams. When I started [teaching], I definitely didn't feel that pressure. And I think my students were a whole lot happier in my classes and they did as well [academically] as they're doing now. But I can't seem to return to those days because we're constantly held to account – and teachers have to be held to account – but this focus on exams doesn't create happiness.
>
> Cynthia, English Teacher

Several students remarked at how the stress associated with GCSE exams in particular begins early in secondary education, concerning young cohorts well before the testing period. As mock examinations and preparations build, some were worried about achieving high marks and what the outcome might mean for their future life and career prospects.

In the [upper] Years you get quite stressed and anxious because [you think] you're gonna do bad in your GCSEs… I want to get decent GCSEs and I feel quite nervous in the fact that if I don't [perform well], then I won't get what I want…

… [Teenagers feel] probably a mix between stress and anxiety… And there are all these expectations that you have to live up to…

… They're starting to [administer mock exams], like foundation exams where they start to test you. If [I] do bad on them, I feel like, *'Oh no*, I'm gonna do bad on the real thing*'.

David, Year 9 boy

Some people - and it's not even in our Year - some [younger] people, they're [increasingly] stressed for GCSEs. To me that's kind of crazy.

Adam, Year 11 boy

Interestingly, two of the students who had completed their GCSEs shared the view that the period *preceding* the exams was worse than the actual testing experience. Natalie [Year 11 girl], who had recently sat her exams the month prior, said:

In the months leading up to GCSEs I was always upset… When there was so much pressure on me, I was crush[ed]. I didn't believe I could do it… [The period] before my exams was 100 times worse than the actual exams because I was just so nervous and so scared.

Karim [Year 12 boy] elaborated on the nervousness associated with the pre-exam period, attributing much of the stress to teachers he says project these emotions onto their students. Speaking intensely, he suggested that exams are treated as a be-all and end-all in school, the process by which leads him to doubt his opportunities and aspirations for the future.

I hate my school life. I absolutely do. I don't like it anymore… [Teachers] talk about competition [and] exam stress. That stresses me out more than the actual test itself. You're talking about it so much as if it's the last option in life… If you want everyone to feel positive about it, don't make it seem like it's the last [opportunity to display your knowledge and skills] … I don't want to think about Plan Bs yet; I want to think of Plan A.

Persistent mention of and attention to upcoming exams, pupils indicated, heighten feelings of annoyance, anxiety and self-doubt.

We had an assembly yesterday saying that these three, four years [of secondary school] will be the most stressful of your life… Sometimes I just think, 'Why do I even continue? There's no point'.

Rajiv, Year 10 boy

They always do 'The Countdown' [to the exam]. But, mentally, it's not helping [pupils] because if they're counting down in days and hours and seconds 'till the exam, it just makes them more anxious. And I just think you should focus on where you're at instead of focusing on days [to go]. I think that's quite unnecessary.

Sarah, Year 12 girl

We act like [grades are] the most important thing in our lives and our lives depend on it. Just continuous reminders like, 'Exam, exam, exam, exam'.

Karim, Year 12 boy

A few pupils described use of threatening language by teachers and other staff members, a practice they found irritating and disheartening. Natalie [Year 11 girl] gave an especially compelling testimony about the power of words in this context, and how teachers' comments stick with and are believed by pupils who look to them as role models and for guidance.

In Year 11, some of the teachers were very much like, 'Do your work. You're not gonna get good grades' [or] 'You're not gonna get accepted to *this* school'. And it's just kind of, like, that's not gonna make people want to do better. That's not gonna make people feel they have a chance of doing anything…

… As an adult, you should know you can't say to a child, 'You're going to fail'. That's not motivational. That's just putting me down. In different situations, fear can motivate people. Like, if you're getting chased by a lion! This is how I thought of the test: *it's going to attack me*. I thought my whole life, my future [was compromised]. They told me, 'This is what steers your future. If you fail these, you fail [later]'…

…I'm believing you because you're the role model here. You're here to tell me the right things [and I] believe you because you're the teacher. You're the role model. I've been put here to listen to what you're saying and take it all in.

The aura of negativity participants describe is further illustrated by my discussions with some pupils, who, when asked about the prospects of schooling for happiness, expressed a degree of pessimism about possibilities and the powers that be. For the three boys below, schooling was expected at times to be painful and unfair. Happiness for them was something to be experienced *after* compulsory schooling, once they were adults in positions to make decisions for themselves and were far removed from a system in which they have little confidence.

Honestly, there are a lot of things [that], because of circumstances, just can't happen. Just in the way education works. And there's always a higher end of

society… You [can] have bright ideas for the school, and you think it's gonna work, but there is just lots of things that just shut you down from making it reality.

David, Year 9 boy

[In school one learns to] now suffer the pain and then, in the future, enjoy your life.

Rajiv, Year 10 boy

It's a domino effect. Students are restricted because of the teacher, teachers are restricted because of the Head Teacher, and the Head Teacher is restricted because of the UK's education system… Like, currently, a couple of old people [working in government] are picking what happens for students [in school and how] they do exams. How is that fair?... I can't do anything about it, [though] I want to.

Karim, Year 12 boy

On the peculiar contagion of emotions in school, Nate [Geography Teacher] explained that, from his perspective as an educator, negativity invites feelings of despair and helplessness, while maintaining a positive attitude can enhance concentration and motivation.

If you're happy, and you're positive, then you tend to find that people like you more. When you're pessimistic and negative, you tend to find that people dislike you, which only feeds into your pessimism and negativity. [You think], 'The whole world's out to get me. Why should I bother learning? It's pointless anyway'. Whereas, if you're happy, [one thinks], 'Yea this topic isn't very interesting, but I'll do well and get good marks and maybe it will come in use some time'. There is that link between happiness and positivity.

Nate, Geography Teacher

Pupil participants also linked happiness with positivity, drawing reference to their abilities to maintain focus and excel in school.

If you're happy, you're in a mood to work [and] you've got to have a focused mindset.

David, Year 9 boy

If you don't have a positive mindset, you can't really do well… There's no point in being low down, 'cause you won't achieve anything.

Rajiv, Year 10 boy

Said Karim [Year 12 boy], an 'ideal' school for happiness emphasises positivity in its approach to failure; the focus isn't on the undesirable outcome, but on expressing determination and optimism going forward.

In my [dream] school, I just care about positivity… At the end of the day [teachers say], 'You got a bad grade? That's fine. What are you gonna do for next time to improve it and become better?'.

In addition to explaining the tone of their schooling environment, participants shared opinions on how teacher attitude and behaviour could be improved. For two older students reflecting on their secondary school experiences, expressions of encouragement and faith from their teachers would have made a considerable difference.

I think reassurance that everything will be okay regardless of the grades you get. The thing I've heard the most is, 'You don't want to be crying on results day if you don't get the results that you want'. But it's not the results *I* want; it's the results *you guys* want for me… They should have reassured us a lot, lot more, rather than scaring us and telling us we're all gonna fail. That did not help at all.

Natalie, Year 11 girl

Encourage us more! Sometimes they just remind us of the workload and things to do. But, like, also encourag[e] [and] motivat[e] like, 'You can do *this*' [or] '*That* is possible'. I feel like that would make me happy… If people would just motivate me more, that would also increase the drive [to do well].

Sarah, Year 12 girl

For Nate [Geography Teacher], teachers can make positivity more visible in the classroom by rewarding good behaviour, for example through delivering verbal praise or by calling parents to share how their child is progressing.

It really depends on the individual teacher as to how positive that classroom is. I try and promote positivity as much as possible… [For example], first look for the positives. Who is doing well? Point them out [and say], 'Well done'… [Also] I ring their parents to say how well they're doing…

… I'm trying my best to be as positive as possible, reward[ing] that positive behaviour and creat[ing] a culture of positive learning… I'd like to think there's a positive atmosphere in the school [but] whether our efforts are successful or not is hard to say.

Nate, Geography Teacher

According to some, the challenge of setting a positive tone in classrooms lies not only in how teachers *speak* to pupils, but the attuites they *model* physically; for instance, engaging authentically with the topics they teach and investing in their students as people.

If you're just expecting them to hang on to your every word and be model pupils without modelling human interaction, I don't see how that works. Don't get me wrong, I'm not an example of personality in every lesson I go in to. Sometimes I'm having a real [bad] day. And the students can feel that. And I'm aware of that.

> But I think if your intention is to at least *try* to invest in each other, you get that back.
>
> Kim, Sociology Teacher

> I think the attitudes of the teachers has to change… If the teachers themselves aren't interested, you can't expect children to be interested in [the topic]. The teachers are basically our role models for five days of the week. We're here all the time.
>
> Natalie, Year 11 girl

It is appropriate here to describe a specific observation that stood out from the rest, a visit to Frieda's [Spanish Teacher] classroom. Upon entering the room, I immediately took note of the warm and cheerful atmosphere. Frieda was visibly excited to see each of her pupils as they walked in the door and began to ask them about their day, extending the same friendliness to me. Individuals were joyful and playful, and Frieda spoke with a resounding and enthusiastic voice. The class was fun and interactive, each individual alert and on their toes. There was a clear mutual respect between Frieda and her pupils, and she addressed them directly and with a genuine curiosity. Based on these observations, and my interviews with participants, this classroom most embodied the kind of *tone* closely associated with happiness in school.

During my interview with Frieda herself, she suggested that, in monitoring what she refers to as "classroom culture", teachers must also keep a certain perspective and consider as part of their teaching the particular time, space and group of students. One cannot expect each class to operate the same way, she said, and it is critical to assess the context and act accordingly.

> It depends on when you teach these children. If you get them after lunch and they're all sugared up, you could have a barrel of carnage. Whereas, first thing in the morning, [you] know half of them are half asleep because they've dragged out of bed half an hour before. Let's be honest. It is very much as well understanding the correlation between *when* you teach children, *how* you teach them and *who* [they] are.

Finally, a few participants acknowledged that part of being human means that neither teachers nor students will be happy or positive all the time in school. Speaking empathetically, they implied that, while each individual can and should do their best, our inherent emotionality means we ought not to expect perfection from one another.

We're all human beings out here. No secure teacher can sit there and say that their mood cannot affect their teaching.

<div align="right">Frieda, Spanish Teacher</div>

The teacher is a human being, too, and they're just trying to help you… They're trying their best, and you should too.

<div align="right">David, Year 9 boy</div>

5.2.3 Fairness and communication

When recounting the ways in which language and behaviour affect pupil happiness, several participants spoke about notions of *fairness* occurring in school. It was clear from student testimonies in particular that, when interpreting a situation as somehow unjust, children can adopt negative attitudes towards their teachers and, in some cases, become discouraged from participating in class and other school-related activities. For Louisa [Year 12 girl], this sort of frustration emerges when teachers do not keep their word or fail to fulfil commitments they make to students.

I think a lot of the time they say they're going to do things, but they never actually happen. Like taking [field] trips.

Her point relates to what the data suggests is a perceived double standard; to students, teachers at times expect certain behaviour without holding themselves similarly accountable. While visiting a Year 11 English classroom, I observed this phenomenon when the teacher came to class with the wrong materials and was unable to teach the day's allocated lesson. She came to this realisation only after her students recognised the issue and was forced to improvise a new lesson. Her students appeared visibly irritated as she took several minutes to organise new tasks for the class. Later in the period, she scolded two students for not having their textbooks and for being "unprepared". Though these students tried to offer explanations, she spoke over them and insisted their position was "inexcusable". This resulted in visible body language which indicated a bitterness between the two. That her position as authority figure necessarily warrants certain privileges is perhaps beside the point; what matters here is that her students reacted negatively to what they likely regarded as hypocritical behaviour.

According to Karim [Year 12 boy], pressing teachers for explanations about how they conduct their classrooms is sometimes outright dismissed or labelled as "complaining".

If I see there's room for improvement, no matter how [small], I will point it out [to the teacher] … I always want [class] to be the best it could be. But the problem is, ya know, it gets to a point where people think you're complaining… No matter what you do, and no matter [what you say], people [view] it as an excuse. And people say, 'You should be working harder', even if it's not your fault.

Karim's attempts to challenge his teachers corresponded closely to a few of my specific classroom observations. In the first instance, a Year 12 sociology teacher was giving a lesson on sociological research methods, focusing on 'structured observations', or ones that watch and record the frequency or duration of predefined behaviours, such as 'the teacher asked a question'. She also mentioned the Hawthorne Effect, the theory that observed individuals alter their behaviour in order to please the observer, and thus present an ethical issue to the research taking place. To demonstrate the concept of a structured observation, she asked half of her students to observe her own teaching behaviour for 10 minutes while she delivered a sample lesson to the second half of the class. The group of 'researchers' was given a pre-set list of behaviours for which to watch their teacher for and record in quantity. When this activity concluded, every *positive* behaviour on the list had been successfully 'observed'. Noticing this, one pupil said to the teacher, 'But, you *knew* we were recording your behaviour', implying that the validity of the 'study' was compromised. The teacher laughed at this suggestion and said, 'Yes, but I obviously didn't *change* my behaviour [to meet the list of desirable behaviours]'. To this the pupil curiously replied, 'Well, you can't be sure'. The teacher had seemingly contradicted herself in struggling to prove her point, though shied away from discussing the topic further when other students sought clarification. Though she had reiterated at the start of class that her pupils were expected to grasp these sociological concepts, she left the matter alone and moved on with the lesson. The end result was a discernible vexation on the part of the pupils, who gestured towards each other with shrugs and eye rolls.

During a separate visit to a Year 10 economics classroom, I observed a pupil point out during the teacher's PowerPoint presentation that one of the statistics on a slide was, to his knowledge, incorrect. Rather than engaging with the child or pausing to investigate the subject, the teacher disregarded the pupil's comment and continued with his lesson. The boy became aggravated and, though he continued to enquire about the slide's (mis)information, the teacher ignored his request. I should mention again that there are possible factors for which I was unaware that might have helped to explain these kinds of teacher-student interactions. Without knowing the whole story, so to speak, these

descriptions of classroom behaviour help to illustrate some of the irritations student participants describe in being treated 'unfairly' in school.

The data suggests that among the ways in which students can interpret a situation or an event as unfair is when they believe they are subjected to 'black and white' judgements on behalf of their teachers. David [Year 9 boy], for example, described the prospect of getting into trouble despite his being an innocent bystander to a group of misbehaved children. More upsetting than the actual punishment, he explained, are the adult reactions he says he receives in trying to redeem himself.

> A lot of the time teachers just see black and white. And if there's a bunch of people talking, or a large group doing something [wrong], and you've been caught in the crossfire and get in trouble for it, then I'd say, 'Well, that wasn't actually me. I was just in that vicinity when it happened'… I try to get my opinion across a lot of the time and say, 'This is wrong' or 'I don't agree with this'. [Teachers] don't like me for it because I give my opinion when they don't want to hear it.

For Karim [Year 12 boy], similar emotions have arisen as a result of unsuccessful group projects, for example when he has assumed the bulk of the responsibility or been forced to work with partners who do not adequately contribute. The part of the process that frustrates him the most, however, is the feedback he receives from his teachers, and what he feels is their unwillingness to recognise his individual effort apart from those of his non-participatory classmates.

> In some of the [collaborative assignments], I have to do the work 'cause no one else is bothered to do [it]… The only part that [angers me] is at the end [teachers say], 'Ah, you should improve on this', 'You should do this'… It's just, like, *I'm trying*. I need a bit of help. My table is not cooperating. You know, I just want the teacher to actually pay a bit more attention.
>
> Karim, Year 12 boy

During our interview, sociology teacher Kim drew on her own life experiences to suggest that student happiness can dwindle when individuals think they are being unreasonably reprimanded or judged. Reflecting on her former days as a pupil, she remembered how she felt when she was negatively "labelled" alongside the "naughty" children. Though the situations Kim described occurred years ago, she recalled with specificity her teachers' words and the adverse effect their attitudes had on her happiness in school.

> I know when I was at school – I went to a secondary school with very naughty girls – there'd be teachers throwing comments like, 'This class is just ruining what

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I thought I was doing this for'. And I remember thinking, 'Oh no, I'm being labelled as "this [misbehaved] class". And I think that hurt my sense of happiness, because it made me happy to be a positive part of something. And when I was cast in with the whole negative [group], that upset me.

One pupil, David [Year 9 boy], attributed some explanation for an "unfair" classroom environment to a lack of transparency in schools. From what he could decipher, teachers and students alter their language and behaviour when visited by administrative staff or other adults touring the school. His feelings were so strong that, when I asked where in the building he would take me in order to best grasp the intricacies of student life, he suggested visiting a classroom entirely unannounced. David went further to recommend recording footage of classrooms as a means to review what occurs without third parties present. While performing these activities would have been neither ethical nor practical, the desperation in which he spoke was telling.

> What happens on [school] tours [is] really stupid, because the teacher may not be good at what they do, and the children may not be good at listening, but teachers *know* when a member of staff is going to judge them on how a lesson works. So the lesson could be out of control and as soon as [a] member of staff comes in, everyone's working hard and everyone's doing the best that they can… So, I'd take you to a classroom [without warning] and then sit at the back just to examine what happens behind closed doors. Then, [you] can get a real vision of what we're actually dealing with… We need to open [outsiders'] eyes to [the reality]. You could get a camera and just record while you're not there so you can see what *actually* happens!

When speaking with two teachers, it appeared that conceptions of erroneous school procedure were not specific to students but relevant to staff experiences as well. The examples below indicate a kind of trickle-down effect of unsatisfactory treatment beginning with ineffective communication from administration.

> Communication is quite poor in this school… [For example] you'll have a new chap on your register, and you won't know until he just shows up. The other day, a [new student] just turned up. I was like, 'Oh, hello'. Didn't even know!
>
> <div align="right">Frieda, Spanish Teacher</div>

> There [are] some things we have to do as teachers that just feel like a real pain in the arse. And I'm like, 'Why are we actually doing this?'. And [I think] there's some bureaucratic nonsense that I think is avoidable… It's the similar stuff to students, I think: if we feel respected by our line managers and there's a mutual respect between all of us as well, there's communication. I think that makes people happier.
>
> <div align="right">Harry, Economics Teacher</div>

To this idea of instilling better communication across the school, many students expressed concerns that they were not always made to feel included in the equation, and that their perspectives are an untapped resource. Two girls shared the opinion that schools should actively look to children for their ideas and potential contributions to pupil well-being and success.

> I don't think it should [always] be the student taking initiative to share their opinions. I think it should be, [for example], giving out a survey before the school year starts.
>
> Hannah, Year 10 girl

> Teachers [should] get advice from the children on what activities they would like to do, 'cause if they're happy with the activity then they'll improve their learning… So [pupils would] have their own way of being happy in the school, something to look forward to.
>
> Patricia, Year 7 girl

Two other pupils commented on their occasional efforts to question school norms and teacher practices, motivation for which they implied stems from curiosity and wishing to be helpful. In the excerpts below, they reflect on attempting to approach staff members about matters they felt affected them and their learning, but for which they received little attention.

> The school, they have their ways. And they don't want their ways to be changed, in a sense… Some teachers are [very] rigid in their beliefs.
>
> Michael, Year 12 boy

> Sometimes you have control, other times you have to abide by guidelines which, in certain cases, I don't agree with. If it's a certain subject and you're trying to find out something, [teachers] tell you to use *this certain way* [to learn the material], when you could get the same answer just in a *different* way.
>
> David, Year 9 boy

One student, Hannah [Year 10 girl], mentioned a recent exchange she had with an administration member after being invited to review a new online learning platform the school was considering integrating into their curriculum. Though she was initially pleased to take part in the evaluation, this conversation left her disheartened and feeling as though her point of view was, in fact, rejected.

> In terms of taking [student] opinions into account, [for example] on Friday we got shown this learning website [the administration] were thinking of bringing into the school. And they were asking us all how we felt about it. But then when I was talking to one of the co-principals – I don't know if he was *trying* to do this, but –

he really believed it was good [as is] and he was negating a lot of the negative things I was saying I didn't like about the learning platform… I just didn't feel that my opinion really was being taken into consideration.

