

A STUDY OF THE LIFE SATISFACTION OF STUDENTS AND ITS EFFECT ON THEIR  
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

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Doctor of Education

By

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## Dissertation Approval

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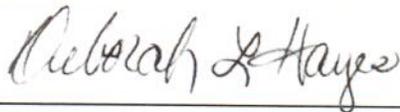
A Study of the Emotional State Of Students and Its Effect on Their Academic Achievement

This dissertation has been approved and accepted by the faculty of the Education Department, Carson-Newman University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Education.

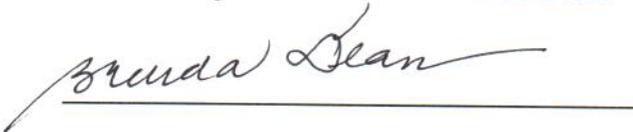
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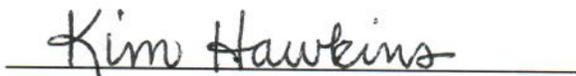
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## **Abstract**

This study examined the literature on the connection between the emotional well-being of students and their level of academic achievement, as well as if an actual connection existed between the mental state of a random group of students and their academic performance. Two hundred and twenty-three students from a large rural high school in East Tennessee took a validated survey to measure their level of life satisfaction, and the results were compared to their grade point averages to determine if there was a correlation. A positive but weak correlation was found between the two variables, which added to the existing information on this important topic.

## Acknowledgements

Earning a doctoral degree is not easy, especially for an educator who has always been vexed with a lack of self-confidence. There were many times during this process that the doubt in my abilities caused me to seriously consider dropping out of the program, but the professional and personal counsel of several members of the faculty at Carson-Newman University enabled me to persevere and overcome my biggest obstacle: myself. I owe all of the CNU faculty members with whom I worked an enormous debt, but I would like to especially thank the following:

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Thank you all for everything you've done for me. I will always strive to be worthy of your encouragement and belief in my abilities.

## Dedication

No man is an island, and that is certainly true in my case. Throughout my entire life, every good thing I have been able to accomplish has been because of my support system. When I was at my lowest, the following people have been there to keep me going. It is to the following that I dedicate this capstone project of my education:

- ★ My beautiful wife Cindy, the love of my life. In spite of all of my failures, you have stood by my side and encouraged me to go on. No one has believed in me as strongly as you, even in our darkest hours. I love you forever and always.
- ★ My gorgeous daughter Laura, my oldest. You possess a greater work ethic than I'll ever have, and that is just one of the many reasons I look up to you. I will always love you as my daughter, and as one of my best friends.
- ★ My incredible son Jacob, my youngest. Your creative talents and abilities constantly inspire me, and our conversations about life and movies are constant sources of joy to me. You are one of my best buddies, and I will forever love you.
- ★ My parents, Johnny and Bunny Cagle. You instilled in me a work ethic that I finally embraced, and a love of learning which has been one of the anchors of my life. You both sacrificed so that my brothers and I could have opportunities you never had, and we are grateful to you for all that you have done for us. I love you both, and hope I can always make you proud of me.

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## Chapter One

### Purpose and Organization

#### Background of the Study

From elementary school to high school, both qualitative and quantitative measures found that the mental state of students is positively correlated with motivation and academic achievement (e.g. Aguilar, 2015; Corradino and Forgarty, 2016; Gruener, 2011). Or to put it another way, happy students seem to achieve at greater levels in school than those students who are not happy. But what exactly *is* happiness? In a piece written for the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) *Communique* in October 2010, Dr. Scott Huebner wrote:

Although numerous definitions have been proposed, most definitions include a relatively enduring cognitive component (i.e., global life satisfaction) and a relatively enduring emotional component (i.e., positive affect). Global life satisfaction refers to a person's evaluation of the quality of her life as a whole while positive affect refers to the occurrence of frequent positive emotions over time, such as joy, interest, and enthusiasm. Thus, a happy student is not one who is necessarily giddy with joy every moment of every day, but one who experiences frequent positive emotions (more than negative emotions) and reports a relatively enduring sense of well-being with regard to her overall life (para. 2).

It was found that the culture of a school and the relationships students form with their teachers and their peers play an influential role in their happiness (Jones, 2015). In a mega study from 2005, Lyubomirsky, King, and Diener found that happiness causes success. Confidence, optimism, and self-efficacy fuel not only the underlying behaviors needed for individual success, including effective coping with challenge and stress, as well as originality and flexibility, they

also yield both likability by others, positive views of others, sociability, activity, energy, and pro-social behavior. The meta-analysis (Lyubomirsky, King, and Diener, 2005) indicated that happiness leads to success because of two main factors: happy people have built up emotional resources over time during previous pleasant moods, and people with frequent positive moods have a greater likelihood of working actively toward new goals while experiencing those moods. Researchers (Lyubomirsky, King, and Diener, 2005) who conducted a meta-analysis, which brought together the results of over 200 scientific studies on nearly 275,000 people, found that happiness leads to success in nearly every domain of our lives, including marriage, health, friendship, community involvement, creativity, and—most notably—our jobs, careers, and businesses.

In spite of this research, some may argue that attending to students' state of wellbeing may distract educators from their main task of teaching new academic skills and concepts. According to Boniell and Ayers (2013), the personal and environmental qualities which promote social and emotional resilience also promote students' learning and engagement in school, a stance that many teachers and resilience researchers have long argued. If there are factors which can promote the levels of learning and engagement in students, then their level of academic achievement would see an increase as well.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The available literature on the topic of student happiness and academic achievement shows that while there may be a nebulous connection between these two on the surface, there is ample evidence to show that there is a definite connection which should be explored and cultivated. Yet in the modern educational climate, very little attention is being paid to the emotional state of the students, who are being assessed at a greater frequency than ever in our

country's history. At one time, the purpose of American education was to educate the whole child; the mission was to give students the academic and social skills necessary to be productive members of society (Seldon, 2012). However, with the advent of increased accountability of schools for the academic achievement of their students, especially as they are measured by standardized tests, the role of educators has been to do whatever is necessary to focus in increasing the academic gains of the students within their walls without regard for their emotional needs. Some educators have noticed this trend and have tried to encourage their colleagues to return to an approach on educating the whole child. Case studies of educational institutions as positive centers of learning have already been done. Some schools are using appreciative inquiry to support positive change (Waters, White, and Murray, 2012; Waters and White, 2015). Other schools are using a strengths-based approach with their students (White and Waters, 2015), while several schools are actually measuring the well-being of the young people in their institution (Kern, Waters, Adler, and White, 2014). Research has also been conducted on subjects such as measuring the level of employee well-being within a school (Kern, Waters, Adler, and White, 2015), on school positive psychology (Alford and White, 2015), and on the integration of strengths in student leadership (White, Vrodos, and McNeil, 2015). Leading whole-school change has also been researched (Waters, White, Wang, and Murray, 2015), as well as on introducing evidence-based approaches to positive education in schools at a strategic level (White and Murray, 2015; Waters, White, Wang and Murray, 2015).

Since the modern climate in American education tends to skew toward increasing the level of student achievement on standardized tests, then every possible factor leading to an increase in student performance needs to be examined and researched. Attention must be paid to

this connection, because if it exists, it could represent a new area of focus for educators that could increase academic achievement using techniques with little or no cost.

### **Purpose and Significance of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine if a measurable correlation between the academic achievement and the happiness of students exists. The students participating in this study attended a large comprehensive high school in the eastern section of Tennessee and represent each of the four grade levels within the school. The students represented a wide range of demographic backgrounds, including socioeconomic status, the educational background of their parents, and their race and ethnicity. If a positive correlation was found between the academic achievement of these students and their emotional state, then it would serve as a foundational rationale for developing strategies for increasing both, which can be developed and implemented by teachers and educational administrators at all levels of education. These strategies and interventions to improve the mental well-being of young people could be done at a fraction of the cost of other manipulatives, programs, and training materials which are currently being used by schools to improve the performance of students on the various tests currently being used across America to measure academic achievement and the perceived quality of the teaching and education those young people are receiving. In educational systems which are facing ever-shrinking budgets but ever-increasing standards, this could be significant.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

Several studies (e.g. Huebner, 2010; Pekrun et al., 2004; Quinn and Duckworth, 2007) have already shown a strong connection between the level of students' overall happiness and their achievement in school. Research was conducted on groups at both the primary and secondary levels of schooling. According to a study by Quinn and Duckworth (2007) focusing

on students at the fifth grade level, participants reporting higher well-being were more likely to earn higher final grades, even when controlling for IQ, age, and the previous year's GPA. Furthermore, students earning higher grades tended to experience higher well-being, controlling for IQ, age, and previous well-being. Huebner's (2010) study revealed similar connections. Students reporting greater happiness indicated more appropriate classroom behavior, higher school grades, better peer and teacher relationships, better physical health, and greater participation in classroom and extracurricular activities. Conversely, the same research noted that the connection could also be negative. Students who reported low levels of happiness were more likely to report mental health problems, peer victimization, poor relationships with parents and teachers, and a variety of risk behaviors (e.g., alcohol and drug use, risky sex behavior, violence-related behavior, eating problems, thoughts of suicide) (Huebner, 2010). The few studies that link positive emotions to academic achievement found that joy, hope, and pride positively correlate with students' academic self-efficacy, academic interest and effort, and overall achievement (Pekrun et al., 2004; Fisher, 2011; Corradino and Forgarty, 2016).

### **Research Question**

The study was guided by the following research question: Is there a correlation between the happiness of students and their academic achievement?

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

In designing the proposed research, there were several limitations to acknowledge. Although students participating in the study are from a variety of grades and socioeconomic levels, they were all from the same school, which means that they are all from the same geographic region. Another limitation was that the study took place during the winter season, a time period in which temperatures and amounts of available sunshine may impact the moods of

the students being studied. The current overall grade point average of the students in the study was used to measure their academic achievement. Because it represents performance over a period of time and over multiple courses, a student's GPA is a better indicator of the student's overall academic performance than the result of a standardized test. It should also be noted that grade point averages can also be influenced by other factors, such as difficulty of courses taken.

Delimitations of this study were that this study focuses only on students at the high school level, and that only one high school was selected for the purposes of this study. A separate delimitation was that only two factors, student academic achievement and student emotional happiness, were examined through the process of this study. Another delimitation occurred through the process of administering the survey to the students involved in this study. Because of some unanticipated technical problems, no identifying information was recorded when the students first took the survey. This made it impossible to correlate the results of the survey with the GPAs of the students who initially took the survey. Once the technical issues were addressed and resolved, the same survey was administered to most of the students who took it the first time (some of the students who were in the initial survey group were absent on the day when the students took the survey again). This double-exposure to the survey may have caused some of the students who took it initially to not take it as seriously the second time, thereby influencing their true reactions to the survey responses.

