

Student Happiness and Literacy-Rich Homes

A Special Project

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ABSTRACT

With the state of Washington's increased emphasis on reading and writing and with increased drop-outs and depressed students, the researcher looked to identify a relationship between literacy-rich homes and student happiness.

Students were surveyed and a small number of them were interviewed to examine the literacy in their lives and the sources of happiness within their life. Through the interviews, three students provided the sources of their happiness. It was concluded that literacy can provide happiness to students who lacked the social abilities or proximity to other sources of happiness.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background for the Project

Historically, the goal of most Americans was to be financially successful. As the country became more financially stable, guidance counselors started asking students what they liked to do. The transition from high school to the work force was no longer about what would give you a steady income and security; the thought process changed. Financial security was a given, so the idea of having a career to satisfy other needs gained importance. The youth of the time had grown up in an age when money was not the most valued goal in their life. Money had always been there. Cable television, video games, fast food, and other non-necessities had always been a part of their life. The motivation in life had changed from a focus on wealth to a focus on happiness.

Odds were low that any American would become a multi-millionaire. According to Cable News Network's (CNN) *Money's* Ellis (2007), "American men in their 30's are earning less than their father's generation did . . ." So what motivated people to work harder, to do better, and dedicate their lives to a business? In A.H. Maslow's "A Theory of Human Motivation" (1943), it was identified that the physiological needs of a person were the basic needs that must be met. These were needs such as food, water, and air. "If all the needs are unsatisfied, and the organism was then dominated by the physiological needs, all other needs may become simply non-existent or be pushed into the background."

(Maslow 1943) As Americans began to satisfy these basic needs, they progressed up the ladder to higher-level needs. The next set of needs identified by Maslow were the safety needs. America hadn't seen a war on its soil in over a hundred years. Crime was kept to a minimum. Therefore, that set of needs was being met. The next set of needs were the love needs. This could also be called the social needs. These needs not only included love and affection, but they included a sense of belongingness and sexual expressiveness. As happiness was explored in this paper, America as a whole rested on the love needs. The two previous sets of needs were, for most of the population, being met. This third set of needs, the love set, appeared to be where most people were struggling to find satisfaction.

This idea that a population can be looked at as a whole to identify needs and satisfaction was echoed by the Prime Minister of Bhutan. In Ongmo's (2010) research, The Prime Minister of Bhutan said,

As people rise above the basic threats of survival, what will our collective endeavour be as a progressive society? Must we continue to believe that human life was to be spent labouring for higher income so as to be able to consume more at the cost of relationships, peace, and ecological stability? Were the causes of depression, suicide, community disintegration, and rising crime to be accepted as inevitable? Could we not find a way to steer ourselves from the self consuming fire of greed that is fueled by the media and paid for by industry and commerce which thrive on reckless consumerism? (p. 2)

A science teacher colleague at the high school where this study took place, suggested that students would be happier if they stopped playing so many video games and read more. This teacher was not the first person to blame video games for problems in today's youth and would not be the last. This was the comment that spawned the guiding question of this research: were children from literacy-rich homes happier than students from literacy-poor homes?

The citizens of the school district had chosen this area to live for many reasons. There was a tight collection of four major rural living areas in the school district. Most of the residents had chosen to live in the area for the safe environment for raising children, the abundance of employment, and the proximity to a major population source. Most had found the American Dream to be quite achievable and life was pretty simple.

The community was made up of nearly 60% Hispanic citizens, but the most outspoken members of the community were white. The school board, city council, and mayor were all white despite the number of citizens that were not. The elementary schools were spread into three of the towns, but there was only one high school for all four communities. This put great distance between the school and the parents of the students. For some to come visit, it had taken over thirty minutes to go from house to school.

Statement of the Problem

As reported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (1999), "in children and adolescents, the most frequently diagnosed mood disorders are

major depressive disorder, dysthymic disorder, and bipolar disorder." In *Mental Health: A Report from the Surgeon General* (1999), it was reported that at any time between 10 and 15 percent of all adolescents were suffering from major depression. The report also stated that adolescents between the age of 15 and 19 had a 9.5 per 100,000 mortality rate from suicide. The report explained that 90 percent of all suicide victims suffered from some form of mental disorder before their death.

The emotional satisfaction of American adolescents had become a serious problem. According to the CDC (1999), suicide was the third highest cause of teenage death. What caused adolescents to find happiness in their lives was an issue that had just become popular within the past twenty years. Teenagers had changed and what made them happy fifty years ago may not be what made them happy at the time of this research. In the years following George W. Bush's presidency, states had tried to meet the requirements of NCLB (No Child Left Behind) and standardized testing had spread across the nation. In Washington state, the only two tests required to pass to graduate from high school were reading and writing. Do these two topics correlate with happiness? One common denominator in the vast majority of teenagers' lives was public education. By having emphasized these two subjects so much, the state was creating a student that was strong in reading and writing, but not necessarily in other areas. By creating a student that was strong in literacy, was the state of Washington also creating a happier student?

Purpose of the Project

As much as schools, parents were also looking for ways to help their children. They often wanted to know simple things they could do that would help their children. They often asked questions about what they could do to prevent gang activity, drug use, and suicide. If this study can start the thought that reading and writing were part of the great solution, then it has achieved its goal.

Throughout the research of this project, the goal of the project was to find the happiest students at the school and find out what made them happy. Washington state had weighted reading and writing as being more important than other subjects, but this researcher wanted to find out if that weighting also increased student happiness.

Delimitations

This survey took place in the year 2011. The only participants were teenagers of a small rural community of four towns. They all attended a school of fewer than 600 students. The teenagers were asked to evaluate themselves as far as life satisfaction (happiness) by rating themselves on a scale of one to ten and then reporting if they thought they would be happier in five years or not. Of the possible population for this survey, 60% were of Hispanic descent. The community was very agriculturally based, and many adolescents were the children of farm owners and the rest of the adolescents were the children of farm workers. This created a case of haves and have-nots existing in the same school. Some students told the researcher that the school's breakfast and lunch were often the

only meals they had all day. One student wrote an essay for class about how as an elementary school student he sold his bicycle, so he would be able to buy something for dinner at the gas station for the rest of the week. On the other hand, one family had a professional-sized water slide for their pool. One student's father paid for twenty members of their family to fly to Disneyland. When the football team won the state title, they all wanted championship rings. Many students did not buy one at all or spent only a few hundred dollars on it. A few students bought rings with real jewels and price tags of several thousand dollars.

Assumptions

The writer of this work assumed from witnessing and experiencing the results that the emphasis of the state and schools on literacy would create happier students. The writer of this work was also assumed then that happier students read more. Another assumption was that during this researcher's work the students answered the questions honestly and that the survey was valid and reliable.

Hypothesis

Reading and writing had been emphasized by the state government, carried out by schools, and strengthened through parenting. This emphasis would create, not just a more literate student, but also a happier student

Significance of the Project

If the hypothesis was supported, this would connect the state government's concentration on reading and writing to creating happier students. Education should not just be about making better citizens and employees; it should be about

creating better people. As an English teacher, the researcher hoped to see that reading and writing created a better, happier life. This research was one of the steps in linking literacy with creating a happier society.

If the hypothesis was not supported, this study will create more questions. What was the benefit of reading? Was it just to be better employee? Was it just to make more money? Why did we emphasize reading so much?

Procedure

During the first week of March, all students were informed of the entire project and process. They were then given a parent release form. Students were asked to return forms by the end of the week. On Friday, March 11, all students that turned in a permission form received a student survey. The survey was in two parts. The first part was a simple two question survey. Question one asked the students to rate their personal happiness. The scale used was borrowed from Veenhoven (2005) which placed labels at various parts of a ten-point scale. The number 10 was labeled "extremely satisfied." The number 7 was labeled "very satisfied." The number 5 was labeled as "satisfied." The number 3 was labeled "fairly satisfied." The number 1 was labeled "not satisfied". This survey was borrowed from Buettner (2010) who used it to identify areas of happiness throughout the world. Buettner identified people that rated themselves between 8-10 and said that they thought they would be even happier in five years. Buettner identified these people as "Thrivers".