As is typical in secondary schools, the Academy offers a form a student government, the heads of which are selected by teachers. The intention, of course, is that students can raise issues with their representatives who will communicate them on their behalf. The problem, Michael [Year 12 boy] says, is that suggestions made through Head Boy and Head Girl are not treated with same urgency as if proposed by an adult.

> I mean, we have Head Boy and Head Girl, who we can go to and make 'suggestions'. But, again, those suggestions I don't really feel would be taken into consideration as much as if a teacher [gave them].

From Karim's [Year 12 boy] perspective, student representatives are 'favourites' among faculty and enjoy certain privileges he feels are not always entirely warranted. He feels it is unfair, for instance, that recognition for his ideas are sometimes ascribed to these selected pupils, and that outside this avenue of communication he is discouraged from speaking with school personnel about matters that concern him. With a strong impression of prejudice in this case, Karim went as far as to question the point of pursuing student leadership responsibilities at all.

> [Teachers say], 'Ah, you can go tell the Head Boy your ideas'. Now, for me, that is the most unfair thing in the world. I wasn't picked for the position, but I have to give my idea for someone else to take credit for… Why would I now try for a next [leadership] opportunity that will come around in our school?

> … [The Heads] are favourites… Not everyone gets that same level of respect.

I came to better understand Karim's notion of fairness in the learning environment when he requested that I visit him during his government and politics class, one he described as his "happiest" and a place he feels trusted and respected. I noticed almost immediately during my observation that the teacher spoke to her students almost like colleagues, addressing topics openly with them and exhibiting genuine interest in their opinions; for instance, how they felt about the week's major news events. The class discussed current affairs and political perspectives, including controversial ones, with a kind of energy and excitement that made the lesson feel especially relevant. The teacher displayed a good amount of confidence in her pupils by allowing them to sit where and with whom they chose, as well as to use their own electronic devices to access useful information and

material for the class. From what I could gather, students were highly motivated, using their equipment appropriately and working at a flexible and productive pace. On these kinds of student-teacher interactions, Louisa [Year 12 girl] explained that students' respect towards a teacher is reflective of how they *themselves* feel respected by that individual.

> I think respect towards teachers comes more from them than coming from you. Like, if it's something you care about, like your education for the future, [teachers] can earn respect from [caring also].

These testimonies of fairness and communication coincide with what some teachers implied was a sort of ethos or guiding principle that, when adopted, can also promote a sense of shared community and teamwork, a principal contributor to happiness discussed earlier in this chapter. In the examples below, two teachers suggest practices which help exemplify said ethos: consistent and respectful treatment of both students and staff.

> I never want to be in a situation where a student says something was unfair. I want there to be consistency in my classroom at all times. Whether it's about discipline, whether it's about [exhibiting] humour, whether it's about being safe, or about enjoyment. I'm not going to say that *every* lesson will [achieve this], but I never want a student to be able to say I was unnecessarily unfair to them.
>
> Frieda, Spanish Teacher

> When there's really strong leadership and everyone knows where they stand and how they fit into this sort of routine [and] they know they're valued as part of a community, I think it's really important [for happiness] …
>
> … [Also] having teachers that respect students and respect boundaries and opinions. I think mutual respect, respecting others and respecting yourself, is very much linked to happiness as well.
>
> Harry, Economics Teacher

From the topic of 'respect' more specifically emerged a separate conversation with students and teachers about how language and behaviour demonstrate *kindness*, a quality they said matters greatly for supporting happiness yet is lacking from many school interactions.

5.2.4 A call to be kind

In inquiring with participants about how individuals' words and actions in school affect pupil happiness, I noticed a recurring theme: a craving for kindness. Student narratives most prominently included yearnings of friendliness, consideration for others, helpfulness

and compassion. For some, experiences of *un*kindness came in the simple form of feeling excluded from a group or being the target of distasteful jokes.

> Most important [for happiness] would probably [be] for students to communicate in a good way so they're not hurting each other's feelings or making others feel left out.
>
> Patricia, Year 7 girl

> What [some students] say, they think is just a joke. But, it's actually quite hurtful. And I did have a lot of problems in Year 7 and Year 8 with my learning set. People would shut me out from what they were talking about. So that made me unhappy. Like, why can't I be involved in the conversation? There are still those people who are not very nice for no reason.
>
> David, Year 9 boy

> I just don't feel very comfortable because of other people around me [whose] sense of humour comes from poking fun at people… A lot of the humour is at other people's expense… The school culture is quite negative and rooted in putting other people down.
>
> Hannah, Year 10 girl

Other examples illustrate how the aggressive language and behaviour some pupils are exposed to can inflict internal anguish, weighing heavily on their minds. In the excerpts below, two students describe instances in school when they have struggled to ignore such negativities and how unkind gestures have impacted their own attitudes and emotions, some lingering even after the school day.

> What can bring me down is, like, [when] I'm waiting patiently in the line for lunch and then some other people just push in… At first I can get mad and just look at them and try to think, 'Why are they doing that?'… [Also] I'm quite used to hearing profanity now in school and [I try] to just block it out…
>
> Patricia, Year 7 girl

> When people [are] very negative towards me or someone else, I try to ignore it, but it's sometimes hard to ignore… They don't know me, so why should they make fun of me if they don't know me and what I feel?...
>
> … People can act really maliciously and just be all-around nasty… That really nasty person that then says something about you, then you go home and wonder, 'Maybe I am that'. And it sticks with you.
>
> David, Year 9 boy

It should be noted that, when asked to imagine a school where students are happiest, two pupils insisted that, while they believed greater kindness exhibited amongst peers was a necessity, neither viewed this factor as necessarily plausible.

[Ideally] there's no bullying, everyone's kind to each other… But - the perfect children and no bullying - that's not really realistic. That's why I *imagine* it as the perfect school…

Patricia, Year 7 girl

[I would like to see] a more kind student body. I just don't know how you could encourage that because you can't make a school where a requirement is that you have to be kind.

Hannah, Year 10 girl

While the above comments may seem discouraging, other student testimonies offer a glimpse into young people's capacities for empathy, as well as their abilities to think critically about happiness and its characteristics. Part of demonstrating kindness, some suggested, entails practicing sensitivity towards others and their unknowable circumstances. Simply put, said Natalie [Year 11 girl]:

You never know what someone else is going through, you know?

For Sarah [Year 12 girl], expressions of kindness are best exemplified by happy people, who possess the ability to consider another person's background or point of view. She suggested that students in school display such compassion by behaving responsibly with their words and actions.

[Happy individuals] know how to relate to other people, [how to] empathise with people. They are really humble so they can relate to other people in their situations. They are also very generous, like to give a lot, think about others [and are] caring…

… Bullying is a problem, and I think I'd just encourage people to not be offensive to anybody. Be careful with your words. Don't come across as ignorant sometimes. And, also, when someone's in need of help, you shouldn't just ignore them. Be responsible.

David [Year 9 boy], who has struggled with bullying himself, paused to consider the motivations of his instigators, arriving at the conclusion that they themselves must wrestle with feelings of unhappiness or discontent. He explained with remarkable sympathy that, despite the pain he has endured in school, he believes that children who behave negatively towards him lack appreciation for who he is as a person, and therefore he ought not to be overly concerned with them.

> I'd say the kids that struggle to find happiness [are] the most negative people… And words *do* hurt… [One should ask themselves]: why are these people not liking [you]? If they don't like you, then they don't understand who you are.
>
> David, Year 9 boy

Though some of these issues pertinent to language and behaviour are arguably unavoidable in a school setting, and even a *natural* part of a person's learning of how to manage disagreeable people, some teachers felt quite strongly about the prospect of teaching these skills to students. Reflecting on what they wanted for their students most of all, several used the word 'kind' to explain that they wished for children in school to recognise when their actions were hurtful and to practice inclusivity towards others.

> I want [my students] to be able to be kind to other people. I want them to have a sense of *emotional* intelligence… [to] know when it's gone too far, [to] know when someone is hurt.
>
> Harry, Economics Teacher

> From the onset, in Year 7, teaching kids how to be kind to each other, how to be tolerant, respectful, inclusive and love each other from an early age is really important.
>
> Nate, Geography Teacher

Frieda [Spanish Teacher] spoke particularly passionately about this subject, insisting that part of teachers' implicit responsibilities is to model acts of kindness. For her, this involves demonstrating basic courtesies, such as treating others with the same degree of respect and friendliness that one would wish for in return. She continued to explain that, from her experience, a kind approach towards classroom interaction influences a child's feelings of safety and security in that place. On preparing for our interview and discussion of happiness in schools, Frieda reflected:

> The word that was hitting me again and again [in my mind] was 'kind'. And, sometimes, there's a lack of kindness in the classroom… Generally, for me, happiness is about being a kind human being. And being safe in the space that you're in…
> … I even said jokingly to a teacher, 'There should be a GCSE on chivalry. There should be a GCSE on kindness'… How do you get [students] to be these positively holistic human beings that go out into the world and know how to treat other people? Who know how to deal with other people?... Stop GCSEs for a minute. How do we send them off [equipped] to treat people with respect?...
>
> … Things like chivalry and basic manners. Kindness. That's not just holding a door open; it's knowing when to say 'sorry' or the whole 'do unto others as you would have to yourself'. And I do try and live by that a little. I think that teachers

should teach it. [Teachers] should expect their classrooms to be a place of safety, and of kindness.

5.3 Theme of recognition and worth

The third major theme elicited from the data is a concentration on how happiness for students is implicated by the degrees of individual *recognition* and *worth* they are attributed in school. The following four key areas are dissected as part of exploring this topic in detail: 1) how students are understood with respect to their emotions, perspectives and needs, 2) how students are recognised for their independent qualities and achievements beyond what is necessarily quantifiable, 3) the essentialness of belonging and acceptance for pupils by those around them and 4) viewing schools as places for self-becoming and growth.

5.3.1 Seen, heard and understood

During my conversations with participants about how recognition and worth serve as core contributors to children's happiness in school, teachers emphasised the difficulty that comes with truly *knowing* their pupils, while pupils spoke about the extent to which they are truly *known* by their teachers. Though many of a person's traits can be reasonably deciphered on the surface, the deeper understanding they alluded to requires close attention and, more crucially, communication. From the teacher's perspective, Kim [Sociology Teacher] mentioned the importance of care and listening to children as ways of supporting their happiness in school, sharing her own personal recollection of feeling 'seen' by teachers and its lasting impression on her life.

> [Pupils want] to feel cared for. To feel like what they have to say matters. Even if it's not what people want to hear…
>
> … I didn't love school, actually, [and] I remember where I had conversations with teachers when I felt like they saw me. I remember where I was, what that conversation was about. And those things stuck with me.

In a similar fashion, Nate [Geography Teacher] described the necessity of understanding one's pupils and divulged his personal strategy of visiting the school canteen during lunchtime as a way of being in the know, so to speak. He insisted that this is not an excuse to spy on the children, but rather a method for identifying potential problems by way of causally observing them during social hours. On what schools ought to ensure in supporting pupil happiness, he said:

Form tutors who really understand their pupils and who really want to talk to their students about their problems. Having someone who values and cares for you as an individual is really powerful…

… I [sometimes visit] the canteen, and I think when teachers are around [pupils] tend to be a bit more guarded with their words… But my job isn't to catch their gossip about GCSEs or whatever. I'm seeing if there's anything I need to pursue. Sometimes you get the sense that it's quite serious. Sometimes it's about someone in the room. Usually they're upset so I'll go and talk to them… If I get the sense there's something going on, I try and pass that to the people who [can help].

Cynthia [English Teacher] agreed that maintaining close relationships with students was vital to their overall happiness in school, but also wondered to what extent children are in a position to discuss the truth about their thoughts or feelings with teachers and other adult staff. With a frown, she remarked:

I wonder if children are prepared to *say* they feel happy. I don't know.

One Year 12 student, Louisa, seemed to partially confirm this point, admitting that students may not willingly share details about their happiness despite some teachers' confidence that students would approach them for guidance or help.

I think teachers always think you could talk to them, if you actually need help. But I don't think you actually would.

Delving deeper into a possible disconnect between what teachers know, or *think* they know, about their students and those students' genuine thoughts and emotions, I enquired with teachers about the ways in which they form judgements or make assumptions about their pupils' happiness in school. Some suggested that outward appearance alone is not necessarily an accurate portrayal of what a student is experiencing in school, their narratives signifying the importance of questioning one's presumptions.

I think, for children, happiness is difficult to gauge sometimes because it's often masked as something else. They can *seem* really happy, but actually not be. Or, they can *seem* really unhappy, but then you go and speak to them and there's that bright light in their eyes and they *are* happy.

Nate, Geography Teacher

I don't know if we can read [students] as easily as we think we do. And I think – this is not to [generalise] – we don't know what they go home to [or] what their stresses are, so to judge their happiness based on snippets that we see throughout the day is difficult, isn't it? I think our students are sometimes more outwardly loud and bubbly and you might read that as happiness. Whereas, [with] somebody

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who is quiet or withdrawn, you might assume that's unhappiness, but it might just be who they are.

<div align="right">Kim, Sociology Teacher</div>

Interestingly, one teacher drew a comparison between more specific schooling contexts of student behaviour and described her observations of a particular student in classrooms, including her own, and on the playground during recess periods.

> There are quiet students that I always think are not happy, but then you talk to them and see their work or watch them in the playground [and realise that] they feel quite happy within themselves…
>
> … [For example] there's one particular girl who looks like the world is going to end every single day. And when I see her in the playground, she's totally happy and she's got lots of friends and she's laughing and shouting. It's clearly fine, but she doesn't look like that in lessons. I watched her in other lessons to make sure it wasn't me, and she doesn't seem happy [there either].

<div align="right">Cynthia, English Teacher</div>

Though one cannot positively conclude the exact causes for the above child's change in demeanour from her learning to social school settings, it is worth keeping this example in mind as this discussion of teachers' understandings of their pupils continues.

As I have mentioned, it was critical for the sake of this study to draw continual comparisons between teacher and student perspectives as a way of exploring topics in depth. In so doing, I asked pupil participants to elaborate on the degree to which they believed teachers correctly assessed their attitudes and emotions in school. For a couple of relatively reserved female students, teachers sometimes mistook their silence as an indicator that something was wrong. Based on their introspective descriptions, these girls are attentive and enjoy their subjects; their quietness, they implied, has more to do with natural inclination and learning preference than what can account for their inner state. With an inkling of annoyance, they said:

> Sometimes when I'm silent in class – like, I'm just silent and can't bother to talk or something – my teachers think there's something wrong.

<div align="right">Olivia, Year 9 girl</div>

> It's hard to gauge whether they can understand [my emotions]. My teachers do quite frequently, like, just ask, 'Oh, are you okay?'… maybe they just interpret my being quiet as being sad.

<div align="right">Hannah, Year 10 girl</div>

Other pupils were of the opinion that teachers generally don't concern themselves with student emotionality, and that unless an individual is quite obviously struggling, they tend not to get involved.

> I guess they're just focused on their subjects and teaching their subjects. Unless you're, like, blatantly looking really down, then they'd probably speak to you.
>
> Adam, Year 11 boy

> I don't feel like it matters to anyone *why* I'm feeling that way [and] anyway I don't think the teachers really care, to be honest, how my emotions are.
>
> Karim, Year 12 boy

Perhaps more intriguing than students' ideas about how well their teachers can read their emotions is how students *choose to express* these emotions in the first place. For reasons primarily dealing with discomfort or shame, many stated outright that they intentionally conceal their feelings while in school. This topic lent itself to conversations with students about vulnerability and the ways in which they opt to refrain from openly expressing themselves, often for fear of judgement. This phenomenon was most apparent amongst male pupils, many of whom said they prefer to handle their emotions privately in lieu of appearing "weak" in front of their peers.

> If you feel sad, then you want to cry. Or, you feel angry, [you may] want to do something. Then people would feel differently about you and think you're weak, or [that] you've got anger issues or something like that. So, you try and hide your emotions and calm yourself down.
>
> David, Year 9 boy

> Boys, we don't talk about [our emotions] that much… boys probably won't want to speak about them and they'd probably just wanna deal with it on their own.
>
> Adam, Year 11 boy

> There is no point in me showing my feelings at all… You will appear weak if you do, so I *act* like I'm positive when I'm actually feeling different things inside… It's more respectful for me to just, like, not show real emotion… What is anyone gonna do?
>
> Karim, Year 12 boy

In addition to acting the part, so to speak, of a happy pupil, one boy's strategy was to banish negative thoughts and feelings as best he could, keeping them "locked" away in the back of his mind.

> The only time I change myself is when I feel sad. Then I put on a good face… The sad part, [I] don't show it… I don't forget about it. It's still there with me. But it's just at the back of my head. It's, like, locked up in a cage in my head.
>
> Rajiv, Year 10 boy

Though girls admitted to also at times withholding their feelings in school, they spoke more about sharing information with friends and, in general, seemed less anxious about how other students would respond if they appeared emotionally unwell. Said Olivia [Year 9], feelings of unhappiness are natural and don't need to always be resisted or regarded as a negative or embarrassing characteristic.

> You shouldn't bottle it up… 'Cause you can't be happy all the time in school. Things happen and you can't just put a smile on. Sometimes you [need to] show that you're upset.

While these gender distinctions present interesting questions on how different groups deal with negative emotions, the point here is that there appear to be a number of reasons to account for the apparent disconnect between perceived and actual emotional states of children in school. What is made clearer by the data is that these misinterpretations exist, and that communication once more presents itself as an indispensable factor in more accurately understanding pupil happiness.

For several student participants, deriving a sense of recognition in school was tied to opportunities for control and decision-making. Comments ranged from specific suggestions, such as Hannah's, for how to increase pupil choice in their learning to more definitive statements, like Karim's, about his general outlook on schooling years.

> [A school aimed at happiness should] let students have more control over the subjects that they take. Just having more control as a student. Because I feel, especially at this school, you barely have any control. Maybe just having more say in how the lessons were taught [or] just having a choice in how you learn. Because people do have different preferences and ways of learning.
>
> Hannah, Year 10 girl

> To be honest at this point [in Year 11] it's pretty structured still. You don't really have much say in what you do.
>
> Adam, Year 11 boy

> Currently I feel like my life is not really in [my own] control.
>
> Karim, Year 12 boy

Along similar lines, one teacher conveyed a strong need for empowerment in the school environment. Speaking on behalf of both teachers and students, she argued that granting individuals appropriate degrees of authority is crucial to their feelings of "fulfilment" and thus their capabilities for happiness.

> What makes a happy school? I think empowerment. Being empowered as a teacher [or] as a student brings you a sense of fulfilment.
>
> Cynthia, English Teacher

This appreciation for empowering activity was expressed during interviews with two pupils. Patricia [Year 7 girl] spoke with glee about her chance to help construct the school's promotional pamphlet. The enthusiasm in which she shared this example was indicative of the pride she gained from this opportunity.

> Lately I've been participating in a task which is, like, designing a leaflet so people coming to the school can, like, read it. And *I'm* doing the designs for that!

Another pupil, Louisa [Year 12 girl], used the topic of online bullying to suggest more student-led discussions about issues relating to their happiness and well-being. From her standpoint, the teachers' efforts to address these subjects were often lost on pupils, who would both benefit from and derive a sense of ownership in being permitted to direct the dialogue themselves and coordinate ways of addressing such matters.

> If something [pertaining to a student's well-being] happens, they'll talk about it with us. Like, how to prevent it, etc. In House [tutorial] time, they'll bring it up and ask us how to stop it from happening… [But pupils] are *not* engaged in the conversation if [teachers] are doing it.

Student testimonies also suggested that, if happiness is a principal concern, schools must listen to and support them in their decisions. According to the two statements below, pupils wish to be respected for their choices and preferences, as well as to be able to change their minds and evolve. For Hannah [Year 10 girl], exclusion from the school selection process has brought feelings of "resentment" and unhappiness, these compounded with feelings of being "stuck" with GCSE subjects she says are effectively unamendable.

> Sometimes I bring a sort of resentment from home to school because I didn't really pick this school, and I'm not really that happy here…

> … Even though we got to pick our GCSE options [at the start of the school year], we weren't allowed to change them [and] now I'm stuck with two subjects that I really don't like.