### **Assumptions**

This study was based upon the following assumptions:

- All participants volunteering for the study were doing so of their own free will and participants were informed of their right to not participate.

- The parents and guardians of all student participants were informed of the study and given the opportunity to refuse to allow their students to participate in the study with no fear of punishment or reprisal.
- Classroom teachers involved in administering the survey to their students were trained fully on how to conduct the survey.
- All participants answered the survey questions from their own perspective.
- The survey was conducted on-line so that no bias could be inferred from handwriting or other personal indicators.
- The survey questions were written with no bias or intent to influence the results in any way.
- The results of the survey were scientifically reviewed and reported at the end of the study.

### **Definition of Terms**

While many of the terms referred to in this study were commonly used in educational research, there were a few which were used and need to be defined:

**Academic achievement.** Accomplishments relating to education, learning, and study, especially in schools and higher education institutions (United States Department of Agriculture, 2016). For this study, academic achievement is defined as a student's cumulative high school grade point average.

**Grade point average.** A numerical average representing a student's performance in academic areas (e.g., reading or language arts, math, science, and history) (71 Fed. Reg. at 46662).

**Happiness.** A state of emotional well-being that indicates a high level of life satisfaction and not anxious or depressed (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2013). The measure selected to represent the happiness of the students in the study was their self-reported level of life satisfaction as measured by the most current version of the *Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale* developed by Dr. Scott Huebner (2001).

### **Organization of the Document**

This dissertation was organized using the guidelines provided by Carson-Newman University and the American Psychological Association. The first chapter describes the purpose and the organization of the study. Chapter two contains a review of literature related to the subject of the research within this dissertation. The third chapter details the research methodology of this study, followed by the results of the data analysis in the fourth chapter. Conclusions from the research performed, along with implications and recommendations stemming from the data analysis, comprises chapter five. The final section is the appendices, containing references and notes related to the research described in this paper.

## Chapter Two

### Review of Related Literature

Happiness is a term that has been hotly debated among scientists, researchers, and lay people alike. The field of happiness research has similarly been viewed through many lenses, very rarely reflecting consensus among those who have performed it. Wilkinson (2007) noted that “happiness research is seriously hampered by confusion and disagreement about the definition of its subject as well as the limitations inherent in current measurement techniques” (p. 4). Therefore, it is not surprising that the relationship between the happiness of students and their success in their scholastic endeavors has not been explored to the extent that other factors on academic success may have been by the scientific or education community. Although there has been research done on the connection between the emotional states of students and their academic achievement (e.g. Jones, 2015; Rae and MacConville, 2015; Valiente, Swanson, and Eisenberg, 2012) there continues to be a dearth of writings on the subject. Perhaps this is because it is difficult to measure a person’s mental state and even more difficult when the person in question is a young school-age student. The focus on high-stakes testing and other standardized assessments may have also hindered the focus on the relationship between the emotional well-being of students and their academic achievements because of the money being spent to promote those programs and the ease of disaggregating the data which comes strictly from a test. It may also have to do with the assumption that a student’s happiness is a result of the student’s performance in school, rather than the cause of it. No matter what the case, the connection between academic achievement and the well-being of the modern student is worth studying for the possibilities it offers to schools.

## Historical Background

The idea of happiness has been researched and critiqued by both scientists and philosophers for centuries. Most of them concur that the concept of happiness in ancient times was based on good fortune and karma, where contemporary Americans view happiness as something over which they have control and something that they can actively pursue (Kesebir & Diener, 2008). To the point that the ancient concept of happiness was based on luck and possibly divine interference, historian Darrin McMahon (2006) noted that the Greek term *eudaimonia* (the term often translated as *happiness* in English; Thomson, 1953) was first used by the poet Hesiod in Concepts of Happiness 5 in the *Work and Days* as follows: “happy and lucky the man” (*eudaimon te kai olbios*). Because the related word *eudaimon* (the adjective of *eudaimonia*) is the combination of *eu* (good) and *daimon* (god, spirit, demon), McMahon concluded “*eudaimonia* thus contains within it a notion of fortune—for to have a good daimon on your side, a guiding spirit, is to be lucky—and a notion of divinity, for a daimon is an emissary of the gods who watches over each of us” (pp. 3 - 4). Thus, in ancient Greece, happiness was seen as something beyond human control, determined mainly by luck and the gods. McMahon went on to state: “happiness is what happens to us, and over that we have no control” (p 19).

In the early 1920’s, one of the first significant studies to uncover a connection between the positive attitudes of workers and their productivity was conducted by Elton Mayo (Mayo, 1933). In what came to be known as the Hawthorne Studies, workers at the Hawthorne plant of the Western Electric Company were examined as part of an effort by management to incorporate factors affecting human behavior in organizations (Mayo, 1933). The research by Mayo indicated that employees in a work setting have socio-psychological needs that are as important

as their financial needs, and which must be equally met for them to achieve their full productive potential. In fact, Mayo discovered that workers were more responsive to social factors—such as the people they worked with on a team and the amount of interest their manager had in their work—than the factors (lighting, etc.) the researchers had gone in to inspect (Mayo, 1933). The conclusion of this seminal work was that workers were extremely receptive to increased attention from their supervisors and their perception that their leaders were actually interested in them and their work. Specifically, Mayo found that a group of workers were more likely to be successful if their manager took interest in the accomplishments of each person, assisted in helping the group find the most efficient way of working together, and provided a great deal of feedback on their performance. The Hawthorne Studies also revealed that teams prospered if each worker took personal pride in what they were doing, labor was involved in the decision-making process by their supervisors, and if they had trust and confidence in each other (Mayo, 1933).

The foundation laid by the Hawthorne Studies led to a relatively new field of study called positive psychology. Positive psychology is the term used by researchers studying subjective well-being and how individuals can prosper (Rae and MacConville, 2015). It was first used by American psychologist Martin Seligman in his address after being elected president of the American Psychological Association in 1998. Although noted as a global authority on depression and pessimism, Seligman asserted that modern psychology was inadequate because it “neglected the study and application of the things that made life worth living” (Rae and MacConville, 2015, p. 3). Seligman has incorporated five elements he has theorized as being essential to personal well-being—positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishments—into the life and work of schools through what he termed positive education. Seligman noted that the historical mission of the education of children has been to put them on a

path towards adult work. While acknowledging his support for success, literacy, perseverance, and discipline, he urged educators to imagine that educational institutions could teach both the skills of well-being and the skills of achievement without compromising either. In other words, Seligman challenged educators to imagine schools which practiced positive education (p. 78).

A comparable argument was made by Anthony Seldon (2011), master of Wellington College in Berkshire, England:

Exams are, of course, essential. They allow us to measure the progress of students and school performance. But they are not the whole purpose of schools. The objective that now needs to be prioritised is character building...The point that many in our education department are missing is that an emphasis on the development of character will only improve exam performance at school and university: it will not turn out responsible and thoughtful citizens...The best state schools are already showing the way, by achieving top academic results and offering character education and real enrichment outside the classroom...and emphasizing the development of good personality and self-control (2011, paragraphs 3, 8, and 10).

Shawn Achor (2010) is one of the leading researchers on the science of happiness and performance in everyday lives. Trained by Harvard professor Dr. Tal Ben-Shahar, Achor served as the head teaching fellow to help teach and design the famed “happiness” course at Harvard University. He now serves as the founder and CEO of Aspirant, a research and consulting firm that uses positive psychology to enhance individual achievement and cultivate a more productive workplace. In his seminal work *The Happiness Advantage* (2010), Achor explored many pieces of evidence that revealed a direct correlation between happiness and various positive effects. In one longitudinal study involving Catholic nuns, a group of 180 nuns from the School Sisters of

Notre Dame were asked to write down their thoughts in autobiographical journal entries in 1917 where they were 20 years old. By age 85, 90 percent of the happiest quartile of nuns were still alive, compared to only 34 percent of the least happy quartile (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). A study done by the University of Toronto study found that our mood can actually change how the visual cortex—the part of the brain responsible for sight—processes information. The experiment performed by the researchers primed people for either positivity or negativity, then asked them to look at a series of pictures. Those in a negative mood didn't process all of the images in the pictures—missing substantial parts of the background—while those in a good mood saw everything (Leyden, 2003).

In regards to the happiness of students in particular, a number of definitions were proposed. Most of these definitions included a multi-faceted approach to happiness, including an enduring cognitive component (i.e., global life satisfaction) and an enduring emotional component (i.e., positive affect) (Huebner, 2010). Huebner elaborated that:

Global life satisfaction refers to a person's evaluation of the quality of her life as a whole while positive affect refers to the occurrence of frequent positive emotions over time, such as joy, interest, and enthusiasm. Thus, a happy student is not one who is necessarily giddy with joy every moment of every day, but one who experiences frequent positive emotions (more than negative emotions) and reports a relatively enduring sense of well-being with regard to her overall life (p. 24).

While the causes of happiness in individual students are varied, cognitive-motivational factors, such as self-esteem, control of one's self, and hopeful thinking seem to be stronger determinants of student happiness than other factors such as genetics, demographic variables, and neuropsychological (Huebner, 2010). Interpersonal relationships, such as high quality

family, peer, and teacher relationships, appear to be the most powerful influences on a student's optimal level of happiness (Huebner, 2010).

With the history of research indicating that the emotional well-being of a person in a work environment affects their productivity, and the studies born from that showing the same in an educational setting, there is little question that there is value in examining methods in which schools can positively impact the level of happiness in the young people they serve. To this end, a review of available research pertaining to the correlation between academic achievement and the level of happiness in students is essential.

### **The Influence of Schools on Student Happiness**

Important research dealing with human behavior discovered evidence that creating positive associations with the learning process proves more effective than allowing negative ones to be created (Pavlov, 1928). In its 2002 *Set for Success* report, the Ewing Maron Kauffman Foundation presented papers from six researchers which highlighted the link between social-emotional development of young children and their cognitive development later in life. In the introduction of the report, it was noted that, "Stated simply, positive relationships are essential to a child's ability to grow up healthy and achieve later social, emotional, and academic success" (p. 2). In terms of the educational process, those positive relationships that are so needed by children begin with adults in the school building. Students in American schools with a strong sense of positive community have achieved more positive outcomes in studies pertaining to the power inherent in communal organizations (Byrk and Driscoll, 1998). In terms of consequences for students, various forms of social misbehavior (e.g. class cutting, absenteeism, and classroom disorder) were all less prevalent in schools with a communal organization. School dropout rates

were also lower, students interest in schooling higher, and the gains in mathematics achievement from sophomore to senior year were greater (Byrk and Driscoll, 1998).