The data was compiled during the week of March 14 to March 18 to identify participants as "Thrivers". Three students were interviewed during the week of March 28 to April 1. The three identified adolescents were interviewed in regards to five domains of life: community, school, social life, home, and themselves. These domains were the same that Buettner (2010) identified as key points in regards to his happiness research. Buettner took the results of many world studies and used that to identify areas of the happiest people. Multiple researchers were involved in finding these areas and thousands of people responded in hundreds of languages. How reliable such research would be was difficult to say, but Buettner's research was very thorough. He studied the areas, interviewed hundreds of people, and observed each place personally. In February of 2011, 28 students were surveyed. In March of 2011, three were selected at random to be interviewed. Questions asked to adolescents were based off of his identified factors that contributed to increased happiness. In regards to community, the participants in this research were asked about employment, tolerance (religious, cultural, and sexual), quality of government, community space, commerce, art, exercise (neighborhood walkability), safety, and education. With regards to school, adolescents were asked about commuting, vacation, importance, challenges, pride, and friendships. In regards to social life, adolescents were asked about friendship quality, faith-based communities, and clubs/activities outside of their average school day. In the area of home, adolescents were asked about pets, television viewing, gardens, displayed

pictures, sunlight exposure, color, and sleeping space. About themselves, adolescents were asked about motivation, hobbies, art, volunteering, and sport/exercise involvement. All participants in the interview were specifically asked literacy questions in regards to books, libraries, reading, and writing.

Definition of Terms

life domain. As defined by Buettner (2010), these were areas in our life we could shape to boost our chances for happiness in the long term.

literacy-rich homes. These were homes with a large number of books (100 or more that were regularly added to or changed out), parental-child discussion with and about books, and routine time spent reading books.

nurturing laughter. the use of humor to reduce stress.

oversocialization. seven to nine hours of social time daily to increase happiness.

student happiness. Students had a feeling of safety, they felt cared for, and they felt that they had someone to talk to when problems arose.

sun bonus. When a location had more annual hours of sunlight each day than average which increased the intake of Vitamin D, a contributor to overall health, well-being, and longevity.

thrivers. People who identified themselves as an 8 or higher on a scale of 1 to 10. They also claimed that they thought they would be happier in 5 years.

Acronyms

CDC. Center for Disease Control

HSPE. High School Proficiency Exam

NCLB. No Child Left Behind

CHAPTER 2

Review of Selected Literature

Introduction

Schools had frequently been the sources of many matters for a community. A school building was the heart of the town during a pasta feed to raise money, the site of student investment during conferences, and the celebration center for athletic achievement. Being that a school was so valuable to a community, it should be a hub for happiness to a community.

While education had always been important, much more was expected from schools. The state required a set of standards to be reached, but communities expected much more out of their schools, as well. Exemplifying dental care, providing daily nutrition, practicing social skills, and regulating safety were all things schools did that did not fall into any standard that was tested by the HSPE. Many high schools were being asked to protect their students 24 hours a day from the threat of bullying, depression, and suicide. These were some of the many expectations placed on a strained educational system.

Purpose of Public Education

The purpose of public education was a topic that many people began to question as they started to create standards and tests to measure those standards. As a result of NCLB, many states were in a position that they had not expected to be in. States had to create a test to show that their schools were creating educated students. This need for standards was not a new one. In 1918, the Commission on

the Reorganization of Secondary Education came out with a list they called "The Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education" (Raubinger, Rowe, Piper, West, 1969). Their list looked much different than future lists of this type. The objectives the commission presented fell into seven categories: health, command of fundamental processes (reading, writing, oral, and written expression, and math), worthy home membership, vocation, civic education, worthy use of leisure, and ethical character. When NCLB was created, the need for more academically-centered standards was needed. The demand on schools was to insure that students could read, write, and perform arithmetic. The objectives of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education became almost secondary or tertiary. Topics such as "Worthy Use of Leisure" seemed frivolous and unnecessary in a world that felt crammed with entertainment.

First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt also wrote a piece for the *Pictorial Review* in which she described the purpose of education (1930). Roosevelt followed the idea that "the true purpose of education is to produce citizens." Several times the idea of service was reinforced and using all subjects to teach economics, government, politics, etc. was the main idea of Roosevelt's writing (1930). This idea also seemed to have fallen to a secondary level.

In "Reshaping High Schools" (Wiggins and McTighe, 2008), the long-term goal of all schools was defined as "making meaning and transfer of learning." Not everyone believed that schooling could be narrowed to such a definition, nor did they believe that schools were currently doing this. Wiggins and McTighe

identified several problems schools had, but claimed that all of these problems could be narrowed to one: "the lack of clarity about the goals of a high school education and how those goals should inform instruction, assessment, and curriculum design" (2008). The need for high schools to identify their purpose was high. Students were attending with a wide variety of goals. Some students wanted to go to college, some wanted to attend a trade school, some were going to the military, and others just wanted to graduate and join the work force. There were still other students that had other plans for life after high school. Schools were struggling to satisfy everyone.

The purpose of school may have been left behind. ". . . [w]e want children to be driven by the intrinsic love of learning" ("On happiness and," 2006) . The term life-long learner had been bandied about in education, but had teachers achieved that? If students were battling in a boot camp and saw school as something less than enjoyable, teachers were unable to achieve this. For many students, school had become "a painful ordeal" ("On happiness and," 2006). Michael Thompson (2009) said, "In years past, teaching used to be a more leisurely profession. Not that it was ever easy, but there is definitely greater anxiety about time today." Students looked at teachers as their future and if all they saw was a life of stress, divorce, obesity, diabetes, and other problems from the pressures placed upon them, how could that motivate a lifetime of learning?

Schools didn't satisfy everyone every time. Dropping out of high school was becoming an alarming problem when students had to compete on a global-

scale. Balfanz (2009) claimed that only one in three students were graduating high school prepared for success in college. This was further claimed to be alarming because this should be a high school's primary goal (Balfanz, 2009). Using this standard, high schools were under-preparing over half of their students.

The standards of public education had changed over the last hundred years and the purpose of education had changed as well. The public wanted students to be better prepared for the rigors of college. In actuality, the demand on public education had become more focused, not less focused like so often it seemed. The responsibility of citizenship (Raubinger, et al. 1969) and the owing of service to the country (Roosevelt, 1930) was no longer considered to be a primary purpose of school. The public wanted their children to go to college, and schools needed to help that dream become a reality.

The Importance of Adolescent Literacy

With the pressure on schools to create students that were strong in math, reading, and writing, the focus of many schools became literacy, especially reading. Interests in reading were low nation-wide. A summary of 10 key findings was compiled by Dana Gioia for the National Endowment for the Arts. Entitled "Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America," the conclusions of the summary were grave to anyone who values literacy in American society. "The report can be summarized in a single sentence: literary reading in America is not only declining among all groups, but the rate of decline has accelerated, especially among the young" (Gioia, 2002). The survey results reflected much greater fears

than just the possible death of literary reading. "The decline in reading . . . parallels a larger retreat from participation in civic and cultural life" (Gioia, 2002). The survey sampled 17,000 individuals and was the third such survey. Previous surveys were done in 1982 and 1992. For the first time, less than half of adult Americans now read literature. In this case, literature included novels, poetry, plays, or short stories (Gioia, 2002). Women still read more than men, but both groups were declining (Gioia, 2002). Over the past three surveys, adults between the ages of 18 and 34 had declined from being the most likely to read literature to being the least likely to read literature (Gioia, 2002). "Literary reading strongly correlates to other forms of civic participation" (Gioia, 2002). Literary readers performed volunteer work, visited museums, and attended performances and sporting events far more often than non-literary readers. Strangely, the percentage of income spent on books had declined only slightly. However, the amount of books that were literary were a smaller portion of this percentage than in the past. Gioia had made a strong case for the importance of literacy. Not only was it a great direction for schools to go in, but the collateral effects of literacy were also very positive. Having people that were more involved in their community was something Eleanor Roosevelt had stressed in her writings (1930).

In Lentners' (2007) case study, the writer looked at the life of Max, an eight-year-old boy. Following the literacy development of Max in a middle class family revealed the many roles and the many forms that literacy took in a child's life. The study reported on community, interpersonal, and personal literacy

activities that Max was involved in. At its core, Max's family was the most important role in the development of his reading and writing skills, but Max always valued the opinion of his peers.