Though Michael's [Year 12 boy] testimony is unlike Hannah's in that his request to modify his course schedule was ultimately granted, the importance of considering pupils' positions on matters pertinent to their schooling experience is illustrated by the gratitude and relief he conveys in gaining staffs' attention and approval.

> I'm thankful that I've dropped government and politics at Christmas and [that] the school allowed me to do it… I was thankful that they listened more than anything. I'm thankful they gave me the chance.

5.3.2 The person behind the score

One strong impression I received from participants in discussing pupil happiness was a mounting resentment for how students are measured and represented according to numerical test scores. Students and teachers longed for human qualities such as dedication, participation, respect and kindness to be better recognised and valued by the education system. What a child appears to be on paper, they contended, is *not* necessarily who they are or what they have to offer society; academic intelligence, for instance, does not always align with a person's attitude or potential. Year 12 student Karim delivered one of the most scathing and perhaps heart-breaking evaluations of which student characteristics seem to matter most in the current educational climate.

> What do universities care about? Your grades. What do colleges care about? They care about your grades… You can be the smartest man on Earth, and you could have the worst attitude, and still probably go to a good university. And people will think higher of *that* person than they do of someone with a fantastic attitude, but [who] just can't provide that same level of knowledge and skill on paper…
>
> … You can be a really bad person, but because your memory is fantastic, you can go to Cambridge… [Or] you can be the most dedicated student [and] not have the best grades [and] that dedicated student *could* achieve a lot more.

David [Year 9 boy] felt so passionately about the subject that he proposed, in a school that prioritises the happiness and well-being of its students, a kind of entrance interview to learn more about a person's inherent qualities and passions of study. This would be a way, he implied, to get to know the pupil more personally and to ensure they are a well-rounded individual.

I'd keep [my ideal school for happiness a] state [school], but make an exam so you're not accepting people who aren't gonna [behave]. There's an exam to get in, so you know there's at least some intellectual ability [and when interviewing you] talk about something you're passionate about. Like, write a poem or make a speech or something like that. And, like, perform it.

According to Karim and David's perspectives, the *means* by which students learn and achieve their goals ought to be held in much higher admiration than the *end* result alone. In other words, these students felt that they and their peers deserved to be recognised in greater part for their progression and improvement and less so for their isolated test performances. From the excerpts below, both boys subscribe to the idea of more prolonged tasks that allow for increased opportunity for experiencing a sense of "achievement" and doing something one can be "really proud of".

I think you should judge [pupils] on how well they've *progressed* through the year. Instead of going through the year, learning stuff, then putting it all to one exam you have to cram [for]. So, I think [students] should be assessed on [whether] they show signs of improvement… That's why I feel like it's nice to have coursework, because it's based off of a long period of time to make something you're proud of, like a piece of work that gradually progresses over time. I just feel it's really unfair [as things stand]. Some people are better at revising than other people. Some people have other ways to get work done. What if you get off task really quickly? Or get really bored?

David, Year 9 boy

For me, it's about improvement. I'm much more happy to see someone who goes from a D to an A than someone who gets As throughout the entire year. It's much more of an achievement, [but] secondary schools just care about our school looking really good [numerically, in terms of student performance]…

… [Universities will think], 'Oh, you didn't get good GCSEs. You show improvement, but we want someone that is consistent, not someone that made progress'.

Karim, Year 12 boy

One student, Natalie [Year 11 girl], raised a special concern for students of ethnic minority groups. Demographic representation on paper, she suggested, can at times lead teachers to form generalisations about these particular students before ever meeting them in person. Natalie argued that preconceptions about students of an ethnic minority background and their projected academic performance in the form of "predicted grades" can be damaging to those individuals. She implies a sort of preliminary disadvantage, one

of prejudice, that these pupils must combat in demonstrating their independent skills and potential in school.

> I think, before a child even enters the school, people have a perception of them. And I think that obviously affects them. You're obviously just basing how you think they're going to perform on their skin colour. Our Sixth Form gets our 'predicted grades'. They [represent] our teachers' perception[s] of how well we're going to do… With ethnic minorities, the statistics obviously make their lives harder because they have to work extra hard to prove to the teachers that they're not just a statistic… You can't really generalise a whole group of people and say, 'Okay, you're from an ethnic minority, so you're not gonna do as well as [people of] *this* race or *this* skin colour or *this* background'.

From the teacher outlook, Nate [Geography Teacher] addressed the consequences for happiness when facets of a child's identity become associated with the test scores they receive. In theory, he explained, tests ought to serve as instruments for students in meeting their learning objectives; in reality, they can spawn much distress and self-doubt.

> Tests [should act as] really a tool to get them where they need to be, rather than a benchmark [that implies], 'This is the sort of student you are' [or] 'You're not good enough', etc. I think that's really unproductive and obviously, in terms of happiness, it's a huge source of anxiety.
>
> Nate, Geography Teacher

The effects of testing on students' self-confidence and attitudes towards their own potential is best illustrated by Karim's [Year 12 boy] reflection on what he believes are his personal strengths in school, and the anguish he feels when he cannot articulate his comprehension of a subject in the traditional written format of examinations. Raised in Iran as a child, Karim speaks English as his second language. In school, he has developed quite an affinity for discussion and debate as methods of learning. It is clear from our interviews that Karim especially enjoys conversing about social issues and is strong-willed about engaging with and improving his community. In the excerpt below, he details the trouble he has experienced in English class, and the great disappointment he feels in knowing the consequence this particular mark has on his lifelong dream of working in law enforcement.

> I just don't think people get to show their real selves [and capabilities] in school… [For example] I can have a debate with you all day long, but if you put one question in front of me on paper and expect me to answer that question to the best I possibly can well of course I'm gonna struggle… I love to talk more than I actually love to write. It's so much more fun and I get to express myself better…

I'm better at speaking, I'm better at presentations. I'm not as good when I have to put my words [onto paper] …

…I personally wanted to become a police officer, and I still do. [Following changes to application criteria] now they say you have to get above a C in English to become a police officer… I just want to live my life and go my direction without anyone saying, 'No, you can't do that' and without anyone making barricades. Because of a simple mark.

As I have mentioned previously, the point here is not to decide whether or not Karim's opinion about written exams as "barricades" to a student's preferred profession are altogether justified, nor to decipher the best criteria for admittance to police academies in the UK. What is important for the purposes of this study is the child's feelings towards how he is recognised for his capabilities in school and to what extent test results properly illustrate his potential for work and life success. It was Karim's conviction that students be encouraged to seek out opportunities that appeal to them without so much focus on grades, and, using his own mother's language as an example, he rejected the notion of an occupational hierarchy.

In a school, it shouldn't be about criteria. It should be about a person being able to explore their options. Not only grades… My mom always said if you're going to college instead of Sixth Form, you're doing the 'bad jobs'… People want you to follow this one straight line. Why?

This inclination that students in school are often urged to conform to a particular academic 'route' was echoed by Natalie [Year 11 girl], who spoke about the frequently explicit messages she receives from teachers that certain career pathways are more commendable than others. She felt strongly about being compared to her classmates in terms of academic achievement, most notably in the STEM subjects, and drew a distinction between happiness and the monetary wealth she says most people attribute to success. From Natalie's point of view, exploring one's individual passions and interests is downplayed for the sake of what schooling implies will guarantee 'happiness' in life: a lucrative career by way of exemplary test results.

Not everyone is built for the academics. And I think they push us all into one [group]. They forget that to have social cohesion and to be like 'one', you don't have to be the *same* thing and go the *same* route… And obviously [adults] think academics is the best route because that's where you'll get money. I think that's not true. I think the happiest people are the people that work and do their passion [and] they're getting paid for doing what they love. And I think unhappy people are the people that have been pushed into work that provides them money and

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[financial] stability, but not stability [in other respects] because they're not happy with what they're doing…

… [Teachers] should have said, '*You* as a person are different than *that* person there. So don't look at their results'… [They] need to recognise us as individuals and different people who don't all want the same thing. I think they forgot to tell us that.

Kim [Sociology Teacher] addressed this issue from her vantage point as an educator, vocalising her disappointment in how firmly the Academy urges university attendance for students. She told of a kind of 'aha moment' she experienced when speaking with a male pupil about his job prospects and the type of work that appealed to him. There is no one single avenue to happiness as an adult, she insisted, and children should understand and be supported in the fact that their interests and ideas will develop and change over time; in essence, there is no absolute path towards success.

What really frustrates me, actually - and this happens a lot [at the Academy] - is, at assemblies, people telling [pupils] they *have to go* to university. It really winds me up… One boy said to me, 'I want to be a locksmith'. And I said, 'A locksmith? That's a funny thing to want to be'. And he said, 'Well, do you know what? You get like 300 quid for a callout, you work these many hours [and] I'm not stuck in an office all day every day looking out the window at life'. And I thought, '*Oh my god, you're so right*'. And I want to work with students who have *their* idea of what they want to do with their lives [and who are] open to the fact that it changes all the time. They don't have to be [one] something for the rest of their life. They don't have to do [one] something in order to be successful…

Kim elaborated on how teachers, in preparing their students for the future, can lose sight of the individuals they work with. Acknowledging that testing procedures, particularly GCSEs, can cause a fair amount of anguish and distraction, she insisted that the more immediate problem lies in how students are treated uniformly in school. For Kim, the majority of the blame might be attributed to forcing inherently different young people to learn and perform in similar ways.

We can't create a test for each individual; we *can* create an education for each individual. So, forget about the assessment, stop trying to change that, and change how you interact with the students. Because, quite frankly, at the end of the day any student can get a GCSE if they feel supported through their education, if they feel comfortable at school, if they feel like an individual and a human. But if we keep drumming them, making them fit into one person's mould of how young people should be, they're not going to pass their GCSEs and they're going to blame the exam. It's not the exam's fault… School can absolutely be the making of people, but it can also be the opposite.

This last sentence in Kim's testimony alludes to what Harry [Economics Teacher] said is a "failing" of the present education system in the UK: students who see themselves as incompetent or a disappointment. There are consequences to pupil happiness, he implied, in assigning children the same academic and performance expectations irrespective of their unique aptitudes or aspirations.

> We do our best, I suppose, to try and find this framework within which we can educate people for society. But are we really making them happy? I don't think we're necessarily making them happy. You can feel like a real failure in school and school can make you feel really stupid or dumb or that you don't belong. And I think that's a big failing of the education system.

Part of educating young people for successful societal functioning, some participants suggested, ought to include introducing more practical skills and knowledge for happy adult living. Topics that were mentioned included how to pay one's taxes and ways of respectfully resolving conflict in the workplace. With such a stringent focus on content-specific knowledge for exam purposes, Kim [Sociology Teacher] argued, students could be exiting their school years without properly knowing how to, for instance, converse constructively with others.

> [Students have been conditioned to say], 'Just tell me what I need to know on an exam'… At the end of the day, they'll all get through these exams or not. But what happens then? Somebody gets a good A Level but can't carry a conversation?

This observation served to underscore Kim's greater point, which was that the disproportionate amount of attention placed on testing in schools comes at a cost to pupils' sense of self-worth. In prioritising student happiness, she suggested, schooling must shed a light on and celebrate children's independent selves, teaching them how to recognise and make use of their distinctive qualities and strengths. She explained:

> [Pupils need] to feel human rather than part of a number or big group. That they're seen as individuals… To also feel like they're valued. To feel like they have something to bring.

Harry [Economics Teacher] drew a similar conclusion, insisting that happiness in part depends on self-esteem and self-love, which lead to the sort of motivation required for pursuing one's dreams.

I think often happiness is linked to our self-worth. And the more we believe in ourselves, the more we love ourselves, the more we'll motivate ourselves to get to a place we think we should be. Whereas, [if] you're unhappy, you're upset, you don't like yourself or have a love for yourself… It would culminate perhaps [in] someone feeling like they don't deserve something and they're not worthy of something.

In the following section, this conversation of self-worth and its relation to happiness shifts from a focus on children's individual academic and future aspirations to the extent students feel they belong and are accepted by their school community.

5.3.3 Belonging and acceptance

Pupils' deriving a sense of worth in school was for many participants associated with how others in the school community accept them and in what ways they feel they belong. Two students explained the particular urge to 'fit in' for young people and how doing so is made complicated by the evolving social landscape and yearning for favouritism among one's peers. Natalie [Year 11 girl] insisted that popularity, if achieved, is fragile and fleeting, and that, in reality, a student's happiness is compromised when they are engrossed in comparison.

In secondary school, you could be the most popular person and then one thing can happen and no one knows you, everyone hates you. People are so easy to switch up in secondary school… They'll be friendly with you, and the next day you're like, 'What happened?'… I don't think popularity is what makes people happy… I think the time you get unhappy is when you start comparing yourself to other people.

For Sarah [Year 12 girl], the pressure that arises to gain approval from other students can manifest into presenting false or insincere versions of oneself. Again, the metaphor of fitting individuals into a 'box' presents itself in her descriptions of conformity as a source of unhappiness for pupils in school.

[The] expectations of being popular can sometimes affect [pupil] happiness. So sometimes when you're in a certain friendship group and everyone's doing a certain thing, like, maybe everyone's wearing a certain jacket and you feel pressure to wear it to be part of them… You're trying to fit in 'the box'… Also, trying to change who you are sometimes. If your friends talk in a certain way, then you try and talk in that way because you want to fit in.

Sarah, Year 12 girl

Noting these patterns he observes in his students, Nate [Geography Teacher] identified contentedness as a characteristic he most associates with a happy child. He recognised the

temptation to please for young people and suggested that real happiness is found when a person is able to separate others' opinions from the truth of who they actually are.

> Happiness in a child, for me, is more about how settled they are in themselves, how confident they are in their abilities, [recognising] the perception of other people's views versus the reality of [who they are]. I find that children who are happier or happiest tend to be those who don't take as much stock in what other people are judging about them.

Two pupils agreed that happiness is tied to a person's authenticity and that likeability built on disingenuity is not sufficient for its achievement.

> [Unhappiness stems from] faking enjoying things, I guess, to be more likeable.
>
> Louisa, Year 12 girl

> [Happiness is when pupils are] true to themselves and how they really feel. And it's not just [about being] socially desirable.
>
> Michael, Year 12 boy

Still, others noted the challenges in maintaining contentment with oneself in school. Natalie [Year 11 girl], for instance, commented that others' scrutiny is often tied to things a person cannot control. She used physical appearance as an example in describing the kind of peer-generated torment affecting one's self-esteem.

> People are very judgemental. Even personality wise, but more looks wise. People are going through puberty, people get spots, people grow at different times, someone is short, someone is tall… [and] people have something to say, regardless. And I think, when you're growing and you're around so many judgemental people, you're kind of always [thinking], 'Why are they judging me? I don't understand. I didn't do anything to them.'… You can't be happy when you're surrounded by people who are just judging you constantly.

Said Patricia [Year 7 girl], sharing one's feelings can subject a person to teasing and dissuade him or her from speaking candidly.

> There are those people where you feel – like, bullies – if you tell them your real emotion, they can spread it around the school and people make fun of you.

I was particularly intrigued by participants' opinions on how structures such as socio-economic background, race or gender affect pupil happiness, and whether certain groups or categories of individuals are presumably happier than others. The opinion shared among most teachers and students was that these elements of student identity were not necessarily indicators of a person's happiness in school. More specifically, they do not on

their own appear to hinder his or her ability to experience acceptance and belonging. Participants were, in fact, quite proud of and wished to emphasise the diversity within friendship groups they say exist at the Academy.

> I think the kids here are really respectful of each other and get on well. Friends are friends and it doesn't really matter where you come from. There's no real social class or race issues among students.
>
> Nate, Geography Teacher

> In terms of groups of people, races and stuff like that… I don't think [pupil happiness] can be broken down like that.
>
> Adam, Year 11 boy

> In terms of ethnicity, like if someone's Arab, someone's white, someone's Jamaican, or black… [I] want to clarify: these boundaries do not restrict us from being a whole group together, 'cause I have friends from all different [backgrounds] and all different races.
>
> Sarah, Year 12 girl

What was communicated during these conversations, however, was that unhappiness can stem from feelings of *alienation* that, at times, are associated with belonging to a minority group. While 'minority' in this context may include a person's socio-economic background, race or gender, the characteristics participants presented as more significant included one's belief systems, sexual orientation and academic and social skill sets. It was Harry's [Geography Teacher] view, for instance, that isolation can derive from a student's inability to communicate or connect with others in school and can manifest in detached and anti-social behaviour.

> I think [unhappiness is characteristic of] people that become marginalised for whatever reason… [Pupils] that find it hard to communicate, and instead lash out or show complete disinterest or complete disengagement and [say], 'Oh, I don't care about this' or 'I don't care about that'… If you can't communicate or you can't share the problem, if you find it hard to reach out and actually say what's going on, I think you can feel really alienated as well.

Reflecting on her individual experiences of alienation in school, Hannah [Year 10 girl] described her struggle in maintaining an identity distinguishable from her reputation as the 'smart kid' in class. The distinction she garnered for her academic achievements, she felt, creates a divide between herself and the majority of her peers who may be viewed as 'normal' students.

> People [who] are in a larger [majority] group feel a lot more connected and normal. I feel like when people are the minority, it definitely makes them feel more isolated. [For example] a lot of people just seem to take me as the quiet, studious one. And I just don't feel that's as accepted here as it would be at a school that's more focused on academics or something.

For Michael [Year 12 boy], feeling accepted in school has been influenced by others' misperceptions of him. He explained that, for a period of time, his classmates inaccurately speculated that he was homosexual. Michael clarified that this specific suspicion was not what upset him, but that he realised how being misread could affect a person's happiness in school. He described this experience as a "lesson in empathy" in that he considered more closely what it might be like for those are less socially accepted in school, in this case for their sexual orientation.

> I think different self-identities will make it a bit harder [to be happy] because they themselves may not feel like they're accepted by society. And they may always feel a bit like an outsider. [For example], I remember a load of people coming up to me and thinking I was gay, which I'm not… I kind of got annoyed. Not because of the suggestion they were making, but [for] not seeing me for who I am. [If] something [about a person] is always being misperceived, that would affect their behaviours and their happiness…

> … It was a lesson in empathy [and] it makes you much less – not judgemental as such – but you don't jump to conclusions as quick… Self-identity, I think that does affect someone's happiness.

The topics of sexual and gender identity were used by several participants to illustrate how individuals' religious standpoints sometimes clash, and the ramifications this can have on students' sense of belonging and acceptance in a school. Similar to Michael's view above, two female pupils believed that alienation often befalls students who identify as non-heterosexual. It was their shared perspective that, for these students, feeling that they must withhold this fundamental facet of themselves to avoid criticism can cause considerable unhappiness in school.

> I think if you're homosexual you can't really be so happy here… I did notice one gay person at this school [who] doesn't really interact with people that much… I feel that really affects his happiness, because it's like he's containing all of it inside himself. A part of him he can't really share with other people.
>
> <div align="right">Sarah, Year 12 girl</div>

> People judge you [concerning] religious beliefs [and] sexuality as well. People aren't open about it. I think people are afraid of judgement… If you're not open with [your sexuality], then you can't be that happy [because] you feel like you're

hiding something. I think being open, like about your beliefs, or who you are, I think it's quite hard.

<div align="right">Louisa, Year 12 girl</div>

David [Year 9 boy] spoke about the personal dilemma he faces in wishing to openly discuss a transgender family member with his classmates who, he says, disapprove based on their religious views. His adherence to agnosticism, he explained, places him within a minority at his particular school, which is primarily compromised of students who self-identify as Muslim. It is important to note here that David spoke at length about this subject and the bullying he said he is subjected to for his convictions. He did not speak ill of the practice of Islam itself, nor of religion more generally, but wished to convey the individual pressure and disapproval he said he feels for reasons relating to prevailing religious beliefs in school.

> People can be very judgemental, [and] if you're expressing opinions that other people don't agree with, you would get a lot of backlash or hate from it… [For example], I've got a transgender [person] in my family. So, you know, I would like to talk about it with people, but obviously I feel I would get made fun of. Because, you know, some people don't agree. [Also] I'm agnostic, and it's quite heavy Islam here, so people try and force their beliefs on you.

