The Role of Friendships in Children's Happiness and Wellbeing

Jane C. Taylor

Massey University

Abstract

Several studies have shown that the presence of a best friend, but not a child's popularity, is a significant predictor of positive mental health. This study was designed to examine whether 'best friendship' and 'popularity' have differential effects on the happiness and wellbeing of primary school children in New Zealand. Children (23 males and 35 females aged approximately 9-10 years old) listed three classroom friends, including their best friend for whom they completed a Friendship Intimacy Scale of common friendship activities (such as sharing secrets). Children also completed three measures of happiness and wellbeing. Each child was assessed as high or low in popularity on the basis of the number of friendship nominations received. Each child was also assessed as either having a best friend or not according to whether their best-friend nomination was reciprocated or not *and* whether or not the pair engaged in a high level of common friendship activities. This created four types of friendship patterns: 'high popular/best friend', 'high popular/no best friend', 'low popular/best friend' and 'low popular/no best friend'. Scores on the measures of happiness and wellbeing were examined as a function of the four friendship types. Unlike previous research, no significant differences in happiness and wellbeing were found between the four groups. These results are discussed in terms of the limitations of the study and the opportunities for further research.

Table of Contents

Introduction

The development of positive social relationships with others is a critical life skill. Through our interactions with others we develop language, values, the ability to take the perspective of others, a sense of self and a host of other skills that are crucial to our growth as citizens. Much of this development takes place in friendships, whether casual or abiding, and many studies have shown the importance of friendship in the development of mental health. Several such studies have been completed in New Zealand (Laurie, 1997; McCracken, 1985; Townsend, McCracken & Wilton, 1988), and the aim of the current study is to find out whether similar outcomes will be achieved using measures specifically designed to assess happiness and wellbeing levels in children.

Happiness and wellbeing are life goals often discussed throughout today's society, in the realm of public media, as well as in medical and legal fields, and it appears that they are becoming less attainable in our modern world than ever before (Seligman, 1995; 2008). Wellbeing is explicitly stated as an aim for New Zealand school students in our national curriculums, and it is important that we gain more knowledge and understanding of childhood wellbeing in order to help our students achieve this outcome in their lives (Ministry of Education, 1996; Ministry of Education, 2007; Soutter, O'Steen & Gilmore, 2012). This study attempts to find out what effects different friendship styles have on levels of happiness and wellbeing in New Zealand primary school students.

Literature Review

The role of New Zealand schools in contributing to student wellbeing is highlighted, and formalised, in the New Zealand national education curriculums (Ministry of Education, 1996; 2007). Referred to both explicitly and implicitly, this official acknowledgement confirms that, today, "education is seen as a key factor in developing capacities not only for work and

civic engagement, but also for experiencing a flourishing life" (Soutter, O'Steen & Gilmore, 2012, p. 112). In addition, promoting the wellbeing of students is listed as a required professional value for New Zealand registered teachers in the *Registered Teacher Criteria* (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2009). Furthermore, the importance of client wellbeing is identified in both the New Zealand Psychologists' Board's *Core Competencies for the Practice of Psychology in New Zealand* (2011) and the *Code of Ethics for Psychologists Working in Aotearoa/New Zealand* (2002). It is, therefore, evident that the wellbeing of our students must be included in our concerns and responsibilities as educators and psychologists. In order to fulfill our obligations to New Zealand students, we need a comprehensive understanding of the nature of happiness and wellbeing, their associated factors, and what these mean for our children (O'Rourke & Cooper, 2010).

Happiness and Wellbeing

The terms 'happiness' and 'wellbeing' are often discussed as closely related concepts within the literature (Veenhoven, 2000; Veenhoven, 2013). Several different conceptual understandings of happiness have been discussed in the literature, and research has shown that a definition of happiness is extremely difficult to determine (Exenberger & Juen, 2014; O'Rourke & Cooper, 2010; Roberts, 2010; Seligman, 2008). As eloquently stated by Howard Mumford Jones, "happiness belongs to that category of words, the meaning of which everyone knows, but the definition of which no-one can give" (as cited in O'Rourke & Cooper, p. 95, 2010). Our conception of happiness may be complicated by the different contexts in which we use the term. For example, many researchers have pointed out that the concept of happiness changes when considering it subjectively in comparison to objectively. Subjectively, happiness may represent an individual's positive emotional rating of their overall quality of life, whereas objectively, happiness may be determined by the

presence of certain factors in a person's life, such as having good health, freedom, and financial security (Exenberger & Juen, 2014; O'Rourke & Cooper, 2010; The Children's Society, 2013; Uusitalo-Malmivaara & Lehto, 2013).

Within self-reported forms of wellbeing, the separate concepts of hedonic wellbeing and eudaimonic wellbeing have been identified, and they are terms that date back to ancient Greek times (Exenberger & Lehto, 2014). Exenberger and Lehto report that, around the 4th Century B.C., hedonism, or the experience of pleasure, was proposed by the philosopher Aristippus as being an important aim in life. In comparison, eudaimonia was thought of in terms of having good fortune. More recently, hedonic wellbeing is considered as subjective wellbeing, with a focus of happiness and wellbeing, whereas eudaimonia is considered as psychological wellbeing, with a focus on personal development and growth (The Children's Society, 2013). To further elaborate:

> Subjective well-being is typically sub-divided into affective and cognitive components. The affective component is concerned with the experience of positive and negative emotions, which may typically be quite variable over time. The cognitive component is concerned with evaluations of one's life overall (life satisfaction) or particular aspects of one's life (domain satisfaction). These evaluations are thought to be more stable over time. (The Children's Society, 2013)

Psychological (eudaimonic) wellbeing refers to a group of personal concepts such as autonomy, self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life, environmental mastery, and positive relationships with others (please refer to Figure 1) (Ryff, 1989).
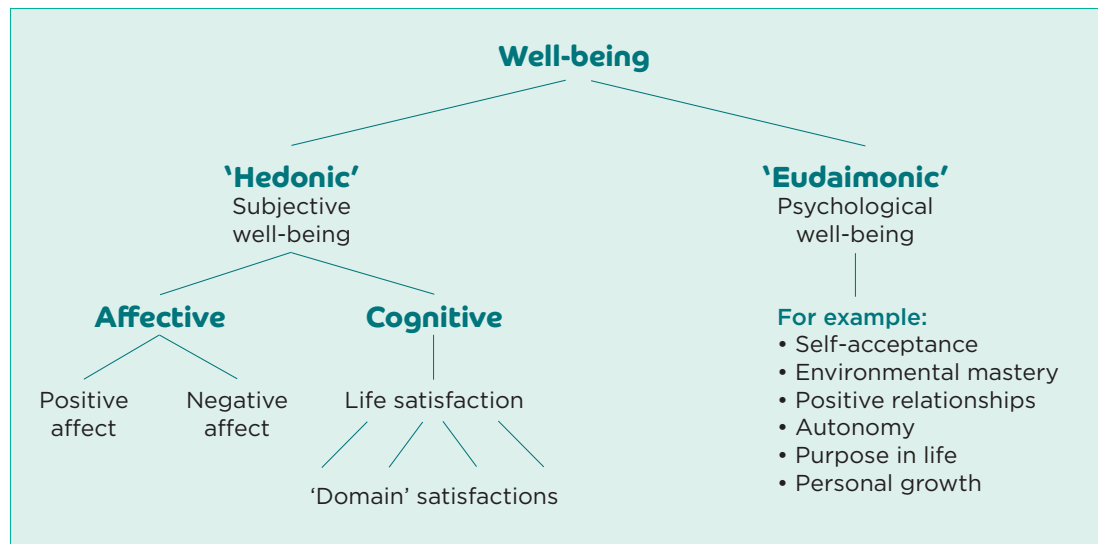
Figure 2. Components of self-reported wellbeing (The Good Childhood Report, 2013, p. 8).

Researchers have proposed a number of other definitions that include aspects of what we generally call happiness. For example, Seligman's (2002) "authentic happiness" theory claims that general happiness has three domains. The first is the hedonic, or positive emotion domain (as discussed above). The second he identified as engagement, a state of flow where there is a "loss of self-consciousness, where time stops for you, and you are 'at one with the music'" (Seligman, 2000, p. 20). The third is based on living a meaningful life, in which people's strengths are used to be a part of, and to serve a purpose for, something bigger than themselves. According to this model, happiness can be measured in terms of life satisfaction on a scale, and the overall objective of authentic happiness theory is to increase life satisfaction (Seligman, 2011).

In his recent book, *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being*, Seligman (2011) has gone on to completely re-work his original theory. He now argues that his authentic happiness model was lacking in three significant ways. Firstly, the term "happiness" is commonly associated with having a cheerful mood, and authentic happiness theory can be criticised for arbitrarily linking engagement and meaning to extend

the basic concept of positive emotion. "Neither engagement nor meaning refers to how we feel, and while we may desire engagement and meaning, they are not and can never be part of what 'happiness' denotes" (Seligman, 2011, p. 13). Secondly, utilising life satisfaction as a measure of happiness is flawed, as it has been found that a person's report of their level of life satisfaction is largely determined by their mood at the time of their report. And thirdly, the three elements of positive emotion, engagement, and meaning do not cover all of the elements that people choose as important contributors towards happiness in their lives, for example success and mastery (Seligman, 2011).

In order to address the above problems, Seligman (2011) has proposed a 'well-being theory', in which a clear distinction between the notions of happiness and wellbeing is made, and focus is given to wellbeing as the more meaningful goal.

Authentic happiness theory is an attempt to explain a *real thing* – happiness – as defined by life satisfaction, where on a 1-to-10 ladder, people rate their satisfaction with their lives. People who have the most positive emotion, the most engagement, and the most meaning in life are the happiest, and they have the most life satisfaction. Well-being theory denies that [well-being] is a real thing: rather the topic is a *construct* [...] which in turn has several measurable elements, each a real thing, each contributing to well-being, *but none defining well-being*. (Seligman, 2011, p. 15)

In Seligman's wellbeing theory, the concept of happiness is reduced to the element of positive emotion, merely one piece of the puzzle that makes up subjective wellbeing.

Seligman uses the simile of weather to illustrate these concepts. While happiness, or positive emotion, can be compared to wind chill – a real thing, a measurable specific factor that is operationalised by the variables of wind speed and temperature – wellbeing can be seen as overall weather. Weather cannot be defined by one single measure, but instead is the result of a combination of inexhaustible elements, such as wind, temperature, and cloud formation. Each different element contributing to weather is a real measurable thing. In the case of wellbeing, Seligman includes positive emotion, engagement and meaning, as well as accomplishment and positive relationships, as contributing elements. He stresses that these elements are chosen by people for their own sake, not chosen to result in any associated benefits, and they are completely independent of one another. For example, while an individual may choose to make positive relationships a priority in his or her life, this choice is not necessarily made to increase positive emotion, and having positive relationships may not lead to positive emotion. However, having positive relationships is likely to increase his or her wellbeing (Seligman, 2011).

A popular model that attempts to unpack the intricacies of happiness, and in particular subjective wellbeing, is that proposed by Diener (1984). Originally, Diener argued that subjective wellbeing has three components. The first he identified as life satisfaction, or a person's evaluation of the factors that make up his or her life as a whole. It is now accepted by many researchers that this evaluation can be either cognitively based or emotionally based (Exenberger & Juen, 2014). The other two components of happiness that Diener (1984) proposed are positive affect, or an elevated level of high energy and pleasure, and negative affect, or an elevated level of unpleasant emotions and moods. Positive affect and negative affect are not seen here as opposite ends of the same spectrum, but are instead

understood to be independent, allowing, for example, the possibility of someone having low

levels of both positive and negative affect (Exenberger & Juen, 2014).