There are those who believe that the need to be happy is a basic human need, much like air, water, and food. In his famous Hierarchy of Needs, Abraham Maslow (1943, 1954) originally classified human needs into five levels. Those levels, beginning with the most basic needs, were as follows: physiology, safety, belonging, esteem within a community, and self-actualization. Maslow (1969, 1979) later added a connection to something greater than self as a sixth level to the hierarchy. He arranged the levels of needs and goals into a hierarchy because he believed that each level was generally not attainable until the needs below it were met. Other researchers have framed this famous hierarchy of needs in terms of student motivation in a learning environment. Marzano, Scott, Boogren, and Newcomb (2017) postulated that the degree to which students are motivated and inspired in a particular classroom was a function of the extent to which the classroom attended to the needs and goals in the hierarchy, especially their needs of self-actualization and having a connection to something greater than themselves.

It has also been suggested that in some classroom situations students could be regularly asking themselves the following questions related to each of the six levels of Maslow's Hierarchy:

- Level One: "Am I physiologically comfortable in this situation?"
- Level Two: "Does this situation make me feel safe?"
- Level Three: "Does this situation make me feel like others accept me?"
- Level Four: "Does this situation make me feel like I am valued?"
- Level Five: "Does this situation make me feel as though I am living up to my potential?"
- Level Six: "Does this situation make me feel like I am a part of something important?"

(Marzano et al., 2017, p. 4)

Marzano, Scott, Boogren, and Newcomb believed that if teachers concentrated on meeting all six levels of their students' needs in the classroom, they would realize incredible gains in the motivation and inspiration of the young people in their care, as well as in their academic abilities. On an institutional level, the authors stated their conviction that if educational systems and schools were to focus on meeting those same six levels of needs for all students they serve that a transformation of the nature and power of K-12 could occur (Marzano et al., 2017, p. 151).

A connection between academic achievement and the happiness of students exist at higher levels of education around the globe. In a study conducted with university students in Iran, results showed that there was a significant relationship between happiness and achievement motivation in reliability level of 95 percent among male and female students and there is no difference between happiness achievement motivation in reliability level of 95 percent among male and female students (Hassanzadeh & Mahdinejad, 2013). But in a similar study in that same country, a like connection was indicated among even younger students. The study involved three hundred and fifteen high school first-grade students, and the results "showed that the variables of locus of control and self-esteem have a positive and significant relationship with academic achievement" (Khaleghi Nezhad, Shabani, Hakimzadeh, Shaker, & Amerian, 2016). Studies showing strong connections between these areas are also being reported in American news outlets. An article in the *Deseret News National* reports on a study by Dr. Christina Hinton of the Harvard Graduate School of Education at the St. Andrew's Episcopal School in Potomac, Maryland which showed correlations between students' happiness and their motivation and achievement (Wecker, 2015). Her research, conducted during the 2013-2014 school year when 94 percent of the schools fourth- to twelfth-graders—or about 450 students—responded to questionnaires, also suggested that student happiness depends upon the relationships they form

with teachers and classmates. Hinton's analysis of the data gathered in the study also found several key associations which open the door to further research on how schools can maximize students' learning experiences (Schiller and Hinton, 2015). Hinton found that happiness was positively associated with intrinsic motivation for all students, and also with extrinsic motivation for students in kindergarten through third grade. Results also indicated that happiness was also positively associated with GPA for students in grades fourth through twelfth. Hinton notes that this was significant, because GPA provides a broader picture of academic achievement than standardized test scores, encompassing multiple types of abilities and the influence of social dynamics. Students' satisfaction with school culture and relationships with teachers and peers were also predictors of their overall happiness.

Each of these studies presented strong evidence that the connection between student happiness and academic achievement not only exists, but is worthy of further study as a means of educating the whole student as schools seek every opportunity and resource available to increase achievement levels at their educational institutions. If it is acknowledged that the level of happiness in students is connected to their levels of academic achievement, then schools could seek out ways to affect the happiness of their students as ways to increase their achievement levels. As stated earlier, the most powerful factors affecting students' happiness appear to be interpersonal, with high quality family, peer, and teacher relationships as essential ingredients in the formula for maximum happiness (Huebner, 2010). Other factors, which schools and teachers could control, may be as simple as slowing down the pace of the school day, getting students outside, incorporating students moving their bodies as they learn, and playing up-tempo music in the classroom (Aguilar, 2015). Research has also shown that students who report that they have positive relations with their teachers (e.g. they get along with most of their teachers, most

teachers really listen to what they have to say, most teachers treat them fairly), are happier at school (Borgonovi, 2015). Creating environments where prosocial behavior is promoted among students has also been shown to result in an overall increase in their well-being. In a study conducted in Vancouver, 9- to 11-year olds were instructed to perform three acts of kindness over the course of four weeks. These students experienced significantly bigger increases in peer acceptance, a critical goal as it is related to a variety of important academic and social outcomes (Layous, Nelson, Oberle, Schonert-Reichl, & Lyubormisky, 2012). Furrer, Skinner, and Pitzer (2014) outlined motivational principles guiding relationships in the classroom that work. Among the principles cited in the study, student-teacher and student-peer relationships inherently included self-sustaining engagement in high-quality teaching and learning characterized by focused enthusiastic hard work and constructive responses to obstacles and setbacks. In addition, relationships generated mutual satisfaction by contributing to students' experiences of relatedness to their social partners in the classroom, to their competence as learners, and to their shared ownership (with their teachers and peers) of creating a caring learning community dedicated to important academic work. Furrer, et al. (2014) noted that teachers have a special responsibility to support student motivation and learning through the provision of warmth and involvement, optimal structure, and support for autonomy.

Two other authors explored another model that may account for the influence of positive emotions in the classroom. Corradino and Fogarty (2016) cited the "Broaden and Build Model" which proposed that positive emotions broadened an individual's awareness and encourage more exploratory thoughts and actions, while negative emotions have a narrowing effect. Corradino and Fogarty further wrote, "This finding may be particularly useful in the classroom. Broadening of the mind may advance a student's skills and resources when a mindful awareness

of the present environment translates into increase engagement” (p. 1). This increased engagement may become a productive state of flow, defined by a state of concentration and optimal engagement in an activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Corradino and Fogarty (2016) surmised that during flow, the intrigue and ability induced by positive emotions conquered challenge. Considering this, teachers and educational administrators may benefit from creating school cultures where students are taught to deal with negative emotions by created more positive ones. Such schools may help students broaden their mindset and increase their opportunity for peak engagement in their own learning process.

All of these studies show that student happiness can not only be influenced by schools, but can be actively cultivated and enriched by educational institutions and the caring professionals which work within them.

### **Relationship between Academic Achievement and Emotional States of Students**

Several studies have explored the correlation between academic achievement and indicators of the mental or emotional states of students. The results of research conducted by Quinn and Duckworth (2007) suggest that happiness and academic achievement are mutually reinforcing. Children higher in subjective well-being earn higher grades, even when controlling for intelligence and past academic performance. In looking at what makes students happy, one cannot ignore the fact that schools are places where students go to gain new knowledge. So in examining the causes of students’ happiness, one should also consider educational systems where students are achieving high levels of both happiness and academic prowess. In a global report on education from Pearson Publishing, countries were ranked on a variety of factors including expenditure per student, GDP, graduation rates. Although once ranked number one, Finland was still ranked at number five in this report (Lepi, 2014). When a group of American

educators visited that country to learn more about the Finnish school system, one of them identified several factors that makes school in Finland an enjoyable experience for students (Faridi, 2014). These included a heavy emphasis on play. At all levels of education in Finland, students are not only allowed to play—they are encouraged to do so. Development of the whole person is highly valued, especially in the early years. Even at the high school level, students have opportunities to play videogames or foosball. In Finland, there is no high-stakes testing. Educational leaders in that country believe that more test preparation means less time for free thinking and inquiry by students. Finns also value personal time a great deal. Finnish educators believe that students' capacity for engagement and learning is most successful when they have a chance to unwind and focus. They believe in this so much that students in Finland have the legal right to 15 minutes of free time every 45 minutes. In turn, students work productively during class time, because they understand that their needs to play, talk, or even read quietly will soon be met. In what may seem to be a contradiction to many, when it comes to education, Finns feel that less is more. Not only do children in Finland wait until the age of seven to begin their schooling, school days are also shorter. The majority of elementary students attend school only four or five hours a day. High school students, much like college students, only attend the classes which are required of them. The process of education in Finland also involves semi-tracked learning. After the age of sixteen, Finnish students can choose from either vocational or “gymnasium” (academic-based) school. Students from either type of school can attend university. The infrastructure of schools in Finland is designed to promote collaboration. Classrooms branch off from a shared learning area where students from all classes and grade levels can work together, and students move about campus with minimal supervision. By

designing schools in this manner, collaboration and collaborative environments are strongly emphasized.

There has been research into ways educators can create a positive environment for student learning in American schools. At the school level, Noddings (2003) presented useful insights on how schools can institute an educational culture that focuses on the positive and argued that “Happiness should be an aim of education, and a good education should contribute significantly to personal and collective happiness” (p.1). She proposed that the best schools should resemble the best homes, in that the best homes provided an environment of caring and positive relations, attend to and continuously evaluate both inferred and expressed needs, and protected all individuals within the group from harm without deliberately inflicting pain. As the people who live in best homes communicate with each other to develop common and individual interests and work together cooperatively, schools could emulate this environment to promote joy in genuine learning, guide moral and spiritual development and educate for both self-understanding and group understanding.

Invariably, the greatest influence on a student’s level of happiness in school was—and is—the teacher (Hough, 2013). The manner in which a teacher affects students’ happiness can vary by the age of the students in question. Elementary school children sometimes feel happy when they please their teacher, but helping them understand that happiness is not “approval” is a difficult concept for them to comprehend. Recognizing young children for “random acts of kindness” or “subtle successes” is different from giving them rewards for doing what is expected (Hough, 2013). Young adolescents in the middle grades and teenagers in high schools tend to respond to the same unexpected, unsolicited stimuli. That is, randomly and intermittently letting secondary students know they are valued and respected in lieu of rewards for attaining something

seems to produce happier charges. Humor can also be used by teachers to increase the happiness of their students. They like to laugh, and laughing sometimes elicits positive outcomes (Hough, 2013).

A similar study involving young people from another country also put the onus on adults who are involved in the lives of young people to pay attention to their emotional well-being. Khaleghi Nezhad et al. (2016) explored a connection between students' life satisfaction and academic performance based on locus of control and self-esteem using first-grade high school students concluded that the findings of their study "revealed that locus of control and self-esteem play crucial roles in developing students' life satisfaction and academic performance" and emphasized "that teachers, parents, and all those, who are related to teenagers, consider respect and attention to teenagers' personality and promoting their sense of worth as a humane duty" (p. 6).