Karim [Year 12 boy], who, like David, is not religious, attempted to examine these tensions from the point-of-view of his classmates who *do* follow a religion. Speaking empathetically, he recognised the discomfort that expressing his secular opinions could have on someone whose faith opposed those same ideas.

> I think what could happen is when other people state their opinion, that could affect [another student] in a negative way. For example, I believe that, as someone who has been a Muslim [and] who almost became a Christian, I feel [religion] is a lie. That's my *opinion*… If I state that to someone, they could be upset about that comment.

From the teacher's point-of-view, Nate [Geography Teacher] recognised instances when students' religious freedoms and LGBTQ+ rights collide. He suggested that the strong presence of religion at the Academy might help to account for some of the shame students sometimes feel in voicing their sexuality; this is exemplified, for instance, in the resistance teachers face in teaching Year 7 students the principles of sex education. It was Nate's position that this dynamic must change, and that through confronting these topics the school could become be a place that better promotes self-expression and the acceptance of others.

We do a lot of work around homophobia, transphobia and LGBTQ rights through PSHE, through drop-down days, through conversations with them in lessons… I can understand why students are not comfortable talking about sexuality or sexual orientation… You go to Year 7 kids, Foundation [level] kids, who are refusing to listen to sex education stuff in science because it's 'against the religion', when you're really just learning about the biology…

…I imagine there is still a feeling that perhaps you can't come out or can't express your sexuality, but there's a good core group of people that are pushing for that to [change]. It's not okay that people in our school feel they can't express themselves.

It was Cynthia's [English Teacher] attitude that, while schools should be working to address forms of tolerance, doing so in a formal setting such as a whole-school assembly could backfire by introducing derogatory language to students who are then tempted to use it. She used a recent example from her son's school to illustrate her point:

[At] an assembly at my son's school, they talked about racism and about how name-calling is as bad as hitting someone. And they gave a list of names you shouldn't use… [Later] my son said, 'Mom, everyone is talking about [offensive noun] now'… So, it can have a good effect or can *introduce* the idea… You have to be very careful with how you address things in an assembly [because] you've got the whole school there, and that can lead to people thinking it's funny or not taking it seriously. It's tricky. They're sponges, aren't they? They'll soak up anything.

Cynthia went on to explain that promoting acceptance in schools is perhaps best achieved on a smaller, more personal scale. Nate [Geography Teacher] shared this thinking, suggesting that normalising inclusivity in the everyday classroom setting was a more promising method of instilling attitudes of acceptance in children. He offered the example of diversifying reading material in English lessons as a way of exposing students to different perspectives and life histories.

It's not always easy to achieve. It's more about, for instance in English, making sure all the novels they're reading are not all written by old white men. Having diverse authors represented and talking about the sort of person who wrote the book and why it's important and having a diversity of characters within the book. Talking about who they are, where they come from.

During my visit to Frieda's [Spanish Teacher] classroom, I observed this sort of normalisation and inclusive education while she was delivering a lesson on Spanish pronouns. In demonstrating how to use these words in a sentence, she casually exchanged the pronouns of 'she' and 'her' in showcasing the phrase, '*He* went to see a film with *his*

boyfriend'. She did so effortlessly and without pause; the gravity of her message was received, one could say, through the nonchalant way in which she spoke. When I enquired about this during our interview, she explained that "sometimes less is more" when modelling acceptance for young people, a realisation she arrived at in raising a transgender child.

> My son is transgender. And I talked about this a lot with students. There's a lot in our school about homophobia, transphobia. Year 7 call each other names [while] not actually knowing what those names mean. Having a conversation about these things means that they leave your room better equipped. And, yes, there will still be those kids who use those [derogatory] words, but there's going to be a few less…
>
> … Sometimes less is more, and my son taught me that when he came out as trans[gender]. He said that I was making it bigger than it needs to be… I realised that, actually, this doesn't need to be a big deal… So, my classroom needs to be like that.

5.3.4 A place for becoming

Lastly, participant narratives relating to recognition and worth as contributors to pupil happiness emphasised the school as a place for challenge and self-discovery. Their testimonies paint schooling experiences as special opportunities for *becoming*, or for realising one's potential. From their point of view, a school that prioritises happiness inspires children to become the best versions of themselves and equips them with tools for creating the life of their choosing. In the comments below, for instance, some students link happiness and schooling with the importance of learning about oneself.

> [Affecting pupil happiness in school is] thinking about what they wanna do when they get older…like, figuring yourself out.
>
> Olivia, Year 9 girl
>
> I think, in the end, happiness comes down to being [who you want to be].
>
> Natalie, Year 11 girl
>
> [School ought to] set [a student] up in the direction for that person to be happy.
>
> Karim, Year 12 boy

A number of conversations surrounding the topic of self-becoming dealt with participants' attitudes that schooling ought to provide ample opportunities for self-directed learning activity. Lack of control in the classroom was, for Tyler [Year 7 boy], a

frustration to his learning and to his happiness in school. On what he wished most for, he said:

> Control over the way we learn. For example, in geography, [if the teacher would say], 'you can choose something [to write about]'. However, most of the time, they just teach you something, so I *don't* have control.

In imagining ways of promoting pupil autonomy, Tyler proposed the idea of devoting more time in the school term to open topic exploration. He described a configuration of individual tables or booths whereby teachers from different departments would set up learning materials and come prepared to discuss their subjects. There would be no assessment nor time commitment to any particular table or teacher, he explained, and students would move freely among them according to their interests. He appeared to be envisioning something akin to an educational fair or exhibition for the Academy's students, though on a smaller scale and occurring more regularly.

> What if there's a bunch of tables with stuff you can do?... A couple of hours at the end [of the school day] you can do something else, whatever you want… There [are] some teachers there to help you with whatever you want. [For instance] if you wanted to learn more about computer science, you could go to a computer science [table].

Commenting on the self-directed learning periods that feature currently on the Academy's timetable, Patricia [Year 7 girl] felt that these should, at least to some extent, be led by pupils themselves. Like Tyler, she yearned for a degree of *ownership* not necessarily granted during what are predominantly extracurricular time blocks.

> [A happy school would have] after-school clubs and you can also run your *own* after-school club with your *own* activities that you like to do, like art… [It would] let students run SDL [self-directed learning periods].

I should note that student autonomy as a specific contributor to student happiness or well-being was only sparingly mentioned by teacher participants, although Don [Geography Teacher] described his "dream school" as one that liberates students through exposure and experience so that they may carve out the best future paths for themselves.

> The dream school for me is, you know, [motivated by] that concept of life-long, liberated learning. A school where students have got lots of choice, lots of activities to buy in to, lots of experiences to help them map out their future, essentially, so they're not scared of the future.

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In addition to self-directed learning, pupil participants spoke about the happiness that arises from showcasing one's capabilities in school. While observing students in the classroom, I noticed several who appeared to derive great pleasure from occasions to shine, so to speak, and to share their knowledge and skills with others. In his computer science class, for instance, David [Year 9 boy] lit up with pride after the teacher asked him to demonstrate his mastery of a particular programming tool for rest of the class. When I asked him about this later, he described a kind of thrill not only from grasping a desired concept, but from illustrating it for others to appreciate. As a child who normally keeps to himself and has dealt with issues of bullying in school, it was evident that this kind of recognition in class meant a great deal to him. Beaming, he spoke of his ambitions:

> I want to understand codes and be able to have the ability to go, '*I* want to make this game and *I* can make that happen'!

Karim [Year 12 boy] resonated with this idea of displaying knowledge and skills as a way of experiencing happiness in school. He referred to his debate class in explaining the satisfaction he gleans from exercising what he believes are his foremost competencies as a student: forming and delivering arguments. Like David, Karim takes particular delight in demonstrating skills he feels will be beneficial to him in his future endeavours. He made a point to emphasise that, when removing the component of assessment, he is able to better relax and enjoy the learning process.

> [Debate class] is really the happiest moment [of my day]. You get to like, you know, show the majority of your qualities just from the way you speak when you present your argument forward. And that, I think, is a fantastic way of being able to be successful…
>
> … I can express all of my skills there and I learn things that I actually do genuinely care about. We have debates, we have presentations, we get to ask people about their opinions. I enjoy that, because for once I get that feeling that I don't have to put all this [towards a] grade. It's just fun and happy [and] it's actually a bit useful… It's the only part [of the school day] I get to enjoy, and I know I'm not being pressured [to earn a mark].

Two pupils, Patricia [Year 7 girl] and Olivia [Year 9 girl], spoke about the joy in exhibiting their capabilities by virtue of their creativity and originality. While both girls presented themselves as quite social students who derived much of their happiness from friendships and collaborative learning in school, it was clear that they also valued the

freedom to craft ideas they could claim entirely as their own. For Patricia, such was the case in art class:

> [Happiness comes from] creative things, like art, because then I get to, like, express myself and put what's going on inside my head on a piece of paper…So I have all my thoughts to myself and I can do what I want without having to ask other people if they're okay with it or what their ideas [are]. It's just nice for everything on that paper to be all *my* ideas.

When I asked her which areas of the school would be best for me to visit, Olivia said:

> [I would like to show you] the engineering department because we're doing this project and we can create whatever we want… It's *my* idea.

The tone with which these two pupils spoke led me to infer that opportunities for creative and original expression were infrequent in their schooling experience. Harry [Geography Teacher] seemed to partially suggest this in stating that young people must be encouraged to act as *creators* and not merely *consumers* so that they may lead happier lives. He used social media to highlight why he believes this is especially necessary in today's society.

> The idea of creation is so key to well-being and to happiness. If you don't create, if you're merely observing the life of others on social media or whatever on this sort of conveyor belt of tech that keeps you hanging off these dopamine wisps, then you're not creating something yourself.

During their interviews, several pupil participants described happiness in relation to their sense of achievement in school. It is important to note that grades or marks did not feature in these conversations, but instead the feelings of fulfilment and accomplishment that arise from challenging work. Success, pupils implied, was the result of staying the course and overcoming a difficult task. Two students in particular suggested that good grades alone are not sufficient for happiness, nor are all high marks equally gratifying. In the first instance, Patricia [Year 7 girl] discussed the intrinsic rewards that come with "doing a good thing" and that, if given the option, she would voluntarily choose the most difficult task. The time and effort required to arrive at the solution, she explains, are precisely what make a learning experience worthwhile and leave her feeling as though she has "achieved something".

> I like to challenge myself because when I finish the challenge, I'm very satisfied… The harder [a task] is, the harder I can think about it and process the knowledge… [I am happy when] I feel like I've achieved something… For me,

mostly, feeling happy is [when] I'm doing a good thing [and] I'm learning so I can get somewhere.

In a separate interview, Patricia described her Maths teacher as "considerate" to her and her classmates' happiness for the reasons that he introduces them to progressively challenging maths problems and encourages them to take time in, and relish, the process of solving them.

> I think my Maths teacher is very considerate of how we are happy in class… My class and me love solving problems, so he'll give us a series of questions, first easy and then hard. But the questions aren't the really easy ones that you do repetitively, it's the long ones that you have to think about for a long time. One question took us two lessons to answer!

Hannah [Year 10 girl] made similar points regarding the effort devoted towards difficult tasks, for example suggesting that good grades on "simple" tests do not lead to feelings of real achievement in school.

> If I do well on a test, but to me I feel like, 'Oh, this wasn't that difficult, it was very simple', [and] if I didn't have to put that much effort into it, [then] I don't feel satisfied. [And if] I got full marks on something, but it was very simple, it doesn't feel like that much of an accomplishment.

In the quotes below, two other students welcome failure and setbacks as necessary by-products of committing to the kinds of challenging work which breed happiness. They seemed to believe in the value of persistence not for the sake of a specific extrinsic outcome, but because they felt it made them happier and improved as people.

> [I can feel unhappy] when I fail. But the next day I bounce back and say, 'You know what? It's fine. Without failure there is no success'… At the end of the day, it hopefully pays off, 'cause it sometimes won't. And when it won't, that's the time I shouldn't quit… That's the happy life. Because if you know you have been pushed back but you still go for something and you achieve it, you feel the best.
>
> Rajiv, Year 10 boy

> [Mistakes] make you stronger, even when you're not happy it just makes you stronger because, well, you get to see the mistakes, you get to identify it, and that's how you will be able to improve as a person…

> … I know that when I get home I will be tired, but I will be in a really good mood because I was able to show off, I was able to have debates with people, I was able to show my understanding and knowledge. I will be happy, and I will simply go to bed.
>
> Karim, Year 12 boy

In discussing the manners in which they learn about themselves and their capabilities in school, students gave the strong impression that success, like happiness, is a highly subjective experience. Their narratives of ownership, creativity, expression and accomplishment might lead one to stipulate that self-becoming relies heavily on identifying internal motivating factors. Said Hannah [Year 10 girl], discovering the sense of achievement that matters for one's happiness is both *personal* and *difficult*. Bearing this in mind, she proposed, schools should support students in setting goals for themselves according to what inspires them.

> [An idea for improving happiness is] getting students to write down personal goals for themselves, in terms of academics or something else to work towards. I feel that's very important. And having specific goals as well. Because when you just have a general goal, like 'I want to study' or 'I want to get good grades', it's not really tangible…
>
> … I feel [achievement is] a very personal thing. Some people, like me, really care about exams and how well [one does] in them. And when I do well on one and I've worked for it, that's when I get a sense of accomplishment. But I can understand how, for other people, they might get their sense of accomplishment [from] a piece of artwork you're going to display [or] something practical… It is a difficult thing to find.
>
> Hannah, Year 10 girl

It is fitting to conclude this chapter with two statements from teachers on how discovering and creating a happy life for oneself is in effect a success. Though their insights appear to capture theoretically what students describe more practically, the point to consider here is that both parties interpret happiness in a similar vein. As the term 'success' is so frequently used in describing school and schooling aims, the following gives pause to reflect on what, according to teachers and students, this word might genuinely symbolise.

> For me, happiness kind of is success. I don't know if it matters what you're doing in life or what you have, but if you're happy, that's a successful life. I've travelled to places of massive deprivation and thought, '*That's a good life*'. They don't have much, but they have a smile on their face and the energy to get through every day and enjoy it. There's this love of life… So, I think the two are not just related; they're synonymous.
>
> Kim, Sociology Teacher
>
> If 'success' is the subjective feeling of succeeding, then I think happiness is key, *so key*. Because if you're happy, then you've already succeeded, haven't you?
>
> Harry, Economics Teacher

5.4 Synopsis of findings

This chapter displays data from this study categorised under three blanket themes: 1) *connection and community*, 2) *language and behaviour* and 3) *recognition and worth*. These choice descriptions are used to capture the essence of more individualised and detailed subthemes. Here I will briefly recount the significance of these subthemes and how they should be collectively evaluated in the context of this research.

Under the broad stroke of *connection and community*, data demonstrates that student happiness depends immeasurably on the strength of relationships which permeate a school, primarily those of student-to-student and teacher-to-student. These 'soft' features of a school, for instance how well individuals feel they bond with and can trust one another, seem to be more consequential overall than its 'hard' features, for instance its technology and learning resources. The emphasis of *people over place* illustrates that student happiness only marginally depends on school facilities, which should be dignified and fulfil basic requirements but, most importantly, foster rich personal connections. Though for teachers the subject of student happiness is largely examined under the purview of *outside issues*, it appears to be *inside concerns* that matter most from the child perspective. Matters which appear to gravely concern teachers, for instance the influences of social media and disruptive home environments, only minimally feature in students' narratives of what influences their happiness in school. This is one of the key incongruencies observed between the two groups. Happiness, it is learnt, is a key factor in how individuals experience and think about their general *health and well-being*. The ramifications of student happiness to other educational and personal outcomes are far-reaching and so must be an established priority of the school; the extent to which this responsibility is fulfilled, however, is another matter entirely. Happiness and well-being ought to be embedded within the social fabric of a school and are less successfully promoted by means of stand-alone PSHE sessions or seminars. A school genuinely tends to these issues by means of appropriately managing its timetables, support networks and workload expectations. And perhaps most crucially, it must invest in the happiness and well-being of its teachers, who work directly with students and sway much of the latter's (un)happiness in school. Schools should facilitate opportunities for *teamwork and camaraderie* to feed students' desires for social and emotional connection. Happiness is difficult to achieve in a culture of continual competition and comparison between peers,

but is found in instances of lively collaboration and joint chances to learn, grow and enjoy.

The second core theme, *language and behaviour*, classifies data pertaining to verbal and physical interactions between individuals and their infectious nature in the school setting. An environment of happiness is not without authority but necessitates clear and consistent rules of conduct. *Decoding discipline* to foster greater happiness requires getting to the root of the causes for disruption and ensuring that punishments are reflective of the context for the problem. Disciplinary policy must be both warranted and constructive to combat a pernicious cycle of discontent and adverse reaction on behalf of both children and adults. Poor behaviour is in part predicated on the emotional underbelly of classrooms and how teachers are *setting the tone* for (un)happiness. Much of the language and behaviour modelled by adults is motivated by performance expectations, though this is not necessarily compatible with their professed teaching beliefs. Students struggle to draw meaning from their lessons apart from what they will inevitably be required to demonstrate on exams, fearful for disappointing their teachers. Auras of cynicism and perfectionism hang in the air and distract from the intrinsic purposes of learning for which happiness are essential. From the student point of view, classrooms can be happier places to be depending on their degrees of *fairness and communication*; again, this is predominantly attributed to teachers. Perceived injustices in how teachers lead their classrooms are of much distress to students, who yearn for reciprocated displays of respect and graciousness. The treatment many say they receive unfairly renders them as irresponsible, incapable and, with respect to reprimanding, homogenous. Important to note is that, while students see this as a significant factor to their happiness, teachers make nominal mention of this. Finally, a subtheme which bleeds into the preceding three is a compelling *call to be kind* in everyday language and behaviour. It is thought that, if teachers and students alike were more mindful of their words and manners, school would be a significantly happier environment. Expressions of aggression and pessimism are described as being particularly contagious and, in conjunction with performance-induced anxieties, dampen expectations that a kinder school community can be realised. Despite their necessary awareness, teachers possess much of the authority in this territory by showcasing ways of being empathetic, chivalrous and joyful for their students.

The third and final theme of *recognition and worth* pertains to data which underscores issues of how students are valued in their school community. It is suggested that happiness depends greatly on whether students feel they are *seen, heard and understood*, primarily by staff. Children are sometimes misread, for instance emotionally or in terms of their leadership and learning capabilities. They are eager for more autonomy and opportunities to engage meaningfully in schooling processes, and wish to express themselves in ways which a limited perspective of 'good student' does not always afford. Including children in conversations and decisions about their educational wants and needs allows them to feel like worthy participants, rather than recipients. Inviting their sentiments on important matters, including student well-being and school representation, contributes to their senses of control and empowerment. Part of this entails placing value in *the person behind the score*, or who students are as individuals notwithstanding their grades. It is not that academic achievement is disassociated with happiness; on the contrary, students typically perform better in their tasks when they are of happier states. The problem is that the pendulum of recognition swings so drastically towards meeting performance expectations that very little attention is given to students' character strengths and internally motivated interests. Teachers and students agree that generalising what a worthwhile or successful life necessarily comprises can be detrimental to children's confidence and sense of self. Rather, they must be appreciated as distinguishable human beings with varying goals and forms of intelligence. Of course, there are more specific identity features which can make it difficult to feel *belonging and acceptance* in school. A major source of unhappiness for students is feeling as though aspects of their authentic selves are disapproved of or unusual, for instance their sexual orientation and perspectives on religion. Interestingly, this difficulty of being a minority in school seems less tied to distinctive ethnic or socio-economic qualities and more to how freely a person can share their opinions and beliefs. When it comes to addressing issues of bullying or bigotry, "sometimes less is more" and, as opposed to implementing official school directives, can be alleviated through the ordinary and informal ways people interact. Lastly, a school which breeds happiness also serves as *a place for becoming*. It is a place where students experience rich fulfilment and a sense of deep accomplishment in their work, often irrespective of the marks they receive. It is a place where they are permitted the flexibility to explore subjects in creative and purposeful ways, learning both about themselves and the lives they wish to lead.