Diener, Napa Scollon, and Lucas (2009) have presented the concept of subjective

happiness as a hierarchical model, and have added one more component to Diener's

original definition (please refer to Figure 2). At the highest level of the hierarchy is the

overall concept of subjective wellbeing, and this is made up of various lower-level aspects

that contribute to the overall concept. At the next level down from overall subjective

wellbeing are the dimensions of positive emotions, negative emotions, global life

judgments, and the fourth dimension of domain satisfaction. These dimensions are

perceived as being only moderately correlated. Within each dimension are even more

specific elements that contribute to overall subjective wellbeing. Diener et al. (2009) stress

that in order to gain precise and complete understanding of a person's subjective wellbeing

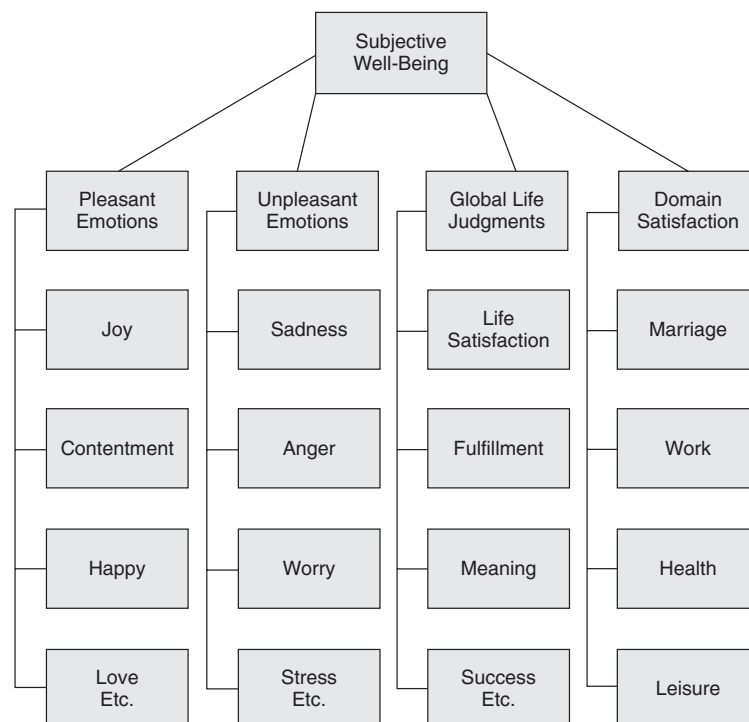it is necessary for the components from lower levels to be measured.

Figure 2. A hierarchical model of happiness (Diener et al., 2009, p. 71).

These models of happiness demonstrate the complexity of the notion, and although a precise definition may not be obtainable, happiness is undoubtedly an important part of our lives, and a condition that we, as humans, strive to attain. In this study, a subjective view of happiness and wellbeing is utilised, including a combination of overall happiness and life satisfaction, as well as positive and negative emotions (Lyubomisky, King & Diener, 2005). By using this combination, a more comprehensive assessment of the participants' happiness and wellbeing is possible.

Easier to determine than a definition of happiness are the factors associated with it. Several studies have been conducted to explain how demographic, personality, and other variables affect the happiness levels of children (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998; Exenberger & Juen, 2014; Holder & Coleman, 2008; O'Rourke and Cooper, 2010). Variables analysed in these studies include parent socio-economic status and income, family structure, gender, personality traits, school achievement, popularity, and physical appearance, and these variables have been shown to correlate with levels of happiness. The studies completed by Holder and Coleman in Canada (2008), and O'Rourke and Cooper in Australia (2010), both found that social factors, life outcomes, and aspects of personality correlate relatively highly with childhood happiness, whereas demographic factors have a lower correlation. O'Rourke and Cooper noted that happier students are likely to be more included, popular, and optimistic, and concluded that this knowledge "provides classroom teachers with an understanding of what constitutes happiness and the beginnings of a model for interventions in primary classrooms" (p. 106, 2010).

Exenberger and Juen (2014) have looked specifically at indicators of childhood happiness from the perspectives of children themselves. They identified three main factors

that children view as contributing to happiness: social, psychological and cultural. Their findings indicate that children view wellbeing not as a state that they individually experience, but as a condition experienced by their family as a whole, as well as by the community in which they live. In this way, children appear to perceive happiness and wellbeing in an ecological context with a strong focus on collectivist values (Exenberger & Juen, 2014).

Despite the explicit call for student wellbeing in our national curriculums, processes and procedures for achieving this objective are lacking in our schools. Seligman (2008) argues that the skills to achieve wellbeing can, and should, be taught in schools. Specifically, he has completed several works within the literature that propose the teaching of optimistic thinking skills to children (1995; 1998; 2008). He claims that, if children learn to recognise and challenge pessimistic and negative thoughts, they are likely to achieve higher levels of wellbeing and self-esteem which, in turn, decreases by half the likelihood of their suffering from depression in their adult lives (Seligman, 2008).

But perhaps the major reason for wellbeing to be taught in schools is the strong indication in the literature that increasing children's happiness and wellbeing leads to improvements in education. Seligman and various other researchers argue that happiness leads to better learning, achievement, and more creative thinking, and that the promotion of these is clearly in the interests of our education systems (Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich & Linkins, 2009; Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005). Furthermore, happiness has been shown to have a causal relationship with other positive factors, such as improved health, social engagement, and career success (Seligman et al., 2005).

With regard to specific interventions to improve happiness and wellbeing in school students, a common approach has been cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). For example,

Day (2009) used a CBT intervention with 60 14 and 15-year-old students at a large inner city comprehensive school in England. Each child attended two lessons using DVDs that focused on how thoughts affect feelings and behaviours, including depression and anxiety. Common irrational thought patterns that lead to depression and anxiety were identified, and the participants were encouraged to come up with alternative rational thought patterns. The results of this study were positive in that the participants enjoyed the classes, found them to be serious, and moreover, despite only attending two classes, acquired a high level of knowledge (Day, 2009).

Using a different approach, Seligman et al. (2009) assessed the effectiveness of another intervention that involves main components of teaching realistic thinking and problem solving skills. Named the Penn Resiliency Program (PRP), this intervention has been the subject of a number of studies over the years, and their results indicate that, compared to control groups, PRP significantly reduces symptoms of depression, hopelessness, and anxiety. Furthermore, PRP appears to work equally well for adults and children, and for people of different cultural backgrounds. Seligman et al. (2009) argue that schools are excellent locations for such effective interventions to be implemented, and doing so would undoubtedly result in higher levels of student wellbeing.

In preparing our students for their future lives both academically and emotionally, it is of the utmost importance that we strive for maximum levels of happiness and wellbeing for them today. Doing so will not only benefit our children and their futures, but it will also enable us to fulfill our obligations as educators and psychologists. In addition, we will be meeting parents' desires for their children, as it has been shown that parents all over the world desire nothing more for their children than happiness (Diener & Lucas, 2004;

Seligman et al., 2009). One factor that we can focus on, in working towards the goal of increased childhood happiness and wellbeing, is friendship.

Friendship

For centuries philosophers, theorists, and more recently researchers, have examined the characteristics of what constitutes friendship, different types of friendship, its developmental significance, and the benefits humans experience from having friends (Zettergren, 2010). What follows is a discussion of these concepts, and what the literature has to say about them.

Perhaps the main feature of friendship that is widely accepted within the literature is its reciprocal nature. It cannot exist with only one person's intentions and actions towards another; it must include voluntary and mutual choice, understanding, and behaviour between two people (Blieszner, 2014; Piaget, 1965; Rizzo, 1989; Sharabany, 1994; Sullivan, 1953; Zettergren, 2010). In other words, being selected and liked by a peer does not make you friends; a "genuine friendship relation demands that you like and select him or her too" (Zettergrem, 2010, p. 164).

As well as being reciprocal, the literature shows that there are other qualities that humans seem to instinctively understand and expect of friendship. People define friendship as a relationship based on affection, trust, companionship, respect, care and commitment (Blieszner, 2014; Nicholson & Townsend, 2011; Zettergren, 2010). We know that friendships are close, informal relationships, and that our friends support us and are on our side (Oxford University Press, 2014). These are not concepts that we often consciously think about, but they are concepts that are deeply ingrained in us.

It is interesting to note that even young children have clear and advanced understandings and expectations of friendship. Rizzo (1989) completed a study that showed

that children as young as 5 years old appear to have internalised concepts of friendship that include many of the qualities mentioned above. Furthermore, the children in his study attempted to determine whether or not friendship existed by "comparing the internalised concept with specific features of interactions with frequent playmates" (Rizzo, 1989, p. 113). In their interactions with their peers, these children were likely "to act in accordance with this concept when with their friends, and to object when their friends failed to act in accordance with the concept" (Rizzo, 1989, p. 113).

Discovering these complex internalised concepts and expectations of friendship in children led Rizzo to investigate how they were acquired. From speaking to the participants' parents, and watching popular children's television programmes, he found that children receive a wide range of input on the subject. Not only are examples of friendship regularly displayed to them on television and in real life, but parents, teachers, and other older people in the children's lives often tell them what being a friend involves, what friends should do and what they should not do (Rizzo, 1989). Therefore, children are bombarded with information, examples, instructions and advice regarding friendship from a very early age.

Not only do humans have a sophisticated understanding of what constitutes friendship, but the literature indicates that we are also very aware of differentiations regarding types, or levels, of friendship. Most of us are very clear about our best friends, friends, casual friends, and acquaintances (Blieszner, 2014; Sharabany, 1994). In modern times, the internet has vastly increased the number of people we come into contact with, and has added further definitions within our overall understanding of what constitutes friendship (Blieszner, 2014). Not only do we categorise our friends in relation to our entire friendship networks, but we also categorise our friends within specific contexts (Nicholson &

Townsend, 2011). For example, Laura's best friend may be Greta, while her best friend in

university class might be Sarah, and her best friend at work might be Alice. This example

demonstrates that we have independent friendship systems and hierarchies for each of the

numerous social contexts that make up our lives. Despite the extensive and complex

natures of our friendship networks, most of us are very clear about what types of

friendships we have with each of our friends.

In their 2012 study, McChristian et al. looked at the differences in stability between

very best friends and other friends. They stated that two primary qualities of best

friendship, as opposed to other friendships, are exclusivity and caring. The caring nature of

these friendships refers to the way that children's best friends make them feel important

and special, and the exclusivity stands for mutual liking and selective seeking out for joint

activities. McChristian et al. found that these qualities of best friendship lead to an

increased likelihood of children maintaining their best friendships for longer periods of time

than their less intimate friendships. Other qualities of best friendship that they identified

are shared knowledge, mutual dependence, and intimacy.

Sharabany (1994) has developed a very detailed definition of intimate friendship. She

has examined various sources in her research on friendship, including psychoanalytic

literature, sociological studies, and dictionaries of synonyms. As a result of her research,

Sharabany has identified eight dimensions of what constitutes an intimate, or best-friend,

relationship. These are frankness and spontaneity, sensitivity and knowing, attachment to

the friend, exclusiveness in the relationship, giving and sharing with the friend, common

activities, and trust and loyalty. She claims that intimate friendship is "a configuration of

[these] diverse but coherently related quantitatively commensurate elements" (1994, p.

451), and that "[t]hese dimensions may vary in quality and quantity, but their sum reveals

the overall assessment of the degree of intimacy in the relationship" (1994, p. 452).

Therefore, Sharabany has broken down the overall concept of intimate friendship into

measurable elements.

Rose and Rudolph, in their 2006 review, focused on friendship processes in relation to

gender. Particularly, they looked at the differences in levels of intimacy between girls' and

boys' friendships. Their review presents findings from several studies that have consistently

indicated that girls are more likely to have more intimate friendships than boys. Therefore,

in the current study, it can be expected that the female participants will show higher levels

of intimacy in their friendships than the male participants.