Other factors related to student happiness were also found to be predictors of student engagement in the learning process. Research which involved students from socioeconomically and ethnically diverse student bodies at two northern California high schools (Park, Holloway, Arendtsz, Bempechat, & Li, 2012) sought to address three questions:

1. To what extent are students from low-performing high schools emotionally engaged in academic activities, and does this engagement differ according to students' gender, race/ethnicity, and prior achievement?
2. To what extent do the three psychological-need variables (perceived opportunity for autonomy, competence, and relatedness) assessed at the student level account for variance in students' emotional engagement?

3. Does the relationship between emotional engagement and three psychological-need variables differ across student gender, race/ethnicity, and achievement level? (p. 392)

The fact that variation in emotional engagement among the students in this study was found to exist, suggested that a student could not simply be labeled as “engaged” or “disengaged” in an educational setting. “Because emotional engagement is a dynamic, malleable construct, high-achieving students sometimes report boredom and frustration in the process of learning, and low-achieving students experience moments of interest and curiosity” (Park et al., 2012, p. 400). This finding strongly suggested that the mental state of a student engaged in the learning process can be influenced, and the researchers involved in this study highlighted this point as an implication for practice. Park et al. noted that “Our findings emphasize the need for pre- and in-service teacher education programs to help teachers evaluate whether the conditions in their classrooms fulfill students’ basic need to feel competent, supported by others, and autonomous with respect to learning” (p. 400). The research by Park et al. (2012) challenged the common notions that low-achieving students were simply not interested in learning, and shifted the focus of research away from identifying “problem learners” and toward ways in which teachers could develop and implement activities that were supportive of students’ psychological needs. The study also underscored the importance of acknowledging that children not only need to be seeking independence, which is the goal that is most frequently associated with this developmental period, but that they also need to feel supported and competent as they approached the process of learning (Park et al., 2012).

### **Analysis of Theories Which Relate to the Study**

Research conducted by others resulted in methods that have already been implemented in educational institutions across America. The Positive Action program has refined educational

strategies through 26 years of research, evaluation, and development, and instituted them at over 13,000 schools (Allred, 2014). Among these strategies, they encourage schools to make learning relevant. When students see that the knowledge they are being taught is vital to their own happiness and success, they are more engaged in learning it and retain it better. By discovering the talents, learning styles, and interests of their students, teachers can adjust their instructional styles and strategies to increase the relevance of their lessons. The Positive Action program also suggests that schools create a code of conduct for each classroom within the institution. When students and teachers work together to create a common understanding of the effects of positive and negative behaviors within their work area, the classroom will be both positive and productive. Teachers using strategies from the Positive Action program promote and model positive actions. It cannot be assumed that students know what positive actions are; they must be taught them in a systematic way. The types of positive actions which could increase the level of student academic achievement includes those for the intellect (such as thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving skills), those for self-management (how to manage time, energy, emotions, and other personal resources) and those for continual personal improvement (such as setting and achieving goals). Positive Action educators seek to instill intrinsic motivation. Students can be taught that if they have a thought that will lead to a negative result, they can change it to a thought that will lead to a positive action and a positive result. These teachers also reinforce positive behaviors. Instead of merely recognizing positive behaviors with an item such as a sticker or certificate, students should be reminded of how that positive behavior made them feel so that the reward becomes a reminder of that feeling. The Positive Action program also suggest that educators engage positive role models. Teachers can bring in positive role models from outside the school setting, such as parents, community leaders. Above all else, the

underlying concept of the Positive Action approach to education is to always be positive. The most important, while often the most difficult, is for the teacher to always be a positive role model. The teacher must always choose a positive way to respond to any situation.

The Positive Action Program claims to be the only character education program which achieves positive effects in both academics and behaviors in a review conducted according to the standards established by the United States Department of Education What Works Clearinghouse (Allred, 2008). Another way to encourage the development of happy and productive students is to allow them time for and help with self-reflection. Teachers can promote critical thinking by asking students questions which have more than one correct answer, and encouraging them to talk about their strengths and weaknesses as they relate to projects they have completed. It may even be as simple as greeting students with a hug or a handshake. This can give a student a sense of belonging, which Abraham Maslow identified in his Hierarchy of Needs as a basic human need (Gruener, 2011).

Two other researchers noted other interventions that may increase academic achievement by increasing the level of happiness among students. Socio-emotional learning programs and mindfulness meditation are interventions that are used to grow positive emotions by fostering students' emotional intelligence (Corradino and Fogarty, 2016). They used the definition put forth by Salovey, Hsee, and Mayer (1993) of emotional intelligence as "the skill of understanding and taking control of one's own emotions." If students can learn to take control of their own emotions, then they can also learn to control their own level of happiness. Social economic learning, or SEL, programs seek to develop socio-emotional intelligence in children by focusing on five major areas: self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Payton et al., 2003). Corradino and Fogarty further detailed some

of the characteristics of socio-economic learning programs by noting that they promote pro-social behaviors and emotional intelligence through classroom projects, meditation exercises, skill building, and positive relationships between students and teachers. By promoting positive social and emotional responses, socio-economic learning programs eliminate the negative emotions and feelings caused by aggression and peer violence by putting a greater emphasis on positive emotions among students. If the level of their positive emotions increase, then their level of happiness will also increase.

One method of learning to control one's own emotions is mindfulness meditation. In describing mindfulness meditation, Kabat-Zinn (1994) explained that it is learning to non-judgmentally attend to one's own present experience. Teachers who used mindfulness meditation instructed their students to concentrate on their senses, breath, internal thoughts, momentary experiences, and body. Mindfulness meditation shows promise as a tool for increasing positive emotions in the classroom, as students who practice it regularly have statistically shown a more positive affect (Broderick & Metz, 2009).

Research has examined other factors which may affect the connection between young students' academic achievement and life satisfaction. A study by Crede, Wirthwein, McElvaney, and Steimayr (2015) focused on the role of parents' education, as a factor impacting a students' socio-economic status, indicated a relationship between students' life satisfaction and academic achievement. They cited research conducted by Bourdieu (1986) which revealed that "parents' education strongly influences students' academic success because more educated parents are able to provide more cultural and social capital that facilitates their children to succeed in school" (p. 2). The research focused on two hypotheses, the first of which was that students' academic achievement (GPA) is significantly positively correlated with life satisfaction (LS). The second

hypothesis was that parents' education moderates the relationship between students' academic achievement and LS. The association between students' academic achievement and LS is lower for students who reached a higher level of educational attainment than their parents had, than for students who reached the same level of educational attainment as their parents (Crede et al., 2015).

Bourdieu's (1986) study involved a sample size of 411 German high school students who attended a class of German school to prepare them for university ("gymnasium"), which is the most academic and prestigious secondary school track in Germany. They measured the students' life satisfaction using the General Life Satisfaction Scale as developed by Dalbert (2003), and the academic achievement of the participants was the grade point average on the students' last report cards. Information on parents' education was garnered from the students themselves, each indicating the highest educational degree their mother and father attained. Since there was a weak correlation between the educational level of the mothers and fathers as reported by the students in the study, the hypotheses were separately considered for both groups.

The result of the study by Crede et al. (2015) with regard to the first hypothesis revealed a weak but significantly positive correlation between students' academic achievement as measured by the grade point average and their life satisfaction scores. However, the second hypothesis that parents' education moderated the association between students' life satisfaction and academic achievement was only partially confirmed. The authors noted that "academic achievement was only positively associated with LS for students attending the same school track as their parents did but not for students attending a higher school track than their parents did" (Crede et al., 2015). One important point that they made was that while fathers' education did not moderate the association between students' life satisfaction scores and academic

achievement, the education level of the mothers did. The conclusion was that “another interesting direction through which to extend this investigation is to examine differences concerning gender and migration background of high and low SES students.

### **Unresolved Issues, Significant Problems, and Unanswered Questions Requiring Study**

In examining the available research on the correlation between scholastic performance and the emotional state of students, one of the significant problems encountered was the lack of research conducted on this connection at the high school level in America. While there have been studies completed on various subgroups, such as the academic performance of African-American students in urban areas when exposed to positive behavior supports (Warren, Edmonson, Griggs, et al. 2003), there is still a dearth of information on how the academic achievement of the general population of high school students is connected to their mental state. Such a lack of research poses a significant problem for any researcher exploring this subject, especially when the goal is to identify such correlation and develop strategies to strengthen it.

Even those who believe they have discovered a connection between positive emotions and academic achievement recognized that other factors may be at play. Corrigan and Fogarty (2016) concluded that “research on social emotional learning (SEL) programs and mindfulness meditation shows that supporting emotional intelligence is useful in strengthening academic outcomes” (p. 3), but they noted that “these results are perhaps attributable to a side effect of emotional intelligence: positive emotions” (p. 3). The findings of these studies leave several unanswered questions, such as is there a definite connection between the emotional state of a high school student and their academic achievement. Another question left unanswered is what factors impact the mental well-being of students, either positively or negatively. Finally, it remains unclear whether or not interventions that improve the emotional state of a high school

student could be easily replicated across all gender, cultural, geographic, and socioeconomic lines.

There have also been questions raised about when and why emotion is associated with academic achievement. One group of researchers explored the possibility that this connection could be controlled by a third variable termed “effortful control”, which could also be defined as “dispositional regulation” (Valiente, Swanson, & Eisenberg, 2012). The conclusions of this research led to three steps for future studies to measure the impact of effortful control, or EC, on the relationship between the emotions of students and their academic achievement. First, tests should be performed to determine whether effortful control moderates the relations between emotions and indicators of academic achievement. Next, studies that test potential mitigating factors on this connection should be designed. Finally, future studies should seek to clarify the relations between emotions and achievement, because it is doubtful that all emotions will relate to achievement the same way and for the same reasons (Valiente, Swanson, & Eisenberg, 2012).

The search for answers to questions such as these has led to the research proposed in this paper. If there is a relationship between the happiness of students and their academic achievement, it must be one that can be measured and one from which programs and strategies to positively affect that relationship can be developed. The study proposed in this dissertation will help to fill many of these gaps and equip school personnel with new knowledge that will arm them with important information as they work toward improving the mental and academic performance of students, especially at the high school level.