One especially important takeaway from this chapter is that these subthemes must be evaluated *as a coherent whole*. Participants contribute a wealth of information to understanding this phenomenon and, to make sense of their tangled life-worlds, it has been beneficial to broadly categorise them. As explained in Chapter 4, these are but my individual interpretations; any other researcher will have digested the data differently. There are several instances where subthemes conceivably overlap; for instance, a school ethos of respect and fairness in turn helps create a shared sense of community in that place. Where these intersections are strongest, I have made a special effort to comment. It is not possible to draw definitive conceptual lines between each subtheme, nor is it necessary. As will become clearer in the following discussion chapter, the data here is used simultaneously to answer this study's research questions and aid learning of the topic. I take this thick description, what has been intended as a "vicarious experience" for the reader (Lincoln and Guba, 2013), and form conclusions as to how happiness for students is arguably achieved.

Chapter 6: Discussion and conclusions

Here I answer the core research questions of this thesis and demonstrate how I have addressed its aims and objectives. In so doing, I identify how the outcomes of this study coincide with prior literature as well as new insights into how happiness is achieved for children in school. I discuss the contributions this study makes to the understanding and prioritisation of happiness in education more broadly, as well as its applicability towards meeting pupil needs following the coronavirus pandemic. I end by proposing directions for future research and showcasing questions which I suggest warrant additional attention and exploration. Fundamentally, I hope to relay intelligible and reasoned research conclusions and provide a thoroughly analysed and worthwhile perspective on this subject from which other interested parties might benefit.

6.1 Conclusions

The central aim of this thesis is to explore what the narrated experiences and perspectives of students and teachers reveal about achieving happiness in secondary schools. In this segment, the leading conclusions from the study are organised according to its three research questions: According to pupil and teacher insights,

> RQ1. What elements of secondary school life are most influential to student happiness, either as contributors or inhibitors?
>
> RQ2. To what extent is happiness valued or prioritised by the secondary school community? What do its practices and discourses convey to children about the relevance of happiness to their education?
>
> RQ3. What might a secondary school look like if it were designed with student happiness in mind?

Responses to these research questions are informed by a collection of rich observational and interview data, which is organised and interpreted in Chapter 5 according to three core themes and 12 subthemes:

Table 4: List of themes and subthemes.

Theme 1: Connection and community	Theme 2: Lanuage and behaviour	Theme 3: Recognition and worth
People over place	Decoding discipline	Seen, heard and understood
Outside issues, inside concerns	Setting the tone	The person behind the score
Health and well-being	Fairness and communication	Belonging and acceptance
Teamwork and comaraderie	A call to be kind	A place for becoming

Embedded throughout this discussion are significant commonalities and discrepancies which exist between student and teacher narratives, both towards how happiness is achieved currently and under what circumstances it might be. And in keeping with the style I have hereto written about happiness and schooling, and the interpretive nature of this topic, the conclusions to each question naturally overlap and draw from one another.

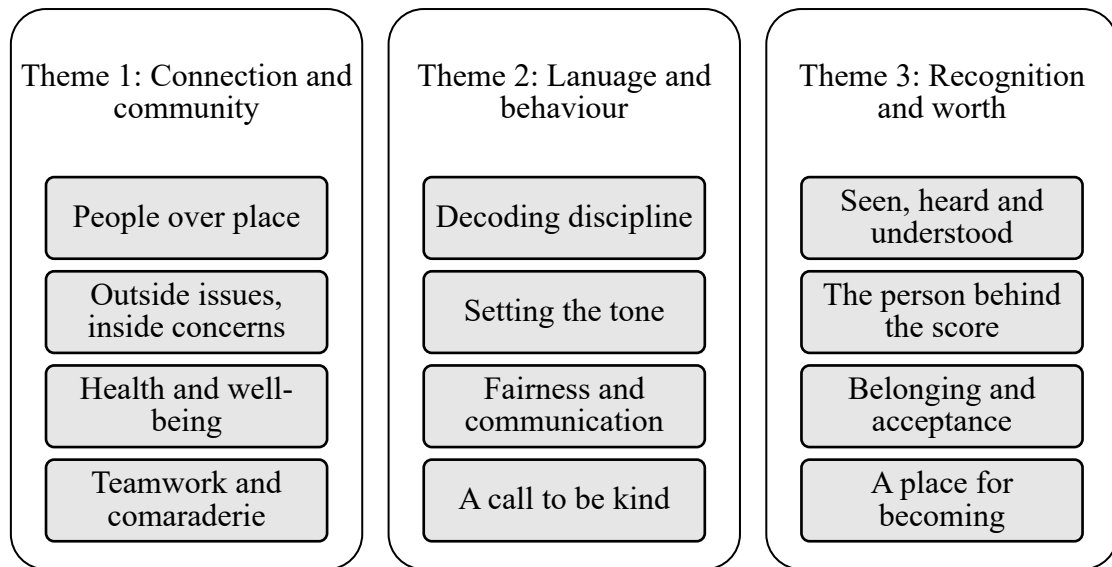### 6.1.1 RQ1. What elements of secondary school life are most influential to student happiness, either as contributors or inhibitors?

To answer this question, it should be clarified that aspects of schooling need not be distinguished according to whether they solely promote *or* prevent happiness, as it is their presence or absence which is most relevant. We can understand them according to how individuals perceive 1) comfort and security in place and 2) pride in one's work. In identifying these elements of school life, students and teachers describe varieties of *pleasure* and *purpose* informed by their *emotions* and *judgements*, their insights thus substantiating Dolan's (2014) interpretation of happiness as a subjective and multi-dimensional measure of well-being.

Comfort and security in place

Perceptions of comfort and security in the school environment first entail how children navigate its social dimension. The evidence from this study overwhelmingly points to the significance of a school's interpersonal fabric and whether students garner support and

respect by their peers and, equally, their teachers. Positive relationships and collaboration are among the most reported contributing factors to experiencing happiness in school, while personal rifts and disconnection are among the most reported inhibitors. The degree to which harmonious and productive relationships feature in this study supports literature on the human inclination to bond and problem-solve within one's community (Dolan, 2014; Seligman, 2011) and how experiences of joy and fulfilment are heightened through quality social interactions (De Neve et al., 2013; Griffiths, 2012; Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). In keeping with research on the reciprocity between happiness and positive relationships, teacher and student participants alike characterise the 'happiest' students in school as those who exhibit friendly, sociable qualities (De Neve et al., 2013), are well regarded by others (Boehm and Lyubomirsky, 2008) and who invest in, and reap the rewards of, quality friendships (Diener and Seligman, 2002; Michalos, 1991). Opportunities to engage and work with one another are important in forming and maintaining a desired social network in school, as well as the *sense of security* it provides. This is true, especially from the student perspective, in divulging sensitive or personal information, as well as in overcoming difficult situations in school. Near to Salavera et al.'s (2017) findings on successful coping mechanisms of secondary aged students, the collaboration and joint responsibility which spawn from positive working relationships in school help to cement a kind of team mentality, boosting pupils' confidence to tackle challenging coursework and learning objectives. As becomes clearer in answering RQ2, these experiences are sometimes limited by an increasingly fragmented and assessment-focused agenda.

Of special interest here is that the language and behaviour dictated by teachers in classrooms quite remarkably influences whether these are happy places for children to be. Student narratives of un/happy lessons revolve much more around the social energy and conduct with which they are executed than the content being addressed (Fisher, 2011; Gorard and See, 2011). This adds to the notion that cultivating happy learning experiences for children depends predominately on whether teachers themselves are happy in performing their duties (Smith 2005; 2013). While teachers vary in expressing sympathy for the power of adult dispositions and how students internalise these, students generally convey an appreciation for the relational component of education and express a desire for mutuality of care (Moore, 2013). Akin to Burke and Grosvenor's (2015) findings on children and young people's visions for education, students advocate for their

teacher's well-being in an imperfect school system while also interrogating their sometimes reluctance to reciprocate the trust and respect they feel they deserve. Evidence from this study suggests that this is a pivotal component of establishing comfort and security in place, and is in part accomplished through applying appropriate and consistent degrees of authority. Importantly, the kinds of classroom interactions which beget happiness are not necessarily initiated by the teacher but can often be driven by young people themselves. At the same time, students respond positively to boundaries and develop a sense of community based in part by how misconduct is resolved; their happiness indeed depends on assertive disciplinarians who exercise good classroom management and model necessary courtesies, such as politeness and helpfulness. Without what is perceived as a *collective investment* (see Gorard and See, 2011) in a fair and positive schooling experience, the social fabric on which happiness depends can deteriorate and allow poor attitudes and behaviour to breed in cyclical fashion. The spotlight on un/kindness in this thesis supports a social, contagious conception of happiness (Dolan, 2014) and adds to arguments for reinforcing just and authentic relationships in schools for the betterment of pupils' well-being (Sardóc and White, 2017; Noddings, 2003; MacMurray, 1958).

In addition to how they function socially within the school community, students' senses of comfort and security involve their self-perceived value in this environment. There are key emotional and psychological dimensions to how children evaluate their worth in school based on their surroundings and the norms according to which they are expected to abide. Considering the roots of happiness, students do not draw attention to either more or newer school amenities but, rather, call for a general pleasantness and comfortability in the everyday spaces they learn, socialise and recharge. As Burke and Grosvenor (2015) also suggest, young people analyse critically the typical characteristics of their school and from these form assumptions about themselves. Often regrettably, their happiness depends on the extent to which they believe they are recognised and appreciated members of their school community. Most significant in addressing this issue are the messages children receive about *who is welcome* and *who is important*.

Part of students' deciphering these messages and positioning themselves in school is tied to the extent that their capabilities and interests are regarded as worthwhile. The implications of preferential treatment afforded by staff to certain subjects or learner

identities can entice feelings of failure and disassociation for students not categorised as 'successful' in these areas (McGillicuddy and Devine, 2020). Findings from this study echo Noddings' (2003) suggestions that compelling students to partake in a school culture which does not necessarily value or reflect their legitimate talents and aptitudes can alter their self-image and anticipations for their future. From both teacher and student perspectives, this is a disheartening reality and sincere failing of the UK education system. Children additionally specify an anxiety which arises from adult *projections* of how different learners will academically perform, and the difficulty in overcoming these biases. This is coupled with a want to be better recognised for how they are progressing with their studies and improving over the course of their education, with less emphasis on independent exam scores.

Evaluating one's worth as a learner is but one origin of isolation in school, as some students struggle to navigate social and cultural norms; the most prominent examples from this study include the extent to which young people are content in expressing their sexuality and religious positions. From a pedagogical perspective, teachers believe alleviating prejudices in school might be accomplished by diversifying learning material to represent various perspectives and modelling acceptance in the classroom, practices which resurface in RQ2 and RQ3. What is clear in addressing this topic is that students themselves crave schools to be places of *belonging* and *inclusivity*, where individuals resemble something like a family in a home. The child perspective is especially helpful here in establishing that happiness comes from being able to behave authentically within this environment, a place which is palpably impartial, empathetic and cohesive (Riley, 2017; Burke and Grosvenor, 2015). Several students distinguish primary from secondary education on this very basis. They resonate with a special and joyful fellowship experienced during early years, one they say embraces collective and open-minded learning outcomes but gives way with time to more competitive and performance-driven discourses.

Finally, children situate themselves as valuable members of their school communities and achieve this sense of security when they are encouraged to enquire about and participate in its processes. Students respond most positively to experiences which liberate them to enact their agency and speak openly about matters of importance (Affouneh and Hargreaves, 2015; Fisher, 2011). In essence, the *exchanging of ideas* is a basic and likely

underrated form of demonstrating care in school. This is evident from multiple student narratives and observations in classrooms, wherein children long to be listened and responded to in ways which exhibit genuine appreciation and attentiveness by adults. There is a distinct empowerment of contribution which allows young people to interpret their place in school as meaningful and legitimate (Fielding, 2005; Bloom, 1953). And while student voice is less prevalent among teacher notions of happiness, children speak of their capabilities and willingness to engage more actively in their education, ways which aid their need for belonging and strengthen the spirit of community (Riley, 2017).

Pride in one's work

A supplemental category of school elements influencing pupil happiness deals with the pride which arises from challenging and intrinsically driven work. Students conceive 'achievement' as a highly personal and difficult outcome, one which does not necessarily align with the formal grades a person is awarded. Consistent with Csikszentmihalyi's (2002) theory of how human beings experience *flow* in their activities, children's fulfilment in their learning appears to be most associated with developing whole-hearted attachment to a topic. What makes this especially challenging in the schooling context, however, is that they need the freedom and autonomy to develop deep-seated connections with that which excites and bares relevance to their young lives (Burke and Grosvenor, 2015; Pring, 2012). Students communicate feelings of powerlessness and defeat during moments in which they cannot exercise some command over the content or methods by which they are expected to learn. The level of proficiency children especially associate with happiness requires decision-making in shaping the environment, as well as opportunities to demonstrate their aptitudes. This again signifies that children must be recognised as *serious contributors* to the schooling experience, both entrusted and expected by adults to add valuable insights and engage with various approaches to understanding subjects. As other researchers of pupil enjoyment have illustrated (see Gorard and See, 2011; Rantala Määttä, 2010), deeply pleasurable and rewarding learning in school relies tremendously on teachers' talents for dynamically and dialectically exploring real-world issues with children. In turn, students can exert initiative and discover for themselves new ways of thinking and being.

Of course, the topic of pride and meaningful achievement warrants mention of attention and how it is allocated in school. The significance of vibrant collaboration and

community to happiness should not be taken to mean that children never benefit from quiet moments of personal reflection; participants in this study attribute clear importance to having dependable, solitary spaces in times of need. But it can be difficult for children to maintain stillness and concentration in school, especially if there are ongoing pressures to perform and progress to the next topic or objective. Students derive greater satisfaction from their work when they are given adequate space to explore what they interpret as worthwhile topics (Sardoč and White, 2017) and time to persist through appropriately challenging tasks (Rantala and Määttä, 2010). They indeed comprehend the *value of engagement* in their learning and how this is coupled with capabilities for thoroughly investing in and completing projects (Burke and Grosvenor, 2015). It may be that holding one's attention and focusing on *being* allows a perceptible shift in how it feels to be in that place. Findings from this thesis would imply, as happiness theorists Dolan (2014) and Csikszentmihalyi (2002) do, that forces of attention by virtue help construe our reality. And it is reasonable to question whether the educational community compels students to partake in activities which are not necessarily guided by these individuals' best interests (see Pring, 2012), commandeering their attention and thus an aspect of their childhood existence.

6.1.2 RQ2. To what extent is happiness valued or prioritised by the secondary school community? What do its practices and discourses convey to children about the relevance of happiness to their education?

This question is important for taking the issues addressed in RQ1 and framing them within a context for confronting why students commonly struggle to find happiness in school and the greater powers which invariably sway their capacities to experience it. RQ2 has two parts: one to reflect the desires and expectations of the schooling community and one to identify actual behaviour which informs children's perspectives. This distinction is important for recognising that means in education are not necessarily compatible with aims, however well- intentioned, and that the assumptions individuals hold are sometimes inconsistent with what transpires in this environment.

With the exception of two teachers for whom student happiness is admittedly not a priority of their work, all other participants interpret this phenomenon as an essential responsibility of the school. Several give the impression that this topic is not one they are accustomed to speaking naturally about among their peers or colleagues, though offer

complex reflections about what they understand the theoretical functions of schooling to be. Some teachers, in sharing their visions of education and aspirations for the young people in their care, communicate a real frustration in realising these whilst also tending to stringent administrative demands. Most of my classroom observations unfortunately substantiate this notion, the behaviour of teachers at times at odds with their personal philosophies on what schooling should accomplish; some hold strong convictions aligned with humanistic principles (see White, 2015), criticising narrow conceptions of 'success' and 'getting ahead' mentalities guiding educational practice (Griffiths, 2012; Layard, 2011b; Noddings, 2003). Still, it is difficult to discern the degree of individual ownership adults attach to this issue, as our conversations reveal a wealth of matters related to *their own happiness* in performing their roles. It is unsurprising then that teachers only minimally address ways of personally championing pupil happiness as an aim when it appears they are commonly discouraged by a system they believe partially fails them also.

Adding to this conundrum is that students, in arguing why their happiness should be better targeted by the school, stress its prominence in how they derive an eagerness and focus to learn. Environments of care and joy appear here to supersede students' capacities for learning and performing (Moore, 2013; Achor, 2011; Gorard and See, 2011), this fuelling the argument that increasing students' academic achievement necessitates the prioritisation of their happiness (Ng, Huebner and Hills', 2015). A key discrepancy demonstrated in this study is that, though participants share common expectations that schools should prioritise student happiness, children place heavier emphasis on issues *within* the school environment than do teachers (Moore, 2013). Adults, for instance, tend to attribute students' unhappiness with contemporary media and family-related matters, these outside influences spilling into their 'school selves'. But child narratives dismiss this dichotomy between school and personal identities, suggesting that school life *is* considerably personal. This inextricable relationship might therefore be embraced in supporting pupil happiness (MacMurray, 2012; Csikszentmihalyi, 2002), imparting disciplinary knowledge and skills in ways which support their living happily in life's many manifestations (Cigman, 2012).

While this study draws important distinctions between addressing *mental ill-health* in children and the promotion of their *subjective well-being* (Patalay and Fitzsimons, 2018; 2016), these two are frequently linked among participants, who overwhelmingly insist on

readily accessible and normalised support for them in schools. However, existing efforts to address these matters appear to be taken seriously by neither staff nor students who, not for being apathetic, are not invested in activities which do not adequately reflect their experiences or needs. Consistent with published reports (Ofsted, 2013; Formby and Wolstenholme, 2011), sporadic PSHE events are seen by students as elementary and dull in their delivery, something for which to 'tick box' rather than gain useful strategies or inspiration. Coordinated assemblies aimed at 'mindfulness' and the like are perceived as equally unproductive, these activities very different from the kinds of meaningful engagement and participation students associate with happiness in school (as discussed in RQ1). Participants generally agree that these approaches are not inherently bad ideas, but lack of resources and attention do not presently do them justice and, consequently, little is gained. Importantly, systematic support of this nature differs from more intimate methods some suggest better assist children struggling with mental health, while factors most associated with subjective well-being feature ongoing, whole-school conventions and cultural transformations (further addressed in RQ3). A most surprising finding from this study is that, while students continue to express a desire for involvement in the varied aspects of their education, especially those impacting their well-being, *no teacher forthrightly suggested the necessity of incorporating children's views in prioritising student happiness*.

On the amount of concentration academic achievement receives, many students and teachers suggest that balancing work and other life priorities, a skill necessary to both parties' happiness, is thwarted by overloaded and rigorous school schedules. Children describe sensations of entrapment and an inability to escape the boredom and anxiety which arise from exam-speak ad nauseum. Unmotivating and disruptive, administrative schemes such as pre-exam assemblies and 'countdown clocks' irritate and patronise them, often compromising their intrinsic motivations to learn. With the extent to which exam preparedness guides the school's activity and rhetoric, class lessons and interactions appear at times transactional and disengaging (Bullough, 2012; Smeyers, Smith and Standish, 2007), enticing feelings of insecurity and undue stress. While these trends in British education have been well documented from a well-being perspective and the perils of performativity mightily criticised (see Layard, 2011b; Stobart, 2008; Ball, 2003), this thesis foregrounds issues of *conformity* and *emotional detachment*.