Another aspect of friendship is popularity. Popularity is independent of intimacy, and

refers to the extent that you are perceived as a friend by those in your peer group

(Nicholson & Townsend, 2011). Research has shown that children who have a popular or

ordinary name, are good looking, are good at something that children value, and are able to

socialise well are more likely to be popular, as opposed to "children who look different, who

wear different clothes, have an accent or have funny names" (Nicholson & Townsend, 2011,

p. 207). Although parents can improve their children's chances at popularity by giving them

ordinary names and by taking action to remedy superficial problems with their children's

appearances, it is very unfortunate that these standards are clearly unattainable for many

children who cannot help being different. Perhaps a small consolation is that research has

shown that these children are not usually rejected, but are more likely to be excluded or

neglected (Nicholson & Townsend, 2011).

Looking at friendship from an evolutionary perspective, humans are social animals, and

we evolved to seek out company and friendship for survival reasons. Although there were

costs to making friends and forming groups, such as the transmission of diseases and

competition for resources, the benefits that our early ancestors gained from having friends greatly outweighed the costs. These benefits included the sharing of knowledge, resources, and parenting duties (Griskevicius, Haselton & Ackerman, 2015). In addition, socialising with others was imperative if one was to gain social status and attract mates. Furthermore, and perhaps most significantly, our early ancestors were safer from predators in groups. In fact, the importance of friendship and peer acceptance "was sufficiently important to human survival in our ancestral past that responses to social rejection are linked to the same brain regions that are involved in responses to physical threat" (Griskevicius et al., 2015, p. 14). From this perspective, the reasons why we seek out friendships and feel so good about having friends, and our natural abilities to mentally manage and categorise our friendships so efficiently, become very clear.

A number of researchers have investigated human friendships in relation to childhood development. Looking as far back as Freudian theory, a child's first and primary mother-child relationship was seen as the foundation for future intimate relationships (Sharabany, 1994). In later years, Sullivan (1953) examined specific developmental stages of what he termed the 'chum' relationship. More advanced than the early childhood relationship with a playmate, which is primarily based on self-interest, the chum relationship is a friendship that can be defined as a mutual and genuine love. It involves a person having genuine care and consideration for their chum's happiness, and a desire to support their chum for genuinely empathetic and altruistic reasons. Sullivan (1953) identified this first experience of altruism and empathy in a relationship as a developmental stage normally met in middle childhood, including preadolescence and early adolescence.

The importance of childhood friendships in regards to development is also highlighted by McChristian et al., who propose that friends in childhood "are valued resources who

facilitate the attainment or mastery of age-related tasks and skills needed for development"

(2012, p. 463). Via interactions with their friends, children are able to learn skills and

behaviours that are not able to be learned through any other means. With friends, children

are also able to practise skills and behaviours that they have initially learned in their

interactions with older people, and this enables them to master such skills. Furthermore,

studies indicate that many of these benefits are exclusive to friendships; they are not

accessible through children's relationships with their siblings and parents (McChristian et

al., 2012).

The literature often links the development of children's friendships to the development

of their social skills (McChristian et al., 2012; Pijl, Koster, Hannink & Stratingh, 2011; Rizzo,

1989). As discussed above, children who develop meaningful friendships show genuine care

for their friends through their empathy and altruism, which are made possible by their

ability to see things from their friends' perspectives. "Children who see others' perspectives

may show more sensitivity towards others' feelings; as a result, they are more skilled in

social interactions and tend to have more positive relationships with peers" (Gallagher,

2013, p. 28).

Krause, Bochner, Duchesne and McMaugh (2010) look closely at the social skills and

types of play that lead to friendship. They identify specific social skills that we develop in

childhood, including complimenting others, offering help, and inviting our peers to play,

which are clearly skills that are very important in the initiation and maintenance of

friendship. Krause et al. also discuss the different developmental stages of play that directly

influence friendship. The first of these stages is solitary play, in which young children play

alone. Next comes parallel play, in which older children play side by side but not with each

other; then cooperative play, in which children play in pairs or groups (Krause et al., 2010).

These stages of play largely determine the closeness of children's friendships, in that children who are at the solitary play stage are unlikely to have close friendships with their peers compared to those who are at the cooperative play stage and are interacting closely with their peers and developing their social skills and friendships through these interactions.

Perhaps most notably, it is widely argued in the literature that friendship is very beneficial to most of us, in terms of our psychological health and our physical health (Buysse, Goldman & Skinner, 2003; Cranley Gallagher, 2013; Ladd, 1990; Pijl et al., 2011). Pijl et al. (2011) point out several benefits of childhood friendship that have been demonstrated by researchers, including not only the acquisition and exercise of social skills and behaviours, but also the access to companionship and emotional support, which in turn appear to increase students' abilities to cope with the challenges and difficulties of school, and provide emotional protection against the negative effects of peer rejection from others. Due to these benefits, Pijl et al. (2011) emphasise the importance of friendships among students in school settings, and suggest that teachers should monitor their students' friendships as part of their roles as educators.

This view is also shared by Buysse et al. (2003). In their 2003 study, they discuss research that indicates that "having friends is beneficial, serving to support children's development and academic performance as well as their emotional responsiveness and sociability toward others" (Buysse et al., 2003, p. 486). Moreover, they particularly emphasise the requirement for teachers to aid young children in social skills and making friends, and to foster the developing friendships of these children in the classroom. From a Vygotskian constructivist theory point of view, they "speculated that teachers could be expected to adjust the level of support they provide so that children exhibiting greater

social competence would receive fewer and more subtle forms of support as compared to children exhibiting less social competence" (Buysse et al., 2003, p. 486).

Their study focused on the methods that teachers in North Carolina are currently using to aid their students' friendships. They found that the two most common strategies that teachers employ are relatively passive: leaving children to establish friendships on their own, and providing regular 'free choice' periods during class time. With regards to the first strategy, Buysse et al. give two interpretations.

> Teachers' endorsement of simply allowing children to form their own friendships could imply that teachers do not fully understand their role in helping young children form and maintain friendships with their classmates and may view active encouragement of a developing friendship as "interference." Some teachers who endorse this strategy may believe that it is generally not advisable for adults to encourage children's friendships, but instead should allow children to choose their own friends when they are ready to do so. Perhaps a more likely explanation is that teachers view strategies such as these (e.g., providing enough opportunities for children to play together) as less intrusive and as requiring fewer changes in classroom routines than strategies that demand more resources and involve complex interventions. (Buysse et al., 2003, p. 496).

Providing regular 'free choice' periods, the other commonly used passive strategy, is viewed by Buysse et al. as an important friendship aid, as it enables children to choose their own playmates and cooperate with each other in their play. Therefore, while this study indicates that the two most common strategies used by teachers in facilitating their students'

friendships are passive, the intentions of the teachers in using these strategies may be

positive, and the 'free choice' strategy appears to be beneficial in allowing children to

establish friendships. Moreover, the lack of resources available to most teachers means that

passive strategies are the only strategies that they can realistically use.

Figure 3. A pyramid model for supporting friendship
development (Cranley Gallagher, 2013).

Cranley Gallagher (2013) proposes a pyramid model for supporting friendship

development among students. This is a comprehensive model that provides a strong

foundation of support, with different additional levels of support according to the different

needs of children (please refer to Figure 3). At the base level, support constitutes setting up

the classroom environment in a way that encourages positive and safe relationships, using

such techniques as modelling caring behaviours, and establishing expectations and rules for

respectful and kind interactions with others. The next level up is also classroom-based, and

involves a teacher providing high-quality environmental supports, ensuring that sufficient

materials are available for children to use in an interactive way, and that the classroom

furniture and spaces are set up in such a way as to allow children numerous opportunities to collaborate. The third level of the pyramid represents a more intense degree of intervention involving the teacher providing explicit instructions in social-emotional skills to all children in the class, and further small group instruction for children who require additional help and practice with these skills. Instructions may include how to recognise and express emotions, and how to manage emotions, and they are often supported with role-play and games. Finally, the tip of the triangle is a level of intervention that is aimed at those students with high social needs. This level requires data collection, personalised strategies and monitoring for individual children (Cranley Gallagher, 2013). Such a structured and tiered model demonstrates how practical and achievable friendship interventions can be, and how the implementation of such interventions in New Zealand schools is a realistic goal.

Happiness, wellbeing and friendship

Many of us naturally assume that having friends is positive and makes us happy, and that not having any friends would be extremely undesirable and would make us unhappy. These natural perceptions that we have are, to a certain extent, founded. The strong correlations between friendship, and happiness and wellbeing, have been well documented in the literature, and supported by a large amount of research (Blieszner, 2014; Demir, Jaafar, Bilyk & Ariff, 2012; Nicholson & Townsend, 2011; Uusitalo-Malmivaara & Lehto, 2012). Having close friends has consistently been shown to lead to higher happiness and wellbeing levels. An example of a study demonstrating these correlations was that conducted by Uusitalo-Malmivaara and Lehto (2012), who looked at the effects of different social factors on levels of happiness and depression in 737 12-year-old Finnish children. The children were given several questionnaires to fill out, including a depression inventory and the Subjective Happiness Scale (Lyubomirsky and Lepper 1999) that is used in the current

study. Results indicated that, for both boys and girls, having two or more close friends reduced the likelihood of being at risk of depression. Furthermore, results indicated that having two or more close friends and having confidential relationships were correlated with high levels of happiness.

Studies examining the relationships between friendships and happiness and wellbeing have also been conducted in New Zealand. In the 1980s, Townsend, McCracken and Wilton (1988) looked at whether or not it is better to have a best (intimate) friend or to be popular. The participants of their study included New Zealand high school adolescents. As in the study for this thesis, Townsend et al. separated the participants into those with a best friend who are also popular, those who have a best friend but are not popular, those who are popular but do not have a best friend, and those who do not have a best friend and are not popular. They then looked at how these four groups of participants compared in their scores in a self-esteem scale and a psychological wellbeing scale. As expected, those children with a best friend demonstrated higher levels of self-esteem and wellbeing, and the highest levels of self-esteem and wellbeing were recorded by those who were popular and had a best friend. However, interestingly, this group did not have significantly higher self-esteem and wellbeing levels than the group that had a best friend but were not popular. Therefore, having a best friend showed a significant correlation with high levels of self-esteem and wellbeing. Furthermore, while it was expected that those participants who did not have a best friend and were not popular would have had the lowest levels of self-esteem and wellbeing, this did not prove to be the case. The lowest levels of self-esteem and wellbeing were reported by the group who were popular but did not have a best friend.

This surprising finding, that positive wellbeing is associated with having a best friend but not with being popular, has been replicated in further New Zealand studies looking at

friendship and different aspects of mental health. One example is a study completed by McCracken (1985). Again comparing those who are popular and have a best friend, those who have a best friend but are not popular, those with no best friend but are popular, and those who are not popular and do not have a best friend, McCracken used a self-esteem scale and a sex role orientation inventory to determine levels of wellbeing. She found that, for both measures, the presence of an intimate (or best) friend is a better predictor of psychological wellbeing than popularity, with the differences between those with an intimate friend and those without one proving to be significant.

Laurie (1997) examined the correlations between friendship and the wellbeing aspects of loneliness and parental attachment in New Zealand year ten secondary school students. He divided his adolescent participants into the same four friendship groups, although he limited the friendships to only same-sex friendships. After analysing the participants' completed loneliness and parental attachment scales, he discovered that those who had an intimate friend scored significantly lower in levels of loneliness and parental attachment than those who did not have a best friend. The variable of popularity did not have a significant effect on levels of loneliness or parental attachment. In addition, as with Townsend et al.'s 1988 study discussed above, results showed that those who were popular but did not have a best friend were the worst off, reporting the highest levels of loneliness and parental attachment, as opposed to those who were not popular and did not have a best friend, who were expected to report the most negative results.