An analysis of Max's life setting revealed a home rich with texts of various kinds. Lentners (2007) reported the following:

A large collection of music on compact disk, several video cassettes and DVDs of children's movies, and home movies, to notes in the kitchen and study and signs on the children's bedroom door; to newspapers, magazines, and collections of books belonging to all members of the family [were] located throughout the house. (p. 115)

Lentners attempted to create a series of literacy events that became a holistic part of Max's literacy development. The first of these events was the bedtime story. Max's father, Owen, was the bedtime story reader in his son's life. As Max learned to read on his own, Owen began to introduce books from his own childhood that Max might like as well. Max discovered a modern popular children's book on his own, so his father introduced him to a classic children's novel. Max then took the more challenging book to school and shared it with his friends. This was ". . . evidence of his taking an apprenticing role with his peers" (Lentners, 2007). When it came to literacy, many people complained of electronic gaming taking over children's time. Max incorporated his love of playing an online game with his love of writing plays and short stories. Max included locations and characters from the game into his own stories. Max also included various classic children's stories into

his own work. The researcher's analysis of Max's writing showed that his storytelling voice began to change as he became more familiar with classic literature. "This inter-generational dialogue from parents' generation to Max's generation is reminiscent of the oral tradition" (Lentners, 2007). Max's love of writing became an activity amongst his friends. They created their own series of adventures called "Tushyman." "This extended writing activity was a source of great fun and tremendous pride for Max and his friends over the period of about a year and a half . . ." (Lentners, 2007). As Max and his friends improved their reading, their writing became more sophisticated as well. The main character changed from "Tushyman" to "Super Snowman" (Lentners, 2007). As the characters changed so did the plot; instead of having adventures the character soon began to fight crime. ". . . Max worked interdependently with his peers, taking on active and dynamically changing roles as he and his friends used writing to capture the fun they experienced in their play" (Lentners, 2007). The librarian at Max's school began to introduce comic books into the school to keep children interested in reading. This change soon became apparent in Max's literacy. Max began to check out books on drawing. He also took a course through a local community program on cartooning. As a result of this, Max taught his younger brother what he was learning. Another facet of Max's literacy development was music. At the age of seven, his parents started to have him take guitar lessons. They also introduced him to Bruce Springsteen. As a result, Max began to write music with lyrics very similar to Springsteen's style. This activity was another

example of Max connecting with his community through his literacy development. Throughout Max's development, he was constantly learning new things and the importance of his peers became evident. Every time he learned something new, he introduced it to his friends. The importance of acceptance was clear. Max seemed to value reading and writing, but if his peers rejected the things he brought to school, this could greatly impact Max's literacy development. Despite the obvious value that his parents had placed on literacy, Max was consistently connecting it back to his community and to the acceptance of his peers.

Max exemplified Gioia's research (2002) that people that read were also more likely to be involved in their community. Max was not just a good reader and writer; he was also a good member of his community. He used the resources that were provided to him through the community and shared them with his friends. Max also reinforces Sapuan's (2008) research on why students drop out of high school. Students that drop out were often frustrated with the services provided to them. They often lacked the language skills needed to succeed. Through the support in literacy he was receiving it became apparent that Max, in the future, found happiness in high school.

The Reading Habits of Teenagers

While Max was young for the focus of this research, Lentners' (2007) research on him did bring up an important question: What were teenagers reading? Max seemed atypical in his interest in reading and writing, but most high schools

in the country still had libraries. Teenagers were reading. After all, there were still plenty graduating high school and being successful in college.

In "Teenagers Talking about Reading and Libraries", researcher Snowball (2008) performed a series of interviews with teenagers to learn about their reading habits and opinions on reading and libraries. Snowball found that magazines were read by nearly all of the teenagers. Also, all of the teenagers used the internet, but most of them did not view that as reading. "The internet was where they looked for assignment information and then something fun to do after homework" (Snowball 2008). Of those that did report reading books frequently, most of them reported "raiding the family bookshelf" (Snowball 2008) as the primary means of getting books that they were interested in.

Hopper (2003) researched into what books were the most popular among adolescents. When teenagers chose their own reading materials, what interested them revealed a great deal about the motivation behind readers' desire to read. The most popular authors found during this research all fell under the category of fantasy. Magic, time travel, dragons, and mythology all seemed to hold high interest to teenage readers. However, when the research was split by gender, female teenagers showed interest in books about abuse, foster care, divorce, and other societal problems. Apparently, it seemed that while male readers were looking for ways to take their minds off their problems, females were looking for solutions to their problems. In both instances, the importance of reading while going through the struggles of adolescence could not be undermined.

As children reached puberty, the importance of schooling often suffered. In Shefelbine's booklet *Encouraging Your Junior High Student to Read* (1999), the writer addressed this very problem which Shefelbine witnessed in his daughters. Shefelbine found it fairly easy to keep them interested in reading while they were in elementary school, but as they grew older, Shefelbine found his approaches to be unsatisfactory. "Junior high students who are good readers read a great deal outside of school" (Shefelbine, 1999). Shefelbine stated this point and then supported it with this statistic: "According to one estimate, some read over 10 million words a year while others read as few as 100,000 words. That meant that some students 'practice' reading over a hundred times more than others, year after year" (Shefelbine, 1999). The point he made was that good readers were not born that way, nor were they naturally smarter. Practice had made these readers better and better readers did better in school. The writer also went on to include personal growth and enjoyment as important benefits of reading for pleasure. "Students struggle with being popular - something that can be as burdensome when they are popular as when they aren't" (Shefelbine, 1999). Reading about others with similar problems provided some relief from this stress and "help[ed] some students feel less isolated and less secure" (Shefelbine, 1999). The connection between literacy and happiness became stronger and stronger. The motivations behind reading created a search for happiness.

The Importance of Happiness

So what made students happy? Despite reading many documents, the

researcher of this work failed to find any evidence that having the new Xbox or Playstation was a factor in student happiness. In "Emotional and Narrative Responses of Students to Targeted Educational Experiences" by Mudge, Grinnan, and Priesmeyer (2006) , the study concluded that focusing on future events, thinking about times of liking school, and participating in activities that were non-academic increased feelings of happiness and interest and decreased feelings of contempt, disgust, and anger. All positive activities included playfulness, autonomy, and a sense of belonging. This research was based on Boekaerts' model of adaptable learning. In this model, "students are acknowledged as having two primary goals: 1) increasing their resources by learning what they need to learn, and 2) maintaining a reasonably positive sense of well-being" (2006). By identifying playfulness, independence, and being social, Mudge et al. (2006) had also shown that certain activities and classes lend themselves to being disliked in school. Certain classes were more social and more playful than others. Other classes created a sense of independence and autonomy. Classes that involved art, music, and exercise were often these types of classes. The focus on standardized testing was a very individualizing process. Studying vocabulary, writing essays, and analyzing stories, activities which often occurred in English classrooms, were often individual work with little social interaction.

In 2008, Sapuan came out with research on the unhappiest of students, high school drop-outs. The number one reason that students gave for dropping out was dissatisfaction with services. This included everything from administrators to

teaching techniques to language competencies. In other words, the school was failing to meet their needs. The next reason was social conditions. This varied from bullying to divorce or death in the family. The final reason was program requirements. This varied from lacking in motivation to course difficulty. In any of these cases, it seemed that reading connected students to the solution. Girls read for solutions to their problems and this helped with the social conditions being a problem for students. The third reason being program requirements could be solved with a higher reading level and therefore, greater involvement in the community around the student.

Methods of Achieving Happiness

In 2010, Buettner came out with a follow-up book to his research on life span (Buettner , 2010). Working for *National Geographic*, Buettner had discovered pockets throughout the world of people that lived significantly longer than the average person. In Buettner's more recent book *Thrive: Finding Happiness the Blue Zones Way*, Buettner wanted to discover pockets of people that were happier than the average person. Furthermore, Buettner wanted to discover the secrets to their happiness. Four areas were identified as places of higher than average happiness: Denmark, Singapore, Mexico, and San Luis Obispo. Each place provided different keys to unlock happiness. In Denmark, the keys to happiness identified were to build an environment of trust, to be tolerant, to seek status equality, to seek economic equality, to care for the young and old, to have freedom, to get the right job, to work just enough, to cultivate the art of living, to

make cozy, well-lit home environments, to nudge people toward social interaction, to optimize cities for activity, to volunteer, and to use taxes correctly. Education in Denmark was much different than education in America. The Danes had schools they called Danish folk high schools which ". . . prepared students for society and for participation in the arts" (Buettner , 2010). Even adults came in from time to time to take classes there and all for free. The design of these schools came from the idea to give ". . . peasants and other poor people a chance to appreciate the arts, to enjoy a poem, or to delight in a Mozart sonata" (Buettner, 2010).

The only place identified in the United States was San Luis Obispo, a city of nearly 50,000 people located between San Francisco and Los Angeles. A student group of three Cal Poly architecture students led the change in San Luis Obispo. They presented an idea to the city council to close the street in front of Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa and replace it with an art-filled park which came to be known as Mission Plaza. This began the change of the city's focus from quality of business to quality of life. Ordinances popped up that limited the size and appearance of signs, sidewalks and bike paths became important, public smoking was banned, and drive-through restaurants were banned. Not only did these changes improve appearances, but it began to improve the citizens' health. Exercise was easier because someone could walk through downtown more easily than driving through it. Nobody could just swing through a drive-through and pick up a greasy dinner. Less healthy options now took as much time as healthy options, so more people began to eat healthier.

Summary

Schools were facing a difficult time, but the focus on literacy seemed to be a positive direction. Reading could be connected to students who were more civic-minded to students learning to deal with the pressures of society. The argument connecting increased literacy to increased happiness now seemed like a fairly easy one to make. With Buettner (2010) showing that happier people were greatly involved with their community and Lentners (2007), Shefelbine (1991), and others having made the connection from reading to being more involved in the community, literacy appeared to be a positive area for the state to center its education dollars. Research seemed to point that this would work, but schools in action often found overlooked problems and brought about issues not noticed. Therefore, the research conducted for this paper connected reading and happiness.

Chapter 3

Methodology and Treatment of Data

Introduction

This research was modeled after Buettner's research in *Thrive: Finding Happiness the Blue Zones Way* (2010). Students were first surveyed using a Thurstone scale to self-assess their own happiness. Surveys that reported happiness as being 8 - 10 and agreed that they thought they would be happier in five years were collected into a pool. The pool was created with 28 students. Three students were then randomly selected for a semi-structured interview to identify the source of their happiness.

Methodology

The research used was qualitative to determine if a relationship existed between student happiness and the role of literacy in their personal happiness. The students' happiness levels were measured using a semantic differential scale with 1 being depressed or sad and 10 being completely happy and satisfied with life. After students had self-assessed their happiness levels, those that rated themselves 8 to 10 were collected into a pool and randomly selected for a semi-structured interview. The interviews covered six areas of student life: literacy, home, school, social life, community, and self. The goal of the research was to identify the happiest students and uncover the source of their happiness.

Participants

The sampled participants were 11th grade students at Connell High School.

They varied in age from 16-18 and came from a large variety of backgrounds.

Some lived in poverty in the trailer parks of Connell and Basin City. Some lived on high-income farms in Eltopia. Others lived in modest houses in Connell. Many of the students were of Hispanic backgrounds including first-, second-, and third-generation immigrants. For many of these students they were the first people in their family to learn English and had their eyes set on being the first of their family to go to college.

Instruments

Survey was the initial instrument used in this study. Surveys were weak in validity because they forced people to fit themselves into one of the choices even though they may not. This had been addressed by giving the students the Thurstone scale to score their happiness level. The Thurstone scale (Gay, 1992) provided a range of options and surveyed participants were able to find an answer that fit them well. The scale used was borrowed from Veenhoven (2005) which placed labels at various parts of a ten-point scale. The number 10 was labeled "extremely satisfied." The number 7 was labeled "very satisfied." The number 5 was labeled as "satisfied." The number 3 was labeled "fairly satisfied." The number 1 was labeled "not satisfied". Surveys were strong in reliability in that everyone received a fair chance and the same options. A different researcher giving the same survey should provide similar results with this population.

Interview was also used to gather data. Interviews were semi-structured and designed to cover a range of areas identified by Buettner (2010) in his

research as sources of happiness among the world population. Interviews took place in school and lasted around 10 minutes. The validity of the interview was controlled with attempting to recreate a similar environment, interviewer behavior, and participant enthusiasm. All interviews were done during the same period of time, the interviewer attempted to behave in a similar fashion in all interviews, and participants were entirely voluntary and were told they could not answer questions at any time. Interviewees still could invalidate the results by lying or purposefully attempting to skew the results (Gay 1992).

Design

To start with, all of the possible participants were given a parent permission form and it was explained what the researcher's purpose was and how this purpose would be achieved. The sample was then asked to return forms and when they did they would receive the survey portion of the research. Students were asked to rate themselves on a scale of 1 through 10 and to answer the question "Do you think you will be happier in five years?" Participants that answered between 8 and 10 and agreed that they would be happier in five years were collected into a pool. The pool was placed into a box and three were drawn out randomly. The drawn participants were then asked to be interviewed. The purpose of the interview was to identify the source of that student's happiness and to what level literacy played in that role.

Procedure

During the first week of March of 2011, the 11th-grade students were

informed orally and in writing of the purpose of the survey and the types of questions they will be asked. They then took an informed consent agreement home to their parents to get it signed. On March 11 of 2011, those students who returned the signed agreement were given a survey of two questions. The first question asked them to rate their happiness on a scale of 1 through 10. The second question asked if they thought they would be happier in five years. Students were encouraged to be honest when answering the survey. During the week of March 14 to March 18 when a student returned their survey, their score was checked and their survey was placed into the pool to be interviewed or placed into the pool of non-interview surveys. Three participants were drawn from the interview pool.

The interviews were conducted during lunch of March 28 to April 1 of 2011 and each took around ten minutes to complete. Questions centered around literacy, school, social life, community, home life, and self (Buettner 2010). The literacy-based questions (Appendix A) were created using research (Lentners, 2007). Interviews did not have firm questions, but often floated around topics and questions varied based on answers given. For each topic of the interview four to six areas were pre-planned for discussion. For literacy, six areas of questions were chosen: literature at home, recommending books, independent writing, sibling influence, and sources for books. For school, the questions centered on student talents, fitting in, teachers, and vacation. For the social life topic, questions centered on groups of friends, closest friend, involvement in social activities, and church. For the topic of community, students were asked about government,

tolerance, employment, shopping, walking, art, and birth control. On the topic of home life, students were asked about pets, television, quiet time, gardening, sunlight, and coloring. For the questions on the self, students were asked about hobbies, volunteering, and music.

Treatment of Data

Questions were initially compiled into a list (Appendix A). These provided a series of questions following Buettner's (2010) areas of focus and Lenters' (2007) research on literacy. The interviews with the three selected students were transcribed into Appendix B, C, and D.

The original pool of candidates that returned their permission forms was compiled into Table 1. This table contained where the students ranked themselves and how they answered the questions in the survey. The interviews with the three selected students were compiled into six tables which were broken down by Buettner's (2010) life domains and literacy.

Summary

The research followed the work in Buettner's book (2010). Because of the emphasis on reading and writing, research was conducted to identify a relationship with student happiness. The class of 2012 at Connell High School was surveyed by asking them to rate their happiness on a Thurstone scale. Students that identified themselves as an 8 or higher on a scale of 1-10 and thought they would be even happier in five years were pooled together. Three students from this pool were chosen at random and interviewed. These interviews covered the five life

domains identified by Buettner in his work (2010). These domains included home, work (school), community, self, and social life. The final area was literacy which was the researcher's area of focus. The original set of data from the survey was compiled into Table 1 to show the initial results. From the students that rated themselves from 8 to 10 on the happiness scale, three were randomly selected and interviewed. Their interviews were transcribed (Appendix B, C, and D) and compiled into Table 2, Table 3, Table 4, Table 5, Table 6, and Table 7.

Chapter 4

Analysis of the Data

Introduction

With the recent emphasis on reading and writing, the primary concern of this research was to identify a link between literacy and student happiness. Other sources of happiness were explored to evaluate possible connections to literacy.

Description of the Environment

This survey took place during March through April of 2011. The participants were teenagers of a small rural community of four towns. All of the participants were scheduled to graduate high school in 2012. They all attended a school of fewer than 600 students. The teenagers were asked to evaluate themselves as far as life satisfaction (happiness). Of the possible population, 60% for this survey were of Hispanic descent. The community was very agriculturally based and many of the participants were the children of farm owners and a large number of the adolescents were the children of farm workers or other agriculturally-based employment. During this time period in the community, new housing and a new elementary was being built across the street from the high school and the prison near the community had just completed a large expansion project. Other signs of growth in the community were the large number of art projects such as murals and statues on display in the community.

Hypothesis

Literacy-rich homes produced happier students. There was a positive relationship with more literacy creating more happiness.

Results of the Study

Of the 107 candidates for this research, 28 returned permission forms and completed a survey. This meant that 26.1% of the pool were involved in the research. Of the 28, 15 were male and 13 were female. 21 were of Hispanic descent.

In Table 1, the column on the far left labeled "Student Happiness Score" was part of the scale students had to use to identify their happiness level. No participants scored themselves below 5 on the scale, so all numbers below that were omitted. The center column labeled "Number of Students" represented the number of students that identified themselves for each happiness level. The final column on the right labeled "Happier in Five Years" was the number of students that answered the question "Do you think you will be happier in five years?" with a positive answer. The totals at the bottom represented the number of survey participants and how they answered the question. Only two students did not see themselves as being happier in five years.

Table 1

Student Happiness Survey Results

Student Happiness Score	Number of Students	Happier in Five Years
5	1	0
6	2	1
7	7	7
8	11	11
9	2	2
10	5	5
Totals	28	26

In Table 2, the results of the literacy portion of the interviews was

represented. This table included a summarized version of the student answers.

The first column reflected Student 1's answers. These answers made the high amount of literacy in this student's life quite apparent. Student 1 owned 200-300 books, received a weekly newspaper, talked about books with parents and friends, and frequently patronized bookstores and libraries. In the middle column, Student 2 reported the aspects of literacy in his life. Student 2 had 20 books in his house, purchased no magazines, had never witnessed his parents reading for pleasure, and never went to the library. Student 2 did report that he received a weekly newspaper and had attempted to write a song. In the right column, Student 3 reported that he had only ten books at home, never went to the library, and never used the internet to look up books. However, Student 3 did help his younger siblings with their homework, subscribed to a magazine, received three newspapers a week, went to the bookstore about once a week, and had been recommended a book from a friend.

Table 2

Literacy Question Results

Student 1	Student 2	Student 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 200-300 books at home - Received weekly newspaper - No magazines - Talked to parents and friends about books - Recommended a book by friends and parents - Helped younger sister with spelling - Occasional bedtime stories as a child - Frequented library four times a month - Frequented bookstores twice a month - Used internet to look up books, but later checked them out in a library 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 20 books at home - Received Weekly Newspaper - No magazines - Had not talked to friends about books in nearly five years - Parents do not read. - Tried writing a song, but did not like it - Had not been to the library in two years - Had been to a bookstore about once a year - Had never used the internet to look up books 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10 books at home - Read three newspapers a week - Subscribed to <i>Game Informer</i> magazine - Used to help younger siblings with homework - Never had help on homework from older siblings - Never went to the library - Went to the bookstore about once a week - Never used the internet for books

In Table 3, student interviews centered on school. In the left column,

Student 1 wished to have gone to a bigger school, found some teachers approachable and trustworthy, and relaxed during breaks and vacations. In the center column, Student 2 reported some teachers as trustworthy and approachable, felt that his talents were being used, and worked during summer vacation. Student 2 also reported playing soccer during spring break, but used winter break to relax. In the right column, Student 3 felt his talents were well used and that he was at the right school. Student 3 thought the teachers were trustworthy and approachable. Student 3 generally relaxed during vacations and breaks.

Table 3

School Question Results

Student 1	Student 2	Student 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Wished to have gone to a bigger school- Some teachers were approachable- Trusted some teachers- Did not feel that teachers offer useful feedback- Relaxed during vacations and breaks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Felt his talents were being used- Some teachers were trustworthy and approachable- Worked during the summer, practices soccer during spring break- Relaxed during winter break	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Used his talents at school like memorization of dates- Felt like he's at the right school- Teachers were approachable and trustworthy- Generally, relaxed during vacations

In Table 4, student answers on their social life were recorded. On the left,

Student 1 found friends to be funny, exciting, and focused on laughter. Student 1 described her best friend as being always there and trustworthy. Student 1 did not participate in any clubs or activities. In the center column, Student 2 said that his friends liked to mess around and tell jokes. Student 2 described his best friend as someone that listened to his problems and provided solutions. Student 2 was very involved with soccer. In the left column, Student 3 described his friends as random and really fun to be with. Student 3 was not involved in school clubs or activities, but did attend church twice a week.

Table 4

Social Life Question Results

Student 1	Student 2	Student 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Friends were funny, exciting, and focused on laughter.-Best friend was trustworthy and always there.- Did not participate in sports or activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Friends liked to mess around and tell jokes.- Best friend listened to his problems and provided solutions.- Involved in soccer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Friends were random and really fun to be with.- Not involved in any clubs or sports- Used to go to church twice a week

In Table 5, community was the focus of the student questions. On the left,

Student 1 described the government as not fair and thought it difficult to find a job. Student 1 said that her community was difficult to walk around because there were no sidewalks. Student 1 did go shopping twice a month and attended a play about once a month. In the center column, Student 2 said that the government was sometimes fair. Student 2 found the community to be tolerant, but that it was not really easy to get a job there. Student 2 reported that it was easy to walk around and go shopping in his community. In the right column, Student 3 said that he doesn't trust the government. Student 3 thought the community was tolerant, but it was difficult to get a job. Student 3 also felt it was not easy to go shopping and never attended plays or museums.

Table 5

Community Question Results

Student 1	Student 2	Student 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Government was not fair.- Thought it was too difficult to find a job- Community was difficult to walk around as it had no job sidewalks- Shopped about twice a month- Attended a play about once a month	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Government was sometimes fair.- Community was tolerant.- Not really easy to get a shop and walk around in the community- Believed it was easy to shop and walk around in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Did not trust the government- Felt the community was tolerant- Jobs were difficult to get- Shopping was not easy in the community- Never went to plays or museums

In Table 6, students reported on their home lives. In the left column,

Student 1 owned one dog and one cat. Student 1 had five televisions at home, watched about two to three hours of television per day, and had about 100 channels. Student 1 used the garage as her quiet space to relax. Student 1 had a flower garden and reported lots of sunlight coming through the window. In the center column, Student 2 owned two dogs. Student 2 had two televisions, had about fifty channels, and watched about three hours of television per day. Student 2 grew a garden for peppers and tomatoes and reported that his windows were sometimes covered. Student 2 claimed that his quiet space was outside. In the right column, Student 3 owned one dog. Student 3 had three televisions, watched about four hours a day, and had about 500 channels. Student 3 used his bedroom as his quiet space. Student 3 had a vegetable garden and lots of light emitted through the windows.

Table 6

Home Life Question Results

Student 1	Student 2	Student 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- One dog and one cat- Five televisions at home- Watched about two to three hours a day- Had about 100 channels- Used the garage as a quiet place- Flower garden at home- Lots of sun came through windows	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Two dogs- Two televisions- Watched about three hours a day- about 50 channels- Went outside for a quiet space- Had a garden for tomatoes and peppers- Windows were sometimes covered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- One dog- Three televisions- Watched about four hours a day- Had about 500 channels- Bedroom was a quiet space.- Had a garden for vegetables- Windows brought lots of light

In Table 7, student answers about themselves were reported. In the left

column, Student 1 said she had no hobbies then claimed reading as her hobby.

Student 1 volunteered at the elementary school. Student 1 listened to four to five hours of music per day, enjoyed grunge and alternative music, and used to play the drums. In the center column, Student 2 reported soccer and listening to music as his hobbies. Student 2 last volunteered a year ago. Student 2 listened to music about sixty to ninety minutes each day, primarily enjoyed Spanish and country, and did not play any instruments. In the right column, Student 3 reported video games as his primary hobby. Student 3 volunteered one time. Student 3 listened to two hours of music each day and played the drums.

Table 7

Self Question Results

Student 1	Student 2	Student 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- No hobbies, maybe reading- Volunteered at the elementary school- Listened to alternative and grunge music- Listened to music four to five hours a day- Used to try the drums	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Hobbies included soccer and listening to music- Volunteered a year ago- Listened to music about one hour and a half per day- Listened to Spanish music, country.- No instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Video games were primary hobby.- Listened to music about two hours a day.- Volunteered once.- Played the drums

Findings

The hypothesis of literacy having an impact on happiness was difficult to prove with the data that was collected. Of the three subjects that were interviewed, two of them had significant amounts of literacy in their lives. Student 1 and Student 3 reported that books were prominent in their lives. Whereas, Student 2 reported books to be almost nonexistent in his life. None of the interviewed students reported writing as being an important piece in their life.

The data from the interviews supported that other factors played a greater role in the happiness of the interviewed students. Reading and writing may not be the sole cause of student happiness, but it played a supporting role. Student 1's source of happiness appeared to be listening to music, reading and her friendships. The primary source of happiness for Student 2 appeared to be soccer, spending time outdoors, and his friendships. Student 3 appeared to find happiness in video games and reading.

Student 1 and Student 3 found some happiness in reading through their feelings of seclusion. They also were not involved in any sports or activities through the school. Student 1 had the most televisions at home and Student 3 watched the most television and had the most channels to watch. Student 1 and Student 3 were also the most involved in music. Both had tried to play the drums and spent the most time listening to music. Watching TV, listening to music, and reading were all activities a person can do alone. Neither Student 1 or Student 3 participated in clubs or activities and both had a distrust of the government.

participated in clubs or activities and both had a distrust of the government.

Student 2 centered his life on being outside. Student 2 was the only participant to report his quiet place as being outside. Student 2 enjoyed the outdoor sport of soccer so much that he even reported spending spring break playing soccer. Student 2 was also the only one to report working during summer break.

Discussion

With the exception of Student 2, the hypothesis that literacy improves happiness was true. This participant, however, fit in with the research on happiness in Mexico (Buettner 2010). The focus in this case was spending time with friends, being active, and being outside. Student 2 fit all of this perfectly. This participant watched television the least, read the least, and was the only one that participated in a sport.

Student 1 and Student 3 appeared to fit the hypothesis. Literacy was a major part of their lives and extended beyond just reading a book. Literacy fit in with their social life, their home life, and their self. Student 3 reported few books at home, but was a frequent visitor to the bookstore. Student 3 was also most likely to purchase a book. Student 1 had a large library at home and would use that as a primary source for reading.

In Lentners' (2007) case study of Max, the researcher found that literacy permeated the life of the subject. Max included literacy in nearly every aspect of his life: he wrote and read with friends, he spent his free time at the library, and

frequently listened to music. Student 1 was the most avid reader and fit the part of Max the closest. Student 3 fit a different aspect of Max's life: video games. Max discussed video games often and used them to further his literacy. Student 3 did the same thing including subscribing to a magazine about video games.

Student 2 was the exception and most closely fit with Buettner's (2010) research on happiness in Mexico. Of the unique aspects of happiness in Mexico identified by Buettner (2010), Student 2 strongly fit with four. He oversocialized which explained the lack of time he spent watching television or reading. He enjoyed the benefits of being outside and received the sun bonus. Student 2 also enjoyed nurturing laughter. Although quiet during class, Student 2 loved laughing and listening to jokes. Student 2 also enjoyed the benefit of living inside the small town which provided a personal sense of freedom. Student 2 could walk to friends' homes, grocery stores, or numerous fields to play soccer. Student 2 did not feel the limits of distance, safety, or parental rules.

In Roosevelt's (1930) piece on the purpose of education, she emphasizes the importance of schools producing citizens. Roosevelt defined a citizen as someone who was active in their government and did not let bad people serve in the government. Roosevelt felt this duty rested on the rich and poor, and she stated that even if someone was not a member of the government, it was everyone's duty to make sure the best people were serving. Student 1 was the only participant that provided service back to her community through volunteering at the local elementary school. Student 1 was also the only one that patronized one of the few

examples of the arts in the local community. Student 3 was very withdrawn, but was knowledgeable about his community and the government's trustworthiness. Student 2 frequently used the public park system and local roads and sidewalks. Student 2 was the only one that worked during the summer. This provided not only money to Student 2, but informed him of taxes and by using the parks, he witnessed his taxes at work.

Summary

This research started with the idea that there would be a connection between literacy-rich homes and student happiness. The participants of the study lived in a small, rural area of Eastern Washington in the spring of 2011. All of the participants were from the class of 2012. The pool of participants was narrowed down to 28 students who were surveyed. Of the surveyed participants, three were selected to be interviewed. The interviews were designed to evaluate the amount of literacy in a student's life and to examine other areas of their life for sources of happiness.

Student 1 provided the strongest case that the hypothesis was correct. Student 1 had a strong relationship with literacy by owning a large number of books and bringing her love of reading to other areas of her life. Student 2 was completely different from Student 1. Student 2 read very little and owned very few books. By examining other areas of his life, Student 2 found happiness through a variety of different methods. Student 3 had a reasonably good relationship with literacy, but Student 3's home could not be called literacy rich. In

order to provide literacy for himself, Student 3 had to use his own resources to acquire them. Student 3 purchased his books at a bookstore and purchased his own magazine subscription. Student 3 appeared to have limited access to a public library.

The research Buettner (2010) did on happiness provided the best examples of how Student 2 achieved happiness. Buettner's research on Mexico fit incredibly well with Student 2's non-literacy activities. Student 1 and Student 3 had connections with Lentners' (2007) research on Max. All of the participants had a connection with Roosevelt's (1930) piece on schools creating citizens as the participants all found a connection back to their community.

Student 1 and Student 3 were not involved in sports at all and therefore, had the leisure time to include more reading, music, and television in their lives. Student 1 strengthened her friendships and love of reading by combining the two and discussing books with her friends. Student 3 strengthened his knowledge of video games by reading about them. Student 2 had not made this connection with his love of soccer. Student 2 spent a larger portion of his day outside, walking around the community, and playing soccer.

The hypothesis that literacy-rich homes created happier students was supported with Student 1 and Student 3. Student 2 did not have a literacy-rich home, but he had found a different route to happiness.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to see if literacy-rich homes produced happier students. Through survey and interview, the happiness level of students was measured and the source of their happiness was attempted to be identified.

Summary

As the American culture started changing from a culture driven toward money for survival to one driven toward happiness, schools would have to change to reflect that. Schools were mandated by NCLB to provide testing of students to insure that they were being properly educated. In Washington state, the only two subjects a student had to pass on the HSPE were reading and writing. By emphasizing the importance of reading and writing, schools were holding those two subjects up as the most important. This emphasis would create better readers, but would that emphasis in student homes create a happier student? The assumption was made that there would be a connection between literacy and happiness. In rural Washington, a small community's students became participants in a study to examine that question. 108 members of the class of 2012 were offered a chance to be surveyed. 28 surveys were returned and compiled into a pool. Of the 28 students, 26 had answered that they thought themselves to be between 8 and 10 on the happiness scale and would be happier in five years. Three

of these candidates were selected to be interviewed.

The purpose of public education, according to Roosevelt (1930), was to create citizens. Wiggins and McTighe (2008) simplified the purpose of education to "making meaning and transfer of learning." In an interview with Michael Thompson ("On happiness and," 2006), Thompson pointed out that we want students to be driven by an intrinsic love of learning and that the idea of having an intrinsic love of learning had been left behind. Gioia (2002) made a strong connection from adult literacy to higher levels of citizenship, such as being active in the civic arts and public sporting events. Lentners (2007) did a case study on an eight-year-old, Max, that connected this idea of literacy creating better citizens like Roosevelt desired. What teenagers were reading was a question that was answered by Snowball's (2008) research. Many teenagers were reading, but they were not all reading books. Teenagers read magazines, text messages, and web pages, but they did not often consider that reading. Hopper's (2003) research showed that those that did read books often valued the escapism and fantasy that books provided. What made students happy according to Mudge et al. (2006) was playfulness, autonomy, and a sense of belonging. Buettner (2010) performed a world wide study of what made the happiest people happy. Buettner's research provided examples of multiple routes to happiness which he narrowed down to five domains of life: school, social life, community, self, and home.

The survey used was based off Buettner's (2010) research and was a Thurstone scale (Gay, 1992). Students that answered 8 to 10 on the scale and

answered positively to the the question of being happier in five years were pooled together. Three were randomly selected and interview. The interview questions were based on Buettner's (2010) domains of life with the literacy-based question coming from Lentners' (2007) research. All of the research was conducted in March of 2011. Data was compiled into a series of tables. Table 1 was merely numbers from the initial survey. The interviews were broken down into summaries and compiled into Table 2 through Table 7.

Findings from these interviews included that the most athletic participant, Student 2, had the least literacy-rich home. Student 1 and Student 3 connected literacy to other facets of their lives including friendships and video games. This idea connected Student 1 and Student 3 strongly with Max from Lentners' (2007) research. While the route to happiness Student 2 had taken connected with Buettner's (2010) research.

Conclusions

Because of the contrast of Student 2 to Student 1 and Student 3, it can be concluded that students involved in sports are less likely to come from literacy-rich homes. Student 2 reported having few books at home, rarely going to a library or bookstore, and never witnessing his parents reading. This lack of literacy at home forced Student 2 to look for another route to happiness. Student 2's love of soccer and the outdoors were the results of this. Student 2 had connected with multiple sources of happiness as identified by Buettner (2010). Being outdoors provides a sun bonus and playing soccer is an obvious form of exercise, another

source of happiness. By playing soccer, Student 2 made connections with friends and found two other sources of happiness: oversocializing and nurturing laughter. Student 2 also reported finding walking around the community to be easy. This provided him with autonomy. Mudge et al. (2006) identified playfulness, autonomy, and a sense of belonging as something all positive activities include. Student 2 did all three when he walked from his house to play soccer with his friends across town.

Student 1 reported that it was not easy to walk around her community as there were no sidewalks. Student 3 reported that it was difficult to shop in his community. Both Student 1 and Student 3 created a sense of isolation. This isolation forced both of them to dig deeper into activities and needs that they had. Student 3, despite not living in a literacy-rich home, used literacy as a way to learn more about another of his hobbies, video games. Student 1 used reading as a way to escape and to connect with friends. These two examples of using reading to reach out to other areas are similar to Lentners' research on Max. Max often introduced literacy elements to friends including writing stories about video games. The conclusion could be made that this isolation forces students to find happiness through means other than socializing and sports. Isolation forces students to use reading to find happiness. While Student 3 had the means to purchase a magazine subscription and books from a bookstore, it would be easier for a student in a literacy-rich home to find happiness through literacy.

Even if a student was not physically isolated, they may have felt isolated

through a lack of resources such as places to shop or sidewalks to use. This isolation provided them with the time and desire to read. Literacy-rich homes may not be the sole reason that a student was happy, but it provided a route to increase their happiness.

Recommendations

Based on these conclusions, it was recommended that future research look into the literacy of students that have a feeling of isolation in comparison to students that do not feel isolated. In this case, literacy should be strongly emphasized to all students as many teenagers feel isolated at some point in their lives.

Because Student 2 lacked a literacy-rich home, this may be the source for the lack of literacy in his life. Student 3 also lived in a literacy-poor home, but worked to create more literacy in his life. Student 3 had knowledge that Student 2 did not. Another recommendation is that students be taught how to use the resources of the community, such as the public library and parks systems.

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APPENDIX A

Proposed Questions for Participant Interviews

1. Literacy

How many books do you have at home?

Do you subscribe or purchase any newspapers, magazines at home?

Have your parents ever recommended a book to you?

Have your friends ever recommended a book to you?

Do you ever do any independent writing at home?

Do you ever help your younger siblings with homework?

Does your older sibling(s) ever help you with your homework?

How often do you go to the library? bookstore?

Do you ever use the internet to shop for books or learn about books?

2. School

Do you feel that your talents are being used at school?

Do you feel that you fit in at school?

Are the teachers approachable?

Do they give quality feedback?

Are the teachers trustworthy and do they listen to you?

Do you use winter break or summer vacation for relaxing or working?

3. Social Life

Describe your friends in general.

Describe your closest friend.

Are you involved in social clubs, activities at school, or any sports?

Do you regularly attend church?

4. Community

Do you think you can trust the government?

Do you think the government is fair?

Do you feel that this community is tolerant of outsiders?

Do you feel that this community has adequate employment opportunities?

Do you feel it is easy to shop here?

If you need to walk somewhere in the community, do you find it easy to walk around?

Do ever go to show gardens, theaters, dances, museums, etc.?

Do you feel knowledgeable about birth control?

5. Home Life

Do you have any pets

How many television channels do you have?

How many hours per day do you watch television?

Do you have a space that is quiet at home?

Do you have a garden?

In your windows at home, is there a lot of sunlight?

What colors of paint are on your walls?

6. Self

Do you have any hobbies?

Do you ever volunteer?

Do you play any musical instruments?

How often do you listen to music?

APPENDIX B

Student 1's Interview

Researcher: All right, all the questions will relate to literacy, school, social life, community, home life, and yourself.

Student One: Mmm-hmm

Researcher: All right, so mostly will be starting off on literacy and the other parts will be more brief. All right, how many books would you say you have at home?

Student One: Um, I'd say at least 200, may be three because there's more in boxes in the garage.

Researcher: Do you get a newspaper? At your house?

Student One: Yes.

Researcher: How often do you get a paper?

Student One: Usually we get the Connell one and sometimes my dad buys a newspaper.

Researcher: Do you have subscriptions to magazines?

Student One: None

Researcher: Have you ever had a friend or family member recommend a book to you?

Student One: Yes, many times.

Researcher: Do you talk about books with your friends?

Student One: Yes.

Researcher: Could you give me an example?

Student One: Just today in first period we were talking about the series House of Night.

Researcher: Do your parents ever recommend books to you?

Student One: Um, sometimes, not really.

Researcher: Can you think of one?

Student One: Um, Napoleon Bonaparte. My dad says I should read that.

Researcher: Do you ever write for fun? Short stories, poems, things like that.

Student One: Not really. I tried and didn't really like it.

Researcher: Do you have any younger siblings?

Student One: Younger sister.

Researcher: Do you ever help her with reading and writing?

Student One: Yeah.

Researcher: Could you give an example of a time that you helped her?

Student One: Um, usually just with homework and if she's trying to spell something, she usually comes to me.

Researcher: Do you ever help her with essays?

Student One: She's in second grade.

Researcher: Do you remember having bedtime stories?

Student One: Yes

Researcher: Was it a ritual, like you always did it?

Student One: No, just sometimes.

Researcher: Do you remember reading books to your parents?

Student One: Yeah.

Researcher: How often would you say you go to the library?

Student One: Four times a month.

Researcher: Would that be the high school or the public one?

Student One: The public one right across the street.

Researcher: Do you ever go to bookstores?

Student One: Uh, yes.

Researcher: How often would you say you go to bookstores?

Student One: Every time I go to the mall, so twice a month.

Researcher: Do you ever buy them?

Student One: Not really, not that much.

Researcher: Do you go to Amazon.com?

Student One: Yeah.

Researcher: Do you buy books there ever?

Student One: No.

Researcher: Do you just look up books?

Student One: Yeah, I just look for them and then get them at the library.

Researcher: Do you ever visit other book websites? Do you ever visit author websites?

Student One: Yeah.

Researcher: Do you ever post on message boards about books?

Student One: Yeah, sometimes.

Researcher: Before you read a book, do you say that you are in a reading mood?

Student One: Yeah

Researcher: Could you describe what a reading mood would be like to?

Student One: When I have time to read it and when I'm tired of watching tV or being on the internet and I just want to sit down and read?

Researcher: Now all about school. Do you feel you are at the right school?

Student One: At times and sometimes I think I should have gone to a bigger school.

Researcher: Do the teachers here feel approachable? Can you talk to them?

Student One: Some of them, but not all.

Researcher: Do they offer useful feedback?

Student One: Not really.

Researcher: Do you feel you can trust the teachers here?

Student One: Um, I guess some.

Researcher: When you say some, do you mean like three out of seven, four out of seven?

Student One: Like two out of seven.

Researcher: We have spring break coming up and other vacations. Do you take the vacation or do you work?

Student One: Usually take the vacation.

Researcher: Do you travel?

Student One: Yes

Researcher: Do you read when you travel?

Student One: Mostly yeah. I take books in the car.

Researcher: Now I'm going to ask about your social life. In general when you think of your friends, how would you describe them?

Student One: Funny and exciting. Always focused on the next big laugh, they don't take things too seriously.

Researcher: I don't need a name, but when you think of your closest friend, how would you describe them?

Student One: Trustworthy and always there when I need her. When we talk, we always have the same thing in common. We just relate.

Researcher: Are you a member of any sports, clubs, or other activities?

Student One: At the moment, no.

Researcher: Do you attend church in any way?

Student One: Holidays.

Researcher: Now I'm going to ask you about the community. When you think of the government, do you think of it as being fair?

Student One: Uh, not really. I mean they are a government and they do what they are supposed to, but there are moments when they are not fair.

Researcher: Do you feel that this community is tolerant of who you are?

Student One: Um, I guess I would say yeah.

Researcher: When you graduate high school and you don't go to college or join the military, do you think you could find a job very easily?

Student One: No, I don't think so.

Researcher: How often would you say you go shopping?

Student One: Twice a month.

Researcher: Do you feel the community is easy to walk around?

Student One: No, there are no sidewalks in Eltopia.

Researcher: Do you ever attend plays, visit museums, flower gardens, etc.?

Student One: Yes, a few months ago I went to some plays in San Pedro with my friends. Plays the school put on and plays at the park.

Researcher: The next question I'm going to try and put as well as I can. I will only ask about this topic once. Um, do you consider yourself knowledgeable about birth control?

Student One: Yes

Researcher: All right the next questions have to do with your home life. Do you have any pets?

Student One: Yeah, one dog and one cat.

Researcher: How many TVs do you have in your house?

Student One: 5

Researcher: How many hours a day do you watch TV?

Student One: Um, about two to three.

Researcher: How many channels do you have?

Student One: I don't know.

Researcher: 10, 50, 100, 200?

Student One: About 100.

Researcher: Do you have a quiet space you can get away from it all?

Student One: Yes.

Researcher: Where is that?

Student One: My garage.

Researcher: Do you have a place in your house for awards, pictures and other things that bring the family pride?

Student One: Yes

Researcher: Do you have a garden at home?

Student One: Yeah.

Researcher: What do you grow in the garden?

Student One: Flowers.

Researcher: Any fruits or vegetables?

Student One: No.

Researcher: When you think of the windows in your house, do they let in a lot of light or is it pretty dark?

Student One: Lots of sun.

Researcher: What colors are the walls in your house?

Student One: Beige.

Researcher: No other colors?

Student One: No, they are all beige.

Researcher: The next set of questions are about yourself. Do you have any hobbies?

Student One: No, not really. Reading, I guess.

Researcher: Do you volunteer?

Student One: I used to at the elementary in San Pedro.

Researcher: What type of music do you listen to?

Student One: Alternative and grunge mostly.

Researcher: How many hours per day would you say you listen to music?

Student One: Four to five hours.

Researcher: Do you play any instruments?

Student One: Not really. I used to try to learn to play the drums.

Researcher: Well, that's all. Thank you for the interview.

[End of Recording]

APPENDIX C

Student 2's Interview

Researcher: These questions will cover literacy, school, your social, your community, your home, and your self. All right, the first questions are all about literacy. How many books do you have at your house?

Student Two: Uh, like 20.

Researcher: Do you get a newspaper?

Student Two: Once a week.

Researcher: Do you get magazines?

Student Two: No, not really.

Researcher: Have your parents ever recommended a book to you?

Student Two: Not really.

Researcher: Have you ever seen your parents reading?

Student Two: Never.

Researcher: Have your friends ever recommended a book for you?

Student Two: Once, like in sixth grade.

Researcher: Do you ever write stories or poems for fun?

Student Two: Never. I tried writing a song, but no.

Researcher: How often do you go to the library?

Student Two: Never.

Researcher: When was the last time you went to the library?

Student Two: Two years ago.

Researcher: Do you ever go to the bookstore?

Student Two: Sometimes.

Researcher: How often would you say you go?

Student Two: One time a year.

Researcher: Have you ever been to Amazon.com or other book related websites?

Student Two: No, I have never been to any.

Researcher: The next questions are all about school. Do you feel this school allows you to use your talents?

Student Two: Yes.

Researcher: Could you give an example of a talent you are able to use?

Student Two: The teachers let me explain myself.

Researcher: Do you feel that you are at the right school?

Student Two: Yes.

Researcher: Do you feel the teachers are approachable and trustworthy?

Student Two: Some of them.

Researcher: Out of the seven you have each day, how many would you say are approachable and trustworthy?

Student Two: Five out seven.

Researcher: Do you take a vacation during our breaks or do you work?

Student Two: I only work during the summer. Spring break I have soccer practice. Winter break I just relax.

Researcher: The next questions are about your social life. When you think of your friends, how would you describe them?

Student Two: They like to mess around and tell jokes. They're pretty good.

Researcher: When you think of your closest friend, how would you describe them?

Student Two: They listen to my problems and tell me what to do to make it better.

Researcher: Are you involved in any sports, clubs, or other activities?

Student Two: Just soccer.

Researcher: Do you go to church?

Student Two: Not for like a year.

Researcher: Now I'm going to ask you about the community. Do you think the government is fair and trustworthy?

Student Two: Sometimes it's fair.

Researcher: Do you think the community is tolerant of you?

Student Two: Yes.

Researcher: Do you think it's easy to get a job here?

Student Two: Not really easy.

Researcher: Do you find it easy to go shopping here?

Student Two: Yes.

Researcher: Is it easy to walk around here?

Student Two: Yes.

Researcher: Do you ever visit flower gardens, museums, plays in theaters?

Student Two: Not really.

Researcher: Do you consider yourself knowledgeable about birth control?

Student Two: Yeah.

Researcher: The next set of questions are all about your home life. Do you have any pets?

Student Two: Two dogs.

Researcher: How many TVs do you have?

Student Two: Two.

Researcher: How many hours a day do you watch TV?

Student Two: 3 hours a day.

Researcher: How many channels do you have?

Student Two: Like 50.

Researcher: Do you have quiet space you can go to?

Student Two: Yes, outside where nobodies around.

Researcher: Do you have a garden?

Student Two: Yes.

Researcher: What do you grow in your garden?

Student Two: Tomatoes and, uh, peppers.

Researcher: When you think of the windows in your home, is there a lot of lot or are they dark and covered?

Student Two: Sometimes covered, sometimes there is lots of light.

Researcher: What color are the walls in your house?

Student Two: White and blue.

Researcher: What shade of blue? Light or dark?

Student Two: Dark blue.

Researcher: The final set of questions are all about your self. Do you have any hobbies?

Student Two: Listening to music, playing soccer.

Researcher: Do you volunteer?

Student Two: Last year.

Researcher: How many hours per day do you listen to music?

Student Two: One and a half hours a day.

Researcher: What type of music do you listen to?

Student Two: Spanish music, country, some rap.

Researcher: Do you know how to play any instruments?

Student Two: No.

Researcher: Thank you for your time.

[End of Interview]

APPENDIX D

Student Three's Interview

Researcher: How many books do you have at your house?

Student Three: Including the phone book? Like 10.

Researcher: Do you ever get a newspaper at your house?

Student Three: Three a week.

Researcher: Do you subscribe to any magazines?

Student Three: Game Informer.

Researcher: Do you ever write for fun? Short stories? Poems?

Student Three: No.

Researcher: Do you have any younger siblings?

Student Three: Yes.

Researcher: Do you ever help them with writing and reading?

Student Three: I used to about twice a week, but not anymore.

Researcher: Why not anymore?

Student Three: They live with my dad and I live with my mom.

Researcher: Do you have any older siblings?

Student Three: Yeah.

Researcher: Did they ever help you with your homework?

Student Three: No.

Researcher: Do you go to the library?

Student Three: I used to before I moved.

Researcher: Do you ever go to the bookstore?

Student Three: Yeah, Barnes and Nobles.

Researcher: How often do you go there?

Student Three: Once a week.

Researcher: Do you ever buy anything?

Student Three: Like once a month.

Researcher: Have you ever been to Amazon.com?

Student Three: No.

Researcher: Do you feel that this school allows you to use your talents? If so, what talents can you use here?

Student Three: Yes, I can remember history really easy.

Researcher: Do you feel that you are at the right school?

Student Three: Yeah.

Researcher: Do you feel the teachers are approachable and trustworthy?

Student Three: Yes

Researcher: During vacations, do you work or do you just relax.

Student Three: I relax. I chill.

Researcher: Describe your friends in general.

Student Three: Awesome. Funny.

Researcher: When you think of your closest friend, how would you describe that person?

Student Three: Random. Really fun to be with.

Researcher: Are you involved in any sports, clubs, or activities?

Student Three: No.

Researcher: Do you go to church?

Student Three: I used to go twice a week before I moved. Now, we never go.

Researcher: Do you trust the government?

Student Three: No, there are too many cover-ups like Roswell.

Researcher: Do you feel that the community is tolerant of you?

Student Three: Yes, I live in Mexican town.

Researcher: Do you feel that getting a job here would be easy?

Student Three: No, everything is too far.

Researcher: Do you find it easy to go shopping here?

Student Three: Yeah, at Wal-Mart.

Researcher: Not here though?

Student Three: No.

Researcher: Is it easy to walk here?

Student Three: No, there are no sidewalks.

Researcher: Do you ever go to plays, museums, etc.?

Student Three: No.

Researcher: Are you knowledgeable about birth control?

Student Three: Yes.

Researcher: Do you have any pets?

Student Three: A dog.

Researcher: How many TVs do you have?

Student Three: Three.

Researcher: How many hours do you watch TV each day?

Student Three: About four hours.

Researcher: How many channels would you say you have?

Student Three: I don't know. 500.

Researcher: Do you have a quiet space to get away from it all?

Student Three: Yes, my room.

Researcher: Do you have a garden?

Student Three: Yes.

Researcher: What do you grow in your garden?

Student Three: Vegetables, tomatoes.

Researcher: As far light goes, how would you describe your windows?

Student Three: Open with lots of light.

Researcher: What color are the walls in your house?

Student Three: White, but we have one that's like a pale yellow color.

Researcher: Do you have any hobbies?

Student Three: Just video games.

Researcher: Do you volunteer?

Student Three: No, once in Idaho I helped scrap the ice off a parking lot.

Researcher: How many hours per day do you listen to music?

Student Three: Two.

Researcher: Do you ever write songs?

Student Three: No.

Researcher: Do you play any instruments?

Student Three: I can play the drums.

Researcher: That's all. Thanks for the interview. [End of Interview]