Conceptions of 'successful living', and by extension 'successful learning', appear to go largely unchallenged in school, where children are encouraged to strive according to traditional student tracks. The message often received is that the extrinsic purposes of education are those which practically matter most, and so it is necessary to conform to singular expectations which maximise odds of academic and career success (Seppälä, 2017; Layard, 2011b). As Rajiv [Year 10 boy] soberly puts it, "the only way to succeed is for the rest to fail". Yet 'success' in this context is not always synonymous with a good or happy life (see Achor, 2011). A prevailing opinion is that schooling should better support learners in exploring possibilities for their lives, and in developing their individual capabilities according to what brings them meaning (Pring, 2014); happiness is again distinguished as inherently *personal* and *subjective* (Dolan, 2014). But despite these sentiments of disapproval, even resentment, towards the existing school ethos of success, there seems to be relatively little actionable discourse on behalf of adults to address this problem. I find it plausible that teachers are at once genuine in their desires for school to be less competitive, and for happiness to feature alongside academic goals, while simultaneously promoting the pursuit of primarily tangible outcomes (see de Ruyter, 2015; Martin, 2006; Noddings; 2003). It is especially striking that some pupils describe happiness as something to be expected later in adulthood, when they are finally granted some authority make decisions for themselves and engage in more personally fulfilling subjects. The school experience for them quite tragically mirrors something to *endure*, and less of something to embrace.

And while these pressures can trigger feelings of contempt and distress for individuals, equally intriguing is how these emotions saturate the school environment and dampen the community spirit. When students are made susceptible to what they describe as hostile language surrounding exam preparation, they can absorb teachers' anxieties and transfix on the potential consequences of poor outcomes. Their chronicles of day-to-day classroom behaviour shed some light on whether the affective needs of learners are neglected, and how teachers in effect govern emotional expression (Rantala and Määttä, 2012). Students seem aware of how their teachers commonly misinterpret or overgeneralise the state of their emotions, while boys distinctly admit to guising their sensibilities to save face. Vulnerability from the male perspective is almost perceived as a weakness, or least something which isn't easily harnessed in the school context. Yet, the needs to belong and be valued as one's authentic self lie at the crux of how children

experience happiness in this place (see RQ1). Suggestive of Fisher's (2011) "veil of compliance" hypothesis, students' affective withdrawal in class and appearing as somewhat hollowed versions of themselves is raised by teachers themselves, some of whom are disturbed at the possibility that their classrooms are places children do not want to be. Again, in-person observations corroborate the tensions many students describe. Some teachers are witnessed half-heartedly responding to children's queries and attempts at participation, and others behaving in ways which are possibly intimidating and improper. The adult in most instances appears to maintain near total dominance over class objectives, activities and pace, the process of learning relatively clinical; meanwhile pupils begrudgingly comply, their curiosities dwindling in real-time (Hargreaves, 2015; Noddings, 2003).

This sweeping disconnect illustrates a socio-affective imperative for students, who are greatly invested in whether their teacher likes and understands them (Moore, 2013) and in part construct their self-identity as a result of these emotional responses (McGillicuddy and Devine, 2020). When teachers are callous or despondent, students perceive this as a lack of care, not only towards the subject matter but towards them personally. And though children insist that teacher encouragement and positivity boost their readiness to learn and engage, common adult dispositions appear to compromise this dimension of their well-being. With this in mind, it is of little wonder that power imbalances and personal frictions coincide with pupils' cravings of approval and issues of misconduct in school (Hulme, 2017; Affouneh and Hargreaves, 2015). But while a nuanced 'fear of failure' is observed here, as it has been for many children across the UK (The Good Childhood Report, 2020), there are exceptional classroom observations, including my visits to Frieda [Spanish Teacher] and Karim [Year 12 boy], which exemplify where happiness unfolds. Emulating a starkly dissimilar authority complex and emotional barometer, these environments are light, playful and transparent. Most captivating are the ways in which the teacher morphs lessons from a top-down facade of learning to a sincerely shared and personal event. With little talk of meeting targets, these adults encourage pupils to assert themselves and lean into their individual connections with topics. Teaching philosophies and administrative prioritises aside, there is *a palpable care and respect* in these settings on which pupil happiness positively depends. The emphasis on real-life happenings and implications appears to elicit affective responses in children, who exude a liveliness not observed elsewhere in the school. What emerges here is a mutual understanding among

persons, who operate with ease and enthusiasm within well-reasoned limitations. To this end, the emotional provocation which educates learners as *people*, helping them to confront more intelligently their life prospects, contributes to happiness and well-being not by virtue of the knowledge content but how adults establish these settings as person-centred (Sardoč and White, 2017; Cigman, 2012; Pring, 2012). To quote Frieda, "we're all human beings out here".

6.1.3 RQ3. What might a secondary school look like if it were designed with student happiness in mind?

This question involves bridging together insights from RQ1 and RQ2 to consider how a secondary school might look and feel with student happiness functioning as a genuine and ongoing priority. It focuses on how participants weigh their current experiences with their ideas and hopes for an improved educational community. The conclusions which follow identify explicit and implicit school characteristics which present a framework for evaluating an institution's commitment to developing happy children. These are broader in nature and work to complement the more specific revelations of the previous two research questions, thus providing a richer perspective on the issue.

Administrative and organisational attributes (macro-level)

A school which promotes the subjective well-being of students, or what I will refer to simply as 'happiness-minded', will have all-inclusive goals and policies which are top-down and thoroughly disbursed. Some well-established strategies for targeting student happiness are necessary for legitimising and cultivating this aim. However, these are vitally *communicative*, *adaptable* and *customised* as much as possible for that community. This is true in managing matters of language and behaviour, a significant theme to emerge from the data. Participants envision a system wherein more energy is attributed to uprooting the causes of misconduct, much of which they tie explicitly to children's unhappiness in that environment. A happiness-minded school might therefore feature an approach for more permanently and restoratively responding to issues, and not simply reprimanding that which has been wronged (Cavanagh, 2008). Part of this will entail special attention to students' emotional development and undertaking a kind of 'duty of care' (Moore, 2013) to reflect their affective needs as part of the school's pedagogical foundation (Rantala and Määttä, 2013). Students in this study express

interesting opinions about what is 'right', 'wrong', and 'fair' concerning their school lives, and collectively unveil issues of emotional inauthenticity between persons. Their experiences bring into focus how children are impacted by their school's adopted values and dispositions, which together convey to them ways of 'correctly' or 'incorrectly' thinking, speaking and behaving[15]. This calls to question how a happiness-minded school will respond to the important normative dimension of achieving happiness. That is, how students come to conceptualise what a happy human life entails and whether they are encouraged to employ some ethical reasoning as to what 'good' or 'worthwhile' pursuits are. The cultivation of children's emotional development will account for this key cognitive component (Dolan, 2014; Cigman, 2012), and will support their exercising contextually suitable attitudes and emotions without learning to categorise them as inherently 'good' or 'bad' (Cigman, 2008; Miller, 2008; Nussbaum, 2001). It is evident here that happiness does not simply imply a greater proportion of pleasant to unpleasant moments but is grounded in how individuals perceive their life in its entirety as meaningful (Dolan, 2014; Seligman, 2011). This value-setting is essential to the human lives we lead and will help students decide for themselves which 'routes' to happiness they are themselves deserving (Pring, 2014; Suissa, 2008).

Importantly, a school cannot substitute this challenging and exploratory work with generic or misplaced 'well-being'-themed activity. Without sufficient resources and staff dedication, an aim to promote happiness may yield undignified and half-hearted efforts and is unlikely to address sources of unhappiness in school (see Davies, 2015). The same is also true for measures to promote teachers' happiness at and with their work. A happiness-minded school will apply situational appropriateness for tackling problems at their core in conjunction with maintaining consistent and reliable support channels for mental health and well-being. But again, it is necessary to distinguish between individuals with diagnosable mental health conditions and a fundamental human need, and in this instance *right*, to live happily with pleasure and purpose. When curricula or organised events for educating children about happiness and well-being *are* introduced, their implementation must be legitimised as much as other academic subjects and structured in ways which are applicable to the place and persons involved. A happiness-mind school

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[15] This is sometimes referred to in educational research as *institutional habitus*, particularly in the contexts of social class and learner identities. See Reay, Crozier and Clayton (2010) and McDonough (1997) for examples.

understands that prioritising students' experiences of positive subjective well-being is more than a response to the endemic of mental ill health; it is a worthy investment on its own.

A happiness-minded school will also apply understanding of happiness' relationship to children's learning and their need for agency, and will adapt its expectations of their performance accordingly. There are quite practical recommendations put forward by the participants in this study for shortening the length of individual class lessons and modifying routines which they say are especially taxing and ineffective. Schools should ensure that students' schedules and in-class activity reflect their needs for peace and positive socialisation, with the appreciation that experiencing meaningful engagement with material is difficult and not likely to be achieved continually for hours on end. And it would be a mistake to confuse children's narratives of boredom and exhaustion with an inability or refusal to learn their subjects. They are in most cases profoundly aware of what contributes to and what inhibits their learning and performance in school, and can identify how and why happiness matters for this. There is an onus on school staff to recognise students for their capabilities to convey their experiences (Prout and James, 1990), and to subsequently shape school practice (de Ruyter, 2015). Being happiness-minded will involve a degree of investigation which assures students being awarded opportunities in classrooms to self-direct their learning and function at a pace which permits such experiences as *flow* and creative thought. This is not to suggest that teachers alone should not be trusted to make their own pedagogical decisions; on the contrary, evidence from this study would imply that greater freedom and jurisdiction to guide learning objectives in response to their own classrooms would place teachers in a much better position to foster happiness for pupils. The weight of academic achievement is a shared displeasure among students and teachers, but while both groups espouse alternative ideals of what 'success' truthfully entails, manifestations of these are puzzlingly few throughout their day-to-day school lives. A happiness-minded school will feature more flexible learning goals which leave space for children's own initiative and interest exploration (Noddings, 2003), aiding their autonomous and meaning-making capabilities (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). It will place an explicitly higher premium on students' role in generating pedagogical standards and practices, and in so doing will expose constructions of success and happiness seldomly represented in the school context.

Of course, a collection of happiness-forward policies need not be labelled apart from other ongoing school priorities. A happiness-minded agenda means most of all that there is continuous and provocative reflection on what these priorities consist of and whether the means to achieve them are compatible with promoting children's entire well-being (see Pring, 2015; Noddings, 2003). This does not necessarily imply use of pre-planned happiness curriculums and the occasional exercises which showcase it but does, without fail, involve participation of students and teachers. From RQ1 and RQ2, it is apparent that a whole-school approach to happiness will be successful insofar as persons in positions at the macro level *empower* and *are receptive towards* individuals at the micro level. Participant testimonies reveal a substantial gap between regular occurrences of school life and what they perceive and experience to be happier alternatives. There is a responsibility of the school to facilitate aims talk around such questions as, what is the quality of life for children here? And how are we nurturing their need for fulfilment in their learning? There is a substantial want on behalf of students and teachers to speak forthrightly on these topics and in ways which directly govern school policy. And adequately addressing the major influences on student happiness means orchestrating some critical deliberation that is collaborative and open-ended. This study has demonstrated how current educational trends in the UK, in their myriad forms, can inflict damage to students' personal well-being. There must be opportunity for transparency and idea formation in spaces which are not, for instance, contributing anonymously to PhD research. Of course, the specific ways in which this is accomplished will vary according to each individual school community and the needs of its members (Cavanagh, 2008). What should be expected to transfer across settings, however, is a normalisation of children and adults together contemplating how to enhance the schooling experience. The student participants in this study exhibit incredible readiness to think deeply about the intricacies of their school lives in relation to their and others' sense of well-being (see Burke and Grosvenor, 2015). School leadership which is committed to happiness will incorporate these perspectives as part of its ideological and decision-making processes (de Ruyter, 2015).

Atmospheric and cultural attributes (micro-level)
Testimonies from this study collectively construe happiness in schools as a product of the social and cultural environment, a kind of internal force which ebbs and flows according to how people interact and the ethos they share. What transpires between individuals in typical situations can have major implications on how happiness is achieved, and the

delicate relationship between students and their teachers is especially helpful in understanding this phenomenon. Because of this, successful school efforts to promote student happiness will be cognizant of the quality of experiences occurring within that institution.

First, a culture of happiness in school will comprise of students who are both happy in their present circumstances and who are learning for its intrinsic value. The school community will realise that to overinvest in the instrumental purposes of education or narrowly focus on where students are *going* can come at the expense of recognising where they are *now*. It will work to resist a purely goal-oriented mindset which can unjustly situate the purpose of children's lives at some point they have not yet arrived. A happiness-minded school will not only regard the schooling process as valuable because it lays the groundwork for something else, but will tend loyally to how students are living in its care (de Ruyter, 2015). This study suggests that the knowledge and skills children are keen to acquire sometimes fall outside what is necessary for exam preparation of some kind. And though any school is necessarily restricted in which content and resources it can provide, data from this study imply that there is considerable room for improvement in how adults respond to student's questions and learning inclinations. To phrase simply, there is a general want on behalf of students for engagement in their learning which is not sufficiently matched by their teachers. Here I think Hogan's (2009) notion of 'imaginative neighbourhood' is something to work towards: a learning scenario wherein children are encouraged to form meaningful relationships with subjects which intrigue them (Griffiths, 2012). Creating these kinds of spaces might liberate students to invest more in the learning *process* without the continuous temptation to test their understanding of what they have learnt, and could be important to relieving the pronounced competition many say diminishes the schooling experience.

Though it might seem obvious, classrooms of a happiness-minded school would also feature substantial degrees of pleasure and play. Children in this study largely convey the significance of pairing serious or challenging work with what is also pleasing, recalling Dewey's (1933) coinage of the "the ideal mental condition" (p. 236). They underscore the role of teachers for facilitating imaginative and delightful pedagogy which invites the creative participation of students and stimulates their interest and curiosity (Stobart, 2014). These are important components to how children derive 'comfort' in their school

environment (as described in RQ1) and which heighten their internal motivation and learning potential (ibid; Burke and Grosvenor, 2015). Although here pupil and teacher appreciations of happiness are again inconsistent. While adults display some concern of how the norms of schooling can be dull or even demoralising for some children, they speak little about things such as enjoyment, humour and fun as occurring alongside their classroom learning objectives (see Gorard and See, 2011). It is further worrisome that an amount of *dis*pleasure in school might also be viewed as unavoidable by some teachers, such as Cynthia [English Teacher], who asks: "Is anyone really happy in school?". Even among the teachers who seem most passionate about student happiness, participant narratives tend to veer towards administrative concerns and minimally feature reflections on the nature of their individual classrooms. It is imperative for a happiness-minded school to embody the profound purposes of pleasure and playfulness in the classroom and lay the foundation for teachers to embrace these by virtue of their everyday practice. This outcome will inspire students' autonomous and decision-making capabilities (Bloom, 1985; Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde and Whalen, 1997) and social and emotional competencies (Martin, 2006). Of course, an atmosphere of happiness does not mean that instances of failure or difficulty in learning are not present (Noddings, 2003) nor that students are encouraged to 'think positively' so as to disregard the legitimate problems before them (Achor, 2011). The nuanced conception of happiness which emerges in this thesis does not seek to shelter or coddle students in these ways, but is concerned with how they are equipped to navigate life's uncertainties and pursue their interests wisely (Pring, 2015).

Finally, a happiness-minded school will be expected to radiate care among students and teachers who work to understand one another. There will be an observable vibrancy in these learning environments, much like that of participant Frieda's [Spanish Teacher] classroom (see RQ2), where individuals emanate joy and friendliness. These spaces would be characterised by constructive and sincere communication between persons, as well as children's wholehearted self-expression and emotionality as a familiar part of the learning process. Evidence from this study illustrates the necessity of instilling cultural values which embrace and involve various student identities. Children who contributed here align happiness in school with who is most celebrated in this setting, determinants of which many say should better reflect *who* people are and *how* they behave, and not solely their academic accomplishments. This is a particularly revealing fragment of the data, and

helps to explain students' general wants for increased compassion and cohesion throughout their school community. In a happiness-minded school, the important sense of belonging will be achieved to such extent as the daily occurrences in that place respect the intrinsic worth of individuals (see Riley, 2017). Frieda's classroom again serves as exemplar, by way of her relaxed pronoun usage in teaching language, and is much different than a formal assembly on how to model empathy. Of similar character to Alex Bloom's philosophy for democratic schooling (see Fielding, 2005), the school in mind will persistently work towards breeding a culture of community, one which places enquiry and relationships at its crux. Children in these spaces will derive happiness both from engaging with said community and by virtue of how it challenges them to develop their self-capabilities.

6.2 Significance and implications of the study

It is necessary now to place the conclusions of this thesis within a general discussion of how they contribute to relevant areas of knowledge and practice. What follows is what I consider to be the importance of this research and the value it potentially holds to other groups in understanding some of education's wider contemporary issues.
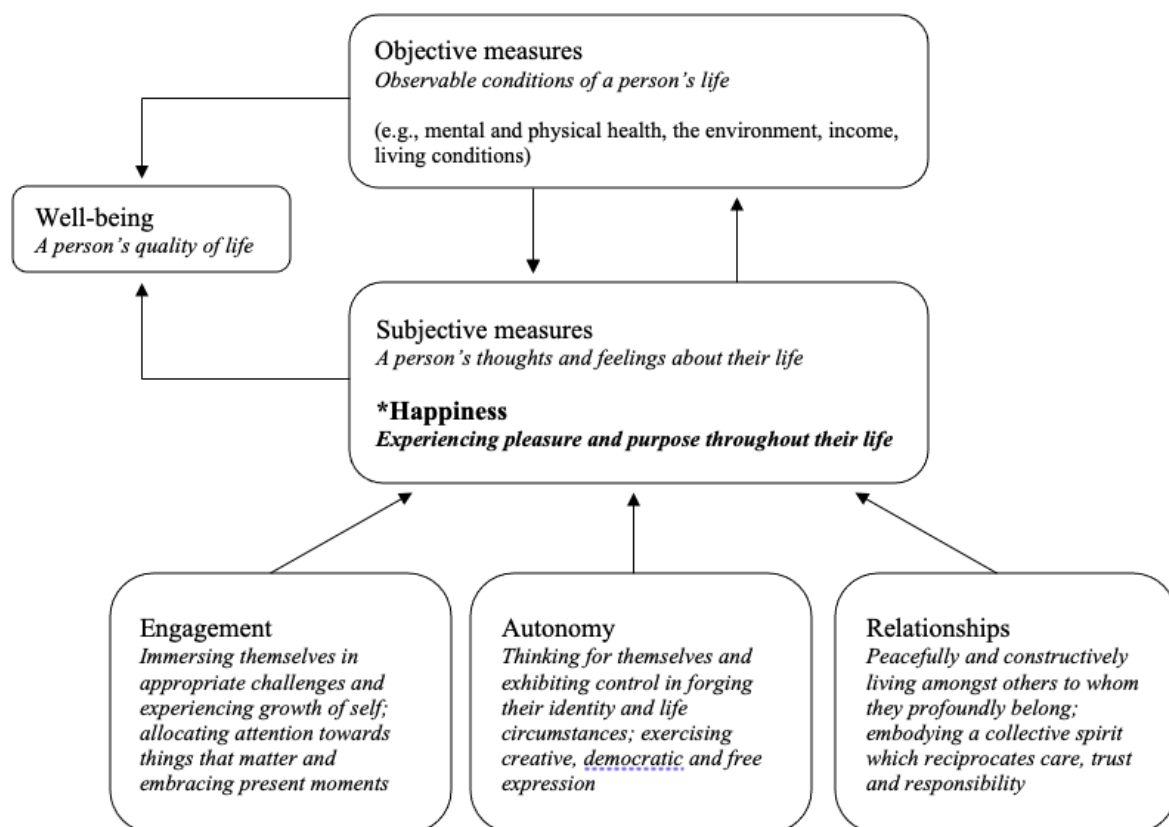
6.2.1 Spheres of contribution

There are two principal areas of contribution identified here, both of which are important for deconstructing and challenging 'norms' of school culture and their occasionally pernicious effects. This study helps to 1) illustrate the pertinence of personal happiness to schooling and 2) refine efforts to prioritise the happiness and well-being of children in school. I suggest these apply to two related sets of stakeholders. First, individuals whose work encompasses students' subjective well-being, whether as academics, teachers or school staff members. A second group of individuals I hope will engage with these findings are those working in the educational policy space, for whom questions about effective school responses to student happiness are relevant. The concept of happiness as an educational aim is sometimes underappreciated in broader discussions of how to address students' mental health and general well-being, and I hope that this thesis provides some clarification on why it is a distinct area of interest.