The phenomenon of those who are popular but do not have a best friend displaying the lowest levels of wellbeing brings into question our expectations of how we are affected by friendships. Overseas and New Zealand research indicates that approximately 10% of preschool and primary school children have no friends at all, and that approximately 20%

only have one friend (Nicholson & Townsend, 2011). Research completed by Lloyd, Wilton and Townsend (2000) found that some children perceive themselves to be popular when they are not, and this may impact data gained in self-rated studies on friendship, resulting in outcomes that are different than if the children participating had accurate perceptions of their friendships and social acceptance. However, this is merely speculation. What is evident is that the studies that have been completed on friendship styles and how these impact wellbeing have raised further questions.

It is important to take into account that the causal relationship between friendships and wellbeing is not one directional. No only does having friends lead to happiness, but research has shown that happy people are more likely to be socially engaged and to have good relationships with friends (Seligman, 2002; Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005). Seligman (2002) explains that those who feel happiness, and moreover express their happiness, are more likely to have positive social relationships and friendships. He uses the illustration of people with Moebius syndrome, a condition that stops sufferers from being able to smile.

> Individuals born with this affliction cannot show positive emotion with their face, and so they react to the friendliest conversation with a disconcerting deadpan. They have enormous difficulty making and keeping even casual friends. When the sequence of feeling a positive emotion, expressing it, eliciting a positive emotion in another, and then responding back goes awry, the music that supports the dance of love and friendship is interrupted. (Seligman, 2002, p. 42)

This cruel syndrome demonstrates that the fact that we are more likely to want to be friends with people who express happy emotions. To put it simply, happy people are more likely to have friends, and people with friends are more likely to be happy.

Summary and research questions

Wellbeing is specifically stated as a priority for our children in our national New Zealand school curricula. However, at present, little attention is being given to promoting happiness and wellbeing in our schools. Due to the research discussed above, we now know more than ever about what constitutes wellbeing, and that we are more likely to successfully learn when we are happy. In order to help our children achieve to their full potential in both their current education and in the future, we need to find out more about what factors contribute to happiness.

This study examines whether the types of friendships one has is associated with one's levels of happiness and wellbeing. The literature demonstrates that, from many perspectives, friendship is fundamental to the quality of our lives as human beings. We have evolved to be social creatures who benefit in numerous ways from having friends, and our sophisticated understandings of the nature of friendship and of the different types of friendship that we have are developed in us from an early age. This information suggests that having friends is likely to increase our levels of happiness and wellbeing.

Following on from the New Zealand studies conducted by Townsend et al. (1988), McCracken (1985), and Laurie (1997) (as discussed above), the current research project particularly works to discover whether their findings will be replicated when conducted with year 5 and 6 New Zealand primary school students.

The research questions were:

1.   Will children who have a best friend in their classroom and who are popular prove to

have the highest levels of happiness and wellbeing?

2. Will having a best friend or will popularity be the better predictor of happiness?

The answers to these questions will be sought in the following study.

Method

The following research design was employed to determine whether New Zealand children who have a best friend in their classroom and who are popular have the highest levels of happiness and wellbeing, and whether having a best friend is a better predictor of happiness than popularity.

Participants

The participants in this study were 58 of a possible 132 year 5 and 6 students (aged approximately 9-10 years old) who attended one suburban primary school located in Northland, New Zealand. Of the 58 participants, 23 were male and 35 were female.

Measures

Three measures were utilised to assess general happiness and wellbeing: the Subjective Happiness Scale (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999), the Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (Huebner, 1991), and the Positive and Negative Affect Scale for Children (PANAS-C) (Laurent et al., 1999). Further instruments were employed to determine the factors of best friendship and popularity. All measures were combined into one booklet that the participants completed during class time with researcher supervision. Please refer to Appendix B for the full version of this combined questionnaire.

Happiness. In order to measure global subjective happiness, the Subjective Happiness Scale (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999) was utilised and given the different title of 'About Me' (please refer to Appendix B). The scale consists of four statements that one responds to on a seven-point Likert scale. The statements focus on the way individuals compare themselves

to others in terms of their general happiness, for example, "Some people are usually very happy. They enjoy life no matter what is going on, getting the most out of everything. How well does this describe you?" The higher people rate themselves on the scale for each item, the happier they are deemed to be. One item is reverse coded in order to screen for response consistency, and scores are totalled in order to gain an estimate of a individual's overall happiness.

Several small adjustments were made to the instructions and items to ensure that it was at an appropriate reading level for the year 5 and 6 participants. For example, the question, "To what extent does this characterization describe you?" was changed to, "How well does this describe you?" These alterations were made in line with advice received from two senior primary school teachers and one Reading Recovery teacher.

The Subjective Happiness Scale has been shown to have excellent validity, and reliability in its internal and retest consistency (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). It has been used by many researchers studying happiness over the years and is accepted in the literature as a high quality measure of overall subjective happiness (Demir, Jaafar, Bilyk & Mohd Ariff, 2012; Uusitalo-Malmivaara & Lehto, 2013). The version used for this study resulted in a Chronbach Alpha internal reliability score of .73.

Wellbeing. The Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (1991) was developed by Huebner to determine general, domain-free wellbeing levels. It contains seven items in which statements are to be responded to on a six-point Likert scale (please refer to Appendix B). Each statement is about life in general, such as, "I have what I want in life," and respondents rate the extent to which they agree with the statement. The third and fourth items on the scale are reverse coded in order to screen for response validity, and scores are totalled for each participant in order to gain his or her global subjective wellbeing score.

Again, changes were made to the language used in the instructions section of this scale in order to ensure that it was at an appropriate reading level for the year five and six participants. For example, the sentence, "Circle the words next to each statement that indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement" was changed to "Underneath each sentence, circle the words on the scale that best describe how you feel about the sentence." These changes were made in accordance with recommendations made by two senior primary school teachers and one Reading Recovery teacher.

The most recent version of the scale (as used in this study) has been demonstrated to have high rates of reliability across a large age range, and good validity (Huebner, Suldo & Valois, 2003). A Chronbach Alpha internal reliability score of .75 was achieved in this study.

Positive and negative affect. The Positive and Negative Affect Scale for Children (PANAS-C) (Laurent et al., 1999) was used in this study to determine the levels of different positive and negative emotions experienced by the participants, with the purpose of gaining a more complete picture of their subjective happiness and wellbeing. This scale was designed as a child version of the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) (Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988) for the purposes of conveniently measuring positive and negative affect and identifying children at risk of developing anxiety and depression. It is another Likert scale-based measure and it involves respondents rating how often they have felt each of 27 listed emotions during the course of the last few weeks (please refer to Appendix B). The Likert scale has five descriptors ranging from "very slightly or not at all" (scored 1), "extremely" (scored 5).

Again, despite the fact that this scale was specifically designed for use with children, it was deemed necessary to modify the language used in the instructions section for this study, to ensure that it was at an appropriate reading and comprehension level for the participants.

For example, "Read each item and then circle the appropriate answer next to that word. Indicate to what extent you have felt this way during the past few weeks" was changed to "Read each word and then tick the box that describes how much you have felt this way over the last few weeks." These modifications were, again, made in consultation with two senior primary school teachers and a Reading Recovery teacher.

The PANAS-C is a measure that has been used in many studies, and has been shown to be a reliable and valid measure of the level of emotions experienced by children (Ebesutani, Smith, Bernstein, Chorpita, Higa-McMillan & Nakamura, 2011; Laurent et al., 1999; Laurent, Joiner & Catanzaro, 2011). Because the items cover a varied range of feelings (for example, lively, delighted, mad, joyful, proud), no attempt was made to combine items into a scale, thus no estimate of reliability was made.

Popularity. In addition to the three dependent variables just described, it was necessary that each child was assessed for their popularity in the classroom. Popularity was determined by having each child identify their three best friends in their classroom in ranking order (please refer to Appendix B). For example, Claire might list Katie as her best friend, Julie as her second best friend, and Tim as her third best friend. Sociometric diagrams were then completed for each of the participating classrooms in order to determine the number of friendship nominations that each participant received. This is a simple method that is commonly used by school teachers for purposes of classroom seating arrangements, and is the same method used by Townsend et al. (1988), McCracken (1985), and Laurie (1997) to determine popularity in their previous New Zealand studies.

At this age level (approximately 9-10 years), the majority of nominations are made for classmates of the same gender. Thus, in a typical class of 25 students, each child potentially receives nominations from about a dozen of their classmates. It is common for a small

number of children to receive no nominations, while it is rare that a single child will receive more than five nominations.

Those children who received three or more friendship nominations from their classmates were classified as being popular. Children who received two or fewer friendship nominations from their classmates were classified as not being popular. In the case of one of the five participating classrooms, only three class members participated in the study due to low consent return (as discussed above), resulting in inaccurately low friendship nominations for these children, and they were consequently unable to be included in the main data analysis for the study. A similar problem existed for the classroom where only eight children returned consent forms.

It should be noted that the exclusion of children for lack of consent had greatest effect on the designation of a best friend. Some of the participants nominated a child who had not taken part in the study as their classroom best friend. Consequently, it could not be determined whether or not these children's best friend nominations were reciprocal, thus these children were unable to be included in the main data analysis.

Best friendship. For this study it was necessary that each child was also assessed for the presence of a classroom best friend. In accordance with the previous New Zealand studies (Laurie, 1997; McCracken, 1985; Townsend et al., 1988), this was assessed using two criteria, the first being that the best friend nomination was reciprocal. Reciprocity was determined by having each participant nominate their best friend in their classroom and identifying those pairs that nominated each other as their first ranking best friends (please refer to Appendix B). Those who nominated a classmate as their best friend but did not receive a reciprocal nomination by that classmate as his or her best friend were not classified as having a best friend in their classroom.

The second criterion for qualifying as having a best friend was that the relationship between reciprocally nominated best friends was sufficiently intimate. Sharabany's Intimate Friendship Scale (1974) was used to measure this aspect. A 32 item scale, it is designed to assess eight different themes that are involved in best friendship, including frankness and spontaneity, sensitivity and knowing, attachment, exclusiveness, giving and sharing, imposition, common activities, and trust and loyalty (Sharabany, 1994). Four statements are based on each of these themes. For example, the statement, "If my friend wants something I let them have it even if I want it too" relates to the giving and sharing theme of best friendship, and children recorded whether they agreed ("yes") or disagreed ("no") with this statement. The children's individual scores were the total number of their "yes" responses.

In order to meet the intimacy criterion for best friendship, both reciprocating parties had to have recorded their agreement with at least 50% of the items in Sharabany's Intimate Friendship Scale (1974). This meant that there was a possibility that a pair of participants who had nominated each other as best friends may have been unable to be considered as best friends if one or both of them did not score high enough on the intimacy scale. However, in this study every participant who had a reciprocal best friend nomination agreed with at least 50% of the items, and so every reciprocal pair was considered to be sufficiently intimate to qualify as being best friends in this study.

While the items of this scale are gender specific and are designed to cater to the gender of the respondent, for this study the wording of the items was slightly modified so that they applied to both boys and girls. For example, the statement, "I tell people nice things about him" was changed to, "I tell people nice things about my friend." This meant that it was not necessary to have different scales for boys and girls, and it also meant that those children whose best friends were of the opposite gender were not confused or made to feel

uncomfortable. Again, the language in the introduction was also altered in order to cater to the reading level of the participants, and these alterations were made according to the advice received from two senior primary school teachers and a Reading Recovery teacher.

The Intimate Friendship Scale (Sharabany, 1974) has been extensively used in research over the last four decades with a wide range of age groups and with numerous types of populations (Sharabany, 1994). It has been demonstrated to have high validity and reliability. In this study a Chronbach Alpha internal reliability score of .80 was achieved.

Procedure

Gaining participants. The principals of several primary schools in the Auckland and Northland areas were approached regarding participation in this study. Only one principal agreed to consider it. After an initial introduction and discussion, the principal gave her verbal consent to participate, and an information sheet was then sent to her via email. A meeting was then arranged with the teachers of the five participating classrooms. During this meeting, the purpose of the study was explained, and the general structure of the measures was described. The teachers were also invited to ask questions and to share their ideas.