## **Conclusion**

The literature reviewed, which was related to this study, unveils many noted connections across a wide variety of populations between the emotional well-being of students and their

academic success, yet still points to the need for additional research on this topic. A study that involved Iranian high school first-graders indicated that self-esteem had very influential roles in improving the academic performance of school students. But the authors of this same study wrote that one of their limitations of their research was that “since studies show the effectiveness of age, gender, and religious beliefs on individuals’ attitude toward life, it is important to conduct more research to understand and control the relationship of such factors with locus of control” (Khaleghinezhad et al., 2016, p. 6). Corradino and Fogarty (2016) declared that research supported the study of more educational programs that increase positive emotions in students. It was their conclusion that research has proven that strategies like mindfulness meditation and socio-emotional learning are advantageous to both academic and emotional development of young people. Future research should explore other interventions that increase positive emotions, and studies should directly assess the correlation between positive emotions and academic achievement so that the application of the theoretical models of broadening and flow in the classroom setting can be verified.

Some researchers (e.g. Duckworth and Allred, 2012, Platt, Tripp, Ogden, Fraser, R.G., 2000) have suggested unique collaborations that could ultimately lead to the types of interventions and strategies proposed in this study. Duckworth and Allred (2012) noted that by working more closely together, psychologists and teachers could focus on developing interventions focused on making lasting changes in the behaviors of students which could result in measurable increases in academic outcomes. By sharing their respective insights, discussing their thoughts and opinions, and basing conclusions on their specific fields of knowledge, these two groups of professionals with unique but valuable insights into the minds of young people could implement interventions with objective academic results for students.

Research on the growing problem of negative emotions also adds validity to the need for this study. More and more students in America are experiencing severe stress, often accompanied by physical ailments. The number of teenagers being treated for depression has more than doubled since 2006, and suicide is now the third leading cause of death among young people between the ages of 10 and 14 (Carter, 2011).

### **Summary**

It is one thing to want students to be happy, but it is quite another thing to want that at the expense of academic achievement in an educational environment driven by accountability. But as the literature that has been reviewed here demonstrates, high levels of academic achievement can be accomplished without sacrificing the happiness of the students being measured. In fact, there is ample research available to not only demonstrate a strong and influential connection between the level of student happiness and academic achievement, but research has also uncovered strategies that can be implemented to increase both. In fact, the characteristics of educational systems in other countries where students are happy and highly productive have been identified and are, for the most part, reproducible at all levels of schooling.

An important factor that influences the happiness of students is the relationship they have with their teachers. In the book *The Skillful Leader* (2000), Platt, Tripp, Ogden, and Fraser include input from students discussing their opinions about what they perceive as effective and ineffective teaching. After a lengthy examination of what constitutes mediocre teaching and how mediocre teachers can be improved through strategies implemented by their school and district administrators, the authors concluded their text with quotes from students about what they see in their teachers. To illustrate their point that excellent teachers care about their students and that

they realize their professional success rests with making personal connections with their students, they offered this quote from Sherry, a suburban high school honors student:

She cares about her students and is really interested in our learning. When I was sick for a few days last year, she called me up to see how I was doing. She told me not to worry about the term test—that she would work out a make-up schedule when I was feeling 100% (p. 193).

As evidence that excellent teachers are not only passionate about the subjects they teach but are just as passionate about whether their students understand the material, suburban high school student Melissa said, “Mrs. Smith is awesome. I think the difference between her and other teachers is that she cares about us not only as people but as students. She cares if we get it” (Platt et al., 2000, p. 194). And when asked by an interviewer “How could we help administrators do a better job in evaluating teachers?” a graduating senior named Deborah replied:

Go to the kids more for evaluation because we’re the ones who sit there every day...we could give an honest opinion...ask the whole class and could get a fair opinion. It is still important for administrators to observe, but ask the people who have been observing all year long! (Platt et al., 2000, p. 196).

If a positive connection between the academic achievement and the happiness of students can be proven to exist, then teachers could be trained in strategies and methods on how to improve the happiness of their students, which in turn would lead to corresponding levels of their achievements. The review of the literature concerning the relationship between student happiness and academic achievement is clear. It exists at all levels and across all nationalities. It can be influenced by caring teachers taught to use and implement methods detailed by other

educators which research has indicated to be effective with students. The only thing that seems to be missing in American educational institutions is the will to recognize, embrace, and foster this connection for students.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Research Methodology**

This quantitative study explored the following research question: is there a correlation between the happiness of students and their academic achievement? The study was conducted at a large comprehensive high school in East Tennessee and consisted of students completing an on-line life satisfaction survey, which was then plotted according to a verified scale (Huebner, 2001). Results were compared to the participating students' individual grade point averages to investigate if a correlation between the two exists.

#### **Population and Sample**

The students participating in the study were high school age students from the ages of 14 to 19 representing grades nine through twelve. In order to provide a diverse sample, courses with heterogeneous enrollment were chosen so that the widest variety possible of intelligence levels, socioeconomic strata, and racial & ethnic background could be represented.

The study involved an on-line survey of students from both the freshmen campus and the main campus of the school. All students participating in this study were enrolled in an English class from their respective grade level. Several different English classes from each of the four grade levels of the school were selected for the study. English classes at the standard and honors levels were the only ones selected; no classes which were specifically classified as special needs were chosen. Using this approach, the sample size for the survey was 223, which represented 11% of the school's enrollment. The chosen method of selecting students for the study ensured that students came from a wide variety of classes so that the most heterogeneous group possible could be involved.

## Description of the Instrument

The instrument used to measure the happiness of the students surveyed was the latest version of the *Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale* developed by Scott Huebner (2001). This instrument, originally developed by Huebner (1994), was selected because it measures several factors of a student's satisfaction with life. Written permission was received from the author of the survey prior to its distribution. As he described in the *Manual for the Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale* (MSLSS), Huebner (2001) specified:

The MSLSS was designed to (a) provide a profile of children's satisfaction with important, specific domains (e.g., school, family, friends) in their lives; (b) assess their general overall life satisfaction; (c) demonstrate acceptable psychometric properties (e.g., acceptable subscale reliability); (d) reveal a replicable factor structure indicating the meaningfulness of the five dimensions; and (e) be used effectively with children across a wide range of age (grades 3-12) and ability levels (e.g., children with mild developmental disabilities through gifted children). (p. 2)

The validity of the MSLSS has been supported by the results of exploratory factor analyses (Huebner, 1994), and confirmatory factor analyses have provided additional further support of the instrument (Gilman et al., 2000; Huebner et al., 1998). Predicted correlations with other self-report well-being indexes have also demonstrated convergent and discriminant validity (Gilman et al., 2000; Greenspan & Saflofske, 1997; Huebner, 1994; Huebner et al., 1998).

To provide another level of anonymity for the students in the study, as well as to facilitate the ease of student use of the survey instrument, computer labs within both the freshmen campus and the main campus of the school were reserved for the classes participating in the research. The survey was placed on the school's computer servers so that it could not be altered or erased

by the teachers and the students who would be in the computer labs. The survey instrument contained forty questions which asked students to respond on a Likert scale of one to six—from one if the student strongly disagreed with the sentence to a response of six if the student strongly agreed with the sentence. The teachers directed students to “answer the question the way you really feel, not how you think you should” (Huebner, 2001). Instructions such as these were used to not only make the students feel at ease taking the survey, but to increase the likelihood that the young people participating in the study would provide honest, insightful responses.

### **Research Procedures and Time Period of the Study**

Approval of the study was received from the Carson-Newman University Institutional Review Board (IRB). A description of the study was provided to the principal, the director of secondary education and assessment, and the director of schools. Once the written permission of these individuals was obtained, the English classes were selected for the study.

The teachers of the classes selected to take the survey were trained as a group in the administration of the instrument (see Appendix B). They were provided instructions directly from the *Manual for the Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale* (Huebner, 2001), and were asked not to provide any directions beyond those specified. Parental consent forms were sent home with the students the week before they took the survey, explaining the survey to their parents and guardians; stressing that the students could refuse to take part in the study with no fear of reprisal from anyone (see Appendix A). The parents and guardians were also informed that all student responses would be kept confidential, and that no individual student responses would be disclosed to anyone. Written permission was obtained from the parents of the students who elected to participate in the study. Grade point average reports for all students participating in the study were provided by the school to the researcher, but the only personal information

connected to the data in the report was the local identification number, which was unique to each student. The only identifying information students were asked to reveal was their unique school identification numbers to associate their responses with their grade point averages as disclosed by the school to the researcher. Any printed data collected for analysis will be kept in a locked cabinet. Consent forms will be stored there for three years then destroyed. Electronic data will be password protected and destroyed after three years.

After the signed permission forms were returned by the specified deadline, the students who had obtained approval from their parents or guardians were taken to the computer lab assigned to their teacher to administer the survey. Students were given written instructions for completing the survey (see Appendix C). Each class of students participating in the study completed their responses on the survey instrument within approximately thirty minutes. However, due to some technical difficulties already mentioned in Chapter One, most of the students who took the survey initially had to take it again about two days later. The only students who did not retake the survey were students who were absent on the day the survey was taken for the second time.

Obtaining the permission of the school administrators took two days from the time the request was submitted. Selecting the English classes participating in the study took one day, and the students in those classes were given two days to return the parental consent forms they were given by their teachers.

Training the teachers of the English classes taking the survey took one day, and the classes completed the initial survey and the retake within five days. The data obtained from the completed surveys were tabulated and collated within five days. The total length of time for the study, from procuring the permission of the school administrators until the tabulation of the data took sixteen days.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

The two sets of data involved in the study were analyzed using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. The dependent variable, which served as the measurement of the students' academic achievement, was their GPA as listed in their official school record. The independent variable was their level of happiness as indicated from their scores on the *Students' Life Satisfaction Scale*. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was chosen as the method for analyzing the data to arrive at the covariance of the two variables in the study divided by the product of their standard deviations. This measuring tool quantified the strength and the direction of the relationship between the students' GPAs and their levels of happiness as identified by the correlation coefficient.

## Chapter Four

### Results of the Data Analysis

Happiness is a basic human need (Maslow, 1943, 1954). Researchers have postulated that if schools were to concentrate on meeting all needs of their students, including this need for happiness, then a positive evolution of the K-12 education system could occur (Marzano et al., 2017, p. 151). Compared to other topics in the field of education, there has not been a great deal of research on the effect of student happiness on academic achievement. The research that does exist, however, shows that a focus on meeting the emotional needs of students can positively affect the scholastic performance of young people in educational systems. Schools must not only function as places where children can learn academic content, but also as places where students can enjoy the process of developing their skills and talents. The review of the literature in this study was conducted to explore the research which has been done on the process of incorporating the happiness level of students with their academic development, and to provide some evidence from other studies which provide a correlation between the two.

The study utilized the Pearson Correlation Coefficient as part of a quantitative study to determine if there is any correlation between the happiness of students and their academic achievement. The instrument used to measure the level of happiness, or emotional well-being of the students surveyed, was the *Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale* developed by Dr. Scott Huebner (2001) (see Appendix D). A correlation was drawn between the individual results of the student MSLSS surveys and the students' GPA, which was chosen to reflect their academic achievement because it is a respected and accepted measure of current student progress across the entire scope of their studies. The focus of this study centered around one research

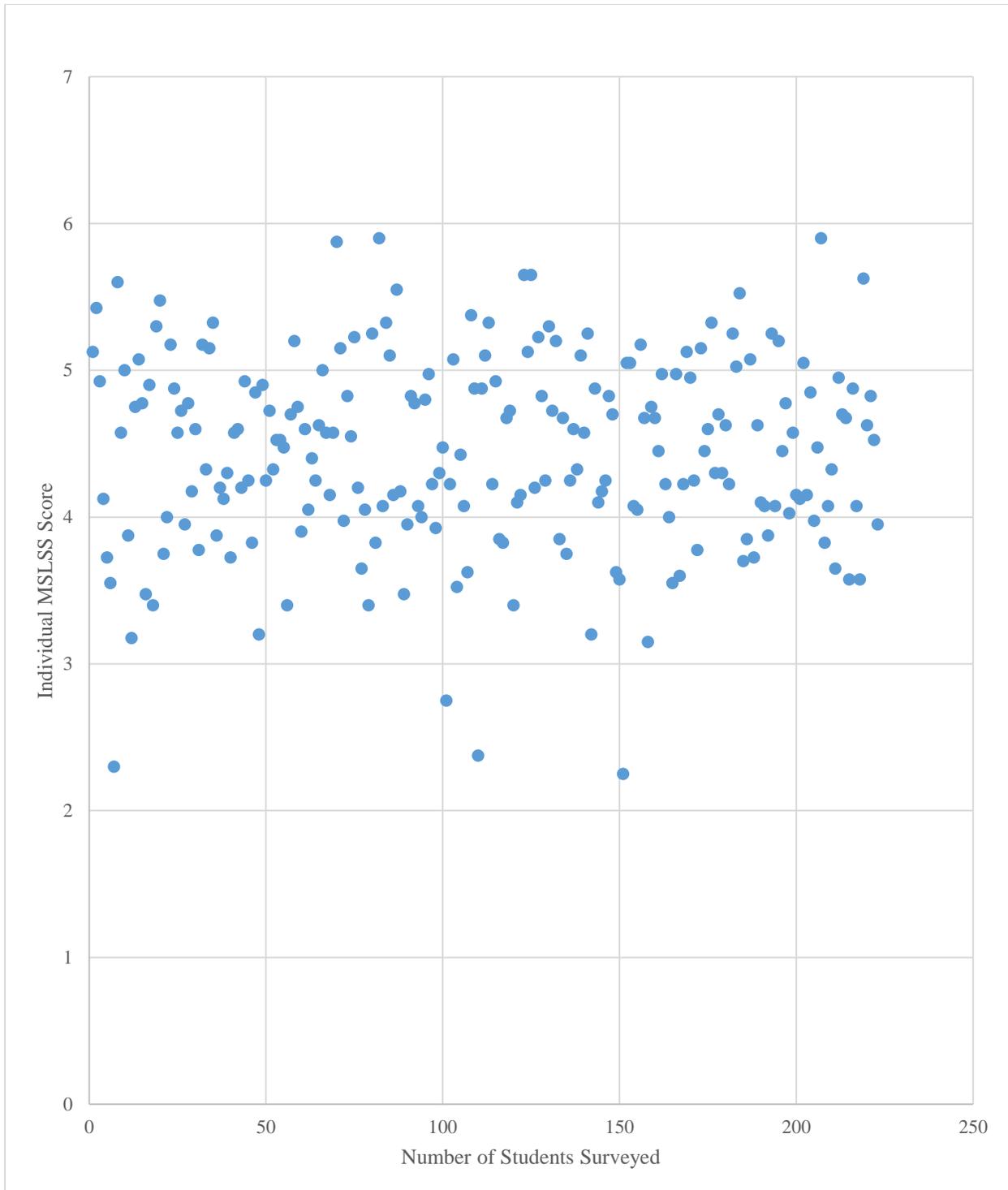
question: Is there a correlation between the happiness of students and their academic achievement?

The study and literature review added to the field of research dealing with the connection between the emotional level of students and their success, or lack thereof, in schools. Any data gleaned from this study could be used a variety of ways as educational leaders seek to promote both academic achievements in their school systems while providing an atmosphere where the emotional needs and development of their students could be developed as well. If the study established a strong positive correlation, this could indicate that happy students learn better. If research revealed a strong negative correlation, however, it may indicate that academically successful students may be achieving these results at the expense of their emotional well-being.

A large, comprehensive high school in East Tennessee was selected for the study. Data were gathered from a sample size of 223 students from across the four grade levels of the school—freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior. This sample size represented 11% of the entire student population of the school. All participants took the *MSLSS* survey online under the direction of their English teacher, who used directions developed to protect the identity and the rights of each student.

## **Results**

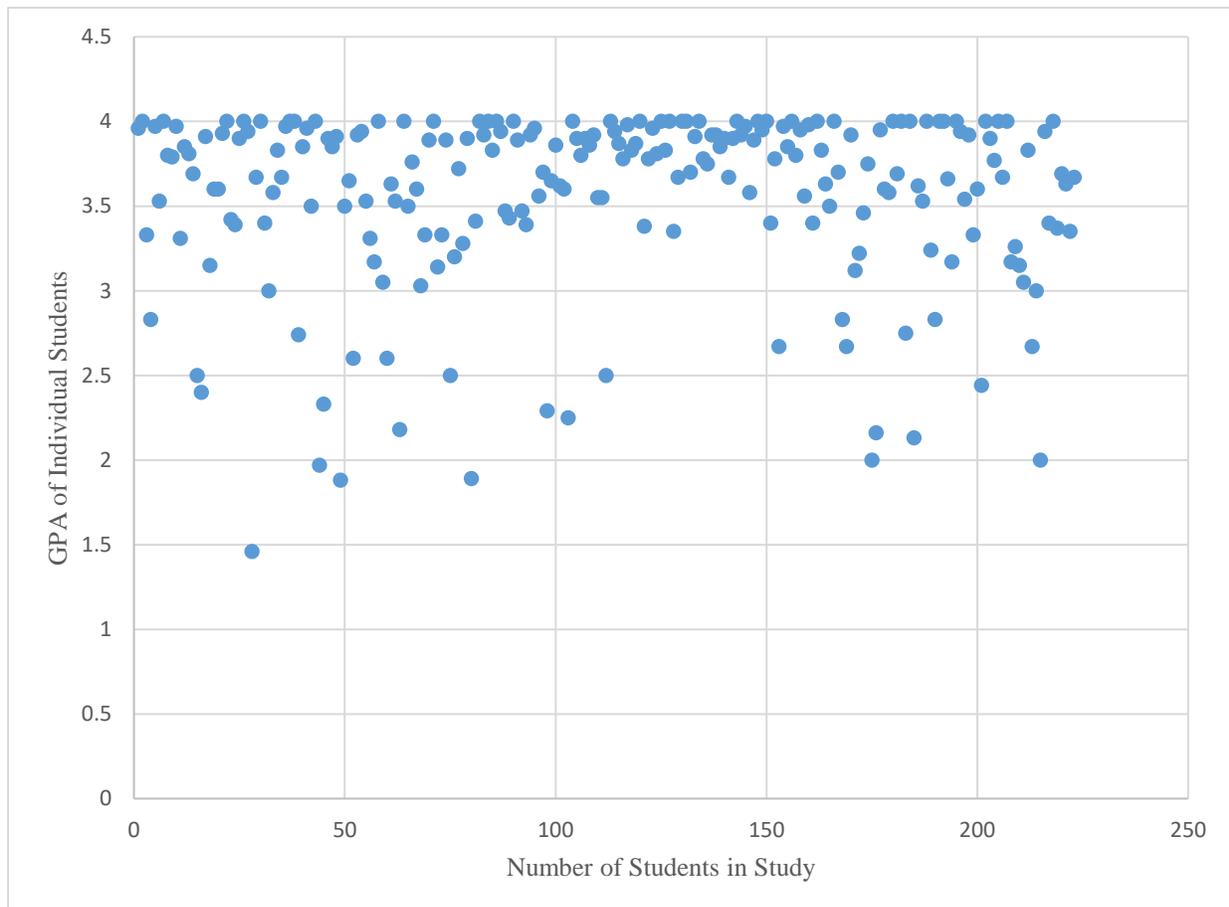
After the students completed the *MSLSS* surveys online, the individual results were compiled and scored. From those individual results, the following scatter plot in Figure 4.1 was developed.



*Figure 4.1.* Individual scores on the *Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale* of each of the 223 students who participated in the survey.

The score produced by the survey was designed to produce a numerical representation of the life satisfaction level, or happiness, of the student who took the survey. The higher the number, the more satisfied the student supposedly was with his or her life. The scores in this survey ranged from a low of 2.25 to a high of 5.9. The average score for the participants was 4.475. With the lowest possible score being 1.0 and the highest possible score being 6.0, the results of this survey indicated that the majority of students have a level of life satisfaction higher than the average score of 3.0.

The grade point average of the students who participated in the study was gathered from the student database of the school the students attended while taking the survey. When calculated and gathered, the chart in Figure 4.2 was developed.

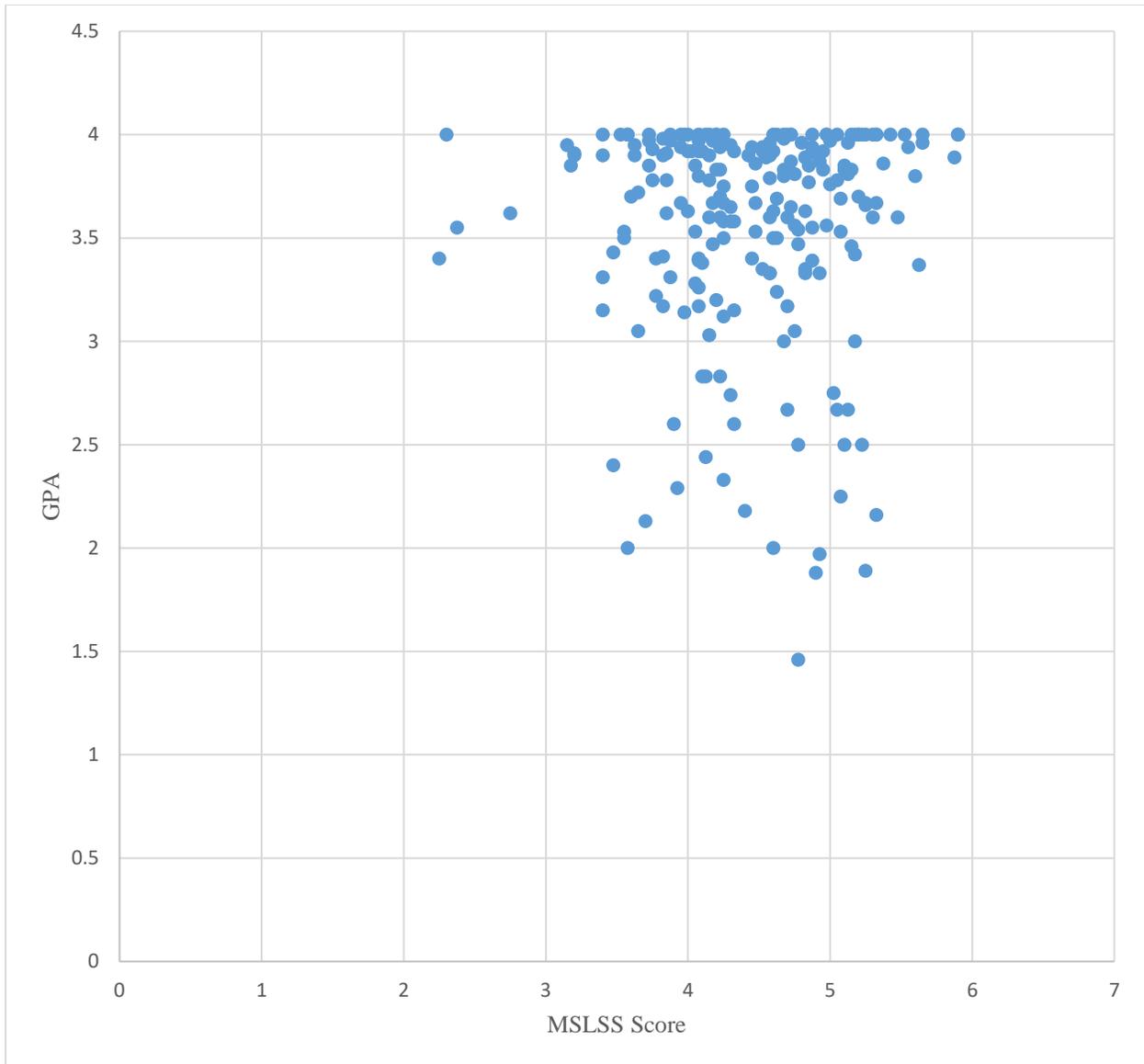


*Figure 4.2.* The individual GPAs of each of the students who participated in the survey.

The GPAs used to represent the academic achievement of the students in participating in the survey were their unweighted grade point average on a 4.0 scale. The grade point averages in this study ranged from a low of 1.46 to a high of 4.0. The average GPA of the sample group was 3.76. On an unweighted 4.0 scale, this is a relatively high average GPA.

### **Results Regarding the Research Question Being Investigated**

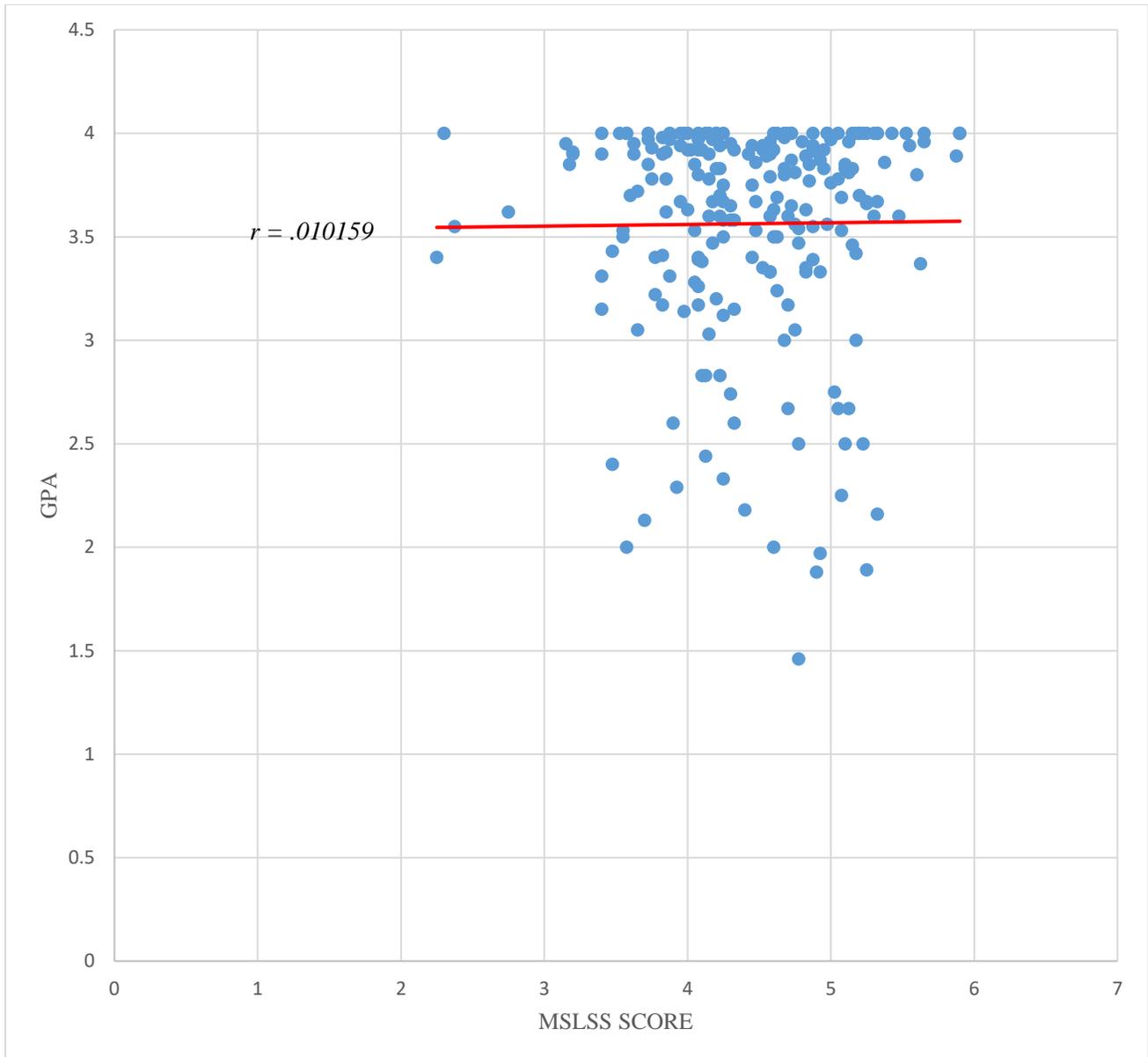
As previously stated, the research question this study sought to answer was if there was a correlation between the happiness of students and their academic achievement. The study used a sample size of 223 students, which represented approximately 11% of the same high school. The measure selected to represent the happiness of the students in the study was their self-reported level of life satisfaction as measured by the most current version of the *Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale*, developed by Dr. Scott Huebner (2001). The information from these surveys was reported in Figure 4.1. The selected representation of the academic achievements of the students in the sample group was their individual grade point averages, or GPAs. The results of these numerical representations can be seen in Figure 4.2. When the *MSLSS* scores and the GPAs of the students in the study were correlated and plotted together, it resulted in the chart seen in Figure 4.3.



*Figure 4.3.* Correlation of the GPAs and the *MSLSS* Survey scores of the students who participated in the survey.

As can be seen in the chart, there was a cluster of students around the high end of both measurements. There were some outliers on the ends of each scale, such as the individual with a GPA of 1.46 and a *MSLSS* score of 4.775 and the student with a GPA of 4 and a *MSLSS* score of 2.3. To be sure, there are always going to be people in any organization or group endeavor who

are either successful yet unhappy or unsuccessful and quite satisfied with their life. However, since the purpose of this study was to ascertain if a correlation exists between academic success and student happiness, the stories behind the individuals represented by the extremes of both scales were not explored. The correlation and trend line of the data revealed in this particular study can be seen in Figure 4.4.



*Figure 4.4.* Correlation of the GPAs and the *MSLSS* Survey scores of the students who participated in the survey with  $r$  value and trendline.

When calculated, the data revealed a Pearson's Coefficient, or  $r$ , value of 0.010159, and a  $p$  value of .88. Considering the significance threshold for this study was set at .05, the results of this study were statistically insignificant. This positive, yet weak, correlation between the GPAs and the MSLSS survey scores of the students in the study sample group is also represented by the red trend line on the chart in Figure 4.4. This provides the answer to the question at the heart of the study. Is there a correlation between the happiness of students and their academic achievement? In this study, there was a positive correlation, but it was a very weak one.

### **Findings Regarding Interactions Between the Data and the Research Question**

The results of this study revealed a weak positive correlation between the GPAs of the students in the survey and their self-reported *MSLSS* scores. Since the correlation was weak, it cannot be viewed as statistically significant. In fact, given the sample size of the group at the heart of the study and the resulting weak positive correlation, the results were concluded as being statistically insignificant. Given that the correlation was found to be positive, it can also be reasonable to conclude that there was at least some correlation between the general level of happiness of the students in the study and their academic achievement.

### **Summary**

With a weak correlation of the data collected as part of this study, no strong conclusions can realistically be reached. The correlation was positive. A sample size of 11% of the student body of the school was more than adequate for the purpose of this study. With a positive correlation and a large sample size, it is not unreasonable to state that this study showed that the positive mental state of students has an impact on their academic achievement. Since the correlation was statistically insignificant, no other findings can reasonably be extrapolated from the data gathered.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations**

Students are at the very heart of any educational system. Without students, there would be no administrators, teachers, school secretaries, janitors, cafeteria personnel, etc. The young people served by institutions of learning play a complex and integral role. They are at the same time the customers of the educational services being offered by the schools in which they are enrolled while also being the end products shaped and influenced by the schools which provide these services. Therefore, it is imperative that schools take a wider view of the students within their walls. They must assist the young people they instruct in learning the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in today's global workforce, but they must do so while considering their emotional well-being. In other words, they must fill the brain without destroying the heart of the students.

This study sought to determine if the life satisfaction level of the students who participated in this study affected their learning. As stated in the research question on which this study was based, this study attempted to discover if there was any correlation between the happiness of students and their academic achievement. The research conducted through this study has answered this question.

#### **Conclusions Drawn Regarding the Research Question**

Through the surveying of the students contained in the sample size participating in this study and the gathering of the information from their school concerning their current academic achievement, a correlation was calculated. The level of life satisfaction, as measured by the use of the *Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale* (Huebner, 2001), was compared to the GPAs of the students who completed the surveys. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient yielded a

positive yet weak relationship ( $r = 0.010159, p > .05$ ). These values were statistically insignificant, and therefore they cannot support any definite conclusions in regards to the research question. Although the correlation is so low as to be an unreliable basis for any concrete assumptions, it is positive. Perhaps the students in this particular school were happy in general, given the rural and relative tranquil nature of the geographic area of the school. The instructors and staff at the school may focus on the happiness level of the students they serve as part of an intentional emphasis by the school at directing efforts on this factor as a way of improving the overall academic achievement at their institution. If one were to explore the academic performance of the students at this high school, it may be found that this is a relatively high-performing place of learning where most students perform well academically despite their overall level of life satisfaction. Since only English classes at the standard and honors levels were selected, this may have resulted in a larger than expected number of high student GPA scores in the sample. Considering the fact that a large number of GPA scores were clustered around the high end of the scale, this could have also contributed to the weak correlation.

This positive correlation adds to the body of research being done on the influence of students' emotional well-being on their academic progress. Even though the positive correlation found in this study was statistically insignificant, it did exist. This makes the focus of this research worthy of further examination.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

In the field of education, millions of dollars each year are spent trying to increase the academic achievement of students. Leaders of school systems are in many instances contractually obligated to raise the composite test scores of their schools, so they offer more rigorous courses of study so that the young people who take those classes can perform better on

standardized exams and earn more scholarship dollars. Corporations develop, market, and sell all manners of test preparation materials, which they claim will help schools and students meet these lofty outcomes. These companies make ever-increasing profits, yet there is not a single program, manipulative, or course of training that has yet to be recognized as being able to definitively increase test scores better than any other. What this study and the many others referenced in the research to conduct this study have shown is that the answer to the question of how to increase the academic achievement of students may not lie in an external program aimed at students. The key to better performance in school for young people may lie within the students themselves.

Although the positive correlation between the happiness of students and their academic achievement was too small to be statistically significant, the data collected in this study did show a positive correlation. This could have been due to several factors. Perhaps the students in this particular school were happy in general, given the rural and relative tranquil nature of the geographic area of the school. The instructors and staff at the school may have already focused on the happiness of the students they serve as part of an intentional emphasis by the school on directing efforts on this factor as a way of improving the overall academic achievement at their institution. If one were to explore the academic performance of the students at this high school, it may be found that this was a relatively high-performing place of learning where most students were successful academically despite their overall level of life satisfaction. Other research cited in the literature review for this study has shown similar, and even stronger, correlations between these two measurements. This data provided additional evidence to justify further research into exactly how the life satisfaction of young people affects their performance in school. In point of fact, the data presented in this study justify an examination into how schools can positively

impact the emotional wellbeing of the students they serve. Further studies need to be conducted into how schools in more diverse settings can impact the happiness of their students. For example, the happiness of students in an urban setting may be dependent on strong connections with positive adult role models. The happiness of students in affluent environments may be affected by opportunities to give back to others. Additional research such as this could lead to more cost-effective, and more overall effective, programs and methods which teachers and school staff can use to make their students feel better about themselves and the process of learning. A kind word, a note of encouragement, even small tokens of recognition such as stickers could make the world of difference to a student at the fraction of the cost of a sterile computer program aimed at merely increasing a test score.

### **Summary**

The review of the literature conducted as part of the research for this study showed that it is reasonable to believe that happy people tend to be more productive than unhappy people. Whether it was the Hawthorne Studies (Mayo, 1933), research on the power inherent in schools as communal organizations (Byrk and Driscoll, 1998), or the work done by educational researchers on framing this Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in terms of student motivation in a learning environment (Marzano, Scott, Boogren, and Newcomb, 2017), enough evidence exists to make the topic of positive psychology in education worthy of ongoing study. And while the information produced by the research in this study did not produce a definitive correlation between student happiness and academic achievement, it adds to the body of evidence, which indicates that there may be something between the two. If this is at all a possibility, if the happiness and emotional well-being of students influences the results they achieve in an academic setting, then it is the moral obligation of any educational researcher—or

any person who has any concern for the happiness and success of young people—to continue to study this link.

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**Appendix A:**  
**Parental Consent Form for Survey Participation**

## Appendix A: Parental Consent Form for Survey Participation

### STUDENT SURVEY CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Your student is in an English class at \_\_\_\_\_ High School which has been selected to take part in a research study.

**What the study is about:** To discover if there is a correlation between the emotional states of students and their academic achievements.

**What your child will be asked to do:** Complete a brief 40 item on-line survey to ascertain their level of life satisfaction. The only identifying information your student will be asked to provide will be their student identification number so that their GPA can be correlated with the results of their survey responses.

**Risks and benefits:** There are no anticipated risks to your student if he or she participates in this study, beyond those encountered in everyday life.

**Taking part is voluntary:** Your consent and your student's participation in this study are completely voluntary. Your student can withdraw from the study at any time without consequences of any kind, and you can withdraw your consent at any time without consequences of any kind. Student participants can choose to skip any question. Participating in this study does not mean that you are or your student is giving up any legal rights. Student participation or non-participation in this survey will not affect their standing or grade in their English class or at \_\_\_\_\_ High School.

**Your student's answers will be kept confidential:** The records of this study will be kept private, and individual data will only be accessible by the researcher. Any hard copy print-outs of the data from this report will be kept in a locked drawer, and any electronic records related to this study will be kept on a password protected flash drive. All records related to this study will be kept confidential for three years, at which point they will be destroyed. Any report of this research that is made available to the public will not include your child's name or any other individual information by which your child could be identified.

**Statement of Consent:** I have read the above information, and I consent to allow my student to take part in the research study of the emotional state of students and its correlation to academic achievement.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Name (Please Print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's/Guardian's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Appendix B:**  
**Teacher Survey Instructions**

## Appendix B: Teacher Survey Instructions

### STEPS FOR TEACHERS OF CLASSES COMPLETING THE MSLSS SURVEY

- A link to the survey will be emailed tomorrow to all teachers participating in the survey.
- On the morning of the survey, please forward the email with the link to the survey to all of the students in the class you are teaching which was selected to participate.  
IMPORTANT NOTE: if a student did not bring a permission form from their parents/guardians allowing them to take the survey, do NOT forward the email to them.
- When the students in your selected class arrive, please take attendance as normal. After that, take your students to the computer lab which you have selected or which has been selected for you.
- Once in the lab, hand each of the students one of the sheets advising them of their right not to participate. This also includes instructions on responding to the statements on the survey for their reference.
- Have the students who are participating in the survey log into their Office 365 account and go to Mail.
- Students should select the email from Mr. Cagle which you forwarded to them.
- REMIND ALL STUDENTS BEFORE THEY BEGIN THAT THEY DO NOT HAVE TO TAKE THE SURVEY, AND THAT WHETHER OR NOT THEY DO TAKE THE SURVEY IT WILL NOT AFFECT THEIR GRADE OR STANDING IN YOUR CLASS OR THE SCHOOL.
- Students should select the link for the survey and follow all instructions.
- While students are taking the survey, the instructor should not circulate and observe or make any comments. Doing any of this could affect the responses students provide on the survey.
- Once students have completed the survey, they should exit their Mail and logout of Office 365.

**Appendix C:**  
**Student Survey Instructions**

### Appendix C: Student Survey Instructions

**First of all, please know that your participation in this survey is entirely VOLUNTARY. You do not have to participate if you choose not to, and whether or not you participate it will NOT affect your grades. This is not a test, and no one will EVER be told your answers.**

We would like to know what thoughts about life you've had during the past several weeks. Think about how you spend each day and night and then think about how your life has been during most of this time. Here are some questions that ask you to indicate your satisfaction with life. Circle the number (from 1 to 6) next to each statement that indicates the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement. It is important to know what you **REALLY** think, so please answer the question the way you really feel, not how you think you should. There are **NO** right or wrong answers.

Circle 1 if you **STRONGLY DISAGREE** with the sentence

Circle 2 if you **MODERATELY DISAGREE** with the sentence

Circle 3 if you **MILDLY DISAGREE** with the sentence

Circle 4 if you **MILDLY AGREE** with the sentence

Circle 5 if you **MODERATELY AGREE** with the sentence

Circle 6 if you **STRONGLY AGREE** with the sentence

**Appendix D:**

**MSLSS Survey (Text of Online Version)**

## Appendix D: MSLSS Survey (Text of Online Version)

### MSLSS SURVEY

We would like to know what thoughts about life you've had during the past several weeks. Think about how you spend each day and night and then think about how your life has been during most of this time. Here are some questions that ask you to indicate your satisfaction with life. Click the number (from 1 to 6) next to each statement that indicates the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement. It is important to know what you REALLY think, so please answer the question the way you really feel, not how you think you should. There are NO right or wrong answers. Click 1 if you STRONGLY DISAGREE with the sentence Click 2 if you MODERATELY DISAGREE with the sentence Click 3 if you MILDLY DISAGREE with the sentence Click 4 if you MILDLY AGREE with the sentence Click 5 if you MODERATELY AGREE with the sentence Click 6 if you STRONGLY AGREE with the sentence

1. My friends are nice to me.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

2. I am fun to be around.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

3. I feel bad at school.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

4. I have a bad time with my friends.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

5. There are lots of things I can do well.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

6. I learn a lot at school.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

7. I like spending time with my parents/guardians.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

8. My family is better than most.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

9. There are many things about school I don't like.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

10. I think I am good looking.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

11. My friends are great.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

12. My friends will help me if I need it.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

13. I wish I didn't have to go to school.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

14. I like myself.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

15. There are lots of fun things to do where I live.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

16. My friends treat me well.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

17. Most people like me.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

18. I enjoy being at home with my family.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

19. My family gets along well together.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

20. I look forward to going to school.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

21. My parents/guardians treat me fairly.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

22. I like being in school.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

23. My friends are mean to me.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

24. I wish I had different friends.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

25. School is interesting.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

26. I enjoy school activities.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

27. I wish I lived in a different house.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

28. Members of my family talk nicely to one another.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

29. I have a lot of fun with my friends.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

30. My parents and I do fun things together.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

31. I like my neighborhood.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

32. I wish I lived somewhere else.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

33. I am a nice person.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

34. This town is filled with mean people.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

35. I like to try new things.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

36. My family's house is nice.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

37. I like my neighbors.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

38. I have enough friends.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

39. I wish there were different people in my neighborhood.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.

40. I like where I live.

- Strongly disagree.
- Moderately disagree.
- Mildly disagree.
- Mildly agree.
- Moderately agree.
- Strongly agree.