Before outlining these contributions, it is useful to elaborate on how the findings of this research aid understanding of key concepts and perspectives introduced initially in

Chapter 2. This empirical inquiry builds conceptual knowledge of the phenomenon by means of *discovery and assimilation* (Lincoln and Guba, 2013), meaning that new insights generated from the data are incorporated into and enhance pre-existing constructions gathered from an in-depth literature review of the topic. Together they offer an enriched theoretical perspective of happiness which, though open to interpretation, stands arguably improved and applicable to the groups referenced above. Interpretivist studies such as this are meant to be presented in ways which are transferable and relatable (ibid). The findings discussed here do not yield definitive recommendations or solutions, therefore, but further unravel the conceptual essence of happiness in schools.

Dolan's (2014) interpretation of happiness as *experiences of pleasure and purpose over time* was used to inform my understanding of the topic prior to data collection. Happiness, as part of a broader theoretical framework of well-being, accounts for a person's subjective thoughts and feelings. When coupled with objectively observed elements, happiness contributes to their overall quality of life. My conceptual geography (Figure 1 repeated from p. 28) depicted this relationship as well as what I identified as three underlying determinants of happiness: *engagement*, *autonomy* and *relationships*.

*Happiness

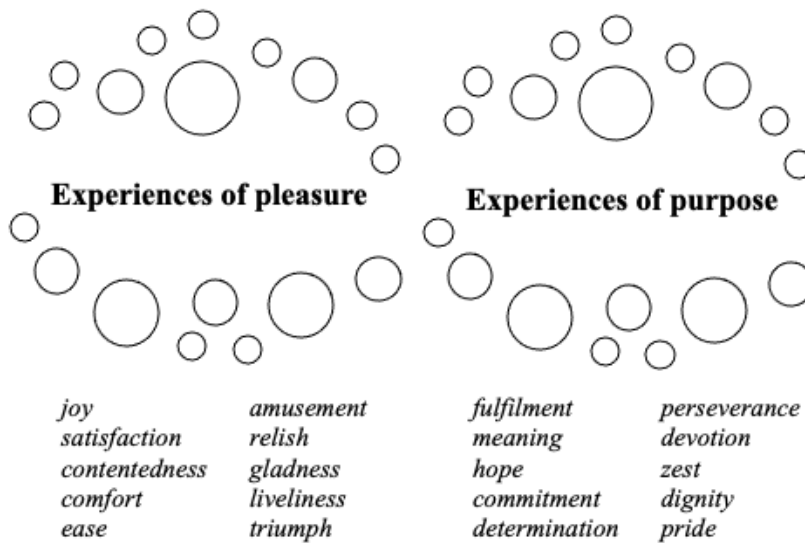|			
joy	*amusement*	*fulfilment*	*perseverance*
satisfaction	*relish*	*meaning*	*devotion*
contentedness	*gladness*	*hope*	*zest*
comfort	*liveliness*	*commitment*	*dignity*
ease	*triumph*	*determination*	*pride*

Figure 1: Conceptual geography of 'happiness'.

The second half of this conceptual geography illustrates that happiness as experiences of 'pleasure' and 'purpose' references a wide variety of subjective thoughts and feelings. As detailed in the literature review, these are understood to overlap considerably and fluctuate according to each individual and their life circumstances. This study has embraced the idea that integrating traditionally hedonic and eudaimonic conceptions of the phenomenon, though challenging to define, better reflects the subtleties and obscurities of human life. I undertook this research precisely to delve into such areas of *school* life, and to extract valuable but possibly overshadowed perspectives for supplementing contemporary discourses on student well-being. To reiterate, this study did not directly apply this conceptual geography of happiness to its individual case of students and teachers, but relied on it to extrapolate varied and compelling insights on the topic. Most notably, this framework allowed for a necessary degree of flexibly in exploring a range of issues; a more restrictive definition of happiness (e.g., one which only permitted analysis of certain words or phrases used to describe the concept) would have significantly limited the scope of this research and produced different findings.

In the context of schooling and the student experience, this study enriches the original conceptual framework in the following ways. First, as my discussion of RQ1 demonstrates, manifestations of (un)happiness can be more specifically framed around notions of *comfort and security in place* and *pride in one's work*. The original categories

of *engagement*, *autonomy* and *relationships* are still significantly applicable, but are refashioned to reflect students in school. Figure 4 illustrates this:
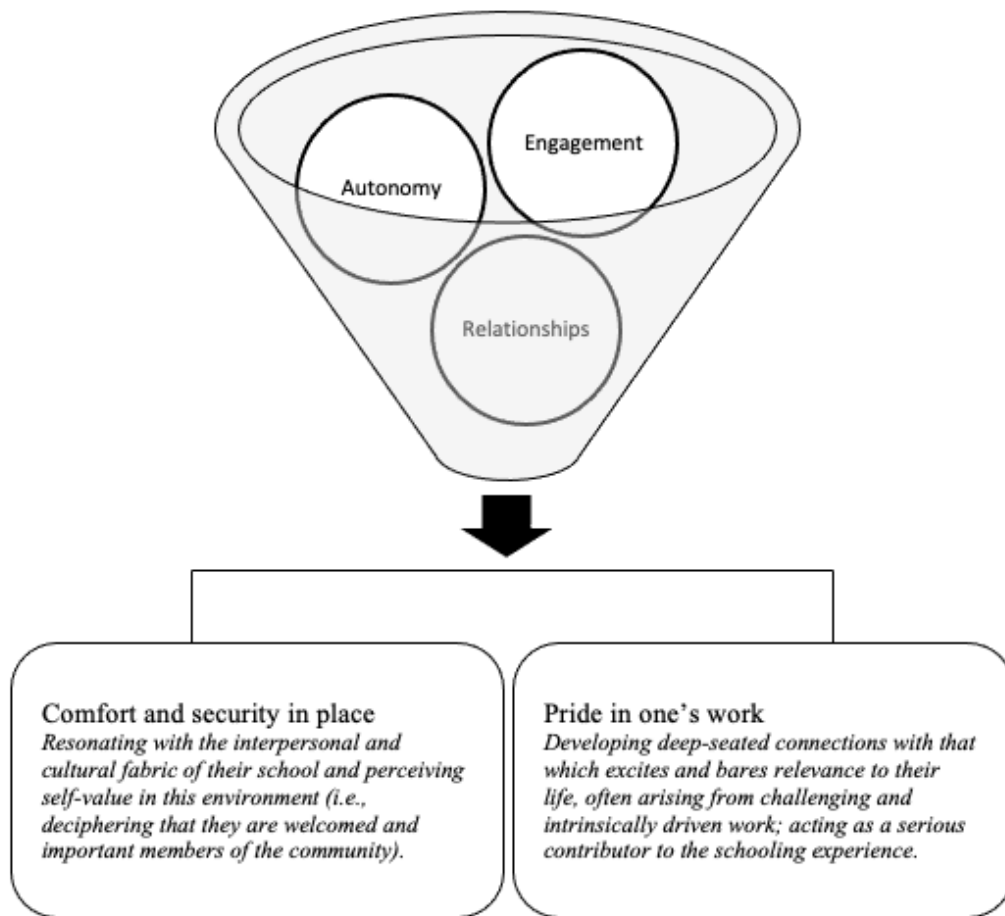

Figure 4: Sources of happiness in school.

Importantly, this research reveals that elements of the student experience conceptually converge in ways which are not always linear or transparent. The construction of happiness which surfaces here is remarkably multi-layered, and so its manifestations cannot be wholly or categorically defined. While the truth of where happiness lies for children in school is surely complicated, the above typologies provide a useful and necessary guide for contextualising the topic.

Participants in this study employ a wide array of terminology in describing experiences of 'happiness' which, in accordance with the original conceptual geography, can reasonably be classified under the umbrellas of 'pleasure' and 'purpose'. This has proved most beneficial in terms of understanding *mis*conceptions of happiness, the details of which

feature previously in discussions of RQ2 and RQ3. Happiness is here depicted as a contagious and fluctuating phenomenon which neither implies, for example, a perpetually cheerful disposition nor avoidance of legitimate issues and obligations. Evidence from this study reaffirms that happiness does not rest entirely within one realm but necessitates both relatively simpler moments of pleasure/joy/satisfaction and deeper senses of purpose/fulfilment/meaning in one's life. These experiences of happiness are sometimes at conceptual odds with dominant narratives of 'successful' living and learning in school but are deeply associated with what participants suggest are real instances of learning and growth. Finally, the data here builds credibility to the notion that a conception of subjective well-being, or happiness, should account for both emotions and judgements. While participants describe *feeling* happy as resulting from interactions and activities in school, they bring equal attention to *being* happy as informed by their expectations, worldview and other psychological factors. Their perspectives as detailed in this thesis align closely with a humanistic and person-centred conception of schooling itself. I suggest that the bigger picture which emerges here helps in evaluating *what it means* and *why it matters* for children to be happy in schools today. This brings me to the more specific contributions of this study, on which I next elaborate.

Illustrating the pertinence of personal happiness to schooling

The most direct way this study contributes to scholarly knowledge on the topic is by strengthening existing normative, ethical and scientific arguments for why the promotion of pupils' happiness in schools is important. With respect to policy-making and aims, it illustrates how children offer ways of thinking, self-conceptions and guiding ideals which can shape what those in education strive to accomplish (de Ruyter, 2014).

In exploring how students achieve happiness in the school environment, this thesis in part epitomises White's (2015) core educational vision: the promotion of human flourishing through ardent and joyful engagement in relationships and autonomous activity. It demonstrates that students' personal and school lives are interrelated in ways which adults sometimes misinterpret, and offers an improved understanding of how to carry out research with children in ways which account for such subtleties. This study recommends an inherently person-centred model for schooling, or one which empowers individuals to contribute to shared and worthwhile goals and values their holistic development as persons (Macmurray, 1941; Fielding, 2000, Pring, 2012). This humanistic perspective

helps to frame the education sector's integral purpose in leading children towards the life-affirming and -enhancing (Wright and Pascoe, 2017) and to subsequently shaping school policy which reflects this (Griffiths, 2012). I will not suggest that happiness is the sole or most important purpose of education (Dearden, 1968), nor will I propose an exact description of the phenomenon to which this field applies (Noddings, 2003). To do so would discredit what has been learnt here about the intricate and contextually dependent ways happiness is perceived. Rather, I will maintain that a concern for happiness, *inspired by the quality of experiences of its students*, should lie at the foundation of what school communities aim to accomplish (see section 2.3.3 on conceiving happiness as an aim).

From an ethical point of view, this study draws attention to why children must be allowed to forge their own unique routes to happiness and how the prominent school culture in this country can deter their capacities for agency and self-discovery. Its data positions subjective well-being as a pivotal feature to one's quality of life and thus an outcome of schooling to which students are entitled (Devine and McGillicuddy, 2016; Griffiths, 2012; Reay, 2012). Although, the educational aim to promote happiness must not be reduced to a series of technical strategies which can inhibit children's abilities to exercise their imagination and initiative (Macmurray, 2012). This study indicates that what occurs *within* school walls is more significant to students' happiness than in the spaces beyond. School leaders and community members must therefore be conscientious towards what is most appropriate for meeting the needs of children in their immediate setting (Cavanagh, 2008). How school policy demarcates 'best' ways of educating children cannot be based too exclusively on who they are expected to become as adults. Nor can performance measures overly govern the extent to which educators are thought to be fulfilling their responsibilities (Noddings, 2003). This is to deny students of their intrinsic worth in the present moment, and is antithetical to the culture of care and dignity they crave. Educational milestones are not on their own determinants of whether a human life is valuable, but schools should be places where childhood is cherished and students are joined in wholeheartedly experiencing its processes (de Ruyter, 2015; White, 2015).

Finally, while this study does not specifically seek to investigate aspects of students' *objective* well-being, it does feature evidence of a likely 'dynamic relationship' between happiness and other tangible life variables (De Neve et al., 2013). This is particularly true of students' learning and performance behaviour, as well as how they maintain positive

relationships. This study suggests that attention paid to students' concrete outputs does not logically exclude concern for their emotional states, however this is not always reflected in school practice and discourse. But while it adds to knowledge about how students' joy and fulfilment in school can aid their educational outcomes, it more interestingly challenges the pretext on which 'successful' educational outcomes rest (see RQ2). That is, how individuals showcase their cognitive aptitudes is not more or less important than how they demonstrate strengths of character. And as I address in my recommendations for further research (section 5.3), there are some socio-demographic factors which only minimally feature here but could reveal significant gaps in how happiness is achieved for students of different backgrounds.

Refining efforts to prioritise the happiness and well-being of children

This study also makes significant contributions to understanding how best to target happiness in schools, and why acquiring student and teacher perspectives is necessary for this. Its findings can be evaluated alongside the growing prevalence of UK school curriculums inspired by the principles of positive psychology for teaching 'happiness science' to children (see section 3.1.3 on positive education and 'the enhancement agenda'). Specifically, they question whether the difficulties of implementing criteria-led strategies designed to promote happiness are sufficiently many as to compromise the aim.

The account of happiness which emerges in this thesis is *co-constructed* with teachers and students, whose narratives have propelled this realm of research forward and increased academic understanding of the phenomenon (see section 4.3 on methodological framework). What has been learnt about this complex and multi-dimensional concept will not apply equally in all schooling situations and will fluctuate according to different sets of students. The subjective nature of happiness means that, while there are meaningful trends to how it is typically experienced in school, a gross interpretation of it will necessarily have limitations. Therefore, any application of this new knowledge must account for the possibility, for instance, that some students are more socially disposed than others. Or, that some exercises of autonomy might not be conducive to feelings of pleasure or purpose. I suggest that the need for a more nuanced understanding of happiness which 'the enhancement agenda' arguably neglects (Cigman, 2008) can be partially fulfilled through further exploration of teacher and student perspectives. The latter of these are commonly omitted from debate concerning children's well-being (The

Children's Society, 2018) and must be especially prioritised. And while quantitative methods are beneficial for gathering key information about school communities, this study demonstrates the depth of understanding which can be gained from engaging with teachers and students in real-time. The elaborate representation of happiness it was able to produce could not have been achieved without the degrees of in-person interaction that took place. An attempt to set fixed boundaries for what qualifies as 'happiness' prior to data collection would have limited individuals' responses and thus eclipsed some of the unforeseen insights about how it is experienced.

Findings from this study support a whole-school approach to nurturing student happiness, one which stems from transformative and sociocultural changes. And there are some influences on happiness identified here which are improbably contained within the purview of a stand-alone programme or intervention. How is a curriculum designed, for instance, to alleviate tensions between students and teachers? Or to address issues related to equitability and inclusivity? And how can an instruction guide be expected to teach children that they are valuable members of their school community? These are the kinds of questions this thesis poses to policy for teaching happiness in a pragmatic fashion as something to be packaged, delivered and measured (see Miller, 2008; Suissa 2008). While this study does not dismiss the idea of allocating more school resources to specifically addressing happiness-related issues, its findings dispute the promotion of student happiness as an exact science. The schooling community must be careful of endorsing an 'ideal' representation of happiness which does not befit life's ambiguities nor allow students to develop their own possible conceptions of happy living (Siegel, 2015). There must be room for discussion about elements to happiness which are possibly unquantifiable and should be discovered by students themselves through genuine educational experiences (Suissa, 2008). Efforts to promote student happiness must begin with an appreciation for the individuals in question and embrace this subjective component as an essential ingredient to its understanding (Gorard and See, 2011; de Ruyter, 2015).

This brings me to another important limitation of this study. If the educational community is to recognise pupils as co-constructors of new knowledge about happiness, it is necessary to question *who* among them will be typically involved in this endeavour. Future stakeholders must ask, for instance, how children with lower levels of literacy or

self-confidence will be included. Or those who struggle to articulate their thoughts. Some children are surely better able to discuss what happiness means to them, and what a fulfilling education would be like. And, for an assortment of reasons, other children might be so discouraged by formal schooling that it is hard to engage them in conversation about its processes. It is possible that, however unintentional, this study and others like it exclude pupils whose insights and experiences of happiness are just as valuable to addressing this issue as those who are in better positions to participate. Having reflected on this, I endeavour to learn about the marginalised voices which may be absent from the 'student perspective' on happiness and ways to improve this.

6.2.2 Responding to student needs as a result of the coronavirus pandemic

The disruptions to humanity brought on by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic are far-reaching and perhaps incalculable. Communities around the globe are still trying to cope with the aftermath of repeated lockdowns and closures of businesses and institutions, many of which have since undergone significant changes to their operation. Schools have faced extraordinary challenges to support students during this time and to continue delivering by some new means a quality education. Although this study's data collection and analysis occurred prior to the onset of COVID-19, it is worthwhile to include some commentary on why its findings are timely to reshaping education as a result of this transformative period.

The immediate and long-terms effects on children and young people's well-being and mental health after extended periods of separation from their schooling communities and social networks are unsurprisingly worrisome. The Children's Society, whose annual Good Childhood Reports (2018, 2020) have been reviewed in this thesis, published in 2020 a special study on children's well-being and experiences of COVID-19 entitled *Life on Hold*. The authors in this paper outline some of the measured and anticipated outcomes of the pandemic on children, indicating that while some will recover from experiencing low well-being[16] and dissatisfaction with their lives[17], others will suffer lasting consequences. For vulnerable groups, the intensity of this period is especially

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[16] See Barnardo's (2020) findings on children and young people's feelings of loneliness and other issues related to mental health and well-being in Great Britain.
[17] See Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2020) for report on age 16+ feelings of life satisfaction and that life is worthwhile.

jarring (Millar et al., 2020). Much as society has developed a greater appreciation for pre-pandemic freedoms and normalcies, the value of schools for the livelihood of children has become ever more apparent. A reliance on these institutions not only as places for learning, but as places for social and emotional development, and even refuge from adverse home situations, has contributed to discourse surrounding COVID-19 and the resurgence of 'business as usual' education.

As schools have re-opened and are racing to compensate for the interrupted or lost learning which has occurred, some argue that herein lies an unusual moment to confront and disrupt some of education's long-standing issues. Referring to COVID-19 as a potential catalyst for reappraising schooling, Zhao (2020) proposes that governments and educators think critically about whether the practices they resume are in students' best interests, for instance accountability testing. Is reverting to 'normal', he questions, a potentially missed opportunity to make important changes which allow more flexibility and purpose to *what* and *how* pupils learn? In keeping with what this thesis has argued as a hindrance to students' subjective well-being in schools, Hughes (2020) claims that the emotional and psychological consequences of excessive assessment of learning and a dauntingly large curriculum are incompatible with the richer aims of education. Although, observations from lockdown can potentially help yield "a more mindful, authentic, and humanly paced approach" (p. 69). The good practice of limiting contact time during online learning, he says (citing Ning and Corcoran, 2020), should inform the return to face-to-face learning for mitigating tension and allowing children the time and space for more critically digesting and reflecting on learning content. Some schools have also experimented with alternatives to written examinations, including projects and vivas, an amendment which alleviates some of the stress and superficial learning associated with standard exam procedure (Hughes, 2020b). This may permit students to demonstrate knowledge in ways more characteristic of the work they will likely conduct in adult life (ibid). Other research illustrates some of the unanticipated rewards of remote learning to pupils' sense of autonomy and degree of independence in managing their own learning (Reimers and Schleicher, 2020). The unprecedented personalisation and creativity applied to education during home-schooling, argue Bubb and Jones (2020), were met positively by parents/carers, teachers and students, and should give rise to grassroots innovation.

This concentration on less competitive, more profound engagement with learning material and refashioning assignments and assessments into what will sow deeper and lifelong learning reinforces what this thesis suggests instils happiness in pupils (see section 3.2.1 on whole-school visions and approaches to pedagogy). As the *Life on Hold* report (The Children's Society, 2020) concludes, getting the return to school right means targeting student well-being not as a mere intervention "to be dialled up or down dependent on proximity with key exams" (p. 28) but as a persistent goal alongside and contributing towards other desirable educational outcomes (see section 2.3.3 on conceiving happiness as an aim).