Informed consent was obtained from the participants themselves and from their parents or caregivers. The teachers of the five participating classrooms gave both child and caregiver versions of information sheets and consent forms (please refer to Appendix A) to each of their students to take home with them in their schoolbags. The child information and consent sheet was created with content and language that were suitable for year five reading and comprehension levels, as confirmed by two senior teachers and a Reading Recovery teacher.

The school principal decided that the teachers of the participating classrooms were to manage the issuing and collecting of the child and caregiver consent forms. The teachers were instructed to remind and encourage their students to bring the completed forms back to school with them. A total of 2 weeks was allocated to allow for consent forms to be returned by children, and throughout this period the teachers were reminded by the assistant principal to encourage their students to return the consent forms. Despite these efforts, the response rate was lower than anticipated. Although the school was large, with approximately 130 year 5 and 6 children spread across the five classrooms, informed consent was only obtained for 58 children. Two of the classrooms returned consent forms from only three and eight students, respectively, which later affected the formation of the friendship groups.

Data collection. Data collection was carried out by the researcher at the participating primary school during August 2014. The consenting participants were retrieved during class time and completed the combined survey in two separate groups in the school library. Before beginning, the participants were asked as a group whether they had learned about scales (it was confirmed beforehand by their teachers that they had), and examples of scales were given on the whiteboard at the front of the room. The children were then given several theoretical scenarios by the researcher (for example, "I like ice cream") and asked to identify where they would mark themselves on different scales. This was done to ensure that the children understood how the scale systems in the measures worked. Furthermore, adjectives included in the PANAS-C that were deemed to be potentially unfamiliar to some of the children, such as "delighted", were listed on the whiteboard. The researcher asked the children if they knew the meanings of the words and, if unsure, meanings were then written on the whiteboard.

Before commencing, the children were also asked to raise their hands while completing the questionnaires if they had any questions or were unsure as to the meanings of any items. The researcher walked around the room throughout the sessions, answering questions and making sure that everyone was on task. Once finished, the children were instructed to bring their questionnaire to the researcher, who checked to make sure every item had been completed (this was done to minimize the risk of receiving invalid data). The children were then able to choose a book to read quietly until the rest of the group had finished.

Data analysis. Decisions regarding the designations of best friendship and popularity were made at data analysis stage. It was decided that, in order to meet the intimacy criterion for best friendship, both reciprocating parties had to have recorded their agreement with at least 50% of the items in Sharabany's Intimate Friendship Scale (1974). This meant that there was a possibility that a pair of participants who had nominated each other as best friends may have been unable to be considered as best friends if one or both of them did not score high enough on the intimacy scale. However, in this study every participant who had a reciprocal best friend nomination agreed with at least 50% of the items, and so every reciprocal pair was considered to be sufficiently intimate to qualify as being best friends in this study.

Ethics

Standards of ethics for this proposed study were met in accordance with Massey University's requirements. The study was approved as "low risk" (please refer to Appendix C).

Results

The outcomes of the main investigative analyses of this study did not support the results of previous studies, as popularity and friendship intimacy were not shown to have either a main effect or interactive effects on happiness, wellbeing and emotions.

Results for the major measures

Analyses were undertaken for each of the major measures in this study, that is intimacy, popularity, happiness, and wellbeing, for the 58 children (35 females and 23 males) who participated.

Best friendship. Intimacy was measured using the Sharabany Intimate Friendship Scale (1974), a 32-item scale requiring a 'yes' (scored 1) or 'no' (scored zero) response to positive statements about a nominated best friend. An individual's score could range from a high of 32 (a high level of intimacy) to 0, and in this sample the scores ranged from 9 to 31. The mean score for all 58 participants was 24.64 (SD = 4.73) indicating a moderately high level of closeness with their best friend. As expected, females (M = 26.23, SD = 3.38; range = 19 – 31) showed higher levels of intimacy in their nominated best friendships than males (M = 22.22, SD = 5.59; range = 9 – 30), $F(1, 56)$ = 11.89, $p < .001$.

Females were also more likely than males to have their friendship nominations reciprocated, with 72 percent (n = 25) of female nominations reciprocated as opposed to 50 percent (n = 18) of male nominations reciprocated. Overall, 43 students nominated class best friends who also participated in the study, while 15 students nominated a class best friend who did not participate in the study. Of the participants who nominated other participants as their classroom best friend, 69.77 percent were reciprocally nominated. The mean intimacy scores for the group who nominated participants (M = 24.70, SD = 4.65) and the group who did not (M = 24.47, SD = 5.11) were not significantly different, suggesting

that the intimacy scores reported here were not influenced by whether or not their 'best friend' returned a consent form to participate.

Popularity. The number of friendship nominations received by students ranged from 0 to 7, with the mean number of nominations being 2 (*SD* = 1.69). Twenty participants received at least 3 friendship nominations and were, therefore, considered popular. With regard to popularity as a function of gender, both males and females had very similar levels of popularity, with females scoring a mean of 2.09 (*SD* = 1.89) and males a mean of 1.87 (*SD* = 1.39). These results were not statistically significant, $F(1, 53)$ = .23, p = .63.

Happiness. The sample scored highly on the Subjective Happiness Scale (Lyubomirsky and Lepper, 1999). Across the four 4-point Likert scale items, the participants obtained a mean overall score of 22.64 (*SD* = 3.57) from a possible score of 28.

Scores for this scale were also analysed as a function of gender (please refer to Table 1). Females showed higher levels of subjective happiness than males, with female total scores ranging from 16 to 28 with a mean score of 23.20 (*SD* = 3.37), and male total scores ranging from 13 to 28 with a mean score of 21.52 (*SD* = 3.51). However, these differences were not statistically significant, $F(1, 56)$ = 3.33, p = .07.

Wellbeing. Results for the Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (Huebner, 1991) were positive. For the seven six-point Likert scale items, an overall mean score of 34.74 (*SD* = 5.61) was obtained, with mean individual item scores ranging from 4.40 to 5.40 (*M* = 4.96). These results indicate that the participants had generally high levels of subjective global wellbeing.

Females demonstrated slightly higher wellbeing scores, with total scores ranging between 21 to 42 with a mean of 35.09 (*SD* = 5.94), while males scores ranged from 20 to 42

with a mean of 34.22 (SD = 5.15) (please refer to Table 1). Again, these gender differences were not statistically significant, $F(1, 56)$ = .33, p = .57.

Table 1

Happiness and wellbeing as a function of gender

	Male			Female			Combined total		
	n	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Happiness	23	21.52	3.51	35	23.20	3.37	58	22.64	3.57
Wellbeing	23	34.22	5.15	35	35.09	5.94	58	34.74	5.61

Feelings. Scores for the 27 emotions of the PANAS-C (Laurent et al., 1999) were analysed individually. Emotions that received high overall ratings included 'happy' (M = 4.50, SD = .86), 'joyful' (M = 4.21, SD = 1.14), and 'cheerful' (M = 4.19, SD = 1.05). Emotions that were scored lowest included 'disgusted' (M = 1.28, SD = .64), 'ashamed' (M = 1.38, SD = .81), 'scared' (M = 1.43, SD = .78), and 'guilty' (M = 1.43, SD = .75). These results were consistent with the high levels of happiness and wellbeing recorded in the Subjective Happiness Scale and the Students' Life Satisfaction Scale.

The data obtained for the 27 emotions were again analysed as a function of gender. The only significant difference shown between male and female participants was for the item 'guilty', with males having an overall mean score of 1.78 (SD = .95) and females having an overall mean score of 1.20 (SD = .47), $F(1, 56)$ = 9.59, p < .01. However, a single significant

finding among 27 comparisons falls within the Type 1 error rate, so cannot be considered meaningful.

Functions of friendship

The major purpose of this study was to determine whether differences in each type of friendship have an impact on the happiness and wellbeing of children. Therefore, independent analysis of happiness and wellbeing were undertaken as a function of high and low popularity, and the presence or absence of a best friend.

Popularity. Participants considered popular (who received at least 3 friendship nominations) rated higher than non-popular participants in both of the subjective happiness and wellbeing scales (please refer to Table 2). Popular participants obtained a mean total score of 23.30 (SD = 2.81) in the Subjective Happiness Scale and a mean total score of 36.50 (SD = 4.59) in the Students' Life Satisfaction Scale. In comparison, non-popular participants obtained total mean scores of 22.03 (SD = 3.85) and 33.63 (SD = 6.13) respectively. Differences, however, were not statistically significant for the Subjective Happiness Scale, $F(1, 53)$ = 1.67, p = .20, although approached significance for the Students' Life Satisfaction Scale, $F(1, 53)$ = 3.31, p = .07.

Popularity also appeared unrelated to emotions. In separate analysis of the 27 emotions of the PANAS-C, only one emotion ("guilty") reached significance (p < .05) with popular children reporting less guilt. However, again, a single significant finding falls within the Type 1 error rate so was ignored.

Table 2

Effects of popularity

Group	Happiness					Wellbeing				
	n	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*p*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*p*
Popular	20	23.30	2.81			20	36.50	4.59		
Not popular	35	22.03	3.85	1.67	.20	35	33.63	6.13	3.31	.07
Total	55	22.49	3.53			55	34.67	5.75		

Best friendship. As noted earlier, the failure of some children to participate reduced the number of children who could be designated as having a best friend or not. Participants who had a classroom best friend (those whose best friend nomination was reciprocated and whose relationship was determined to be sufficiently intimate) did not show significant benefits in terms of higher subjective happiness and wellbeing levels over those who were not designated as having a best friend; mean total scores for both groups were very similar on these scales (please refer to Table 3). No statistically significant difference was found for scores on the Subjective Happiness Scale, $F(1, 41) = .13$, $p = .72$, or the Students' Life Satisfaction Scale, $F(1, 41) = .29$, $p = .59$. Therefore, having a classroom best friend was not a predictor of greater subjective happiness or wellbeing in this sample.

Again, the presence or absence of a best friendship did not demonstrate a significant impact on feelings. For this scale, the one item that resulted in a significant difference was 'active', with the best friend group rating higher for this item ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 3.46$) than the no best friend group ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 1.45$), $F(1, 41) = 6.87$, $p = .01$. Although it might be expected that children with a best friend would be more active than those without a best

friend, a single finding of significance is within the Type 1 error rate, so cannot be considered meaningful in the context of this analysis.

Table 3

Effects of best friendship

Group	Happiness					Wellbeing				
	n	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*p*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*p*
Best friend	30	22.33	3.28			30	35.33	5.62		
No best friend	13	22.77	4.34	.13	.72	13	34.31	5.94	.29	.59
Total	43	22.47	3.59			43	35.02	5.67		

Popularity and best friendship. This study was designed primarily to examine the independent and interactive effects of degree of popularity and type of friendship on the happiness and wellbeing of the children. Thus, the major intended analysis was a 2 (Popularity: high versus low) X 2 (Friendship: best friend present versus best friend absent) analysis of variance (ANOVA) of each of the dependent variables: happiness, wellbeing, and feelings. The separation of the sample into the four groups just described resulted in a further loss of participants (to 41), and small cell sizes (please refer to Table 4). For this reason no attempt was made to include gender in the following analyses.

Table 4

Group sizes

	Popular	Not popular
Best friend	13	15
No best friend	5	8

Mean scores for the Happiness scale are shown in Table 5. Although the happiness scores of popular children (*M* = 23.22, *SD* = 2.78) appear higher than those of less popular children (*M* = 21.92, *SD* = 4.04), this difference was not significant, $F(1, 39) = 1.71$, *p* = .12. Similarly, the difference between the happiness scores of those with a best friend (*M* = 22.33, *SD* = 3.28) and without a best friend (*M* = 22.77, *SD* = 3.59) were also not significantly different, $F(1, 39) = 0.27$, *p* = .61. Finally, the Popularity X Friendship interaction effect also failed to reach significance, $F(1, 39) = 0.33$, *p* = .57. In brief, happiness did not appear to differ between children as a function of their popularity or the presence of a best friend, or the interaction of the two.

Table 5

Group happiness

Group	*M*	*SD*
Popular with a best friend	22.85	2.35
Not popular with a best friend	21.60	3.91
Popular with no best friend	24.20	3.83
Not popular with no best friend	21.88	4.64

Similar findings were obtained in the analysis of the Wellbeing scale scores shown in

Table 6. Wellbeing appeared to be greater in popular children (M = 36.94, SD = 4.61) than

less popular children (M = 33.64, SD = 6.03), but this difference was not significant, $F(1, 39)$

= 1.83, p = .18, and greater in children with a best friend (M = 35.33, SD = 5.62) than those

without a best friend (M = 34.31, SD = 5.94), also not significant, $F(1, 39)$ = 0.42, p = .52.

Again, there was also no significant interaction effect involving popularity and best

friendship, $F(1, 39)$ = 0.86, p = .36. As with happiness, there was no evidence that popularity

or type of friendship, or their interaction, influenced the wellbeing of the children.

Table 6

Group wellbeing

Group	M	SD
Popular with a best friend	37.77	3.14
Not popular with a best friend	33.20	6.81
Popular with no best friend	34.80	7.26
Not popular with no best friend	34.00	5.48

Scores on the 27 items of the Feelings measure were analysed in a two way (Popularity

X Friendship) multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), an analysis which allows the

simultaneous examination of a number of dependent measures while controlling the error

term to avoid the risk of Type 1 error (claiming a difference is 'real' when it could have

occurred by chance). The multivariate tests (Pillai's Trace) for Popularity, $F(13, 27) = 1.21$, p = .37, and Friendship, $F(13, 27) = 1.35$, $p = .29$, were not significant. (It should be noted that although the test of the overall main effect of Popularity did not reach significance, a total of six individual items showed a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$) in the mean scores of high and low popularity children, including the items 'happy', 'cheerful' and 'joyful' which are conceptually similar to happiness and were associated with higher mean scores in children designated as popular; the remaining three significant items were 'frightened', 'guilty' and 'afraid' which have more tangential links with wellbeing. Inspection of the individual item effects for Friendship revealed three items that reached statistical significance, but these were items less closely associated with happiness (i.e., 'interested', 'active' and 'delighted'), but perhaps more related to general wellbeing.) However, the Popularity X Friendship interaction effect almost reached significance, $F(13, 27) = 2.33$, p = .055, suggesting that popularity and friendship had differential effects among the 27 items. Inspection of the items indicated three items for which there was a significant interaction effect, of which only 'joyful' seemed closely associated with happiness; the others were 'interested' and 'strong' which again seem elements of wellbeing.

Notwithstanding the significant results just described, the overall MANOVA analysis offered little support for differences in emotional feelings as a function of popularity or friendship in this sample.

The conclusion just noted for the MANOVA analysis applies to all of the results in this section. There is little evidence in these planned investigative analyses that popularity and friendship intimacy have an influence on happiness, wellbeing, and emotions either directly as a main effect or through an interactive effect. Several implications and limitations of these results are contained in the final section of this thesis.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of two types of friendship, popularity and the presence of a best friend, on happiness and wellbeing in Year 5-6 children in New Zealand. It was anticipated, on the basis of previous local studies (Laurie, 1997; Townsend, 1992; Townsend, McCracken & Wilton, 1988), that happiness and wellbeing would be greater in children with a best friend but largely unaffected by popularity. However, in the major analyses no statistically significant relationship was found between either type of friendship or their interaction on the happiness and wellbeing scores of children in this sample.

Before discussing the implications, limitations and possibilities for future research associated with the study, it should be noted that all children were able to nominate three friends in their classroom, including a best friend (even if not reciprocated), reported relatively high levels of interaction with their best friend, and reported high levels of general happiness and wellbeing. Thus, the children who participated in this study appeared to be well adjusted and to have no difficulty in coping with the demands of the study. Furthermore, girls reported significantly higher levels of interaction with their nominated best friends than did boys, a finding consistent with reviews of friendships in middle childhood where girls' relational style is characterized by stronger interpersonal engagement than that of boys (Rose & Rudolph). Thus, there is no reason to suggest that this was an unusual sample of children in New Zealand.

Possible limitations

Given the characteristics of the children in the sample the unexpected findings associated with the major analyses are difficult to explain. It is, of course, possible that the findings of previous similar studies using other measures of psychological wellbeing (such as

loneliness and self-esteem) do not apply to the different measures used here. This seems unlikely in view of the general similarities in the measures used, and the known positive effects of best friendships discussed earlier in this thesis. Teachers (and parents) of children at the primary school level are well aware of best-friend associations, cliques, and popular individuals, as well as 'loners' or children who are socially withdrawn (Townsend & Seccombe, in press), and frequently report using this knowledge in their use of seating arrangements, group work assignments, and play activities. Thus, it would be unwise to suggest that teachers not take account of the different kinds of relationships between classmates, even if further research was to confirm the current results.

Another possible explanation for the results lies in the way the sample was achieved. Although the researcher administered all of the data collection, the study required both school and teacher assistance. As noted earlier, it took a number of approaches to schools before even one agreed to participate. Further, teachers were asked by their principal to give reminders to children in their classes over 2 weeks to return the parental consent forms; the wide variation in return rates across the five classrooms suggests that some teachers were more mindful or more enthusiastic in giving reminders. (The researcher is aware, from talking to other research students, that schools and teachers in the Auckland area are under increasing workload pressure and are reluctant to assume more responsibilities associated with research projects from the three universities in the area.) As noted earlier, consent forms were returned for less than half of the children available (and much less in two classrooms). This compromised the assessment of both popularity and reciprocity of best friends; for each child who did not return a consent form three 'friend' nominations were 'lost', as was the opportunity for a reciprocated friendship. This not only resulted in small cell sizes (as low as 5 participants) in the major analyses, but may also have

undermined the representativeness of the groups in terms of their types of friendship. These two problems represent a limitation of the study and must be considered a possible explanation of the unexpected findings. Future research in this area needs to ensure better 'buy-in' from participants. This could be increased by using koha for participation (with ethical approval) or by having the school collect full data on popularity and best friendship interactions as part of their procedures for classroom grouping, and then obtaining ethical approval for a researcher to gather the happiness and wellbeing information and to link it to the friendship data collected by the school.

Another limitation of this study (and others) is that the friendship nominations were made within intact classrooms. Thus, nominations to children in other classrooms or to existing friends outside of the school (even in different cities) were not possible. This may undermine the degree of 'closeness' associated with the best-friend nomination and hence its relationship to happiness and wellbeing. This possibility was suggested by several teachers at the school. However, for teacher-related purposes (e.g., grouping) the nominations need to be made within-class, and there is a strong research base of class-based friendships, some of which may be long-lasting. Townsend (1992) notes that many adults are able to list several friends, and their best friend, from their primary school classrooms of years earlier, suggesting that these friendships were meaningful. These comments notwithstanding, the role of best friendships in relation to life happiness and satisfaction, particularly long-term, remains a worthy area of exploration. Such research would likely use a qualitative approach to data collection (e.g., personal invitations, analysis of personal letters) rather than the quantitative approach taken in this study.

Future research

Many studies utilise quantitative measures to obtain information, and legitimately so; however, studies that do so are always going to be limited in their scope. The current study asks participants to rate their opinions and feelings on set scales and in an absolute manner. In doing so, the study limits the participants' answers to these set structures. Participants may have liked to respond 'unsure' to some items, or responded in a way that was not offered as response. Some participants may have also liked to give explanations for their responses. Therefore, restricting participants to a set response structure excludes the possibility of gathering more detailed, and possibly more accurate, information. Future researchers interested in studying this area may consequently wish to completely eliminate the use of set measures in the assessment of happiness and wellbeing, and instead choose a data collection method that is interview-based. Obtaining more detailed, sensitive data could potentially provide a more accurate account of the ways in which types of friendships affect happiness and wellbeing.

A further factor that the current study design and that of Townsend et al. (1988), McCracken (1985), and Laurie (1997) did not explore was the participants' perspectives of their friendships. As mentioned in the literature review section above, it has been demonstrated that children tend to have inaccurate perceptions of their popularity and acceptance amongst their peers (Lloyd, Wilton & Townsend, 2000). Therefore, a child who is shown by friendship nominations to be unpopular may actually believe that they are, in fact, popular among their peers. Moreover, a child's perceptions of their friendships may be a more accurate predictor of their happiness and wellbeing than the true nature of their friendships. Thus, obtaining subjective accounts of the participants' friendships would be an interesting and beneficial addition to the research. The addition of interviews to the study

design could effectively capture this information. An interviewer could ask participants questions regarding the identities of their best friends, whether they believe their relationships are reciprocal, and whether or not they consider themselves to be popular. Questions could also be asked to find out about how their friendships affect them, the reasons why they believe they are (or are not) popular, and their views on the importance of friendship to them and to people in general. Responses to such questions could potentially shed more light on the relationship between friendships and wellbeing.

There are many other avenues that are open for researchers to study happiness and wellbeing as a function of friendship, and furthermore, avenues that have not yet been investigated in the literature. Such a rich topic area is one that we would greatly benefit from learning more about, particularly as the literature has demonstrated that friendship often improves our levels of happiness and wellbeing.

Implications for education

Despite the lack of significant results obtained from this study, much research indicates that friendship is a vital factor in the makeup of human happiness and wellbeing. Furthermore, research has shown that having friends enables children to develop valuable social skills, increases their levels of psychological and physical health, and increases their academic performance at school (Buysse et al., 2003; McChristian et al., 2012; Ladd, 1990; Pijl et al., 2011; Rizzo, 1989). These are valuable benefits for children.

Such significant benefits resulting from childhood friendship should not be ignored by New Zealand educators. Apart from the educational connection of friendships increasing academic performance, the wellbeing of our students is explicitly stated as a target in our curriculums, and the promotion of friendships in our classrooms and schools is a practical way that we can work to achieve this target (Ministry of Education, 1996; 2007). While

passive strategies for promoting friendships are often used in classrooms by teachers

currently, such as allowing free choice periods, more structured and comprehensive

strategies should be encouraged, especially for children who may not be forming good

relationships with their peers (Buysse et al., 2003). Practices and interventions that

encourage and support the development and maintenance of friendships should be

implemented in New Zealand schools. An example of a school-wide intervention was

described earlier (Cranley Gallagher, 2013). Not only does Cranley Gallagher's pyramid

model propose a school-wide base strategy that promotes social skills and the forming of

friendships for all students, but it also caters for students who require more intensive

direction and support in gaining the social skills necessary for friendship. Such a tiered

model is an intervention that would be extremely beneficial for all students, for enhancing

their friendships and, in turn, increasing their levels of happiness and wellbeing.

 It is important that teachers not only set up their classroom environments in a way that

works to enhance opportunities for children to develop friendships, but to also actively

encourage one-to-one social relationships. Searcy (1996) offers numerous examples of ways

that teachers can do this. One simple classroom activity that she recommends is that

teachers implement regular activities that are focused on children getting to know each

other. Searcy gives the example of name recognition activities; however, other activities

could involve classmates learning about each other's hobbies, favourite foods, and other

personal interests and preferences. By getting to know about each other on a personal

level, children are able to identify those in their class that share common interests and to

initiate and develop close friendships based on these shared interests.

 Searcy (1996) also recommends the use of friendship-themed literature in classrooms

to provide a catalyst for discussions around friendship. Whether for story time on the mat,

personal reading, or writing assignments, teachers can choose stories that involve the main

character making a friend, or stories that are based on interactions between friends. After

completing such projects with their students, teachers can then ask their students questions

about the characters' friendships, how the characters make and maintain friends, and even

why certain characters are or are not friends. This should encourage their students to reflect

on different aspects of their own friendships and why such friendships are important.

For children who struggle to make friends, Searcy (1996) suggests that teachers

implement a more targeted strategy. Teachers should meet with these children individually

to set and discuss goals, which may include a child identifying the children in their class that

they particularly like and want to spend more time with. This would then lead to the teacher

and child planning steps to take to meet these goals, such as the child offering their selected

classmate toys and asking them to play. The teacher's role should be ensuring that the child

is given more opportunities to interact with their selected peers by sitting them together for

particular learning activities.

The above examples are practical and convenient for teachers (as well as parents) to

incorporate into their normal routines. They demonstrate the realistic opportunities for

New Zealand educators to increase the number and quality of children's friendships, in turn

increasing the happiness and wellbeing levels of New Zealand children.

Final note

"If you have two friends in your lifetime, you're lucky. If you have one *good* friend, you're

more than lucky" (Hinton, 2008).

We now know that having friends is beneficial to us all in many ways. Childhood

friendships allow us to develop valuable social skills, protect us from stress, and increase our

academic performance, and having friends throughout our lives has been shown to improve

our physical and mental health. Previous research indicates that different types of

friendships affect us differently, and if we better understood how types of friendships affect

our lives in positive ways, we could increase the happiness and wellbeing of children in New

Zealand schools.

References

Blieszner, R. (2014). The worth of friendship: Can friends keep us happy and healthy? *Generations*, *38*(1), 24-30.

Buysse, V., Goldman, B., & Skinner, M. L. (2003). Friendship formation in inclusive early childhood classrooms: What is the teacher's role? *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *18*(4), 485-501.

Cranley Gallagher, K. (2013). Guiding children's friendship development. *YC: Young Children*, *68*(5), 26-32.

Day, P. (2009). The use of CBT to strengthen emotional wellbeing. *British Journal of School Nursing*, *4*(3), 130-132.

Demir, M., Jaafar, J., Bilyk, N., & Mohd Ariff, M. (2012). Social skills, friendship and happiness: A cross-cultural investigation. *Journal of Social Psychology*, *152*(3), 379-385.

DeNeve, K. & Cooper, H. (1998). The happy personality: A meta-analysis of 137 personality traits and subjective well-being. *Psychological Bulletin, 124*(2)*, 197-229.

Diener, E. (1984). Subjective well-being. *Psychological Bulletin, 95*(3), 542-575.

Diener, E., Napa Scollon, C., & Lucas, R. E. The evolving concept of subjective well-being: The multifaceted nature of happiness. In E. Diener (Ed.), *Assessing well-being: The collected works of Ed Diener* (pp. 67-100). Dordrecht, New York: Springer Science + Business Media.

Diener, M., & Lucas, R. (2004). Adults' desires for children's emotions across 48 countries: Associations with individual and national characteristics. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *35*(5), 525-547.

Ebesutani, C., Smith, A., Bernstein, A., Chorpita, B. F., Higa-McMillan, C., & Nakamura, B.

(2011). A bifactor model of negative affectivity: Fear and distress components among

younger and older youth. *Psychological Assessment*, *23*(3), 679-691.

Exenberger, S., & Juen, B. (2014). *Well-being, resilience and quality of life from children's

perspectives: A contextualized approach*. New York: Springer Science + Business Media.

Griskevicius, V., Haselton, M. G., & Ackerman, J. M. (2015). Evolution and close relationships.

In M. Mikulincer, P. R. Shaver, J. A. Simpson, & J. F. Dovidio (Eds.), *APA handbook of

personality and social psychology, Volume 3: Interpersonal relations* (pp. 3-32).

Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Hinton, S. (2003). *The outsiders*. New York: Speak.

Holder, M., & Coleman, B. (2008). The contribution of temperament, popularity, and

physical appearance to children's happiness. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *9*(2), 279-

302.

Krause, K., Bochner, S., Duchesne, S., & McMaugh, A. (2010). *Educational psychology: For

learning and teaching*. Melbourne, Australia: Cengage Learning.

Ladd, G. W. (1990). Having friends, keeping friends, making friends, and being liked by peers

in the classroom: Predictors of children's early school adjustment? *Child Development,

61*(4), 1081-1100.

Laurent, J., Catanzaro, S. J., Joiner, T. E., Rudolph, K. D., Potter, K. I., Lambert, S., Osborne, L.

& Gathright, T. (1999). A measure of positive and negative affect for children: Scale

development and preliminary validation. *Psychological Assessment*, *11*(3), 326-338.

Laurent, J., Joiner, T. J., & Catanzaro, S. J. (2011). Positive affect, negative affect, and

physiological hyperarousal among referred and nonreferred youth. *Psychological

Assessment*, *23*(4), 945-957.

Laurie, C. M. (1997). *The function of intimacy and popularity within same sex adolescent friendship.* Unpublished master's thesis, The University of Auckland, New Zealand.

Lloyd, C., Wilton, K. M., & Townsend, M. R. (2000). Children at high-risk for mild intellectual disability in regular classrooms: Six New Zealand case studies. *Education & Training in Mental Retardation & Developmental Disabilities*, *35*(1), 44-54.

Lyubomirsky, S., King, L., & Diener, E. (2005). The benefits of frequent positive affect: Does happiness lead to success? *Psychological Bulletin*, *131*(6), 803-855.

Lyubomirsky, S., & Lepper, H. S. (1999). A measure of subjective happiness: Preliminary reliability and construct validation. *Social Indicators Research, 46*(2). 137-155.

Mannarino, A. P. (1976). Friendship patterns and altruistic behavior in preadolescent males. *Developmental Psychology*, *12*(6), 555-556.

McChristian, C. L., Ray, G. E., Tidwell, P. S., & LoBello, S. G. (2012). Classroom friends and very best friends: A short-term longitudinal analysis of relationship quality. *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, *173*(4), 463-469.

McCracken, H. E. (1985). *Intimacy in friendship as an indicator of psychological well being in adolescence.* Unpublished master's thesis, The University of Auckland, New Zealand.

Ministry of Education. (1996). *Te Whāriki: He whāriki matauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa: Early childhood curriculum*. Wellington, NZ: Learning Media.

Ministry of Education. (2007). *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Wellington, NZ: Learning Media.

New Zealand Psychologists Board. (2011). *The core competencies for the practice of psychology in New Zealand.* Wellington, NZ: Author.

New Zealand Psychologists Board. (2002) *Code of ethics for psychologists working in Aotearoa/New Zealand*. Wellington, NZ: Author.

New Zealand Teachers Council. (2009). *Registered teacher criteria.* NZ: Author.

Nicholson, T. & Townsend, M. (2011). Children's friendships – real and imaginary. In C.

    Rubie-Davies (Ed.), *Educational psychology: Concepts, research and challenges* (pp. 200-

    214). Routledge.

 O'Rourke, J., & Cooper, M. (2010). Lucky to be happy: A study of happiness in Australian

    primary students. *Australian Journal of Educational & Developmental Psychology*, *10*(1),

    94-107.

Pijl, S., Koster, M., Hannink, A., & Stratingh, A. (2011). Friends in the classroom: A

    comparison between two methods for the assessment of students' friendship networks.

    Social Psychology of Education, *14*(4), 475-488.

Rizzo, T. A. (1989). *Friendship development among children in school*. Norwood, New Jersey:

    Ablex Publishing.

Roberts, R. (2010). *Wellbeing from birth*. London: SAGE.

Rose, A. J., & Rudolph, K. D. (2006). A review of sex differences in peer relationship

    processes: Potential trade-offs for the emotional and behavioral development of girls

    and boys. *Psychological Bulletin*, *132*(1), 98-131.

Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self image.* Princeton, New Jersey:

    Princeton University Press.

Russell, D., Peplau, L., & Cutrona, C. (1980). The Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale: Concurrent

    and discriminate validity evidence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 39*(3),

    472-480.

Ryff, C. (1989). Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of

    psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 57*(6), 1069-

    1081.

Searcy, S. (1996). Friendship interventions for the integration of children and youth with

learning and behavior problems. *Preventing School Failure*, *40*(3)*,* 131-134.

Seligman, M. P. (1995). *Optimistic child*. Milsons Point, Australia: Houghton-Mifflin.

Seligman, M. (1998). The prediction and prevention of depression. In D. K. Routh, R. J.

DeRubeis (Eds.), *The science of clinical psychology: Accomplishments and future*

directions (pp. 201-214). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Seligman, M. P. (2008, August). Positive education and the new prosperity: Australia's Edge.

Education Today, *pp.* 20-21.

Seligman, M. P. (2011). *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being*.

New York: Free Press.

Seligman, M. P., Ernst, R. M., Gillham, J., Reivich, K., & Linkins, M. (2009). Positive education:

Positive psychology and classroom interventions. *Oxford Review of Education*, *35*(3),

293-311.

Seligman, M. P., Steen, T. A., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005). Positive psychology progress:

Empirical validation of interventions. *American Psychologist*, *60*(5), 410-421.

Sharabany, R. (1974). *Intimate friendship among Kibbutz and city children and its*

measurement (Doctoral dissertation, Cornell University). Retrieved from University

Microfilms International. (74-17-682)

Sharabany, R. (1994). Intimate Friendship Scale: Conceptual underpinnings, psychometric

properties and construct validity. *Journal of Social And Personal Relationships*, *11*(3),

449-469.

Soutter, A. K., O'Steen, B., & Gilmore, A. (2012). Wellbeing in the New Zealand curriculum.

Journal of Curriculum Studies, *44*(1), 111-142.

Sullivan, H. S. (1953). *The interpersonal theory of psychiatry*. New York: Norton.

Tay, L., & Diener, E. (2011). Needs and subjective well-being around the world. *Journal of*

Personality And Social Psychology, *101*(2), 354-365.

The Children's Society. (2013). *The good childhood report.* York, England: Author. Retrieved

from www.childrenssociety.org.uk/well-being

Townsend, M. R. (1992). *Children's friendships and social development*. Palmerston North:

Dunmore Press.

Townsend, M., McCracken H., & Wilton, K. (1988). Popularity and intimacy as determinants

of psychological well-being in adolescent relationships. *Journal of Early Adolescence,*

8(4), 421-436.

Townsend, M., & Seccombe, P. (in press). Social withdrawal and schooling. In C. M. Rubie-

Davies,., J. M. Stephens, & P.W. Watson (Eds.), *The Routledge international handbook of*

social psychology of the classroom. London: Routledge.

Uusitalo-Malmivaara, L., & Lehto, J. E. (2013). Social factors explaining children's subjective

happiness and depressive symptoms. *Social Indicators Research*, *111*(2), 603-615.

Veenhoven, R. (2000). The four qualities of life: Ordering concepts and measures of the

good life. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 1*(1), 1-39.

Veenhoven, R. (2015). Overall satisfaction with life. In W. Glatzer, L. Camfield, V. Moller, &

M. Rojas (Eds.), *The global handbook of quality of life: Exploration of well-being of*

nations and continents (pp. 207-238)*.* New York, New York: Springer.

Friend. (2014). In *Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford University Press. Retrieved from

http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/74646?rskey=o1ut0h&result=1#eid

Zettergren, P. (2010). Girls' best friendship in school as predictor of adjustment in

adulthood: A follow-up from preadolescence to middle adulthood. In J. C. Toller (Ed.),

Friendships: Types, cultural, psychological and social aspects (pp. 163-195). New York:

Nova Science.

Appendix A

Information and consent forms

Information Sheet for Principal and Board of Trustees

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
TE KURA O TE MATĀURANGA

Friends at School

INFORMATION SHEET

Researcher Introduction

Hello, my name is Jane Taylor, and I am currently undertaking a research project as part of my Master's degree in Educational Psychology.

Under the 'community of learners' philosophy of current education, teachers use practices that involve children collaborating and working cooperatively together, for which social skills are essential. Many of these social skills are developed through children's friendships. Research has found that the presence of a 'best friend' is associated with a range of positive outcomes (such as higher levels of self-esteem and lower levels of loneliness), that are not found in children who are 'popular but do not have a best friend' (popular). This research investigates whether these two types of friendship are related to children's general happiness. In this study children will nominate their friends in their classroom, tick the sorts of activities that they engage in with their best friend in the room, and complete three short happiness and wellbeing scales with items such as 'My life is going well'. This will enable me to see whether levels of happiness differ for children who are popular and those who have a best friend. It is possible that the quiet child with a single best friend has greater psychological wellbeing than the child perceived as popular.

Participant Identification and Recruitment

The participants in this study will include children from year four to year six. In order to recruit participants, information sheets and caregiver and participant consent forms will be sent home with all of the children in participating classrooms. Only those children who return signed participant and caregiver consent forms will be accepted as participants.

Project Procedures

Data will be gathered with the use of several short questionnaires, which will be filled out by the participants in their classrooms during class time. Combined, these questionnaires will take the participants no longer than 20 minutes to complete. Children not participating in the research will be given an alternative task to complete by their teacher during this time.

Data Management

The identities of the participants, as well as those of the school and city, will be kept totally confidential in my thesis. Code names will be used when discussing results.

In terms of the storage of the questionnaires, these will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at my personal residence, and only myself and my course supervisors will have access to this data. Once my thesis has been accepted for marking in late 2014, all questionnaires will be destroyed.

By 31st December 2014, a summary of my findings will be provided to you via email.

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
TE KURA O TE MĀTĀURANGA

Participants' Rights

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- withdraw your school from the study by 22nd August 2014;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

The children and caregivers will also be under no obligation to accept this invitation. If they decide to participate, the caregivers will have the right to:

- withdraw their children from the study by 22nd August 2014;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that their names will not be used unless they give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

Project Contacts
Please contact either myself of one of my supervisors if you have any questions about the project.

Researcher
Jane Taylor   Phone: 0210 727 900
                Email: janetaylor4849@gmail.com
Supervisors
Michael Townsend   Phone: 649 4140800 ext 41099
                     Email: m.townsend@massey.ac.nz
Tom Nicholson   Phone: 649 4140800 ext 43519
                     Email: t.nicholson@massey.ac.nz

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor John O'Neill, Director (Research Ethics), telephone 06 350 5249, e-mail humanethics@massey.ac.nz

Information Sheet for Caregivers

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
TE KURA O TE MATĀURANGA

Friends at School

CAREGIVER INFORMATION SHEET

For:_____

Regarding:_____

Researcher Introduction

Hello, my name is Jane Taylor, and I am currently studying for my Masters of Educational Psychology at Massey University. For my thesis, I am looking at children's friendships at school. I will be giving children questionnaires about their friendships and feelings, which will only take them a few minutes to complete. I would be extremely grateful if you would consider allowing your child to participate in my research project.

Participant Identification and Recruitment

The participants in this study will include children aged from eight to ten years old. Only those children who have signed consent forms (please see the child's form attached), and whose caregivers have signed consent forms, will be accepted as participants.

Project Procedures

Data will be gathered with the use of two short questionnaires, which will be filled out by the participants in their classrooms during class time. Children not participating in the research will be given an alternative task to complete by their teacher during this time.

Data Management

The identities of the participants, as well as those of the school and city, will be kept totally confidential in my thesis. Code names will be used when discussing results.

In terms of the storage of the questionnaires, these will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at my personal residence, and only myself and my course supervisors will have access to this data. Once my thesis has been accepted for marking in late 2014, all questionnaires will be destroyed.

By 31st December 2014, a summary of my findings will be available for you on request. Please contact me on the email address below after this date if you would like to receive a copy.

Participants' Rights

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to consent to your child's participation, you have the right to:

- withdraw your child from the study by 22nd August 2014;

- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded. Please contact me at the email address below at the conclusion of the research project.

Your child will also be under no obligation to accept this invitation.

Project Contacts
  Please contact either myself of one of my supervisors if you have any questions about the project.

Researcher
Jane Taylor   Phone: 0210 727 900
                 Email: janetaylor4849@gmail.com
Supervisors
Michael Townsend   Phone: 649 4140800 ext 41099
                      Email: m.townsend@massey.ac.nz
Tom Nicholson   Phone: 649 4140800 ext 43519
                      Email: t.nicholson@massey.ac.nz

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor John O'Neill, Director (Research Ethics), telephone 06 350 5249, e-mail humanethics@massey.ac.nz

Consent Form for Caregivers

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
TE KURA O TE MATĀURANGA

Friends at School

CAREGIVER CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree for my child, _____ (please print your child's name), to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: ....   **Date:** ....

Full Name - printed ....

Page 1 of 1

Consent Form for Participants

☺ *Friends at School* ☺

Hi, my name is Jane and I doing a project for my university study. For my study I am visiting classrooms to ask children of your age about their friendships at school, and I would like you to help me by filling out two short forms. This will take just a few minutes. When I write my project I will not use anybody's name, so no-one else will know what you have written. It will be top secret, just between you and me.
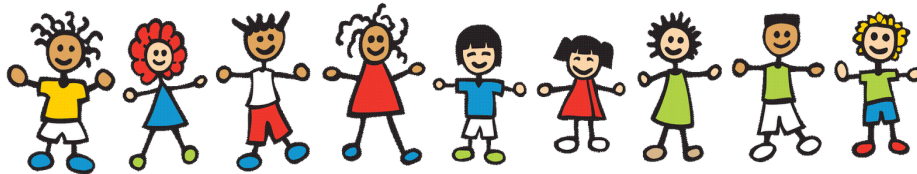
By signing here, you agree to fill out my questionnaire to help me with my project.

Your signature:_____

Date:_____

Appendix B

Participant Booklet

1

Name:

Classroom:

My Friends

Who is your very best friend in your classroom?

1.

Who are your two next best friends in your classroom?

1.

2.

2

My Best Friend

Please write the name of your best friend in your class here (this is the person you named at the top of your friends list) _____

The sentences below are about things you might do with this person.

If you AGREE with the sentence about you and your best friend, put a circle around YES.

If you do NOT AGREE with the sentence about you and your best friend, put a circle around NO.

There are no right or wrong answers so please be honest.

1. I can talk with my friend about almost everything.	Yes	No
2. If my friend does something that I don't like, I can always talk with my friend about it.	Yes	No
3. I talk with my friend about my hopes and plans for the future.	Yes	No
4. I tell my friend when I have done something that other people would not approve of.	Yes	No
5. I know how my friend feels about things without them telling me.	Yes	No
6. I know which kind of books, games, and activities my friend likes.	Yes	No
7. I know how my friend feels about the girl or boy they have a crush on.	Yes	No
8. I can tell if my friend is worried about something.	Yes	No
9. I feel close to my friend.	Yes	No
10. I like my friend.	Yes	No
11. When my friend is not around I miss them.	Yes	No

3

12. When my friend is not around I keep wondering where they are and what they are doing.	Yes	No
13. The most exciting things happen when I am with my friend and nobody else is around.	Yes	No
14. I do things with my friend which are quite different from what other kids do.	Yes	No
15. It bothers me to have other kids around and joining in when my friend and I are doing something together.	Yes	No
16. I stay with my friend when they want to do something that other children don't want to do.	Yes	No
17. When something nice happens to me I share the experience with my friend.	Yes	No
18. Whenever my friend wants to tell me about a problem I stop what I am doing and listen for as long as my friend wants.	Yes	No
19. I offer my friend the use of my things (like toys, food, or books).	Yes	No
20. If my friend wants something I let them have it even if I want it too.	Yes	No
21. I can be sure my friend will help me whenever I ask for help.	Yes	No
22. I can plan how we'll spend our time without having to check with my friend.	Yes	No
23. If I want my friend to do something for me, all I have to do is ask.	Yes	No
24. I can use my friend's things without asking permission.	Yes	No
25. Whenever you see me you can be pretty sure that my friend is also around.	Yes	No
26. I like to do things with my friend.	Yes	No

4

27. I work with my friend on some of their hobbies.	Yes	No
28. I work with my friend on some of their school work.	Yes	No
29. I know that whatever I tell my friend is kept secret between us.	Yes	No
30. I will not go along with others to do anything against my friend.	Yes	No
31. I speak up to defend my friend when other kids say bad things about my friend.	Yes	No
32. I tell people nice things about my friend.	Yes	No

5

About Me

For each of the following sentences and questions, please circle the point on the scale that you think describes you the best.

1. Usually, I think I am:

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

not a very   a very

 happy   happy

 person   person

2. Compared to most of my classmates, I think I am:

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

 less   more

 happy   happy

3. Some people are usually very happy. They enjoy life no matter what is going on, getting the most out of everything. How well does this describe you?

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

 not very   very well

  well

4. Some people are usually not very happy. Although they are not depressed, they never seem as happy as they could be. How well does this describe you?

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

 not very   very well

  well

6

Directions:
I would like to know what thoughts about life you have had during the past few weeks. Think about how you spend each day and night and then think about how your life has been during most of this time.

On this page are some sentences about your life. Underneath each sentence, circle the words on the scale that best describe how you feel about the sentence. For example, if you Strongly Agree with the sentence "Life is great," you would circle those words on the following scale:

Life is great.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Mildly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

It is important for me to know what you REALLY think, so please answer the questions the way you really think, not how you think you should think. This is NOT a test. There are NO right or wrong answers.

1. My life is going well.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Mildly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

2. My life is just right.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Mildly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

3. I would like to change many things in my life.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Mildly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

4. I wish I had a different kind of life.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Mildly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

5. I have a good life.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Mildly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

6. I have what I want in life.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Mildly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

7. My life is better than most kids.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Mildly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

7

My Feelings

This scale includes some words that describe different feelings. Read each word and then tick the box that describes how much you have felt this way over the last few weeks. There are no right or wrong answers.

No.	Item	Very slightly or not at all	A little	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely
1	Upset					
2	Sad					
3	Frightened					
4	Excited					
5	Ashamed					
6	Interested					
7	Happy					
8	Strong					
9	Nervous					
10	Guilty					
11	Energetic					
12	Scared					
13	Calm					
14	Miserable					
15	Jittery					
16	Cheerful					
17	Active					
18	Proud					
19	Afraid					
20	Joyful					
21	Lonely					
22	Mad					
23	Disgusted					
24	Delighted					
25	Blue					
26	Gloomy					
27	Lively					

Appendix C

Ethics approval

7 April 2014

Jane Taylor
51A Fir Street
Waterview
Auckland 1026

Dear Jane

Re: **Friendship and Childhood happiness: A study of how best-friends and popularity affect levels of happiness in New Zealand primary school students**

Thank you for your Low Risk Notification which was received on 7 April 2014.

Your project has been recorded on the Low Risk Database which is reported in the Annual Report of the Massey University Human Ethics Committees.

You are reminded that staff researchers and supervisors are fully responsible for ensuring that the information in the low risk notification has met the requirements and guidelines for submission of a low risk notification.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

Please notify me if situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your initial ethical analysis that it is safe to proceed without approval by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas. In addition, the supervisor must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

A reminder to include the following statement on all public documents:

"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor John O'Neill, Director (Research Ethics), telephone 06 350 5249, e-mail humanethics@massey.ac.nz".

Please note that if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to publish requires evidence of committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to provide a full application to one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. You should also note that such an approval can only be provided prior to the commencement of the research.

Yours sincerely

John G O'Neill (Professor)
Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and
Director (Research Ethics)

cc   Prof Michael Townsend, Prof Tom Nicholson   A/Prof Sally Hansen HoS
       Institute of Education   Institute of Education
       Albany campus   Manawatu campus

Massey University Human Ethics Committee
Accredited by the Health Research Council