Of course, meeting children's needs post-pandemic also entails re-establishing social relationships and helping them to regain a sense of community and belonging in school. A key focus of supporting children's well-being when returning to the classroom is allowing them room to reconnect with their friends, as maintaining friendships was a particular struggle for many during lockdown (The Children's Society, *Life on Hold*, 2020). Riley, Mendoza and Galdames (2020) call on decision-makers to break from conventionality and take heed of the opportunity for normalising positive relationships among both students and teachers. This 'new normalcy', they suggest, would break away from persisting and intolerable degrees of exclusion and alienation in schools, and would better reflect compassion and appreciation for diversity. In congruence with this thesis' findings on the importance of authentic and respectful treatment between persons, the authors maintain that "school as a place, needs to be consciously created, supported, and maintained by systems that allow honest and dynamic communication" (p. 18). For the sake of children's well-being and happiness, we must question how we can more thoughtfully engage with one another in schools. And as the current study illustrates, instilling this culture of relationships and belonging demands enacting both staff and student agencies and using their perspectives as tools for building a more genuine community (Riley, Mendoza, Galdames, 2020).

In managing the return to school following the COVID-19 pandemic, this study's findings on pupil happiness are applicable to arguments for educational reform and leveraging this crisis. The topics of conversation and research pertaining to regenerating schools advocate for much the same as is argued from a happiness-oriented perspective. That is, students are deserving of an improved education system which considers their

wants for *increased agency and empowerment, meaningful and creative learning* and *profound social connection.* Though these needs pre-dated the pandemic, they have manifested in new and precarious ways. What we have learnt in this time can guide the schooling community in implementing purposeful and lasting change.

6.3 Recommendations for further research

As I have emphasised in this paper, the subject of human happiness is incredibly broad and contentious. There are a considerable number of ways in which one could empirically evaluate it in relation to education. But in view of this study's particular design and findings, there are emerging questions which could yield increased understanding of how happiness occurs in the secondary school context.

My first suggestions for further research concern diversifying the groups of students whose happiness is under evaluation. As is addressed in the methodology chapter, limitations to sample composition consequently narrowed the demographic representation of this study's participants. And though these individuals reference religious, social and sexual characteristics affecting student happiness and the difficulties of being a marginalised person, the data reveals little about how achieving happiness is specifically influenced by structures such as *socio-economic background, gender, age* and *ethnicity*. Equally, there remain important questions to ask regarding *attainment level*. While this study is useful in exploring the effects of performativity and the interplay between happiness and success, the evidence it provides does not strongly suggest how students' subjective well-being and ability grouping, for instance, align. Stringent selection of participants from a larger and more varied student body might allow some meaningful conclusions to be drawn about how children's demographic and academic profiles correspond to their happiness in school and, if so, why.

Secondly, I recommend evaluating this study's findings as they relate to other school locations. How does student happiness fluctuate, for instance, according to school type (e.g., state-funded versus independent), or to the degree of curricular freedom that institution is afforded? Are students happier in urban or rural schools? Does the size of a school matter for instilling a sense of community? Can Ofsted ratings signal useful information about how happy a school's pupils may be? Comparative research between schools in the UK could be especially useful for uncovering trends in day-to-day

operation and their implications for pupil happiness. Perhaps most intriguing would be in-depth case studies of schools which implement 'happiness curriculums' or by other explicit means have worked to embed principles of happiness within their daily practice.

Finally, it is apparent from this study that prioritising student happiness necessarily involves prioritising teacher happiness. I suspect there are elements of this thesis which could quite practically be refashioned to form new sets of research questions targeting teachers and their happiness in the workplace. Teachers in this study, for instance, voice a desire to be sufficiently supported and informed by their superiors and expressed concerns over their own well-being. Though scheduling conflicts prevented them from taking place, it would have been useful to conduct focus groups wherein teachers, perhaps together with students, could engage in discussions about pedagogical happiness and support systems for eliciting pleasurable and purposeful classroom activities. It was my impression that these topics are not often discussed among teaching staff, and especially not with young people. Also applicable to this study are questions concerning teacher training and professional development. Are teachers adequately prepared to foster happiness for their pupils? Do they assume a responsibility to encourage things like engagement, autonomy and relationships? Which teaching philosophies are most instilled, and how do they primarily manifest? These are topics of interest if happiness in education is to be realised for the sake of both teachers and pupils.

6.4 Concluding remarks

This study arose from two basic curiosities: the relevance of happiness to education and how ideal purposes of schooling align with students' actual experiences of it. What transpired has challenged my understanding of how schools are meeting the intangible needs of children and what an entitlement to education means for instilling a sense of well-being. Looking ahead, this inspires me to think more about what students in this country are realistically provided, and what sorts of life progressions society is shaping by virtue of its educational policy and practice. More extensive investigation into day-to-day life in schools can increasingly establish the conditions for which some of the theoretical benefits of education for promoting human happiness are indeed afforded. There is a wealth of knowledge to acquire here, research for which I hope to further partake.

In concluding this thesis, I am inclined to stress my sentiments towards children and young people's potential for shaping conceptions of education. As this study and others like it demonstrate, there are remarkable benefits to offering children the time, space and authority to express their perspectives towards schooling; getting at the crux of issues related to student well-being *must* involve these perspectives in the process. And while the habits of our educational institutions often adhere to outdated learning styles and potentially squander children's self-esteem and capabilities for happiness, relinquishing control so that pupils guide the conversation can yield new and compelling information. Among the most poignant insights I have gained from conducting this study is that children, despite whether they can articulate the causes, project awareness of a kind of 'wrongness' of school life. Such is the word employed by American writer Charles Eisenstein (2013), who characterises the regimentation of childhood:

> Life, I knew, was supposed to be more joyful than this, more real, more meaningful, and the world was supposed to be more beautiful. We were not supposed to hate Mondays and live for the weekends and holidays. We were not supposed to have to raise our hands to be allowed to pee. We were not supposed to be kept indoors on a beautiful day, day after day (p. 2).

This sense of detachment from what is 'supposed' to be occurring in schools is gathered not only from students but also from their teachers. In reshuffling schooling aims and approaches, incorporating these individuals' viewpoints is as worthwhile a practice as it is a just one. The political, economic and cultural age in which the current education system was founded has altered drastically, and we ought to expect ongoing educational reform which reflects new and improved ideas about teaching and learning. *Students* should not fit the mould of *schools*, but rather *schools* should mould to meet the needs of *students*. The demand to make schools happier places to be will require this shift in perspective on a multi-level scale, as well as a readiness to adapt to an evolved construction of compulsory education. We need not be tied as a society to conventions of our own making and from which we have simply learnt better.

To end, this process has in some peculiar and unexpected ways forced me to reconcile with facets of my own subjective well-being. During especially solitary writing periods, I was confronted with how much my happiness relies on others to challenge and sustain me, both personally and professionally. And though I experienced some setbacks while completing this thesis, I discovered on an individual basis what my research also

revealed: there is authentic and lasting happiness to be found in absorbing oneself in matters of interest and in tending devotedly to difficult work. I have been humbled by the degrees of commitment and cooperation required to accomplish a project of this scale and, having brought mine to a close, am happy for doing so.

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Appendix A: Participant information sheet for students

My name is Joy Perry and I am inviting you to take part in my PhD research project. I am a former teacher from the USA and am interested in learning how students, like yourself, experience and think about happiness in school.

Take a look at the information below and see if you would like to participate ☺

What is it for?
My main research question is: 'What do the narrated experiences and perspectives of students and teachers reveal about achieving happiness in secondary schools?' In other words, how can the stories and ideas of real people help build a deeper understanding of this important topic? Student views and insights lie at the heart of this project and have the potential to highlight the realities and possibilities of happiness in schools.

Why me?
You were selected with the help of one of your teachers on the basis of your 1) age, 2) gender, 3) ethnicity, 4) learning and social traits, and 5) ability to communicate. The purpose of selecting students from different demographics is to represent a greater number of perspectives in the study. You will be part of a total group of four teachers and eight students who participate.

Do I have to participate?
It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part, and there will be no negative repercussions if you choose not to. My hope is that, if you do wish to participate, you will find the experience enjoyable and purposeful.

What will I have to do?
You and I will sit together for an interview three times, each lasting between 30 and 45 minutes. These will need to take place during the 2019 Spring and Summer terms, but the precise date, school location and time will be arranged according to your needs and preferences.

We will discuss questions such as:
1. What do you understand *happiness* to mean?
2. In which instances do you experience feelings associated with happiness in school? When do you not?
3. To what extent do you feel schooling empowers students to pursue happiness, both now and in their later lives?
4. How do you envision a school where student happiness is targeted and regularly achieved? To what degree do you view this school as realistic, or even existing?

To help me best understand some of your responses, you may be asked during the interview to complete a brief written activity, draw a picture, imagine a new situation, or tell a story. I will also make a brief visit to one of your classes and ask you to take me on a short tour of your school.

Towards the end of the school year, you will be asked to attend a focus group with other student participants from your school. This will be a relaxed discussion whereby you and your peers can share feedback on the study.

Interviews will be audio-recorded so I that I can replay our conversations during my analysis. However, all information will be kept confidential by myself and will not be shared with anyone else. You will be anonymised and given a pseudonym (i.e. a new name) so that people who read the study are unlikely to identify you in real life. Only under rare circumstances will I have to report information you share with me to another adult. For instance, if I suspect you or another child is in harm, I would need to inform the appropriate authority.

Did my parents say it was okay?
Although your parents will not be participating in the study, it is important for them to have read the information sheet and signed a separate consent form.

Who will be helped by this research?
I hope that this project will highlight how valuable student voices are in understanding important elements of everyday school life. It is possible that the results of this study can offer a new perspective for others in the secondary schooling community to encourage the prioritising of student happiness.

What if I want to quit?
You may withdrawal from the study at any time for any reason. It is YOUR choice. Doing so will have no consequences on your grades or other school programs.

What comes next?
Please email me if you have any questions at all about the study or what your special role will entail.

If you would like to participate, please sign the consent form and return to me by email.

Thank you for reading about my study. I hope you will take part!

Joy Perry
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Appendix B: Participant information sheet for teachers

1. **Invitation to participate**
   My name is Joy Perry and I am inviting you to take part in my PhD research project. I am a full-time doctoral student with an MA in Effective Learning and Teaching from UCL IOE and three years teaching experience in the USA.

   I am hoping to find out how personal happiness is achieved for students in secondary school through a series of observations and interviews with students and teachers.

   Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what participation will involve. This information sheet will try and answer any questions you might have about the project, but please don't hesitate to contact me if there is anything else you would like to know.

2. **What is the project's purpose?**
   Recognising personal happiness as a critical component to overall well-being, this study aims to answer the question: 'What do the narrated experiences and perspectives of students and teachers reveal about achieving happiness in secondary schools?' The project's purpose is to tell candidly the stories of real people as a way of building a comprehensive understanding of the topic. I will explore and interpret questions such as: 'What elements of secondary school life contribute to the attainment of happiness?' and 'What might a secondary school look like if it were designed with student happiness in mind?'.

3. **Why have I been chosen?**
   You have been identified as a potential participant based on your teaching subject and Year; the purpose of selecting teachers from different backgrounds is to attempt to diversity research findings. Four teachers and eight students will be chosen in total. As an educator, your testimony can help illuminate both the realities and possibilities of achieving happiness in secondary education.

4. **Do I have to take part?**
   It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part, and there will be no negative repercussions if you choose not to. My hope is that, if you do wish to participate, you will find the experience enjoyable and purposeful. Should you change your mind during the course of the study, you may withdrawal at any time; it will be your choice as to whether any data already collected may be used.

5. **What will happen to me if I take part?**

   You will be interviewed one time for roughly one hour, with the precise date, location and time arranged as much as possible according to your needs. Sample interview questions include:
   - What do you understand *happiness* to mean?
   - What attitudes or assumptions do you make about happiness' relevance to schooling?
   - To what extent do you feel schooling empowers students to pursue happiness, both now and in their later lives?

- How do you envision a school where student happiness is targeted and regularly achieved? To what degree do you view this school as realistic, or even existing?

During the interview, you may be asked to tell a story or recall a particular situation relating to a specific topic.

Secondly, you will be asked to allow for a short classroom visit of 15-20 minutes during which, if possible, I will partially participate in lesson activities and engage informally with students.

Finally, teachers will be asked to assist in the identification of two student participants.

6. **Will I be recorded and how will the recorded media be used?**
Your interview will be audio-recorded for the purposes of analysis. No other use will be made of it without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recording.

7. **What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**
There are no foreseeable discomforts, disadvantages or risks associated with this study.

8. **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**
Whilst there are no tangible benefits for those individuals participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will highlight the significance in understanding and engaging with the lived experiences of students and teachers as well as offer insight for the secondary schooling community to encourage the prioritising of student happiness.

9. **What if something goes wrong?**
Please direct any complaints to me and they will be handled swiftly and appropriately. Alternatively, you may contact either of my PhD supervisors at their email addresses provided below.

Dr Eleanore Hargreaves	**Prof John Vorhaus**
Dept Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment	Dept Education, Practice and Society
UCL Institute of Education	UCL Institute of Education
e.hargreaves@ucl.ac.uk	j.vorhaus@ucl.ac.uk

If you feel your complaint has not been handled to your satisfaction (e.g. by myself or my supervisors), you may contact the Chair of the UCL Research Ethics Committee at ethics@ucl.ac.uk.

10. **Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?**
All the information that I collect from you during the course of the research will be kept confidential and stored securely. Though it cannot be guaranteed, every effort will be made to ensure that you will not be able to be identified in any ensuing reports or publications.

11. **Limits to confidentiality**
Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies.

12. **What will happen to the results of the research project?**

The results of this research will be presented within a PhD thesis on or before April 2021 and may be subsequently published in an academic journal or presented as part of a conference or lecture series. Upon project completion, a summary of the research findings will be offered to any interested participants and all original data will be destroyed.

13. **Data Protection Privacy Notice**

Notice:
The data controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Office provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data and can be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk. UCL's Data Protection Officer is Lee Shailer and he can also be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk.

Your personal data will be processed for the purposes outlined in this notice. The legal basis that would be used to process your personal data will be the provision of your consent.

Your personal data will be processed so long as it is required for the research project. I will make every attempt to anonymise and pseudonymise the personal data, and endeavour to minimise its processing wherever possible.

If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, please contact UCL in the first instance at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk. If you remain unsatisfied, you may wish to contact the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). Contact details, and details of data subject rights, are available on the ICO website at: https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/data-protection-reform/overview-of-the-gdpr/individuals-rights/.

14. **Contact for further information**
Please ask me if anything is unclear or if you would like more information before you decide.

Those who are happy to participate are kindly requested to complete a consent form, a signed copy of which you will be provided. Please return the form to me by email to arrange next steps.

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering taking part in this research study.

Joy Perry
Dept Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment
UCL Institute of Education
20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL
j.perry.15@ucl.ac.uk

Appendix C: Participant consent form

If you are happy to participate in this study, please complete this consent form and return to Joy Perry in person or by the email address below.

	Yes	No
I have read and understood the information leaflet about the research.	☐	☐
I agree to be interviewed and for my interview to be audio recorded.	☐	☐
I agree to be briefly observed in the classroom.	☐	☐
I understand that if any of my words are used in research publications and/or presentations they will not be attributed to me.	☐	☐
I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time, and that if I choose to do this, any data I have contributed will not be used.	☐	☐
I understand that I can contact Joy Perry at any time and request for my data to be removed from the project database.	☐	☐
I understand that the data I have contributed will be kept confidential by the researcher and processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).	☐	☐
I understand that confidentiality will be respected unless there are compelling and legitimate reasons for this to be breached. For example, if the researcher suspects possible harm/danger to others or myself.	☐	☐

Name_____ Signed_____
Date _____

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Appendix D: Interview schedule for students

Interview No. 1 with 'My emotions' activity
Core questions: How are you feeling today? How do you feel most days?

1. What does the term 'happiness' mean to you?

2. When do you feel most happy in school? When do you not?

3. What do you do when you feel *unhappy* in school? Who do you talk to? Where do you go? How do you cope?

4. Describe who you think the happiest kids in school are. What about them makes them the happiest?

5. How happy do you think you are relative to your peers? Why?

6. How has your happiness in school changed over the course of your secondary education?

7. How important do you think it is to be happy? (E.g. for the future, for success)

Interview No. 2 with 'Agree or disagree' activity
Core questions: Overall, how satisfied are you with your schooling experience? How would you judge school's impact on your emotional well-being?

8. Tell me about how you see happiness as it relates to schooling.

9. What elements of average teenage life, particularly with respect to social media usage, do you think affect your happiness while in school?

10. What about your self-identity (i.e. characteristics, beliefs or personality that makes you *you*) do you think affects your happiness in school? What about other peoples' identities?

11. How does coming to school and the schooling environment change your happiness?

Interview No. 3 with 'Imagine a school' activity
Core questions: How do you a envision a school where student happiness is targeted and regularly achieved? To what degree do you view this school as realistic, or even existing?

12. How do you believe schooling empowers students to pursue happiness, both now and in the future?

13. Which school structures are most influential to the prioritising of student happiness?

14. Is there a disparity between what you think *ought* to be occurring and what is *actually* occurring in schools?

15. If you could take me on a personalised tour of your school, where would you take me? Why?

Appendix E: Interview schedule for teachers

Part 1: Brief enquiry into his/her teaching history and relevant background

Part 2: Questioning

1. What does a 'happy' child look like to you? What are his/her characteristics?

2. What attitudes or assumptions do you hold about how happiness is relevant to schooling, if at all? What, to you, is the relationship between happiness and success?

3. What do you think children need to feel happy in school?

4. How does the schooling environment support their happiness? How does it not?

5. What coping mechanisms are used for students experiencing unhappiness in school?

6. What elements of average teenage life, particularly with respect to social media usage, do you perceive as affecting students' happiness while in school?

7. To what extent do you feel schooling empowers students to pursue happiness, both now and in their later lives?

8. Which school structures would you say are most influential to the prioritising of student happiness?

9. Is there a disparity between what you think *ought* to be occurring and what is *actually* occurring in schools?

10. How do you envision a school where student happiness is targeted and regularly achieved? To what degree is this school as realistic, or even existing?

Part 3: Allow for participant to clarify his/her responses or offer additional comments.

Appendix F: 'My emotions' student activity

1. Draw a circle around each word that describes how you feel ***most*** days at school.

2. Underline each word that describes how you feel ***some*** days at school.

If you don't see the emotions that appeal to you, write your own in the spaces below.

Hopeful	Lonely	Nervous
Jealous	Happy	Fine
Satisfied	Angry	Worried
Trusting	Confident	Proud
Depressed	Bored	Stressed
Thankful	Strong	Smug
Sad	Bitter	Annoyed
Relaxed	Lucky	Safe
Useless	Afraid	Trapped
Pleasant	Successful	Determined
Inferior	Disappointed	Ordinary
Energetic	Excited	Worthy
Self-conscious	Frustrated	
Important	Loved	

Appendix G: 'Agree or disagree' student activity

Consider the statements below, then indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I am satisfied with my schooling.	1	2	3	4	5
2. School is a place where I can express my feelings and opinions with others.	1	2	3	4	5
3. When I am happy, I do better in school.	1	2	3	4	5
4. My school community is a positive one.	1	2	3	4	5
5. When at school, I feel good about myself.	1	2	3	4	5
6. My personal life affects how happy I am in school.	1	2	3	4	5
7. My teachers understand my emotions.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Most days, I enjoy being at school.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I have a good amount of control over my schooling.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I sometimes hide my real feelings while in school.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I feel good about my future.	1	2	3	4	5
12. School should be a place where students are happy.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix H: 'Imagine a school' student activity

Imagine a secondary school where students experience happiness often and where happiness is a main priority. For example, think about what activities would be taking place or how the environment would feel.

Now imagine you attend this school. Use the space below to either:

1. Write a diary entry describing a typical day. What did you see and do? **or**

2. Draw an illustration of the school and what is happening there.

Appendix I: Observational notes template

Date/Time: Participant(s):

Location:

Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes