

**An exploration of young children's interpretation and understanding
of "well-being"**

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Abstract

This piece of research explored young children's (3-8 years) interpretation and understanding of well-being. The majority of research on well-being has been with adults and older children, with a distinct gap in younger children's perspective being included. Where subjective well-being has been part of research, it has tended to be an add-on to the more weighty and identifiable data from government statistics and pre-determined objective measures. Subjective well-being is prominent in this piece of research, thus securing young children's perspectives.

The research was undertaken with forty children across four year-groups in one large urban community Infant school in the East of England. Drawings, paintings or photographs together with their narrative explanations, were collected from the children. Eight children then categorised the data, ordering it by frequency and importance. The final categorisation resulted in six key themes from the children: 1. Family, 2. Doing things with Family, 3. Being outside, 4. Pets and animals, 5, Activities, games and toys, 6. Friends.

The researcher analysed the data using Barthes (1973, 1977) visual semiotic approach alongside a developmental perspective (Einarsdottir et al 2009), then thematic analysis. The researcher's key themes were 1. Key relationships, 2. Sense of self, and 3. Outdoor world, which encapsulated the children's themes and ideas.

The importance of key relationships to young children has implications for time spent with family having greater status. It was also evident that young children are developing a sense of self, and need support, validation, and time from key people for this to be successful. The outdoor world was also significant, which needs recognition, provision and value attributed to it.

The elements that make young children feel well and happy, need recognition and promotion by adults and professionals. Children's perspectives need greater prominence in the policy domain. This piece of research demonstrated that young children are able to interpret and understand well-being, with the findings showing differences, or differences in degree of emphasis, to those put forward by older children and adults.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

1.1 Defining well-being

In 1948, the World Health Organization (WHO) defined health as:

“...a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (WHO1948: 2; 2009),

demonstrating a rounded “whole person” perspective, putting health and well-being firmly together. However, the health and social care services provided from that time were often a focus for state intervention, and health services for purposes of practical delivery, were separated out into their component parts. The move towards more integrated and streamlined services, now suggests that in the past, the “whole” person ideal got lost in this separated-out provision. In addition, the move from a public health agenda that concentrated on health, fitness and the absence of disease to one that recognises the multi-dimensional nature of people’s lives, and the many factors that can affect health became more appropriate.

Well-being is now significant in public policy and as Oishi and Diener (2014 p195) purport, self-reported well-being can “track objective societal and economic conditions fairly well” and “help gauge the effectiveness of specific policies, as well as the psychological well-being of individuals and society at large”.

In the UK, the Whitehall Well-being Working Group (2006) cited in Steuer and Marks (2008, p.9), summed up well-being as:

“...a positive physical, social and mental state; it is not just the absence of pain, discomfort and incapacity. It arises not only from the action of individuals, but also from a host of collective goods and relationships with other people. It requires that basic needs are met, that individuals have a sense of purpose, and that they feel able to achieve important personal goals and participate in society. It is enhanced by conditions that include supportive personal relationships, involvement in empowered communities, good health, financial security, rewarding employment, and a healthy and attractive environment” (Steuer and Marks 2008, p.9).

Although the government working group definition is adult focused here, it does demonstrate an understanding of the complexity of its components, as opposed to the over-simplified definition given by the WHO (1948, 2009).

It is evident that constructions of well-being are complex and are influenced by whether society reflects individualistic or collective values. It also depends on whether the term is regarded as objective or subjective, whether it is a measurable state, an end in itself, or a process that can be positively supported.

Although definitions varied, well-being for children also:

“...encompasses developmentally appropriate tasks, milestones and contexts throughout the life course that are known to influence current quality of life and pave the way for future health and success” (Fauth and Thompson 2009),

showing it is associated with developmental stage transitions, and has both a current and future time dimension as well. As young children and adults experience and inhabit different worlds for much of the time, this suggests that there are distinctions between the well-being of both, that must be taken into account.

In their review of the child well-being literature, Pollard and Lee (2002) suggest that well-being consists of five distinct domains, or dimensions. They are physical, psychological, cognitive, social and economic. In much of the literature the psychological domain, which includes emotional aspects, is referred to as “emotional well-being” (Waters 2009 p17).

Well-being is multi-dimensional but generally understood to be the “quality of people’s lives” a more holistic interpretation that can include happiness and satisfaction with life (Statham and Chase 2010 p2, Rees et al 2009 p8).

As an element of well-being, subjective well-being is a positive evaluation of one's life associated with good feelings. Life satisfaction requires a cognitive evaluation of one's life situation, whereas happiness generally represents an emotional component. Subjective measures are frequently viewed as too individualised and lacking the robustness to inform policy (Statham and Chase 2010), although they are now seen as indicators of importance and used to inform, add to, and/or complement objective measures.

Research into subjective well-being suggests adults are often asked how “satisfied” they are with their lives (Cronin de Chavez et al 2005), but this term is not as commonly used with children. Cummins & Lau (2005) found the two terms “how satisfied are you with...” and “how happy are you with...” although not equivalent, yielded very similar data in their Australian research with adults and then school-age children and adolescents. Therefore my working definition of wellbeing with young children will be through the term “well and happy” when exploring their interpretation and understanding of well-being.

1.2 Importance of Well-being

Well-being is a social construct, generally perceived as a “good thing” by individuals and communities, and “should be a fundamental goal of any society” (Rees et al 2009 p10). It is a concept that has slowly risen to prominence in the last two decades particularly in developed societies. It has moved from something of concern to the individual, into the public sphere. As nations, societies and citizens prosper a move to measure aspects that demonstrate quality of life, and thus well-being, dominate. It is now topical and a popular term in the policy context, but it has proved difficult to define (Morrow and Mayall 2009, Pollard and Lee 2002). Well-being lacks a clear conceptual base, interpreted differently by key disciplines. These include health, medicine, education, sociology, psychology and economics (Cronin de Chavez et al 2005).

The majority of research in the last 50 years has focused on adults (Diener et al 1999, Eid and Larson 2008), mostly in the health sector (Cronin de Chavez et al 2005) and much research implies a deficit model in the main. A western perspective from the world's developed countries dominates (Diener and Suh 2000), making cross-cultural comparisons difficult. This is because judgements on "quality of life" are dependent on the values societies hold, and the goals they pursue. When judging the success of societies in this area, competing concerns make this challenging (Diener and Suh 2000).

An interest in child well-being has been growing for some time (Bowers- Andrews and Ben-Arieh 1999). According to McAuley and Rose (2010) key influences on child well-being, include children's rights, the new sociology of childhood, the ecological perspective and the new science of happiness. Whatever the focus of well-being, there is however recognition that the perspective of the person participating should also be included, as the processes will affect their lives (Parker Rees et al 2010, Newton 2007), but this is not yet the norm with young children in many sectors.

1.3 Locating the research

The purpose of this study was to explore young children's interpretation and understanding of "well-being". This piece of research will contribute to the existing knowledge base, and could act as a pilot for a larger national study, which may then influence future research, policy and practice in this area.

The majority of research to date on well-being has been with adults, older children and adolescents, with a distinct gap in younger children's perspective being included. This study was initiated because younger children's perspective on well-being is missing. It is an identified area for focus, which can be explored (Harcourt and Einarsdottir 2011, Brownlie 2009).

In addition to this where subjective well-being has been part of research studies, it has tended to be an add-on to the more weighty and identifiable data from government statistics and pre-determined objective measures. In this piece of research, subjective well-being is the focus ensuring young children's perspective is included.

1.4 Researcher's Professional background

As a senior lecturer and programme leader in Early Childhood Studies and someone who works in a multi-disciplinary / inter-disciplinary subject area, I have seen that the different disciplinary interpretations and understandings of well-being have resulted in differing emphases. It is particularly relevant in inter-disciplinary working where emphasis may be either disjointed or divided, and result in competing or differing priorities. If professionals are trying to do the best for children and their families, this can be challenging. I am therefore interested in a holistic view of well-being, which includes the instrumental and objective, but in this study gives a subjective consideration to meet a "whole person" perspective.

1.5 Background to the study

To date research on well-being has tended to draw together and interpret a mix of existing data sets that abound, but this makes comparison very difficult (Macionis and Plummer 2011, Bradshaw et al 2006). That the majority of research has been with adults and older children and adolescents, with only limited data on younger children less than eight years of age, highlights an area for consideration. In addition to this, where subjective well-being has been included, it has not adequately given voice to young children, and tended to be an add-on to the more weighty and identifiable data (UNICEF 2007).

The underpinning focus of my subject area Early Childhood Studies is young children from birth to eight years, so when reviewing the literature I directed my attention to children, and where available children in this age range.

1.6 Research Aims and Research Questions

In this research, I will explore whether young children (3-8 years) have a conceptual understanding of well-being, and whether they can express this through suitable age-related methods. I give value to the children's position and analyse the data generated, comparing it with the children's perspective and the available literature.

The aim of the research is to explore young children's (3-8years) interpretation and understanding of "wellbeing".

This was undertaken through the following research questions:-

1. Are young children (3-8 years) able to express an understanding of well-being through appropriate age-related methods?
2. What is young children's interpretation and conceptual understanding of well-being?
3. Are young children able to interpret, categorise and analyse the data generated?
4. How does the data analysis of the researcher compare with the children's interpretation and understanding of well-being?
5. What conclusions are there, and what are the policy and practice implications for young children's well-being?

1.7 Structure of the thesis

The study is organised into six chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the concept of well-being, locates the research and provides background. Limited research with young children in this area has been undertaken and including subjective well-being indicators has proven challenging. Chapter 2 reviews the literature on well-being and the limitations of young children's perspectives being included. Chapter 3 includes the research design and methodology, methods and stages of data collection and analysis, and ethical considerations. Chapter 4 considers the analytic process and results of my analysis where key themes emerged. Chapter 5 is a discussion of the findings where results are analysed. Methodological

issues and limitations are also considered. Chapter 6 discusses the implications of the research and makes recommendations focussing on areas of practice and policy before drawing together the conclusions of the study.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

In the introductory chapter, well-being definitions showed the multi-dimensional complexity of this social construct. I established the importance of well-being and its growing place in the policy arena, showing that keeping a whole person or holistic perspective is challenging, often because of the different emphases placed on well-being by different disciplines.

In this chapter, a review of the literature will take place, including models, dimensions, measures and indices. The importance of well-being to the “progress” of society and to children will be deliberated. Research on children’s well-being and the limitations of existing research will also be considered.

The initial approach to the literature search strategy (see Appendix 1, p 180) gave the parameters for a review to be undertaken. I started with key concepts and a background consideration of well-being. I considered a suitable period of relevance for refining my search and then used a range of material that would be apposite and enable depth of focus.

2.1 Models of Wellbeing

Wellbeing is considered through different ideological lenses. How the models of well-being are defined and measured determines interpretations and emphasis.

2.1.1 Models: Bio-medical Model

The Bio-medical model and what constitutes being healthy and feeling well, including freedom from disease, pain, illness or disability has been the predominant discourse. It focuses entirely on the physical processes dimension and adopts a negative, pathogenic response to health and wellbeing (Annandale 2014).

For children it can include the use of growth charts, fitness levels, diet, and nutrition but does not include psychological and/or emotional aspects in determining well-being. However because of its reductionist and mechanistic stance, and its judgment of children (or adults) as a homogenous group, it has been criticized for being too narrow (Collins and Foley 2008).

2.1.2 Models: Socio-economic Model

The Socio-economic model of well-being uses healthcare, social aspects, education benefits, in addition to material factors (for example income) to measure well-being. Layers of social and economic influences can affect well-being, with the individual usually at the centre of these (Macionis and Plummer 2011). In this model, well-being is contingent on these two external determinants that can affect, influence and shape individual physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing and behaviour.

In their well-documented review of health inequalities, Marmot et al (2010) demonstrate the positive relationship between higher socio-economic status and better health. Using this model, the effectiveness of targeted programmes and policies to redress inequalities, are measured to see whether they are worth retaining. For children the social and economic influences that can affect their well-being, and of which they have little control over, can be measured. For instance, Bradshaw et al (2006) when analysing European data, saw child well-being and deprivation as different sides of the same coin, and Ben-Arieh (2006) who helped develop a well-being index saw children's well-being very closely linked to a child's social conditions. The environments in which young children develop and the contexts in which they often find themselves (Fauth and Thompson 2009), enabling or otherwise, are particular factors that can have a strong impact on children's well-being.

2.1.3 Models: Ecological or Socio-cultural Model

An Ecological or socio- cultural model recognises that well-being is mediated by different and complex forces working on each other, and has multi-layered dimensions. It locates the

individual in the wider context of its environment and culture and considers this as a key determinant – interpersonal relations, social events, community, organizational and national / supranational forces are included. Similar to the socio-economic model, the ecological or socio-cultural model is subject to an array of external determinants similarly influencing wellbeing and behaviour. It appears that the growing trend away from a single dimensional approach to one that is multi-dimensional gives a much clearer picture of the complexity of children's health and wellbeing (Parker Rees et al 2010).

The educational theorist Laevers (1997) in his theory on "Involvement" indicated that children's emotional health and well-being would affect their development and learning. He believed that high levels of emotional well-being meant children would engage positively with all aspects of life and learning. He believed the environment children found themselves in, such as school, had to be designed to enable a child to feel safe and secure, to be themselves, to remain in contact with themselves and have their emotional needs (for example the need for attention, recognition, competence) fulfilled. He listed characteristics such as concentration, persistence, motivation, openness, and satisfaction, which would indicate high levels of well-being in a child. In this theory, the environment influences or impacts on a child's emotional health and wellbeing.

It appears therefore that enabling environments in the home and community will support children's development, and their ability to be resilient and to thrive. In this model, a system-wide intervention alongside a person-focused approach, in health and well-being promotion and intervention, would modify environments and / or behaviours. In this model, the child is located in the wider context of his or her family, friends, school, community and culture. It implies that when promoting children's well-being at policy level, relationships are central, and the multitude of layered influences need to be taken into consideration (Pugh 2005).

The psychologist Bronfenbrenner's (2005) Bio-ecological systems theory, which views child development as part of a broader social, cultural, economic and political set of systems, is useful when considering children's well-being, and the bi-directional influences on children and their lives. Such factors as family, community, social networks, work, services, culture, politics, society, and the global context, are all important systems that affect children. The influences between individuals and each system will be moderated by many different factors, so it cannot identify cause and effect, but it can demonstrate the multitude of dynamic influences of person–context interrelatedness, that can affect the well-being of the individual.

Theorist and American psychologist Maslow (1970), recognised the biological interplay between physical health and emotional well-being with his seminal theory "Hierarchy of Needs", and suggests that one cannot be promoted without the other in providing effective all-round health and well-being.

2.1.4 Models: Rights Model

A Rights model or perspective taken from the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (United Nations 1948), recognizes that health and human rights are complementary approaches to advancing well-being in societies, and any violations of rights has health impacts. A human rights model recognizes an entitlement to certain underlying "circumstances" which can establish the foundation for physical, mental and social well-being. This includes the right of access to appropriate services such as education, health and social care.

The Rights model for children is based on the specific Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (United Nations 1989), and is the approach taken by much research into well-being, including UNICEF (2007), and Bradshaw (2005, 2011). The focus is on the quality of lives in the here and now, and the fulfilment of opportunities to the rights afforded them. Although

children's potential, attributes and strength and / or resilience was recognised as being important in the Rights model, this was secondary to children's needs in the present day.

2.2 Dimensions of well-being

Social, physical, psychological, mental and economic factors are included in determining well-being (Bradshaw 2011). Therefore, researchers and policy makers include dimensions that closely align to these dimensions.

For instance, UNICEF (2007) in their comprehensive assessment of the lives and well-being of children and adolescents in the economically advanced nations suggested there were six different dimensions that could be measured (see Table 1, p13). Each dimension had multiple components (total 18) and each component multiple indicators (total 36), demonstrating the breadth and depth considered. Objective assessments of children's lives, and subjective and objective indicators with children's own subjective sense of their well-being, was included. However only children between the ages of 11-15 years were involved in this research, even though the focus was supposed to be children and adolescents; so younger children's perspectives were not included and their sense of well-being could not be evaluated.

Similarly, the Child Poverty Action Group Report (2009) led by Bradshaw, one of the co-authors of the 2007 UNICEF report, used seven dimensions. This again demonstrates a multi-dimensional perspective with an additional emphasis on economic and environmental factors, broadly the same as UNICEF's but with the addition of housing and environment, including indicators of overcrowding, housing problems, crime and pollution. It also included some subjective components, but again with older children and adolescents.

DIMENSIONS	COMPONENTS	INDICATORS
1. Material Well-being	Relative income poverty Households without jobs Reported deprivation	-percentage of children living in homes with equivalent incomes below 50% of the national median - percentage of children in families without an employed adult – percentage of children reporting low family affluence – percentage of children reporting few educational resources – percentage of children reporting fewer than 10 books in the home
2. Health and safety	Health at age 0-1 Preventative health services Safety	– number of infants dying before age 1 per 1,000 births – percentage of infants born with low birth weight (<2500g.) – percentage of children age 12 to 23 months immunized against measles, DPT, and polio – deaths from accidents and injuries per 100,000 aged 0 – 19
3. Educational well-being	School achievement at age 15 Beyond basics The transition to employment	– average achievement in reading literacy – average achievement in mathematical literacy – average achievement in science literacy – percentage aged 15-19 remaining in education – percentage aged 15-19 not in education, training or employment – percentage of 15 year-olds expecting to find low-skilled work
4. Family and peer relationships	Family structure Family relationships Peer relationships	– percentage of children living in single-parent families – percentage of children living in stepfamilies – percentage of children who report eating the main meal of the day with parents more than once a week – percentage of children who report that parents spend time 'just talking' to them – percentage of 11, 13 and 15 year-olds who report finding their peers 'kind and helpful'
5. Behaviours and risks	Health behaviours Risk behaviours Experience of violence	– percentage of children who eat breakfast – percentage who eat fruit daily – percentage physically active – percentage overweight – percentage of 15 year-olds who smoke – percentage who have been drunk more than twice – percentage who use cannabis – percentage having sex by age 15 – percentage who use condoms – teenage fertility rate – percentage of 11, 13 and 15 year olds involved in fighting in last 12 months – percentage reporting being bullied in last 2 months
6. Subjective well-being	Health School life Personal wellbeing	– percentage of young people rating their own health no more than 'fair' or 'poor' – percentage of young people 'liking school a lot' – percentage of children rating themselves above the mid-point of a 'Life Satisfaction Scale' – percentage of children reporting negatively about personal wellbeing

TABLE 1: UNICEF (2007) Child poverty in perspective: An overview of child well- being in rich countries. Taken from *Innocenti Report Card 7*.

2.3 Measures of Well-being

There are a variety of measures, scales, indices and criteria commonly used to identify well-being. The constituents can include indices of health and welfare (such as aspects of mobility, pain / discomfort, fertility, self-care), or the determinants (such as access to clean water, educational provision, employment, physical and social activity, safety). The majority of measures and scales have been designed for use with adults and very few with children.

2.3.1 Measures of Well-being: Health Measures

Health-utility measures abound and often reflect the traditional, objective, bio-medical perspective. One such measure used across the world, called EQ-5D, a standardised instrument for use in evaluating health outcomes, was examined positively by Wailoo et al (2010), and is one of the preferred instruments now used by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE). It measures over 200 distinct health states across five dimensions (mobility, self-care, usual activities, pain/discomfort, and anxiety/depression) with three levels (no problem, moderate problem, and severe problem). It is employed across many European countries with adults, although adaptations have been made so it can be used with older children and adolescents.

The Office for National Statistics (2005) in their survey of 5-16 year old children's mental health in Great Britain concentrated on psycho-pathology or mental disorders, with a parent's questionnaire followed up by interviews with parents, teachers and a selection of children aged 11-16 years. The interviews were only conducted with older children because, as stated

“The subject matter was considered to be too complicated for younger children”,
and,

“Most of the psychiatric assessment was designed for children with a mental and language age of at least 3 or 4...” (ONS 2005p18),

demonstrating researcher's perception of the challenges of research with younger children. There is little about younger children's "voices" or perspectives being included, when they are the ones experiencing the mental disorder.

Wolpert et al (2009) in their systematic review of mental health outcome measures, suitable for use with children and young people up to 18 years with a wide range of difficulties, deemed 41 measures as the best that could be implemented to promote better psychological well-being or effective intervention for children with any mental health problems. However, only three out of the forty-one measures seek young children's perspectives. It is evident that the majority ask for parent or teacher rating or report. Only children over 11 years are included in any opportunity to self-report, again indicating that young children's opinions are not viewed as necessary or are difficult to gauge, and so are routinely ignored.

2.3.2 Measures of Well-being: Quality of Life measures

Indexes of quality of life and well-being related scales are growing in number across the world. For example, web-based resources for measuring well-being are on the Australian Centre on Quality of Life (2012), which has a few hundred quality of life and well-being scales extending the traditional objective measures of health, wealth, and social functioning, to include subjective perceptions. The scales were designed and used by researchers and those working in a range of subject areas. It is apparent that the decision to measure positive or negative aspects can have a bearing on results, as can unequal aggregation of indices, weightings, and their interpretations, which can create bias in analysis and evaluation when used differently. Australian Centre on Quality of Life (2012) also includes many child and adolescent measures, but apart from a Childhood Asthma Questionnaire, which measures quality of life and symptom distress with 4-7year olds with parental assistance, all other measures appear to be with children over eight years, mostly with adolescents and most consider health or psychological domains. It is revealing that the Childhood Asthma Questionnaire expects parental answers to questions, and does not distinguish whether the

child is answering or contributing to the answers in the response area of the questionnaire. This suggests that young children are not thought to be capable of answering, or whoever is overseeing the questionnaire may feel challenged in seeking the answers from this age group.

Similarly, Kidscreen-52 is a health-related Quality of Life Screening Instrument for Children and Adolescents to self-report their health and well-being (Ravens-Sieberer et al 2005). It was used to survey 8-18 year olds with a chronic illness, across 12 European countries, and found children were clearly able to give detailed answers. By identifying children at risk in terms of their subjective health, it was found that appropriate early interventions can be suggested, implemented and then evaluated, demonstrating the value of including this type of instrument with those who have the illness, rather than relying on carer's or professional's viewpoints.

2.3.3 Measures of Well-being: Emotional and Psychological Measures

Authentic Happiness (2012) has numerous scales on levels of emotion, engagement, meaning and life satisfaction. Other websites also include similar scales to measure adult and adolescent satisfaction with life, and psychological and subjective happiness (Positive Psychology Centre (2012), World Database of Happiness (2012)). However, there appears to be a gap in the development of similar scales or adapted scales to use with children under eleven years of age, and particularly for children under eight years of age. The most widely used scales and measures appear to look at a variety of indices including single and multi-dimensional measures depending on their foci.

2.3.4 Measures of Well-being: Subjective measures

Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener et al 1985) is the most commonly used measure for subjective well-being with adults, and is considered an 'evaluative' measure. Respondents consider everything they believe to be important to their lives and provide an overall evaluation of how their lives are proceeding. However, according to Seligman (2011), mood may determine more than 70% of how much life satisfaction an individual reports, so five

elements in this particular design commonly known as PERMA: positive emotion, engagement (being in the flow), relationships, meaning (purpose in life), and accomplishment, are usually measured in order to evaluate the complexity of well-being.

Some approaches, such as the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (Tennant et al 2007), focus on adults and young people over 16 years of age. They also regard subjective well-being or positive mental health, as requiring both hedonic and eudaimonic components; that is, the combination of feeling good and seeking emotional happiness and pleasure (hedonic dimensions) and functioning well and developing oneself so as to lead a fulfilling life (eudaimonic dimensions). The eudaimonic dimension includes many aspects: having a sense of meaning and purpose, self-worth, autonomy, relatedness, and engagement (Ryan et al 2008). These dimensions could be considered appropriate for children as well, but would need to be adjusted to take into account their lived experiences, and the mastery and control they have over their lives.

2.3.5 Measures of Well-being: Affective measures

Many affective measures are adult focused. Deci and Ryan (2000) and Ryff (1989) in the UK use a family of scales (general and specific) to measure needs based satisfaction in their Basic Psychological Needs Scale; and Watson et al (1988) in the USA, developed the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS). Many psychological well-being scales are multi-dimensional and include areas such as autonomy, positive relations with others, purpose in life, self-acceptance, environmental mastery and personal growth. The many measures put forward by Wolpert et al (2009) suggest that young children are not being asked to evaluate or self-report on their psychological well-being.

2.3.6 Measures of Well-being: Research Measures and Children

The majority of research measurements have been developed to identify aspects of adult well-being. However, adults and children inhabit and experience different worlds for much of the

time, and therefore adjustments or different indicators are necessary to gain a picture of children's well-being.

It appears that children and particularly young children are often invisible entities, generally categorised within the context of the family or households, with this approach. In many cases parents, teachers or professionals report on their behalf, which brings into question the validity of findings.

There are developments however; a good example of this is in data from young children (3-6 years) included in the findings from the National Well-being Debate (Office for National Statistics (ONS) 2011 p22) which also includes young children's comments at various events. The debate included 7,250 people across the country at 175 different events. It included 14 Primary Schools or Academies, a "Children in Scotland", and a "Children in England Annual Conference" event. However looking at the National Well-being Debate (ONS 2011) in some detail, only six quotes from children less than six years of age are included, which is tokenistic and does not add value to the debate. In addition, when considering the overview of findings from the events, it is adult-focused, and there is no mention or suggestion that further research with younger children might be useful.

Children often place different emphasis to adults on the various elements of their lives, and different aspects of life may be more or less important for children of different ages. For instance, most children go to school and so indices on enjoyment and achievement could be additions to family indices on poverty, income, and family structure (Thomas 2009). The element "school" has now been included in the New Economics Foundation (2012) review of well-being for policy consideration. This is a positive step and means that government and researchers are waking up to the realities of children's lived experiences, and including them as well. Children are also heavily influenced by their environments and what is available to

them, so their perspective on the effects of poverty, income and family structure should be considered at the very least, to inform and appraise policy.

2.3.7 Units of Analysis

What is included and what is assessed, is dependent on what is driving the measurements or indicators – policy, theory, or data. The majority of key disciplines have tended to measure what is of importance to them in their own disparate disciplines. This demonstrates that there is still little consensus on how well-being should be measured and therefore no unifying taxonomy (Ben-Arieh, Frones 2011).

However, a multi-disciplinary or holistic perspective (to embrace some or all of social, physical, psychological, mental and economic factors) provides the richer or richest results and is more meaningful. Interestingly the sequencing of dimensions in many studies (UNICEF 2007), often places subjective well-being last, and this perhaps reflects its value in much research.

The individual versus the collective group also needs consideration when reviewing measures. Statistical social indicators (objective observable facts) can present problems to validity because everyone is viewed as part of a homogenous group, and such indicators are only a representation of the quality of people's lives. The government's Office for National Statistics (ONS) (Office for National Statistics 2012) developed new measures of national well-being, proclaiming their aim was to provide a fuller picture of how society was doing by supplementing the existing economic, social and environmental measures, which was a positive move forward. Although measures of society as a whole cannot differentiate individual and personal differences, it is still important to understand these and recognise that a "one size fits all" is not sufficient in seeing the whole picture.

Objective measures (e.g. physiological, health records, income, educational assessments) and subjective measures, which are people's valuation of those facts (happiness, life

satisfaction, quality of life) are often disaggregated, whereas each has its place in ensuring a whole picture.

2.4 Well-being Indexes

Many countries have constructed well-being indexes that facilitate the measurement of progress of well-being in their own countries. For children, the European Union Child Well-being Index (Bradshaw et al 2006), the United States Child and Youth Well-being Index (Land et al 2001) only include family indices as a unit of analysis. Although social indicators are important, there is a lack of indicators specific to children in both of these examples. If a common framework was developed, this could support a more coherent picture for accurate cross-country and regional comparisons.

Crucially, the lack of disaggregated datum (by age, gender, disability, ethnicity, sexuality, and contextual and socio-economic differences) has also limited understanding in this area (Statham and Chase 2010).

Objective domains, measures or indicators of well-being are used in gathering data, but subjective measures of well-being to date have presented some challenges. UNESCO (2014) developed an index, the Holistic Early Childhood Development Index (HECDI) to overcome the limitations of previous indices. They include child development from antenatal life to eight years of age with six core indicators: health, nutrition, education, parent support, equity and social protection, and alleviation of poverty. Although still missing the child's voice, it will highlight the whole child as important, and raise the distinction between the various stages of childhood and the importance of the early years.

Children's well-being at policy level tends to consider an instrumental or objective perspective and concentrate on group characteristics, rather than those of the individual. However, the

holistic perspective includes “how children experience their lives” and includes both a collective and individual consideration (Waters 2009 p19-20).

2.5 Importance of Well-being

Well-being is generally perceived as a “good thing” and a “...fundamental goal of any society” (Rees et al 2009 p10). Its importance has risen in developed societies, moving it into the public sphere and policy context. Research to date on well-being has been mainly health centred and with adults, although child well-being is gaining interest and promoting discourse.

2.5.1 The Importance of Well-being: Measuring the progress of Society

According to the New Economics Foundation (Abdallah and Shah 2012), a growing disaffection with the narrow economic focus that developed nations have advanced to date, lead many academics and civil society organisations to call for different means of measuring a country’s “progress”. In November 2010, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in the UK launched the Measuring National Well-Being Programme (Office for National Statistics 2011) designed to complement Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as a headline policy indicator, to ‘provide a fuller understanding of how society is doing’, and review what is important and valued in society.

Internationally the European Commission and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) also begun to focus on well-being measurements, calling for a

‘...commitment to measuring and fostering the progress of societies in all dimensions, with the ultimate goal of improving policy-making, democracy and citizens’ well-being’ (OECD 2013).

2.5.2 The Importance of Well-being: Progress in England

The Health and Social Care Act (Department of Health 2012) established new local Health and Well-being Boards who promote joint commissioning and the integrated provision of services. This demonstrates in policy how well-being was considered integral with health in

this area. Two of the three key principles from the Act reflect the centrality of the patient voice within the National Health Service (NHS), and the changing emphasis of measurement to clinical outcomes. Both reflect the changing role of the customer or patient, alongside the need to measure policy for its effectiveness.

2.5.3 The Importance of Well-being: Progress with Children

A multi-national research project for monitoring and measuring children's well-being was established in 1996, where experts from 28 countries compared national and international surveys and relevant available data, and put forward five key domains for measuring well-being: safety and physical status; personal life; civic life; economic resources / contributions; and children's activities (Bowers- Andrews and Ben-Arieh 1999). However, research such as this used government statistics of an instrumental nature. For example, household surveys and agency audit data; or pre-determined objective measures gained from parents, such as educational outcome or household income. It has included children over the age of eight years, but in the majority of cases those over eleven years of age and older adolescents. It is evident that older children and adolescents are seen as having some agency and contributing to family, community and society, but this is not attributed to younger children in the same manner.

In the UK, children's well-being has been variably considered by government policy. It has resulted in focused initiatives, interventions or long-term programmes to combat significant inequalities to children's health and well-being, across different social, ethnic and income groups. This includes Birth to Three Matters (DfES 2003); Every Child Matters (DfES 2004); The National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (DoH 2004); Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures (DCSF 2007), and The Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE 2012, DCSF 2008). However, often these narrowly focus on improving and assessing specific one-dimensional outcomes and do not capture the complexities of children's everyday lived experiences, or the challenges facing those providing the range of

services for children. These initiatives do show that measures of health and well-being inform policy decision making, and affect the promotion of certain standards in services for children.

Much of the research to date (Child Poverty Action Group 2009, UNICEF 2007) has focused on discrete dimensions (outcome based assessment) by specific disciplines, where clearly defined objective measurements are constructed and used to judge or survey populations. It would appear that how well-being is conceptualised in policy and how it is enacted in practice can also vary, creating difficulties as professionals interpret it and approach it differently, leading to variations in practice and across practice.

A holistic perspective, which should include how children experience their lives, has not been used sufficiently to determine what well-being is to children, and particularly young children. Most research has evolved and transferred naturally, what adults perceive as important, to what children would perceive it to be. An example of this is the Millennium Cohort Study follow-up survey undertaken by Hansen and Joshi (2008), who found that the majority of five-year-olds in England are growing up healthy. However, this was entirely rated by the caregiver. This devalues the status of children as active citizens with agency and a voice (Bradshaw 2011).

The emerging view of childhood in the last decade is that children are competent and have agency as they increasingly try to make sense of their worlds (Dahlberg et al 2006). Many professionals do recognise the perceptive nature and often “gift of insight” that belies children’s years (Clark and Moss 2011). For the most vulnerable or deprived children such as those who are looked after, those with disabilities, refugee children and those who have been or feel excluded, this is even more important, as their use of services is likely to be much greater. From research with children, it is becoming increasingly clear that children can contribute to determining indices of relevance to their lives, and even more recently that

researchers and policy makers have considered subjective well-being an area of relevance and importance (Clark et al 2005).

From a public health perspective, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE 2012) has published guidance, which recognises that young children are a separate group, particularly influenced by their contexts and environments. NICE (2012) aims to define how the social and emotional well-being of vulnerable children under five years of age can be supported, through home visiting, childcare and early education. They found that children living in disadvantaged circumstances are more likely to experience social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and as a result, poor health, education and employment outcomes. This highlights the complexity of circumstances that many young children may be experiencing that will affect well-being.

2.6 Research on Children's Well-being

Caregiver or professional reports of children's behaviour and lifestyle have tended to be the norm for example, Goodman's (1997) behaviour questionnaire is a clear example of this, and where the presence or absence of problem behaviours was measured, by asking parents and teachers of 403 children to complete a questionnaire, and the child's voice was never heard.

2.6.1 Research on Children's Well-being: International and Cross-National Research

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC 2001) "Children 5-16: Growing into the 21st Century" contributed an insight into policy thinking underlying the well-being of children. The growing concerns of increased rates of relative child poverty were explored together with various social, physical and economic risks to the well-being of children. Many initiatives including the governments Department for Education guidelines for childcare partnerships came out of this study's recommendations, in an attempt to bring coherence to disparities in children's services.

The economist Richard Layard (2006) first considered a country's GDP alongside measurements of happiness and well-being to compare national performance. It was however the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF 2007) child poverty comparative index, used across 21 nations of the industrialised world that truly raised awareness of the link between economic and social factors, and children's well-being. From this point, multi-dimensional research was undertaken, although there was a tendency to concentrate on the easily measured social indicators, such as GDP and poverty.

UNICEF (2007) in their report on child poverty drew data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD): Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the World Health Organisations: Health Behaviour in School-age Children (HBSC). UNICEF took a multi-dimensional perspective in their overview (see Table 1, p13) and included subjective well-being – children between 11-15 years own perceptions, as the last dimension. By only including and asking children over 11 years of age pre-determined data, meant a narrow emphasis on older childhood and adolescents, which the researchers recognise as one of the limitations of their research. They also recognise that concentrating on mostly national indicators, inferring a causal relationship between factors, not weighting the data, not disaggregating the data by characteristics such as age, sex and ethnicity is problematic and limiting. That some key data were unavailable for many countries (including data on child protection and mental health) meant that making some comparisons was not valid, as those countries with more comprehensive data, were penalised in the league table because of it. However UNICEF do add that one of the purposes of the research was to “stimulate the discussion and development of policies to improve children's lives” (UNICEF 2007 p2) so even though the children were older, raising international awareness and including children's perspectives as a unit of analysis, was a positive move forward. UNICEF's pioneer research of 2007, shamefully placed Britain at the bottom of the international league of twenty-one Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) nations for well-being, which created a furore and a move to analyse the efficacy of

government policy to date in this area. The unflattering comparison highlighted how children's needs were not being met, and provided a timely warning (Foley and Rixon 2008) as to how divided children's services had become in the UK, in comparison to other European countries with their more social pedagogical practices.

The UNICEF (2007) research was followed by an OECD (2009) comparison of children's well-being across all thirty OECD countries, using data from 2005 and 2006. The focus of the research was on areas that could be influenced by government policies. It used all the previous domains from the UNICEF (2007) research, with the exception of subjective well-being and the addition of housing, environment, and quality of school life. The UK was again ranked in the bottom half for most domains, except quality of school life where it was ranked 4/30, and material well-being where it was ranked 12/30.

UNICEF's (2010) later research on "The Children Left Behind" used available data on inequality in child well-being in some of the world's richer countries. Twenty-four countries were given an overall score, from rankings for material well-being, education well-being, and health well-being. The United Kingdom came in the bottom half for all except health where it was ranked 11/24. This report provides an international comparison and benchmarks what other nations at similar levels of economic development have already achieved. Its acknowledged weakness is that almost all of the available data concerns 11-15year olds and it admits,

"There is a glaring lack of comparable information on the critical years of early childhood," (UNICEF 2010 p28),

signifying the importance of the early years in gaining a true picture of children's well-being.

These pieces of research highlight the importance attached to the well-being of children from a policy perspective, but suggest that policy changes and initiatives implemented over this

period were not having a sufficient impact on the well-being of children. These major pieces of research also highlight that only data from older children have been included.

Nairn and Ipsos MORI (2011) for UNICEF UK undertook a more in-depth comparison across three developed countries: UK, Sweden and Spain in 2011. Two hundred and fifty children's experiences were compared in the child well-being report. The children were aged between 8-13 years. The findings from this research which took a more ecological stance indicated that well-being and happiness,

“...centres on time with a happy, stable family, having good friends and plenty of things to do, especially outdoors.” (Nairn and Ipsos MORI 2011, p1).

Although this study was again with older children, it considers children's own perspectives on what is important for their well-being. It could potentially provide some comparison with younger children's perspectives in this area, if they were to be included in the future.

Axford (2009) took a wider perspective in his research on well-being, identifying five different lenses (needs, poverty, quality of life, social exclusion, and children's rights) through which well-being was being viewed by government policy makers. He states that despite the differences in emphasis of perspective that can influence different policy, all need to take a multi-dimensional approach to gain a degree of consensus. Bradshaw and Richardson's (2009) cross-national, socio-economic comparison used a European Index of Child Well-being, which included 43 indicators and seven clusters or domains (material resources, housing and environment, child health, subjective well-being, education, personal relationships, risk and safety). This resulted in a ranking of twenty-seven European Union (EU) Member States, but also included Iceland and Norway, with the Netherlands and the Nordic States at the top of the league table of child well-being, while Malta, Romania, Bulgaria, Latvia and Lithuania were at the bottom. The UK was ranked 24/29 countries for child health, 21/28 countries for subjective well-being, 24/26 countries for material resources,

and 22/27 countries for education. This again demonstrates that government policy is not as effectively addressing well-being for children in the UK as many other EU countries.

Kasser (2011) in his data analyses on well-being in twenty nations, markedly found where hierarchical values were prioritised over egalitarianism in a nation, inequality was evident resulting in much lower child well-being. The European Commission (2010 p41) had also stated that,

"...child well-being is associated with inequality- generally more unequal countries have lower child well-being" (European Commission 2010 p41).

This means that in considering child well-being, the cultural values of a nation also have to be considered, as these will influence policy level initiatives, responses and foci. Interestingly in the European Commission (2010) study, they found no association between family breakdown and child well-being, but within the analysis of subjective well-being found that family conflict and quality of parent-child relationship strongly influenced well-being. Although the index is data driven, the subjective well-being section included 11-15 year olds ratings, making it limited in its comparison to all children and particularly younger children.

The limitations of some of the de-contextualised international research must be borne in mind because of the widely variable contexts, but it does provide some overall trends, associations and indicators. Income inequality consistently provided a negative association with well-being, whereas family benefits and services provided a positive association (Statham and Chase 2010). Bradshaw et al (2008) also found that there could be substantial variations in well-being within countries at both a regional and local level, making it difficult to make generalisations. This highlights some of the challenges in research on well-being and well-being with children.

In Ireland, Nic Gabhainn and Sixsmith (2005) sought 8-12 year old children's views as well as those of parents and teachers, to develop a national set of well-being indicators for children.

They found that children were able to express complex understandings of abstract concepts in their piece of research. In the results, the categorisation of family was given primacy by all groups; teachers included 14 categories, parents' 28 categories demonstrating a broader approach, and children 23 categories. They also found that parents and teachers identified a specific bio-medical component (ill health, visiting the doctor, nutritious food) whereas children had a very positive conceptualisation of well-being which did not include any negative health connotations. One of the categories given particular importance by children was pets, whereas this was categorised as much less important by the adults. These notable differences indicate that adults and children have differing perspectives and priorities and this needs to be recognised in policy and in service provision. It would have been enlightening to see younger children included in this research to support the development of a national set of indicators, because then it would have provided a more comprehensive picture. However, this piece of research is important because those who are using the services have been included in developing the well-being indicators.

2.6.2 Research on Children's Well-being: UK centred Research

Gutman et al (2010) focused on children's psychosocial well-being in their research, looking at four different aspects: emotional, behavioural, social and subjective school well-being, examining in particular what drove change in these outcomes. They used secondary data analysis to examine changes in well-being within the framework of risk and resilience. Their research looked at two time periods: mid-childhood (7.5 years to 10.5 years) and early adolescence (10.5 years to 13.8 years) but only used parental perceptions of the available data (p52) rather than children's reports about this time period, therefore severely limiting validity by excluding children's viewpoints.

Layard and Dunn (2009) research commissioned by the Children's Society UK entitled the "Good Childhood Inquiry" included a national call for evidence, and included surveys, focus groups, "my life" postcards, the BBC News-round TV programme, and existing research

around the themes: family, friends, lifestyle, values, schooling, mental health and inequality, to explore adult's, parent's, professional's and children's views. Although they state they included the views of children between the ages of 5 and 17 years to determine what constituted a good childhood it is evident that most of the children's data came from the older age range 10-15 years, which again severely skews the results. In this inquiry "relationships" were found to be the most important area cited by the participants in ensuring a sense of well-being and hence a good childhood.

International and national research reviews on older children's well-being, for example by Statham and Chase (2010), Parker Rees et al (2010) consistently find the most important aspect of older children's well-being to be the quality of relationships with important others.

The Children's Society UK, in collaboration with University of York, also developed a new short index of children's subjective well-being, based on three surveys undertaken with over 17,000 young people in 2005, 2008 and 2010 (Rees et al 2010). However, these surveys only included children between 8-15 years. They followed this up with "The Good Childhood Report" (The Children's Society 2012) which highlighted, analysed and evaluated 10 areas of importance to children in the 8-15 year age group: 1. Family, 2. Home, 3. Money and possessions, 4. Friendships, 5. School, 6. Health, 7. Appearance, 8. Time-use, 9. Choice and autonomy, 10. The future. Findings corroborated other studies, and the research highlighted the significance of children wanting stability in their lives and the ways in which adverse life events may have a substantial impact on their well-being.

Following this the updated "The Good Childhood Report 2013" (The Children's Society 2013) added children's psychological well-being (personal development and growth), and subjective well-being (happiness and life satisfaction) to its measures. However, instead of including children less than 8 years of age, they extended the age range upwards and added young people aged 16 and 17 years within their surveys. This inclusion of older adolescents is a

useful addition to well-being research, but the exclusion of younger children as a sub-group means it cannot be valid in representing the whole of childhood. A noteworthy comment made in the updated report about children self-reporting on their well-being includes:

“...it is possible and valid to ask children and young people from at least the age of 10 upwards to report on aspects of their own well-being” (The Children’s Society 2013 p 8),

demonstrating that younger children are routinely viewed as incapable and incompetent of a viewpoint, even by organisations that purport to work on their behalf.

Ethnicity, education and health, and changing family structure are areas considered influential by Wollny et al (2010) in their research, which took an ecological approach for the Family and Parenting Institute. They did not concentrate on the well-being of the individual, but on family well-being and the importance of the family, to outcomes for both adults and children. Their research findings aligned the well-being of young children very closely to the lived experiences of their families

2.7 Limitations of research on Well-being

When considering the limitations of research so far on well-being, certain key points are evident.

1. The sequence of determinants researched and presented, demonstrates what those undertaking it perceive as important. As well-being is multi-dimensional, taking a holistic view and relational approach is preferable. Research, which takes this perspective and considers the whole person, will also strive to gain an insight into the individual’s position on well-being to provide an indication of (rather than measure) how they are doing and what they consider important.
2. Reducing children’s well-being to objective lists, of things that are needed in order to live well lacks the reality of their lived experiences. There is a growing body of

evidence that challenges this, and suggests so much more can be revealed at the level of the subjective child (Watson et al 2012, Bradshaw 2011). However, policy reform in the UK encourages a central focus on outcomes defined in terms of well-being. This requires a better understanding of how well-being can be measured, evaluated, and how services can effectively support it (Axford 2008).

3. Little research has considered children's views or position in the area of "wellbeing". Much more data is available from children over eight years of age, whereas parents or professionals tend to speak for younger children. When considering the literature, as children mature their opinions are listened to far more and they gain some credence. The UNICEF Report (2007), Layard and Dunn (2009) "A Good Childhood" for The Children's Society, and Rees et al (2009) "Understanding Children's Well-Being", have included some data, but this is again from older children in the age range 8-17 years. The Office for National Statistics (2012) when measuring the well-being of children from 0-15 years included both objective and subjective measures. The objective measures included infant mortality, birth weight, access and use of technology. The subjective measures explored how children felt about some of the key aspects of their lives, such as family, friends, school and appearance. However, they only included 10-15 year olds opinions when exploring this dimension, highlighting limitations in the age range and indices used. Research by Brooks et al (2011) in England as part of a European WHO regional study on young peoples' health and well-being also looks at the age range 11-16 years.
4. For the most part, it appears parents, carers or professionals have tended to report on younger children's behalf in this area. There is a distinct gap in the research literature on younger children's (less than 8 years of age) position on well-being. Much of the literature comes from the perspective that young children either cannot express

themselves sufficiently or do not have the cognitive abilities to be able to offer an informed opinion.

5. Research to date with older children which has taken a holistic perspective and included how children experience their lives, has shown that children can and do have very different perceptions to adults about well-being.
6. In some research studies, (Fauth and Thompson 2009) comparison between sub-groups is important in determining change over a period. However, there is very little data that have been disaggregated (Statham and Chase 2010 p3) so little is known about such differences as age, gender, ethnicity or culture.

2.8 Research with Young Children

Research often reflects adult discourse and keeps the child silent, so that childhood becomes a product of the way adults view children (Wyness 2006). The United Nations (1989) Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has provided a powerful platform to change that perspective. Its Articles provide the standards and scope by which nations are legally responsible in providing certain rights to children. Although interpretations may vary across nations, it has focused much policy and legislation into reflecting these rights and ensuring they are upheld. Article 12 states that children have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account. This is reinforced in United Nations (2005) General Comment No.7, which adds that children should be empowered to communicate their views, thus providing a directive that the voice of the child must be included.

A paradigm shift followed the UNCRC (1989) in the new sociology of childhood (James et al 1998) that supported a move away from children viewed as incomplete and incompetent to reposition them as competent social actors in their own right, with capacities and capabilities.

This has resulted in a growing body of evidence about the benefits of research with children (Prout 2005), which has been supported by key legislation, for example The Children Act 2004, which states that children have a right to articulate their opinions and have them heard.

Since the late 1990's, policy documents have demonstrated a clear commitment to seeking the views of the children who are affected by service delivery. These include: Learning to Listen: Core principles for the involvement of Children and Young People (DCLG 2001) and the National Standards for the Provision for Children's Advocacy Services (DoH 2002).

However seeking children's views is a long way off from allowing their views to carry weight or influence policy decisions (James and James 2004), as it appears that governments on the whole take an investing in the future (well becoming) stance rather than a focus on children's current concerns (well-being).

Although research with young children up to 8 years has its challenges with regards ethical considerations and time, it also does require adults to "attune" to the world of the child. It is worthwhile because discovering children's own views and meanings will generate new knowledge and understanding, and thus have relevance and value. Firstly it will help to make young children more visible in the well-being arena, giving them legitimacy and agency, secondly it will provide knowledge and possibly in the policy area, inform and promote improvements to their lives. The epistemological position taken demonstrates a belief that the subjective well-being of young children is worthy of analytical exploration.

Punch (2002) identified three approaches to research with children. The first considers them practically the same as adults, and employs the same methods in research with them. The second considers them as completely different, uses ethnography (participant observation) to examine their world, and the third, which understands children are similar to adults but have different competencies, uses child friendly methods.

Child friendly methods require a methodological shift from more traditional methods for example interviews, questionnaires, to more appropriate participatory multi-method approaches. A “mosaic approach” or “integrated approach which combines the visual with the verbal” (Clark and Moss 2011 p1) has proved useful in much research with young children. By not focusing or relying on the written word, imaginative methodologies can be considered, which are suitable for eliciting young children’s perspectives and position.

Methodological and ethical considerations also need to be carefully thought through. Areas such as the protection, participation, and privacy of children may create tensions as can power imbalances and adult-child relations. All require a degree of reflexivity and responsiveness, to ensure the aims and objectives of research with children is not compromised, and the voice of the child is genuinely heard.

For children in particular well-being needs to be considered and analysed in the here and now and include children’s activities, their growing life skills and their current happiness. There can be a focus on children’s “well-becoming” and “preparation for adult life” but this longer-term view needs balancing with the short-term view, thus giving legitimacy to both perspectives.

Although there is a move away from an over-reliance on objective measures, the message from the results of the literature on well-being, is that there are gaps in the research with younger children that need to be addressed, if policy and practices are to be effective in supporting well-being. It is now recognised that stakeholders should have a say in shaping policy and services, so including the perceptions of its youngest citizens is both reasonable and necessary. Many experts (Ben-Arieh 2008, Bradshaw and Richardson 2009) are recognising that children’s voices should be included when putting together and measuring well-being indicators. However challenging to measure, subjective well-being plays a vital part in seeing the whole picture.

In addition to this if children are given a voice and it is reflected in policy, at a practice level professionals will be able to further evidence their approach, so the impact of relevant research findings that include young children's voices and what they believe is important or has an effect on their lives, is a crucial addition. It also means that if children have a voice about environments that affect them, a better balance may be afforded between efficiency and effectiveness.

2.9 Summary

Well-being is a dynamic, complex, multi-faceted concept that can include physical, psychological (emotional), cognitive, social and economic aspects. As a concept, it has been increasing in prominence since 1948, as western societies become more affluent. It is now considered from different life stages – adult well-being and children's well-being.

Measurements used are now providing data for policy decisions and practices, in an attempt by many societies to redress the many negative factors that impact on and provide an unequal society. A growing number of national and international policy decisions reflect its importance.

Differing ideologies and perspectives on well-being have resulted in different emphases in research. Well-being research to date includes objective and subjective domains but researchers and policy makers tend to give greater value to objective, evidence-based domains. However measuring discrete dimensions does not necessarily make for homogenous groupings, therefore to reflect the holistic realities of individual's lives subjective measures can support and complement the objective measures. Greater use of adults and children's own perceptions of well-being are beginning to influence policy and practice.

There are limitations to much of the research on well-being to date as it has overlooked research with younger children, less than eight years of age. Although research with younger children has its challenges as can be seen by its absence in the literature, there is clearly a gap in research on young children's perception of well-being.

This review has explored the research and literature in this area but it has also shown that young children and subjective well-being are under researched areas that deserve consideration. The rationale for undertaking this research is valid, because the aim to explore young children's interpretation and understanding of "wellbeing" warrants attention.

In the next chapter, I attend to methodology and discuss the process. I explain the context, design and methods employed. I then discuss the stages in the data collection process and the children's contribution, and the ethical considerations.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter, I explain the research methodology. The perspective taken and research design, including the data collection methods, context, sample and timetable are provided. Pilot study details are given, and then challenges and stages in the data collection process explored. I explain the children's sorting, categorisation and ordering of the data and present their themes. Consideration to the context in which the data was gathered is then given. My own approach to analysing the data is justified, and finally I give details of ethical considerations.

3.1 Overview of Research Perspective

In this piece of applied research, a qualitative inquiry was deemed the most appropriate for enabling me to gather the data, analyse, interpret and attempt to make sense of young children's own interpretation and understanding of "wellbeing". As I wanted the children participating "to define their own reality" (Greene and Hogan 2005 p 254) in a way that was meaningful to them, I took an emic perspective to gain an understanding of well-being from their point of view (Harcourt and Einarsdottir 2011).

Qualitative research has gained credence over time and in much research with children is a recognised and often preferred methodology (Elden 2013). In quantitative studies judgements of reliability (consistency of well-being measure), and validity (integrity of the conclusions) are often made, but in qualitative studies judgments centre on the criteria of trustworthiness and authenticity (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). Qualitative research has a strong part to play particularly in the social sciences, but as with quantitative research, there must be recognition of its strengths and limitations, and any challenges it presents. With that in mind the robustness of argument, trustworthiness and credibility of data, and reflexivity of the researcher, are central to this process.

An approach found to be useful in research with young children is “The Mosaic Approach” (Clark and Moss 2001, 2011) which integrates visual and verbal elements to give ‘voice’ to young children. This approach was pertinent and age appropriate for ensuring children’s access as active participants in the research. The approach recognises children’s competencies and abilities, did not include the written word, and therefore was suitable across the age range 3 – 8 years.

A “bottom-up” inductive approach that used a necessary developmental consideration, alongside a visual semiotic analytic approach (Barthes 1973, 1977) then thematic analysis to analyse the data, was employed and supported this stance (Bryman 2012). My intention was to “flesh out” the children’s voices based on the evidence gathered from the children.

3.2 Research Design

3.2.1 Data Collection Methods

Research friendly methods with young children have gained prominence and credibility over the last twenty years (Greig et al 2013, Clark and Moss 2011, Thomson 2008, Fraser et al 2004). I took into account that young children communicate in a number of ways, not just through verbal explanation or written form. Children are often more comfortable and more practised with visual methods, and alternatives such as play, activities, dance, drama, and drawing, have proven to be effective in research with children (Clark and Moss 2011, Harcourt and Einarsdottir 2011, Fargas-Malet et al 2010, Christensen and James 2008). By using these methods in research, which children enjoy, are used to, understand and can happily engage and participate in, they “fill them with their own meaning” which can be a productive starting point for allowing their agenda to dominate (O’Kane 2008 p131).

The topic, research aim and questions, plus a desire to find participatory methodologies that would play to children’s strengths and / or interests led the research methods chosen. I

decided to use drawings and painting, which can be comfortable, ordinary and familiar means of communication for younger children (Elden 2013; Fargas-Malet 2010; Thomson 2008), and the use of photography, a visual hands on activity which allows children to shape the agenda (Rose 2012).

Although using drawings and paintings with all participants may have elicited some of the same content, I believed that photography with the older children, gave them wider scope to capture specific elements in their own time, and gave them complete control of what they could record. I also started from the premise that these children would probably be able to express their well-being moments easily in the home environment (Greig et al 2013) and hoped to capture some of these.

These “participatory methods” give participants a voice and can be the starting point for discussion, or for their narratives where they can explain, elaborate and give insight into their creations (Gallacher and Gallacher 2008). Importantly they also give the participants something to focus on without the formality or restraint that a straightforward interview can elicit. Painting, drawing and photographic activities can be engaging and creative for participants, and are constructivist because the participants are representing and constructing information and knowledge out of their own lived experience. These creative constructivist tools can support young children in communicating or analysing their experiences, to generate new knowledge in a meaningful way (Harcourt et al 2011). They also allow the participant to control the material generated (Greene and Hogan 2005 p254) which retains an emic perspective.

The painting or drawing activities, and photos, yielded the visual data. The children also provided a narrative for each piece of visual data they produced. This was collected during or following the activity. By exploring the visual data with the children this encouraged greater and more in-depth interpretation, allowing a multi-layered depiction to emerge (Elden 2013).

Following these stages, two participants from each class categorised the visual data from their class, and then all eight participants came together to further categorise the data, and consider it in terms of frequency and importance. These research methods were designed to enable young children's active involvement and communication (Palaiologou 2012) during the data collection process.

In Table 2 (see below), I describe a child participant's contribution and journey they experience from their perspective, if involved throughout the data collection process.

1. Provide two Visual images:
 - a.
 - i. One Painting, Drawing or Photograph of an experience that made me feel well and happy.
 - ii. Provide a narrative about the image either during or after the activity
 - b.
 - i. One Painting, Drawing or Photograph of a place, person or thing that made me feel well and happy.
 - ii. Provide a narrative about the image either during or after the activity.
2. With another participant from my class interpret and then categorise all my own class' visual images.
3. With another participant from my class and pairs of children from the other three year-group classes come together and consider all the categories from all classes.
 - i. Further categorise where there is overlap or connection.
 - ii. Order the categories by frequency, and then importance.

Table 2: Example of a child participant's experience of the data collection process.

3.2.2 Setting and Context

The research was undertaken in one large community Infant school (270 children listed on roll 2011) in an urban area of a town in the East of England, which caters for children between 3-8 years of age. In Table 3, (see p 42) the context is summarised. The school has 9 classrooms: 3x Year 2 classes for 6-7 year olds, 3x Year 1 classes for 5-6 year olds, 2x Reception classes for 4-5 year olds, and 1x Nursery class (2x p/t provision, morning and afternoon) for 3-4 year olds. The school is ethnically diverse and includes a higher than national average percentage of children with statements of special educational needs, and higher than average proportion

of children eligible to free school meals, and therefore Department of Education (DfE 2011) pupil premium. Involving a school with a diverse population, including Eastern European and Asian cultures, meant where informed consent was obtained would include a range of children's perspectives.

Year Groups	Number of classrooms in School setting	Approximate no. of children in class	Age range of the children
Nursery	1 morning group	26	3-4 years
	1 afternoon group	26	
Reception	2	30	4-5 years
Year 1	3	28	5-6 years
Year 2	3	28	6-7 years

Table 3: School Context

Using a school context is one way of accessing a sample that is typical of the population required (Greig et al 2013 p92). Other more informal contexts, such as children's clubs, may have given the desired age range and broad demography, but it was pragmatic to involve a local community school.

Carrying out research in an environment that is familiar to the children was important for this research and of value in terms of the validity of the findings. Unfamiliar environments or ones that are dis-embedded could easily constrain children's desire to participate or engage in the process (Palaiologou 2012).

3.2.3 Setting and Preparation

I considered issues of reciprocity (MacNaughton et al 2001). As I had a distant working relationship with this community school anyway, over time I was able to build up a rapport with the staff and pupils, ensuring they were familiar and comfortable with my presence. The Head of the school initially provided information and contact, which was the first step in a long process to develop effective working relationships (Cohen et al 2011p108) vital for undertaking the research.

From the start of the research, I believed I must give something back to the school and the children for their time, contribution and commitment to my research. I decided that my time and expertise would be the most valuable resource I had on offer, so planned volunteering within some of the classrooms. I also thought that the children's data (drawings, paintings or photos), once copied for my research could be taken home for the children and their families to enjoy, so also viewed this as a form of payment and reward for all their time and effort in participating.

3.2.4 Research Timetable in Setting

In Table 4 (see below), my timetable for carrying out the research is summarised. The stages in the data collection are explored in depth on page 48 (Stage 1), page 50 (Stage 2), and page 53 (Stage 3).

I began working in the classrooms half a day a week from January 2011. I continued this for a period of 18 months until July 2012. In the first 7 months, I gained an understanding of the school, its ethos and its workings. This was important and useful in effectively planning strategies to gather the necessary data. During the eighteen-month period in the classrooms, I followed their daily routines and plans. I was then able to plan for and gather the data when it was practicable in each of the four busy year group classrooms.

Dates	Classroom base	Planned Stages of Research Data Collection	Actual Stages of Data Collection
January 2011- July 2011	Year 1	Preparation and Planning	Preparation and Planning
September 2011-October 2011	Nursery	Stage 1a-e (see p 48-50) 3a (see p 53-55)	Stage 1a-e (see p 48-50)
November 2011-December 2011	Reception	Stage1a-e (see p 48-50) 3a (see p 53-55)	Stage1a-e (see p 48-50) 3a (see p 53-55)
January 2012- February 2012	Year 1	Stage1a-e (see p 48-50) 3a (see p 53-55)	Stage1a-e (see p 48-50) 3a (see p 53-55)
February 2012- March 2012	Year 2	Stage 2a-f (see p 50-53) 3b (see p 55)	Stage 2a, 2b (see p 50-52)
April 2012- May 2012	Contingency period	Contingency + Stage 3c (see p 55-62)	Nursery Stage 1a-e (see p 48-50), 3a (see p 53-55) Year Stage 2c-2f (see p 52-53), 3b (see p55)
June 2012-July 2012	Contingency period	Contingency + Stage 3c (see p 55-62)	Stage 3c (see p 55-62)

Table 4: Researcher's timetable in school

This preparation and planning time at the school also allowed me to the opportunity to practise and refine my skills in interacting with young children, and I became more attuned to interpreting, rather than misinterpreting their responses (Johansson 2011). Experience has taught me that only when time, active listening and genuine respect are shown to children, will they be prepared to accept you, welcome you and then share their experiences with you (Pattman and Kehilly 2004 p134). It was evident that as I became immersed in the children's worlds, and as time progressed over the eighteen month period, I became better attuned to the child's "voice", language and environment, even though occasionally I didn't always understand what I was hearing or seeing. I reflected on being a welcome visitor in their worlds, but still only a visitor.

Haavind (2005) suggests if children are participants in research, researchers must take into account their experiences within and across the social settings and contexts they inhabit. Therefore, to gain that scope in my research, gathering data in a primary school with the younger children, and in the home / neighbourhood with the Year 2 children has been included.

3.2.5 Research Sample

I obtained formal permission and informed consent (Palaiologou 2012, Kellett 2005) from the school via the Head teacher (see Appendix 2, p182). I worked in one class from each year group and in these sought permission and consent from the teacher (see Appendix 3, p183), parents/ guardians (see Appendix 4, p184), and informed consent and on-going assent from the children (see Appendix 5, p 187). Table 5 (see p 46) summarises the sample and context of the data collection.

I considered English as an additional language and translations of information / consent letters were organised, where necessary. This included Polish and Punjabi Urdu. As the school have parent translators that they use from time to time, I was invited to access their services in

translating letters. I took time to explain the proposed research to these parent translators, when making contact with them at the school. The Head teacher explained that other parents often approach the parent translators if there was anything they were unsure about, so this was important in ensuring wider understanding.

I followed ethical guidelines and ensured only those who gave consent would have their child's data included in the research (Palaiologou 2012, Harcourt et al 2011). I did not want to coerce participants so also made it clear to the children, parent / guardians and school that they had the right to withdraw their participation at any point during the research process (Greig et al 2013).

I used classroom register lists as my starting point for gaining a sample and once permission had been given by parent / guardian, I allocated pseudonyms reflecting the classroom, gender of participant and sample number (e.g. 2B5 Year 2, Boy, Participant Number 5). I was the only person who knew the coding system used to ensure participant anonymity (Fraser et al 2004).

Although I recognised that children are not a homogenous group (Harden et al 2000) when planning the research, I wanted the sample to be "characteristic and representative" of the population (Greig et al 2013 p92) so used a purposeful sample and included equal numbers of girls and boys. As more parents of children than was required gave consent (see Table 5, p46) I then used a stratified sample, randomly selecting five of each gender from the group (Greig et al 2013 p127). I did this simply by picking out coded participant sample numbers from a box.

A large sample was impractical because of the nature of the research, so I sought a sample of 40 children in total. The sample was adequate to gain the required data necessary, although it is not generalizable or reproducible as it is context specific. However, "fittingness" is a more

appropriate consideration for qualitative studies because the findings may “fit” other similar contexts (Guba & Lincoln 1994).

Year / Proposed Class Group	Class Size	Age of Children	Parental Consent obtained	Sample Size
Nursery AM	26	3-4 yrs.	15	10
Nursery PM	26	3-4yrs	N/A	Not included
Reception	30	4-5 yrs.	17	10
Year 1	29	5-6 yrs.	11	10
Year 2	28	6-7yrs	16	10

Table 5: Sample Size and Context

Nursery morning children in preference to Nursery afternoon children were included in the sample. This was because morning children should be fresher following a night’s sleep and would not be weary from a busy schedule elsewhere, which can happen for Nursery afternoon children. Nursery children attend either a morning or afternoon session for different reasons: sometimes it is parental choice or a school decision based on balancing age and gender within the groups. However from research (Davies and Brember 1991), own experience, and discussions with Nursery staff, attendance in the morning or afternoon can affect the dynamics of the group and is a mediating factor with regard settling down, relationships, and energy levels during these sessions. For this reason, I decided to take the sample from the morning group attending.

As there was more than one class for each age group, I asked the Head teacher to assign me to classrooms preferably:

1. Where there were not too many staff already.
2. Where my presence would not disrupt the normal flow of the day, or present difficulties for the staff.
3. Where I could be utilised by the teacher and staff present.
4. Where the teacher was present and not on planning, preparation and assessment time (PPA time) whilst I was there.

I considered these points because it was important to ensure the research could be undertaken effectively and I could be a useful addition to the classroom, and not too much of a distraction or dilemma to those working there.

Asking the Head teacher to assign me rather than assign myself was preferable for a number of reasons. The Head teacher knew her staff and the dynamics of the classrooms. She knew timetables, and where on the day I could attend I would be best placed. To some degree, it was inevitable my presence would affect the “normal” dynamics and functioning of the classroom, but I was keen to reduce this as much as possible. I have been in classrooms where a profusion of adults alters the situation negatively, and the valuable space that children need or enjoy is adversely affected. This meant that where there was more than one Learning Support Assistant (LSA) in addition to a Teaching Assistant (TA), or more Parent Helpers, I asked to avoid that class group where possible. I also wanted staff to be at ease with my presence so explicitly asked the Head teacher only to consider classes where the staff would be comfortable with me being there.

3.3 Pilot Study

Two children from a Year 1 class (one boy and one girl) and two children from the Nursery (one boy and one girl) were involved in pre-testing the data collection methods. These methods had been carefully considered with a view to finding “...an effective way of eliciting children’s voices” (Harcourt et al 2011 p16). Findings from the pilot study helped me to identify any confusion or issues, so I could make modifications (Hall 2008).

I found during the pilot that the Nursery children enjoyed the activity, understood it and were quite forthright with what materials they wanted. However, one child kept looking towards the door in the classroom and on two occasions told me he was “*waiting for mummy*”. I realised that to get the most from my data gathering I should try to time these to ensure children had settled down in the classroom, and were not waiting on a normal routine such as home time,

playtime or lunchtime to happen. For this reason, I planned data gathering around the normal routines of the day.

I had originally intended for Year 1 participants to use single use cameras but the two year 1 children in the pilot found the cameras challenging to use. I had not planned to use digital cameras for data collection because of cost and/or availability. Recognising either the “training time” that would be required for this method to be of use or successful, I decided on making changes with this class group. I mistakenly thought that as these children used digital cameras in school, using single use cameras would be similar. However, these children were used to making mistakes and deleting them on digital cameras, which they could not do with the single use cameras. I took a pragmatic approach and decided that it would be pertinent to substitute drawings to depict well-being from the Year 1 group, and only use the single use cameras with the older children in Year 2.

3.4 Challenges of Data Collection

The data collection process was not without difficulty even with careful planning and preparation. I had to include contingency planning for many different situations including school and class timetable changes, whole school events, the weather, interruptions, competing distractions, resources running out or not working, illness, behaviour and mood. Nonetheless, with some timetable and planning changes, all data was gathered within the time scale.

3.5 Stages in the Data Collection

There were three stages to the collection of data, as summarised in Table 4: Researcher’s timetable in school (see p43).

3.5.1 Stage 1 of data collection

Table 6 (see p49) summarises this stage of data collection. Following introduction of the activity by the teacher at the start of the day, planned drawing or painting activities took place in a Nursery, Reception and Year 1 class. As each child participated, I explained the activity. Those who wanted to participate produced, at two separate activities; drawings or paintings of what they considered made them feel well and happy.

Children who wanted to participate wore green smiley badges, which the children took for themselves, and those who withdrew or did not want to complete the activity exchanged their green badge for a red smiley badge to indicate withdrawal. This strategy allowed children to signify their choices and for that choice to be respected. Children who did not want to take part in the activity could either paint or draw a different picture or undertake another activity, whether teacher directed or child initiated during this time. Any child who did not complete the painting or drawing or withdrew early did not have their data included (Kellett 2005).

Stage of Research	Class Sample	Sample No.	Focus
Stage 1a	Nursery, Reception Year 1	10 10 10	1 x Painting or Drawing of an experience which made the child feel well and happy
Stage 1b	Nursery, Reception Year 1	10 10 10	1 x Painting or Drawing of a place, person or thing which made the child feel well and happy
Stage 1c	Copy all visual images		
Stage 1d	Children provided narratives about their paintings or drawings .Responses were collated during/after activity. Return the painting or drawing to the child.		
Stage 1e	From available number of participants determine sample of 10		

Table 6: Stage 1 of data collection

1a. the first painting or drawing the children undertook was of an experience, which they considered made them feel well and happy.

1b. the second painting or drawing the children undertook was of a place, person or thing, which they associated, with being well and happy.

1c. Following the two painting or drawing activities, using a digital camera, I copied those sample children's visual images where I had consent from Parent/Guardian and on-going assent from the child. I returned the drawing or painting to each child. I downloaded the copies onto a password protected USB via a computer. (I also had 6x4 print copies made of the copies in preparation for stage 3a). I kept all data securely at home in a locked cabinet.

1d. I either listened and wrote down the children's narrative that accompanied their painting or drawing at the time, or asked the sample children individually about their paintings or drawings and why the experience in the first activity, and person, place or thing in the second activity made them feel well and happy. I matched and collated the responses to each visual image and coded these for anonymity. I kept these on a password protected USB securely at home in a locked cabinet. During this period of collecting the data, I also kept field notes to provide context, non-verbal cues and any details of relevance the children shared with me. I kept my field notes securely alongside the USB and 6x4 prints made.

1e. By employing a stratified sample I was able to determine ten participants from the 15x Nursery, 17x Reception, 11x Year 1 children who had participated, to make up the research sample. I randomly selected five boys' and five girls' to make the sample of 10. I did this simply by picking out coded participant sample numbers from a box, as Greig et al (2013 p127) proposed. I destroyed the non-sample copy visual images, deleted the narratives and any field notes made.

3.5.2 Stage 2 of data collection

This stage related to the Year 2 class participants who used single use cameras to record their perspective on well-being. Table 7 (see p51) summarises Stage 2 of the data collection process.

Stage 2a	Year 2	Whole class	Camera practice activity in school
Stage 2b	Year 2	16	Children took cameras home to record experiences, places, persons or things which made them feel well and happy
Returned cameras are processed (13 out of 16)			
Stage 2c Stage 2d	Year 2	13	- Children removed non-relevant photos. - Children interviewed about their photos, and responses collated. - Child chose 2 favourites : 1x photo of an experience which made them feel well and happy; 1x photo of a place, person or thing which made them feel well and happy
Stage 2e		13	-Return negatives and all duplicate photos to child except 2 favourites
Stage 2f		10	Determine sample of 10 from 13 sets of photographs

Table 7: Stage 2 of data collection

2a. One whole class activity using single use cameras was initially used in a Year 2 class. Instruction on how to use single use cameras was part of the activity and familiarised the children with their usage, so all children in the class were included in this activity. During this activity, the children took two photographs of aspects of the school environment they really liked. I supported all the children in undertaking this activity and this enabled me to see where there could be individual usage problems. This reduced any later possible difficulties in camera use.

The single use cameras had 27 exposures and included processing. Taking into consideration modelling their usage and allowing two photographs for each child, three single use cameras were sufficient for this rehearsal activity. Although this phase was time-consuming, it was important in preparing the children for the actual data collection. The class teacher used the

school environment photographs as part of an effective wall display and topic in the classroom.

2b. Following this activity a group of 16 children whose parents had given their consent from the Year 2 class (age range 6-7 years) were given single-use cameras to take home to record experiences which they considered made them feel well and happy; and places, persons or things which they associate with being well and happy. I gave the children clear and detailed verbal information, answered questions, and checked and re-checked understanding. A short letter (see Appendix 6, p188) to parents was included to highlight the objectives of this part of the research and provide the return date. I asked parents to support children where they needed it, but asked them not to take over the cameras or dictate what photos should be taken. Instructions on how to use the cameras were included in each camera pack and I asked parents to help children get started if necessary.

I gave the children two weeks to use the cameras before their return. At the two-week deadline, I gave verbal reminders to the children, and sent reminder notes out to parents (see Appendix 7, p189). The outstanding cameras were returned after the Easter holidays. In total, I received fifteen of the sixteen cameras back. I was able to process thirteen of the fifteen cameras. Two of the cameras had been dismantled and put back together with tape in an attempt to save the contents, but although processed were unusable.

I ordered a duplicate set of 6x4 prints at the processing stage in order to keep one for data use and return one set to the child. I kept these securely at home in a locked cabinet to which only I have access.

2c. The child was the first to view their photographs once the film had been processed. As the brief was only experiences that made the child feel well and happy, or places, persons or

things that they associate with being well and happy, the children took out any photographs they did not mean to take, or that did not meet the brief. I did this in a respectful and supportive way to ensure children could make the choices they wanted. Only clear photos were included in the data collection. At this point, I mirrored the children's choice of removing photos from the duplicate set so they could see they were leading the decision-making.

2d. Once on-going assent had been established, the 13 children were asked about their photographs, and why the experiences that made the child feel well and happy; or the places, persons or things that they associate with being well and happy were included. I collated all their responses to each of the usable prints. The children then individually chose their two favourites photos which showed an experience that made them feel well and happy, and a place, person or thing which they associate with being well and happy.

2e. At this point I returned the negatives and all the duplicate photos, and gave these to the child for them to take home. My data therefore consisted of two photos from each of the 13 children. I matched and collated the responses to the photos and coded these for anonymity on a password protected USB. I kept the 26 photos and USB secure at home in a locked cabinet.

2f. By employing a stratified sample I was able to determine ten participants from the available thirteen. I randomly selected five boys' and five girls' to make the sample of ten participants. I did this simply by picking out coded participant sample numbers from a box as Greig et al (2013 p127) proposed. The three non-sample participants' photos were then destroyed.

3.5.3 Stage 3 of data collection

Table 8 (see p 54) summarises stage 3 of the data collection. Following stage 1, and stage 2 of data collection, categories of prime meaning were drawn and groupings made. The children lead this stage, alongside the researcher whose main role was as facilitator and scribe.

Two sample children from the Nursery class, two sample children from the Reception class, and finally two sample children from the Year 1 class undertook this stage. Only those who had given assent were able to self-select. Where more than one boy or one girl from each class wanted to participate, I used a stratified sample. I did this by picking out coded participant sample numbers to avail this (Greig et al 2013 p127).

Stage 3a	Nursery, Reception Year 1	2 from each class sample	Children interpreted all their own class samples drawings Children categorised all their own class samples drawings
Stage 3b	Year 2	2 children from class sample	Children interpreted all their own class samples photos Children categorised all their own class samples photos
Stage 3c	Nursery Reception Year 1 Year 2	4 pairs of children from 3a, 3b (8 children in total)	- 4 pairs of children considered all categories from all classes. - Children further categorised where there was overlap or connection. - Children then ordered the categories by frequency - Children then ordered the categories by importance or value of "feeling well and happy"

Table 8: Stage 3 of data collection

3a. The pairs of children looked at the 6x4 print copies of their own year group's paintings or drawings. Each pair looked at the class samples two prints making 20 prints in total. The children tried to interpret them and then group them by category (see Appendix 8, p187).

I initially asked the children to help me to understand theirs and their peers' perspectives by giving me their reaction and meaning to the drawings made, which I put in my field notes. I did not give the children the narrative data alongside the visual data in an attempt to minimise influencing their ideas and interpretations. If children found the drawings difficult to interpret, I gave them the individual child's narrative to the drawing. This meant I now had two interpretations for each drawing, one from the owner and one from the pair of children.

When it came to the pairs of children determining the categories, I wrote down what they said. My only contribution at this stage was to validate or mirror back to them what they said, so as

to ensure they knew I was listening, were happy with what they were saying, and understood their role in this categorisation phase.

This stage allowed the children to see individual experiences, until that point seen separately, coming together and in some instances becoming a strong and unifying category. I matched and collated all interpretations and categories of the image copies and coded these for anonymity. I kept these on a password protected USB securely at home in a locked cabinet.

3b. As with the other classes in 3a above, two children from Year 2 participants followed the same procedure. The pair of children looked at the two 6x4 print copies from each of the 10 sample making 20 photos in total. The children tried to interpret them and then group them by category (see Appendix 8, p190).

As with the other class samples, I initially asked the children to help me to understand theirs and their peer's perspective by giving me their reaction and meaning to the photos. If children found the photos difficult to interpret, I gave them the individual child's discourse to the photo. Again, this meant I now had two interpretations for each photo, one from the owner and one from the pair of children. When it came to the pairs of children determining the categories, I followed the same procedure used with the other classes.

3c. The four pairs of children together from Stage 3a and 3b above were then invited to group the categories further, from all class samples if they saw any connections. Following this, the children then ordered the categories firstly by frequency of image pertaining to that category, then by importance or value of category (see Appendix 9, p193).

Each pair of children was already familiar with their own participation of undertaking drawings, paintings or taking photographs, and categorising these within their own class' sample. The eight children then explored any connections between the year group samples categories.

They were also able to see frequency of image within a category (ordering each category), and they were able to consider the importance of the categories (valuing each category) in making young children feel well and happy.

I lead this process and created suitable conditions (environmental and social / emotional) for research with children, which enabled and encouraged all the children's interpretation (Harcourt et al 2011).

I was able to use an area where children usually undertook group work so it was not in the busy classroom environment. Although to one side of a corridor, it did not have passing traffic to distract those taking part. I explained the data collection process and their contribution to date, to ensure all children felt comfortable. I also told them that each of them had another valuable contribution to make in interpreting, grouping and valuing all the data, if they were willing. I explained it meant being respectful to each person's contribution and listening to what everyone had to say.

Similarities and differences in making connections, noting frequency, ordering the categories, valuing the categories, and age / stage of development were noted in my field-notes during this process. I saw my role again as facilitator, scribe and where necessary intermediary. This would support the identification of emerging categories and ensure the integrity of the findings. I checked the notes made from the discussions for accuracy with those present. I coded any identifiable information to ensure identities were unknown to anyone who read the research findings. All data gathered was put on a password protected USB and kept securely at home in a locked cabinet.

3.5.4 Children's sorting, categorisation and ordering

The pairs of children from each class group appeared initially to be interested in finding their own two drawings or photos and then trying to guess who the owners of the rest were. They

would point out obvious features and guess representations of people by gender, hair length, sometimes eyelashes if drawn, and shape of clothes. Bigger people were usually adults and if the size of the people was roughly the same they would state the people were friends.

Sometimes the children could not say what the drawing was and would say so in a matter-of-fact way. I gave the child's interpretation of their visual image, and often this was accepted without further comment. If there was an amusing statement or it included something the children could relate to they often added comments such as "I've done that"; "my brother's got one of those"; "I like that".

The pairs of children looked at the copies of the twenty paintings, drawings or photos and sorted them into categories (Stage 3a, 3b). Categories included families and home; doing things with family; being outdoors / outside; feeling / being happy; fun and laughter; pets and animals; playing with toys and games; activities; playing with friends; helping out; getting good; food; rewards and treats. The nursery children were less able to sort and categorise, although they had a very good attempt, indicating language experience and cognitive ability in this task were factors that needed consideration.

The older pairs of children appeared to enjoy working out who people, pets and places were likely to be, and were quite confident in the sorting process. Their language and cognitive skills meant they could articulate any seen overlap, and would discuss if a photo could fit more than one category. At the end of this process, I summarised the children's categories by year group and frequency (Appendix 8, p190). I could see some similarities in the categories although at times the emphasis was different (see Appendix 8, p190). For instance in the Nursery there was no mention of pets, but animals featured strongly. This was the reverse in Year 2 class. In Nursery, friends referred to were always family friends but by Year 2, peer group friends featured in many more activities.

Alongside recording the categories, I made notes of interpretations and comments made by the pairs of children in my field notes. I found the children were not judgemental about other children's choices, and recognised that as an adult I was looking in and capturing aspects of their world. I gained the impression that these aspects of their lives were not often visible to adults in this way. The children did not seem to need any validation by adults about things that made them feel well and happy, but when adults such as me showed interest and had time, they welcomed sharing their ideas.

The last stage in sorting the data was when the four pairs of children together considered all the categories put forward from each year group pair (Stage 3c). Organising a time and place where the children could review the categories put forward by the pairs proved challenging. I had to negotiate with the four teachers when was convenient, and this took some time to reach agreement. Finding a place where there was enough space for the children to work together also needed some organisation. I eventually managed to negotiate a corridor / reading area, which was big enough to spread out the prints and photos.

I had recognised that a buddying / support system operating in the school meant older children were used to supporting the younger children and this proved advantageous when bringing the children together. The older children treated the younger children with respect and care and did not dominate or push their ideas forward. In fact the reverse was the case and they coaxed the younger children into making judgements and decisions.

I went through the drawings, paintings and photos telling the children how they had been categorised and asked them whether any categories could be put together or overlapped. Where there was some overlap, the children either determined the main category or put some categories together (see Appendix 9, p193).

Decisions made by the children included *“having fun and being happy”* was *“in everything”* so decided that wasn't a category and so reviewed these pieces of visual data again and put them into what they considered appropriate categories. They also decided “pets” and “animals” went together; doing things whether “activities”, “games and toys” and “getting good” (mastery) also went together, so these were combined. “Special places”, “helping out”, and “rewards and treats” were all linked to “family” and “doing things with family” so they decided these should be re-categorised.

The main categories following review of overlap or connection determined by the children were:

1. Family (and home)
2. Being with/doing things with family
3. Pets and animals
4. Being outside/playing outside
5. Seeing nature
6. Playing with friends
7. Doing activities, playing with toys and games
8. Food

The four pairs of children then all together determined which categories had the most drawings and photos in it thus considering frequency. The older children did not count the number in each category but talked about there being more in that pile and less in another. Although it was not completely accurate across all categories, they managed to get the majority right. Two categories were similar in number but one of the Year 1 children said *“that’s more important, that’s next”* which indicated they were considering frequency and value together. The nursery pair of children found this the most challenging task but the older children supported them here so I was confident I was gaining an appropriate overview.

The categories in order of frequency determined by the children were:

1. Family (and home)
2. Being with / doing things with family
3. Being outside / playing outside
4. Seeing nature
5. Pets and animals
6. Doing things: activities, playing with toys/games
7. Playing with friends
8. Food

Finally, I asked the children to order the eight categories by importance (or value). Initially they did this in their class pairs (see Appendix 9, p193).

Following this process, some of the children decided that “being outside” and “nature” went together, and that “food”, linked to “family” and “doing things with family”, so the visual data were reviewed and put in what the children believed to be the appropriate category. The children also discussed “playing” which was attached to many of the categories, but at this point in the categorisation process dropped the word. This appeared to indicate it was an accepted part of these categories and probably did not need highlighting any more.

This meant there were now six categories, for the whole group of children to order by importance (value):

1. Family (and home)
2. Being with / doing things with family
3. Being outside
4. Pets and animals
5. Doing things: activities, playing with toys/games

6. Friends

I then asked for consensus or a final decision on order of importance, as there were some differences in the groups' ratings of importance (value) (see Appendix 9, p193).

Once again, the older children sought the younger ones' opinions and gave many positive non-verbal cues to their responses. Watching this taking place made me wonder at what I was seeing. I could not envisage quite the same situation I was viewing here, where adults could so competently and sensitively support others in the same way. My field notes demonstrate this when I look back on them, just the number of exclamation marks showed me I was not expecting this. I did think the older children might dominate and the younger ones acquiesce. On reflection, I was not expecting children to be as capable and competent in working together and that surprised me. It could be that my own experiences of being with children or researching with children affected my expectations and is more limited than I had recognised.

3.5.5. The Children's Themes

The final categorisation and ordering from the four pairs of children across the classes resulted in their key themes being:

1. Family
2. Doing things with Family
3. Being outside
4. Pets and animals
5. Activities, games and toys
6. Friends

The children were pleased with sharing their ideas on feeling well and happy and one of the Year 2 children asked me, "*do you want to know anything else?*" I thanked them for their ideas and told them I had learnt a lot about what they thought was important in making them feel

well and happy. I had not had any major difficulties with gaining children's assent to participating and put this down to their interest in the subject area and enjoyment of the methods used. I believe that I gained rich data because I listened carefully and showed real interest in what the children had to say, and had the time to do so. I ensured validity by giving the children the opportunity to categorise, order and value the data, and give feedback on the results to me (Bryman 2012).

I spent the last five Wednesdays as "payback" to the school, supporting the school where there was the greatest need. It was also an opportunity for me to find some emotional distance from the research process and participants. During this period, I also sent a letter of thanks to the Head teacher for sharing with her staff and the children who participated in the research, stating how much I had gained from the research experience.

3.6 Data Analysis

3.6.1 Context Considerations

Initially I considered the data by class, which meant I could also consider from my field notes the contexts of data collection. There were some key elements to take into account.

It is important to note that I initially went into the Nursery in the autumn term to gather data, but had to return briefly in the summer term to complete it. This was mainly because children were still "settling" in to school when I first arrived and for some of the children this proved to be a prolonged process. Going back into the Nursery six months later meant these children were then more settled and able to happily engage in the data collection process.

I recognised that time of year and festivities could affect the children's thought processes. I considered that when I was in Reception and Year 1 during the winter, cold short days may well impact on their drawings and the experiences they would relate, whereas in the Autumn (Nursery) and Spring (Year 2) the focus could change. The approach of Christmas was a

context I was aware of when in the Reception class, but only two children referred to this in their narratives. This suggests that in carrying out their drawings they were able to focus competently on the brief.

It was also important to think about educational context whilst gathering the data, particularly when considering the formality / informality of the learning process in a given class, and scheduling of the school day and term. This was because I had to be aware of mediating factors in the social context, which would have some impact on the visual data gathered. In a more formal learning environment, which was evident as children progressed through the school, I found the older children particularly pleased to be involved in the research, but also noticed they spent longer on their drawings and narratives. This may be because it was enjoyable to them, or a welcome release however temporary, from the constraints of the more formalised curriculum. It could also indicate that children were not having their emotional needs as fully met in this social context as they needed, and found this data collection occasion with the researcher opportune.

Prior learning was also evident in some of the children's drawings. For instance within the Nursery class when the Nursery children had "colour mixing" activities, preceding some of my data gathering. Six children's paintings reflected the learning that had taken place from these activities and their subsequent exploration of the properties of paint, during their painting of feeling well and happy. It was the narratives and field notes in these instances, which were particularly valuable in highlighting the "meanings" from the children. Another activity, which affected one child in the Nursery, was a previous hand-printing activity. During one data gathering episode, one child asked if he could paint his hands and then made handprints on his paper, whilst happily telling me what made him feel well and happy. Taken without context and narrative, these paintings would have given me a very different perspective to the one I gained.

The participants from the Reception and Year 1 class all used their own school journals for the drawings, which demonstrated that they had learnt these were the most appropriate resources to use for the brief. All children using school journals used either felt-tip pens or crayons depending on individual preference at the time.

The context of gathering the narratives from the children was also pertinent. Sometimes the children without prompting would tell me what was going on in their painting or drawing, but in some cases, their concentration was such, that I needed to wait for them to signify they had finished before they would discuss the visual medium with me. For some children just the act of painting or drawing was the door to them opening up a dialogue about what made them feel well and happy, sometimes these were experiences, sometimes descriptions with much detail, and sometimes with questions, or indignant responses when they assumed I knew something that I did not. Often the children told me the names of the people in the drawings and photographs often adding the relationship as part of the explanation.

When telling their stories the children were animated, most showing a disarming openness. As children developed, some of the detailed descriptions of experiences, places and people had a quality of precision to them, and their explanations came across with great importance. This concurs with Strauss (1978 p61) who talked about children “singing with the brush”. In many instances, the older children appeared to be singing with their felt-tip pens or coloured pencils then with their narratives. One of the reflections I made in my field-notes refers to the lack of opportunity children have as they progress through school, to communicate what is important to them. The demands of a school day rarely permit children to talk about what is important to them in their own lives, to “sing”, let alone sing visually and vocally. My field-notes testify that the happiness these activities brought to the children was noticeable. I believe I had the time to show interest, engage with them, and truly listen, which then allowed them to talk freely about what is important to them and their own lived experiences. It was also testimony to children’s growing ability to not only paint their thoughts through the medium of painting and

drawing, but also their growing ability to articulate their thoughts as well.

Throughout the data collection, I was sensitive to the children's inferences and this supported many of the comments and reflections I made in my field notes. This concurs with Becker and Geer's (1957 p32) construct that when working "in a social context rich in cues and information of all kinds" these observed but frequently unsaid additions (which can pass unnoticed), can provide "an extensive base for the interpretation and analytic use of any particular datum." I therefore believe that together the visual data, narratives and field notes made, complemented and brought together effectively, the children's perspective on what made them feel well and happy.

3.6.2 Approaches to Data Analysis

I assembled the data sources: prints of the drawings or paintings, photographs, narratives, children's categorisation and any interpretation together with my field notes.

3.6.2i Visual Semiotic Analysis

In order to make sense of the data I explored techniques that would enable me to manage it all together. The visual elements of the data, the children's representations of what made them feel well and happy, needed to be analysed systematically in order to seek out any deeper meanings and messages. Semiotics the study of "signs" was an appropriate starting point for uncovering the "processes of meaning production" (Bryman 2012 p291) made by the children. Bryman (2012 p 559) states that "Semiotics is concerned to uncover the hidden meanings..." and this is what I needed to begin a worthwhile analysis. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, 1996), Chandler (2002), van Leeuwen and Jewitt (2001), consideration of semiotics and it's signs, symbols, signifiers and signified supported my decision making, in initially following a visual semiotic analysis, using the approach of Roland Barthes (1977,1973). Using Barthes approach I initially questioned what the children were trying to represent in their visual material and took a "denotative" stance to the data set, which is considered the first

layer of meaning, and depicts what or who is being portrayed (van Leeuwen, Jewitt 2001).

This enabled me to explore the signs or representations within an image.

Following this, in order to explore the deeper layers of meaning that may be present in both visual and narrative communication together; I took a “connotative” stance and approach (Barthes 1977). Barthes’ believed images were polysemous – lacking stability and subject to multiple interpretations, but with the addition of words ,ambiguity in an image was reduced.

This supported my decision to analyse the representations, narratives and field notes together and investigate any ideas, values and deeper meanings present. Visually it included consideration of people, environments, physical properties, features, focus, colour, shape, placement, and repeated objects in the data (see Table 9 below. Also, see Appendix 11, p202 for examples of data analysis using Barthes Approach).

Parti- cipant	1. Denotative depiction)	2. Initial connotative layer from visual depiction	3. Child’s Narrative	4. Second connotative layer using visual and narrative	5. My Field- notes (<i>italics</i>)	6. Final Conno- tative (layers of meaning)
N M1 A	3 red lines including a hull shaped curve at bottom, horizontal line in middle and a vertical line (1/3 pg.)	Boat central in painting with sail and mast	“Going on a boat with daddy, mummy, nanny and patch (<i>cuddly dog</i>)-sailing”	Sailing Boat to depict outing with family central in painting with sail and mast	<i>He discussed how he was allowed to steer and the fun they had on their boat</i>	Family activity Key persons Belonging Emotional security Outdoors Developing Competence Fun

Table 9: Exemplar of Data Analysis using Barthes Approach

Although Barthes’ interest was in art, photography and the cultural meanings of signs, his method went beyond consideration of the content, form and subject matter to its communications and meanings. Barthes saw denotation as what is drawn or photographed; and connotation, as how it is drawn or photographed. As the children’s visual data, narratives and my own field notes needed to be brought together; this coherent and cohesive approach

had resonance and enabled a satisfactory re- conceptualization of the data from an adult “making meaning” perspective.

Alongside Barthes (1973, 1977) approach, I also included a developmental perspective and consideration to allow for the children’s emerging ability with drawing and painting (Einarsdottir et al 2009, Anning and Ring 2004, Cox 1992, Strauss 1978). As Strauss (1978 p10) expounds, “...with careful study of the drawings of any child we will find the essential elements”. This supports the idea that children's drawings go through stages of development and that subject to culture and experience, their symbolic expressions follow a universal pattern of development in the early years. It was important to have a depth of knowledge and awareness of this element to support a reasoned analysis of the drawings and paintings, particularly with the younger children between 3-5 years of age within the Nursery and Reception classes. This is a key period for the development of fine motor skills and representation, necessary for drawing and painting.

3.6.2ii Thematic Analysis

I also wanted to analyse it from a different perspective as well, using a thematic analysis (Bryman 2012, Braun and Clarke 2006) in order to ensure and check nothing had been overlooked. Different characteristics were coded, following familiarisation and immersion in the data. To encapsulate these I then indexed with sub categories and refined this through further sifting of the data (Braun and Clarke 2006). It allowed repetitions, connections, commonalities, similarities and differences to be identified and established. I thought that the two approaches used would bring greater rigour to the analytic process.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

I carefully and conscientiously considered young children’s potential vulnerability and the unequal power relationships present when undertaking research with young children. My

stance to ensure high standards was one of respecting the participants and gatekeepers, and taking ethical practice seriously and responsibly (Palaiologou 2012).

3.7.1 Ethical Approval

I submitted a research proposal and application to the University of Essex Ethics Committee (reference number 10033) in May 2011. The Faculty Ethics Committee granted approval to proceed in June 2011.

3.7.2 Access and Informed consent

I recruited participants through an appropriate setting where I had an existing relationship. Initially I discussed the research with the Head teacher clearly setting out my position and explaining the contemporary context of the research topic. From that point, I was able to negotiate access with the Head teacher, class teachers, parent(s) / guardians and children. I made sure I was familiar with and paid proper regard to the policies and procedures of the school at all times. By doing this, I was demonstrating that I understood the rules for running the setting and was agreeing to them (Bruce 2010 p383).

Sufficient information was given in the Head teacher, Class teacher, Parent(s) / guardians and Children (see Appendices 1, 2, 3, 4, p180-186) information and consent letters, to enable an informed decision to be made by the participants. I included key information about the research with explanation of informed consent. All participants had the right to withdraw at any time and there was no coercion of professionals, parents or children during the research process.

Children's information letters and briefing (see Appendix 5, p187) was child friendly to ensure understanding (Greene and Hogan 2005). I instigated a protocol whereby the children involved in the research activities wore "green smiley face" stickers. I explained to the children if they no longer wanted to take part for whatever reason, they could change the green smiley face sticker for a red smiley face sticker, to indicate their decision to stop their involvement at that point.

I was also mindful of interpreting assent with the children (Palaiologou 2012). The process of seeking 'assent' (Cocks 2006 p247) is a more comprehensive method of gaining the agreement of children in research, as it goes beyond language, ability, cultural, social and international borders. It requires the researcher to watch out for the slightest signal to suggest the participant is uncomfortable in any way.

I was confident throughout that participants were happy to be there and happy for me to be there during data collection. I did re-negotiate consent with the children again at the description, categorisation and ordering stage to ensure they were happy to be involved and were still giving me permission to use their data.

At no time did I get a child dissenting or withdrawing permission. At one point, a child was hesitant with their participation so I emphasised that they could decline to take part or withdraw permission if they wanted and I would take that as their choice. I also emphasised that they could withdraw from the research activities at any point they wanted (Greene and Hogan 2005). On a few occasions children's non-verbal cues told me they were not ready or willing to participate at that moment, so I became adroit at recognising these signs and interpreting consent signals. I readjusted my schedule when this happened only returning when I felt confident the child would be comfortable and happy to have me there.

3.7.3 Confidentiality and Anonymity

All those allowing me access to the children were reassured in the information letters that anonymity and confidentiality would be upheld (see Appendices 1, 2, 3, p180-184). Any person's name in the narrative or visual data was changed to a pseudonym, and any photographs used in the thesis had faces blurred or pixilated to ensure anonymity. In a developmentally appropriate way, I assured the children of anonymity and confidentiality (see Appendix 5, p187). I told the children and teachers that confidentiality would only be breached, if risk of harm were divulged (Harcourt et al 2011). I did not refer to the school, and all participants were coded to ensure anonymity. I secured all the data in a locked cabinet at home to which only I had access. After digital copies were made originals were returned to the children. Data, findings and analysis were put on a password protected USB and coded to maintain anonymity. The password protected USB was carefully stored at home in a locked cabinet to which only I have access, as with all the data, to ensure confidentiality (Greig et al 2013).

Informed consent was required from all participants in the research. Children in Nursery, Reception and Year 1 that did not have parental consent, were still involved in the production of the drawings and paintings, as they were within normal classroom activities. This ensured no child felt excluded or left out.

Instruction on how to use single use cameras was included as a whole classroom activity in Year 2 to familiarise the children with their usage, so again all children were included in this activity. Having an inclusive environment in this way would avoid any distress to any of the children (MacNaughton et al 2001).

3.7.4 Researcher Suitability and methods

As a senior lecturer and programme leader of BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies programmes, I currently lead on professional practice modules. This means visiting students in placement and in practice where young children are situated, is a familiar and normal part of my professional role. I have a valid Criminal Records Bureau check (CRB) (now a DBS) certificate from my employer. Once the school agreed in principle to my research, the Head teacher instigated a CRB through the local education authority as well.

I was reflexive throughout the research process in recognising my own biases and beliefs and how they may affect the research (Thomson and Walker 2010). I was aware that the choices I made in formulating the design of the research and the subsequent knowledge generated were part of this. This was an on-going process, initially supported by an informal journal kept during the planning of the research and the eighteen months spent in the school. At the beginning of the research endeavour, I identified both my own personal and professional reflections regarding the area of research, and later used some of these reflections for discussion with colleagues and supervisor. Although reflexivity is vital in any research endeavour, I knew that as an interpreter of the situation, I must not ignore my own personal history, location in time and social space, and stance taken, as it should contribute to understanding my role in the process (Clough and Nutbrown 2012).

Familiarising myself with the school and children over a period also helped reduce a degree of “observer effects” when working with the children (Christensen and James 2008). I considered research friendly methods with young children to be realistic and achievable. I endeavoured to be flexible and sensitive to the children throughout the research process. The methods chosen had an element of fun for the children participating and this helped engage them in the process (Thomson 2008).

The children participating in the research provided the data, interpreting and categorising it alongside the researcher. This ensured that their views and interpretations were given due authority (Christensen and James 2008).

3.7.5 Protection from Harm and Disclosure

Children's health and safety remained paramount throughout the time I was at the school. This included awareness of safety issues in the environment and the use of resources whilst data collection was taking place. I discussed the limits of confidentiality with the participants before the research. If a child had revealed they were at risk, or disclosed a child protection issue then I would have told the child in a developmentally appropriate way that I must tell the school, and therefore break that confidentiality (Greene and Hogan 2005). This would have been the only situation where keeping confidentiality would not have been ethical.

3.7.6 Deception

Being fully prepared, open, honest, and respectful, and giving detailed information to participants and "gatekeepers" ensured that deception would not take place. Adhering to standards, taking a principled and ethical stance throughout the research process supported and ensured this (Fraser et al 2004).

3.7.7 Distress

I did not want to cause any child possible harm or distress and so carefully considered all stages of the data collection process. There was no reason for me to gather narratives from the children in a quiet area, so all data gathered was within the classroom or in open hallways outside the classrooms, which mostly doubled as IT specific areas or writing/reading areas. I was mindful that:

"The risk of exploitation exists in any context where an adult researcher is alone with a child" (Greene and Hogan 2005 p73),

moreover, for that reason ensured this was not necessary and did not happen.

I was also conscious that in focusing on well-being I could open up opposing ideas that could result in distress, areas of concern for the child, or suppressed emotions. I knew that if a child did become upset I could offer some immediate comfort but would also ask the child if I could pass on my general concerns to their teacher. This occurred on two occasions, which I subsequently conveyed to the class teacher for following up.

3.8 Summary

I have discussed the research methodology, the researchers' perspective, planning and preparation in this chapter. I have explained the setting, context, data collection methods and stages of data collection. I have included a description of the children's categorising and ordering of the data, and their resultant themes. I introduced my approach to data analysis, and finally explored ethical considerations.

In Chapter 4, I analyse the data using Barthes (1973, 1977) visual semiotic approach, and a thematic analysis. I present my results and analyse the key themes present. I then compare the children's themes with mine and consider similarities and differences.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 3 Methodology, I explained the process of gathering the data, presented children's expressions of well-being and the children's key themes. In this chapter, I start by considering children as communicators. I then discuss the process of my own analysis and present the results, analyse the key themes and consider how they compare with the children's analysis.

4.2 Children as Communicators

My perspective started with the premise that children are communicators, and through their paintings, drawings and photos could express their lived experiences and perceptions of feeling well and happy. Although the visual data gathered was only part of the story, it facilitated the children's narrative, and provided the focus for their narrative explanations or interpretation that followed. For me the visual data was the connection that allowed me entrance to their personal worlds and thus understanding of what made them feel well and happy. Together the visual and narrative elements complemented each other effectively and made the picture complete for capturing their thoughts and communications of well-being.

The children enjoyed telling me what made them feel well and happy, and all drawings, paintings and photos were in accord with their narratives. However, some children's narratives jumped from one subject to another often with obvious links, but at other times not.

Occasionally I became lost in trying to follow their train of thought, recognising that I was not party to the child's inner world and probably the connections were there, but unless explained I would not be able to see them. Children frequently related to "I" or "me" and their relationship to the world around them. This reflects much of the developmental psychology literature and links to concepts such as "metacognition" (Gopnik 1993) which includes a child's ability to think about or reflect on how they are feeling or thinking; and the development of "theory of

mind” (Harris 1989) where children can understand others may have different emotions, feelings, thoughts and beliefs to their own. Many of the narratives included words such as, “like”, “happy”, “laugh” and “fun” and the children's body language and gestures reflected they were happy in undertaking the activity and sharing their experiences and thoughts with me. My field notes were testimony to this showing that the children understood the purpose of the activities and enjoyed their participation in the data collection process.

4.3 Analytic Process

My own analysis started with Barthes (1973, 1977) visual semiotic approach to the data gathered. Alongside Barthes (1973, 1977) approach, I considered a developmental perspective (Einarsdottir et al 2009, Anning and Ring 2004, Cox 1992, Strauss 1978), to support my analysis of the drawings and paintings, particularly with the Nursery and Reception participants. I found the Year 1 class drawings easier to analyse, as the children's ability to represent was more developed and therefore easier for me to understand.

I reviewed all the drawings, paintings, photos, narratives and field notes repeatedly, in an attempt to understand the depictions and narratives. This allowed me time to consciously dwell in each participant's world and begin to consider what feeling well and happy meant from the children's perspective. This overview gave me some confidence in then revisiting the data by class group, which was my starting point in determining overarching themes.

I wanted to take a “bottom up” inductive approach (Bryman 2012) to ensure that the themes emerged from the data. This meant that in the process of interpretation, the layers of meaning should become more visible over time.

4.3.1 Denotative Process

Barthes (1973) denotative approach was utilised initially, in an attempt to understand the depictions. In some instances in the Nursery, this was beyond my capability, but at other

times, I could make out their developing symbolical language. I could make out some shapes such as figures, faces, houses, trees, the sun and grass but often had to use the artistic arrangement to support some of this endeavour. Some children exposed their symbols to begin with, and then covered them over, which is where my field-notes came in useful. In some paintings, the children used big sweeps of the brush, big loops, dabs, lines, curves, or layered colours on top of each other, demonstrating their developing small motor control of tools. Some children carefully chose the colours they wanted, whereas others used every colour and did not wash their brush at colour changes. It was also evident that a few of the participants had not had much experience of this medium, and on some occasions, it was possible to see that the process was far more important to them than the product. I found the Nursery class groups paintings the most difficult to analyse but recognised that the developmental stage they were at was the foremost reason. Strauss (1978 p11) shows how this unravelling can be done and how there are “clues to the mystery” in analysing and understanding children's drawings, which was very helpful.

As I worked with each class in ascending order, the children's developmental stage progressed. Some Reception drawings still proved difficult to interpret, but overall most were distinguishable and I was able to record what or who was being depicted. The Reception children's drawings of people and faces varied dramatically with some children using curved shapes or stick shapes for appendages, whereas others would draw people with just trunks and heads. Figures of human beings were particularly prominent and the I-form, the children themselves being in many of the drawings, recognised as developmentally appropriate for this stage of development. According to Strauss (1978 p71) this is the norm, as was the size and positioning of figures, at times showing their relative importance in the eyes of the child. Many functional features started to appear, such as doors having handles, and clothes having buttons, showing that the children could now observe and reproduce everyday things. Enclosing objects in circles and bubbles was also prominent and is often evident in many children's developmental journey, which accords with Piaget's (1952) Schema theory, a theory

that identifies patterns of thought and actions, further developed by Athey (1990). Colour use was often faithful to the portrayed object, but some children chose colours purely based on preference. Many children at this stage have greater control of their fine motor skills and this was evident in some of the finer details and features added to the drawings.

Some children's attention to detail and ability to recall was surprising to me in their drawings, and in my field notes, I had noted "as adults we become habituated to stimuli around us, whereas children are still exploring their world so take so much more in." Some of my observations spanned both denotative and connotative approach, but were important in my analysis of the visual data.

In Year 1, I could see what the children's drawings depicted, although could not always pick out specific or named people. The degree of detail in the drawings had increased from the previous classes, for instance, one child put their own house number on a drawing of their house, and another child detailed an X-Box rifle with telescopic sight, grip and magazine. Children also included some personal detail, for instance one child accurately portrayed the colour of her family's skin and Afro-Caribbean hairstyles. The children also labelled some of their drawings with "me" being popular alongside named family members. Titles were also included, such as, "I am in my garden" or "me and dad went to the shop". It would therefore appear that in their desire to communicate some of the children found an additional outlet in the written word. This also demonstrated their understanding of the importance of the written word and their growing capability in using it. There was variance in different children's drawing capabilities and still some use of stick arms and legs. The children were mostly able to scale objects effectively and often used positioning to show what was most important to them. I also found that many of the children chose colours that replicated real objects, possessions and people, determined to give a clear interpretation and representational portrayal.

In Year 2, I initially poured over the photographs in an attempt to capture what was there. The first element I found was that five children had asked a relative to photograph them with others, and three of those children had included both photographs with them in it, for meeting the brief. This perspective could be the desire to communicate feeling well and happy with those who contribute to the process. Another element that was evident was only three photographs were actually taken outside of the home environment. However, I realised those children would only have evenings and weekends to use the camera, and that the weather in February and March could affect and limit their possible experiences. In the previous classes, the children had been able to use their memories to remember prior experiences they could reproduce in their paintings and drawings. They had also been able to add elements, such as flowers, rainbows, animals and could make an artistic and often imaginary arrangement from them to depict things that made them feel well and happy. However, in this class, the children with the photographs were capturing a moment in time, a snapshot, which could not be enhanced with additions from their memory or imagination. All photographs were clear, and where people were included there was a degree of posing for the camera, with the majority smiling at the camera. This reflects a social and cultural norm in this society. It was quite straightforward to decide what or who was being depicted, although I did not always know who the subject was or necessarily the location. I used all the visual cues to ascertain gender and rough age of subjects, and used the background to support decisions of where the photo had been taken.

4.3.2 Connotative Process

Following this, I then took a connotative approach (Barthes 1977) to the data and was able to explore the layers of meaning and therefore begin to see the children's interpretations of what made them feel well and happy.

Employing all aspects of the data meant I was able to retain the context whilst interpretation and analysis took place. Alongside my field notes, which also included non-verbal

communication from the children where relevant, I was also often able to go back in time and visualise the scenario. I realised that the combination of painting, drawing, or photograph with the narrative; plus context and field notes enabled a full picture of the data gathering period.

At this stage, I had established many layers of meanings within the data. These meanings comprised of, key persons, pets, family activity, celebrations, parties, belonging, sharing, being together, emotional security, physical safety, comfort, physical security, physical contact. In addition I could see elements that highlighted a sense of self, gender identity, self-reliance, giving, outdoors, natural world, animals, freedom, awe and wonder, developing competence, mastery, exploration, and discovery. There were also aspects that included friends, play, structured play, physical play, imagination, games, toys, animism, favourite food, and being healthy. Experiences and feelings included anticipation, excitement, happiness, fun, laughter, humour, and enjoyment.

At the end of this analytic process of peeling back the layers of meaning from the children's individual pieces of visual and narrative data, I had generated an index of over forty interpretations or subthemes. The next stage was to consider connections and commonalities and find emerging key themes.

4.3.3 Thematic Analysis

Before continuing my analysis of the forty plus subthemes from using Barthes (1973, 1977) visual semiotic approach I went back to the data. I wanted to get an overview of the data as a whole to ensure nothing had been overlooked, so trawled the data initially a class at a time then moved on to considering it as a whole. I had research question 2, "what is young children's interpretation and conceptual understanding of wellbeing?", in my mind during this process which allowed me the opportunity to consider each age group's data and then all the data together. By considering it in this way, I was able to identify repetitions, connections, commonalities, similarities and differences. I coded, and categorised the data afresh. The

process took some time, but in approaching it from a different perspective, I was thinking about it differently and this added to my analysis. During this stage, I generated codes, and made links where subthemes emerged, which then overlapped, or increased and narrowed (Bryman 2012, Braun and Clarke 2006). My key themes from this process were 1. Family, 2. Emotional Security, 3. Developing Competence, and 4. Outdoor World. I put this to one side confident that in considering the data as a whole I had not missed any recurring ideas and topics that were present.

I then revisited the 40 subthemes from Barthes (1973, 1977) visual semiotic approach and examined any connections and commonalities in these subthemes. I refined and collated these to identify the overall themes. Appendix 11 (p 202) shows the process of collating the sub-themes and grouping them into three key themes: 1. Key Persons, 2. Sense of self, and 3. Outdoor World. Elements that were not significant were listed as subsidiary, to be included in the key theme but not warranting additional foci (see Appendix 11, p 202), during this process. The key themes were pertinent to all year groups, but the degree of emphasis was at times different across the year groups (See Appendix 11, p 202).

I reviewed the two approaches together, which enabled me to see the degree of correspondence present in both processes. Key Persons encapsulated family and emotional security; Sense of self captured developing competence; and the Outdoor World in both was comparable. For that reason, I decided that the three key themes: 1. Key Persons; 2. Sense of self; 3. Outdoor World would be pertinent for further analysis and discussion.

4.4 Key Themes

From reviewing the results of the data, the salient key themes were -

1. Key relationships
2. Sense of self
3. Outdoor world

In the following section, I present each of the key themes pertinent to the children's feelings of wellbeing, alongside the key elements that made up the theme.

4.4.1 Theme One: Key Relationships

This was by far the most important theme emanating from the data in understanding the children's perspective on what made them feel well and happy. It also had very strong links to the other two themes in demonstrating that being with key people was important.

The children frequently illustrated and articulated many components from this predominant theme. The main components were key persons; key persons providing physical safety and emotional security; family activities and feelings of belonging.

4.4.1i Key Persons

There was much dialogue about being with family and friends. This included the positive relationships they had with these people and the interactions and things they did together or shared. It was evident in most of the visual and narrative data that these key relationships were central to the children's feelings of wellbeing. Many children focused on parents who are usually the primary care-givers, nuclear family including pets, and wider family members such as grandparents, uncles, cousins, step-relations, and the wider family groupings pets.

It is universally accepted that children have needs which must be met for them to survive and grow, which Maslow (1970) suggested for all humans in his "Hierarchy of Needs". For younger children the key people in their lives meet these needs until their development and learning are such that they can move towards independence. Basic physiological needs such as food, water and shelter must first be satisfied for survival, followed by physical safety and emotional security needs. These needs are secured from close family when children are young, as they are usually the main, most reliable and generally stable grouping children will experience in their early years.

Following these basic needs, psychological needs, which include developing relationships, love and belonging, are also crucial for children to be able to blossom and grow, and in the early years it is normally parents and close family who are the key to ensuring this. Seeing to these needs and ensuring individual needs are being recognised and supported can enable growth, development and the gaining of self-esteem, crucial in beginning to function independently in the social world (Roberts 2010).

Sometimes it was obvious that family relationships were “key” to making the child feel well and happy, but at other times, it was implied by the make-up of the people present in the visual and narrative data:



“Being with mum, dad and Sally (sister) makes me happy.” (Y1M2A)

He talked about each member of his family giving me some detail.

(field notes)

Some children included their pets as part of the family:



*“Andrew (brother), Mummy, Finley (pet dog), Dillon (pet dog)...
alien with 1 leg on the moon, troll at the zoo, not scared. Aliens:
green and purple – they all make me happy”. (NF4A)*

Often the children would represent these key people and pets as a unitary entity to the best of their ability, often adding characteristics, which denoted they knew the individual differences that made them who they were. It was frequently the narratives that demonstrated the children’s thinking and highlighted their importance in making the child feel well and happy.

Sometimes the visual element was not a depiction of a key person as below, but it unleashed a connection in their thinking to someone important, and then this became the focus of their narrative:



"This is me. I'm going swimming with my dad. I like being with him.

We go to his works". (RM1A)

The children's interpretation of key people appeared to develop as they matured and gained more life experiences. In the Nursery they named people who were important and connected to them by their family role, whereas by Year 1 some used the term "family" to encompass either a single parent, parents, siblings, or extended family including grandparents, cousins, uncles and pets. These important people (and pets) are "key people" because of the stable and on-going relationships they have with them. It included for some children those relatives they saw infrequently or only on certain occasions, further suggesting that the stability of the relationship was what really mattered to them. Many children who represented and talked about their family (or named relations and pets), would refer verbally to either a positive experience or an interaction. This is unsurprising because for most young children it is the key people in their lives who make them feel safe and secure, and who provide for most of their needs and wants (whether physical, cognitive, emotional or social) during early childhood. This was evident in one child's drawing of her home and the value she placed on what her parents had provided for her:



"My favourite place to be, that's mum and dad. I love my bedroom, it's got a princess bed". (Y1F3A) She talked about home and her parents and brother. She then described how her parents had recently re-decorated her bedroom pink and bought her a new bed. (field notes)

Mothers were represented and referred to frequently as a key person in many of the children's lives. Mothers were mainly associated with emotional comfort, or seen as being caring, happy, supportive, and sometimes as a playmate. The paintings and drawings of her were most frequently from the younger children reflecting much of the literature on the importance of a mother and her place in a young child's life, and this reflects many cultural norms within societies. As children developed and became more self-reliant, they tended to include other key people as well, widening their experiences and perspective, and showing the developing influences that impact on them and their lives. Bronfenbrenner's (2005) bio-ecological systems theory is useful here in considering how young children's interpersonal processes are influenced by a developing interaction with their immediate environment, and then with the wider context.

A combination of wanting to be with and share experiences with their mother can be seen

from the following painting:



"Mummy has a big smiley face....I like being with mummy- she plays with me.... and we watch CBB's (children's TV programme)". (NF2A)

Fathers played a key role in children's perspective on what made them feel well and happy. For some children this was the main person they drew or discussed. He was perceived as someone of significance, who was admired and looked up to, therefore the desire to be with him and share an emotional and physical bond with him was strong. The desire to share an activity or play with him came through strongly in the data. Some children, particularly boys were keen to identify with their fathers and his validation of who they were and their developing skills, was clearly important.

In the next example, it is unclear whether it is the validation or the sharing of time together, which is more important:



"I went to the park with my dad and I rode my bike really good. I like going round dads. This is me and dad going to Asda". (Y1M2B)

One child identified a step-dad, because of his importance to his mother. This consideration from the child demonstrates that he recognises the impact and influence on his own feelings as well. This child's photo and narrative, demonstrates his cognitive and emotional development, and his growing awareness and understanding of others around them.



"Jack...my little brother's dad. He's got a cockatiel". (Y2M4A) When he was telling me about his brothers dad he added, "He makes mummy smile

and laugh and that's why I chose it". (field notes)

Grandparents also featured prominently in children's visual and narrative interpretations. Sometimes it was as part of the extended family, but often it was as individuals with whom they had a close emotional or physical bond. It was evident in the data that children enjoyed being with and sharing experiences with their grandparents. As some grandparents can be key people in their own children's lives, grandchildren can become familiar with them from birth, sometimes as substitute carers, but often as people with close emotional ties to their family. Grandparents can be supportive in times of need, provide time and comfort, and in so doing can be recognised as emotionally dependable and reliable relatives for young children. It is therefore understandable that children can develop strong, secure and lasting relationships with them, and they can be hugely influential in their lived experiences:

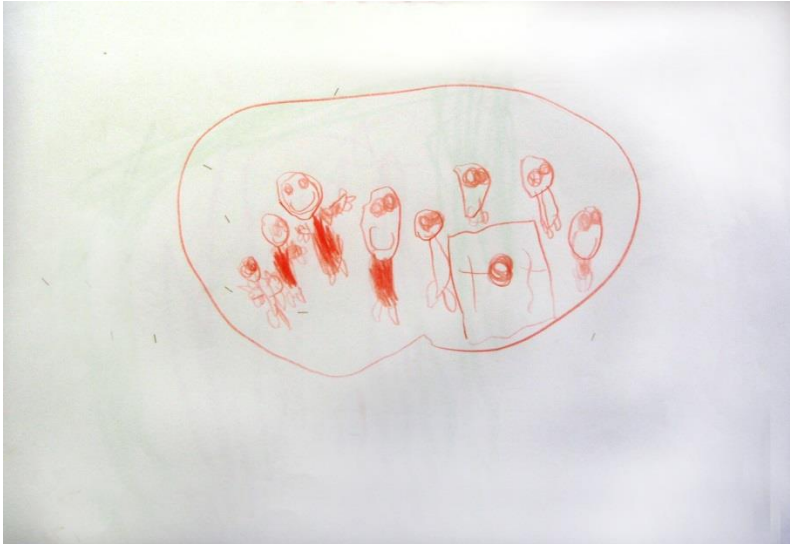


"I stayed with nanna and we had ice-cream. My nanna looks after me andshe makes me happy. She cuddles me and I cuddle snoopy (cuddly toy)".
 (NM4A) I discussed with him why cuddles make him happy and he responded with hunched shoulders by saying, *"They make me warm"* (field notes) (no distinguishable features in painting, but the narrative gave me his perspective).



"I like going to see my nanny. That's the bus... everyone is having a bus ride. We have a sleepover with my nanny, me and my sister. She plays games with us. My mummy gives me big cuddles, my daddy likes big cuddles. They're all holding hands because they are happy. My nanny has fish; they have all kinds of colours. She lets me feed them. They have loads of eyes. People in the fish make me laugh - that's funny". (RF5A)

Other extended family relatives were included in the data. Some children referred to cousins as part of the extended family or grouping, as playmates they could enjoy activities with, or sometimes as friends:



“When my cousins come round – they make me laugh, Kate (cousin) tickles me as well. Sometimes they sleep round. Sometimes they can’t come round cos I’ve been naughty. I’ve got 5 or 10 cousins- I don’t know how many. I’m drawing all my cousins. We’re really noisy when we are all together. We play Wii together (electronic game).... This is going to be Uncle Ian (larger figure), we all watch a film together after a roast dinner”. (RM2A)

He discussed the fun they had together and used the word “fun” at least four times (field notes).

Pets were a prominent feature for many of the children in expressing their perspective of feeling well and happy. They were included in this theme “Key Relationships” and the sub theme “Key persons” because the children often referred to them as a member of the family and part of the family. It was evident they provided an additional emotional bond to family and something they loved; sometimes they were viewed as friends and playmates. An example is evident here and demonstrates how pets can be important in many children’s lives:



“That’s Alfie my dog... he’s the best dog in the world” (Y2F1B) She told me all his attributes, how she loved him, and how she spent a lot of time cuddling and playing with him in the park, outside and indoors (field notes).

For some children friends were important and therefore gained key person status. Nursery participants did not refer to friends, but friends were included in drawings and photos by the older children. They were not as visible in Year 2 photographs but this may have been because the photographic opportunities were not there. The children referred to friends mainly in the context of them being playmates, which demonstrates the growing importance of the social dimension to play. It also suggests that as children develop, become more independent, and have greater / wider experiences, friends, friendship groups and belonging to these groups gains greater importance to them. Friends often share similar play preferences and this supports a child developing their personal identity and sense of self, and in becoming individuals in their own right:



"I like going to parties and being with my friends. We play princesses outside... I like to run". (Y1F1B) She was animated about the princess games they played and talked about the Rapunzel fairy tale. She told me she didn't like to play the prince role but her friends got cross with her about it and wouldn't play with her (field notes).

4.4.1 ii Key Persons Who Provide Physical Safety and Emotional security

The provision of physical safety and emotional security by key persons was an evident subtheme. Notions of safety and security are fundamental to a child's wellbeing, as affirmed by UNICEF (2007). Children did not explicitly express physical safety, but in analysing the data, it was evident that the key people in the participant's lives provided this for them. Feelings of security often came through being with key people and being in their own homes or those of loved ones.

For some children it appeared their fathers made them feel safe:



"I went for a ride at Disneyland... Mummy was scared of the dinosaurs ... daddy laughed at the dinosaurs... he looked after us" (NM3B). He was very excited whilst painting, some large brush strokes used. We discussed the ride and he asked me questions about being frightened. I tried to sensitively answer these aware of his ambiguity over being frightened (field notes).
(no distinguishable features in painting, but the narrative gave me his perspective)

Young children's need for emotional security also came through strongly in the data. The close attachments and social relationships with key people in their lives were included in many narratives.

When considering a simple emotion such as happiness, the participants were all able to identify emotional states and attitudes, and provide experiences, places, people, pets or objects to demonstrate awareness and understanding of this. Some of the children's visual representations showed they understood how to detail emotion from the facial expressions they portrayed with wide smiles often a feature, which suggests they are part of their emotional exchanges. Many narratives also demonstrated the participants growing linguistic ability to express emotional security. At times they used quite simple words with "I like" being a

favourite for many, but for some their narratives were quite sophisticated.

Frequently children used the word “happy” to show their emotional state in their narratives and many of the field notes include the words “smiling”, “animated” or “laughing” to record the non-verbal cues the children were displaying. These emotional states are significant external markers that demonstrate positive emotions.

Many children enjoyed close physical contact, and saw it as a sign of affection. The feelings of emotional comfort or security were often referenced through being cuddled or tickled from someone close to them in their family.



*“...Daddy makes me laugh and he bundles me (I ask what it means)
he cuddles me...” (RF1A)*

Some children used the same sign of affection on their pet or used positive emotional words to interpret and show their feelings. Pets were often included within a family grouping and were an important part of family life and children’s feeling of wellbeing:



"Willow Wiglets, my granddads dog. I love him so much". (Y2M2B)

He told me that being with the dog made him *"really happy"* (field notes).

In the comment below that went with a singular detailed drawing, the emotional comfort and security gained from a mother is evident. The drawing exuded a representation of a key person they wanted to spend time with, interact with, and share experiences.



"My mummy's smiley face... I like my mummy. She has yellow hair.

She tickles and cuddles me...I like being with mummy". (RF2A).

The emotional bond between father and child was also evident in the data, although it was not always the most obvious facet of the relationship. Some of my field notes however support the inherent need for emotional security. For the participant below it was detectable from his thinking, that he could recognise the pattern of the day, his father going to work and both the anticipation of his return and the actual experience:



“Daddy, he’s gone to work. He’s not far away. He’s taken his jacket.

I like it when he’s at home....” (NM1B). He discussed being excited

when knowing his dad was coming home and how his dad was always ready with a “big hug” for him (field notes).

Sometimes the participants demonstrated more than one emotion simultaneously:



“Dad and me playing with the (play) dough at his house. I like going to my dad’s. I’m going this weekend... Mummy’s friend Dan is alright” (Y2M1B)
 (photo taken by auntie). He told me he loved seeing his dad and his dad loved seeing him and he got very excited when he was going to his dads (field notes).

This child’s perspective from his photograph, narrative and the accompanying field notes demonstrates how his father made him feel well and happy. He appears to recognise the visits to his fathers are part of the routine of his life and are happy experiences. He is not negative about his mother’s friend Dan, but the additional comment could be him trying to come to terms with potential changes to his family grouping and any possible adjustments that may be necessary. Children may become emotionally stressed during times of change, and this can have some considerable impact on feelings of security. Within the data collected, changes to family grouping, the arrival of a new sibling, moving house and the death of a pet were instances where this was discernible.

For many children feeling emotionally secure and physically safe was evident when peeling back the layers of meaning from their visual and narrative data, and in all cases the children

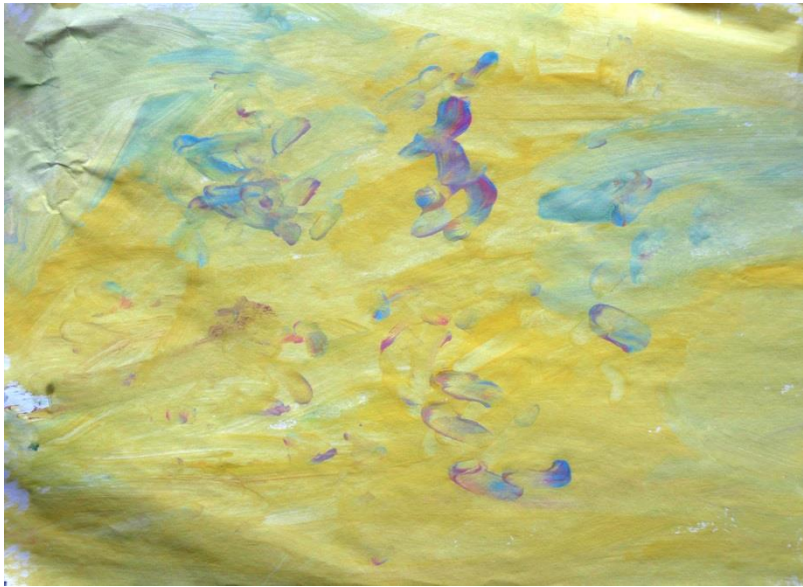
looked to key people for this:



"I would like to stay at home all the time with mum, dad, Bryony (sister), gran and granddad 'cos they love me. I'm safe and sound at mummy's house... (RM1B).

A few of the children expressed a view that they could make themselves happy. It is likely that it is something they have learnt from key people in their lives, rather than having that knowledge and understanding themselves. Many adults find this a difficult concept to get to grips with so it would appear to be quite an advanced concept for young children to have learnt. Children can be affected by the attitudes and behaviour of key people around them so it is probable that parents and family have played a key role in supporting this development.

On a few occasions children also gained this from "comforters" provided by parents and family as well, such as dolls or cuddly toys, viewed as "transitional objects" (Winnicott 1975, Bowlby 1991) signifying their influence in providing children with additional comfort and security.



“I play mummy and daddy with my babies - my baby sister – she’s not real”. (NF3B) She talked about how she was given her doll when her brother was born. She said she liked having a doll (field notes).

4.4.1iii Family activities and feelings of belonging

Family activities and feelings of belonging were also central in many children’s visual and narrative data on making them feel well and happy. Shared family activities included walking the dog, sharing meals together, going out, seeing relatives and friends, going on holiday and spending leisure time together. These were some of the cherished activities included by the children.

Reference to the immediate or nuclear family was made sometimes as children defined belonging to the group:



*"My family going out. Sometimes we have a "family night", we all watch a film"
(Y1F1A).*

The interpersonal relationships, feelings of security and group belonging from these family activities were key aspects that became apparent. It was also evident that fun and laughter were an inextricable aspect in the social relations that children experience from family activities, which contributes to them feeling well and happy. Many children laughed and giggled at different times during the data gathering, and this coincided with discussions on sharing times and social interactions with the key people in their lives:



"Parties at my Nanny's.... we have fun and cuddles. We eat mint ice cream and we laugh a lot, a lot, a lot. At Christmas we will have lots of time there". (RM3B) He was animated at recalling a past experience of a party and also looking forward to Christmas parties with his family (field notes).



"My family... we are having a party and everyone is happy. We played "Operation" (game) I like that when it buzzes...we all laugh". (Y1F6A) She gave me a list of names of family and friends who went to the party. She smiled and giggled (field notes).

The children frequently construed a sense of belonging and being part of a particular group. The children in particular proudly spoke about their families, and appeared to value the “interdependence” of family life (Mayall 2003) recognising they could bring happiness to others lives, demonstrating the bi-directional influence that belonging to a group conveys.

This was particularly poignant in one child's drawing and narrative:



“I like playing with Katie, my sister. My daddy’s in Afghan. He is a soldier.

He’s coming back in 10 days. We are going to have a party, a second Christmas.

We are going to visit Nanny Smith...a long way away. We have presents for daddy”.

(Y1F2A) The excitement on her face and the barrage of details that exploded from her was unexpected (field notes).

All perspectives showed that the family was a group of people who were there particularly in times of celebration, for fun and laughter and where the children felt safe and secure, could be relaxed, be themselves and be comfortable. This need for the familiar from a group gives reassurance and enables some resilience in facing the unfamiliar.

4.4.2 Theme Two: Sense of Self

This was the second theme which emanated from the data analysis and within this second theme the three main components were, having a sense of self; developing competence; and play.

4.4.2i Sense of Self

Children's awareness of themselves as individuals is crucial in their development and much of their early learning about themselves comes from key people around them. The sense of self comprises of how they think about themselves (identity), and how they feel about themselves (self-esteem), which with increased knowledge also supports their developing understanding of others (Hala 2013, Watson et al 2012).

It was evident that children need to feel good about them-selves and have that approval validated in some domains to develop a degree of reputation recognition, self-esteem and self-efficacy (Gottman 2011, Roberts 2010).

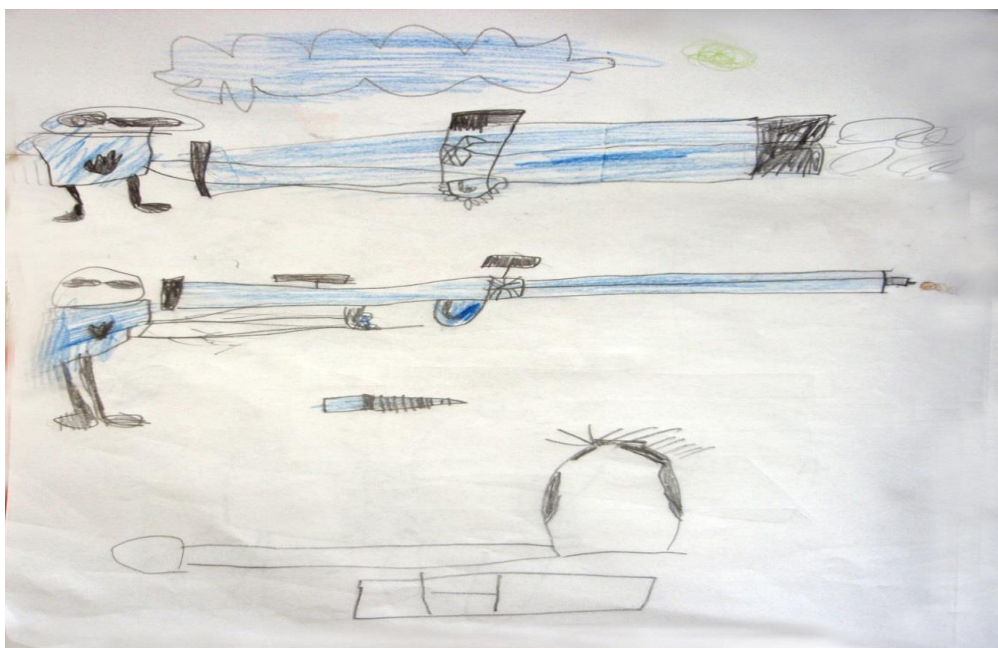


"I love playing football, dad and gramps comes and watches. I'm very good at football. I like winning". (Y1M3A)

The key people in a child's life initially provide the messages to support the child in the construction of their identities. This includes aspects of gender identity, characteristics of self-worth, and even their belonging to certain groups. However, it must be recognised that children are also active in this process and can be selective in their attendance and the value they place on such messages (Wyness 2006):



"That's my ears and eyes and nose. I make me happy" (NF1B) She giggled, smiled, and was emphatic with the statement (field notes).



"I love shooting games, I've got an X Box, Elliott's (cousin) got a Play-station....

We play fighting games and my dad plays with me as well". (Y1M3B) He detailed

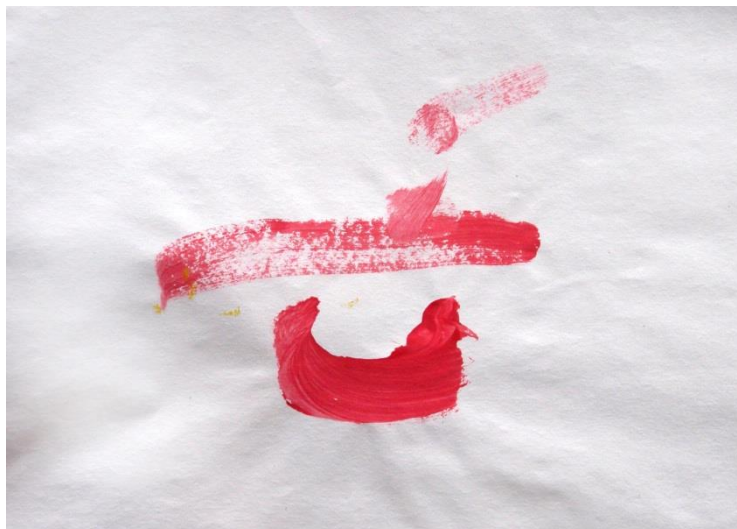
the components of the guns when drawing them, but didn't know the technical terms.

Could explain how they worked. He smiled as he chatted to me (field notes).

4.4.2ii Developing Competence

It was evident that developing a degree of competence was important to the children. In much of the literature on wellbeing, there is included a recognition that people (both adults and children) want a sense of meaning and purpose to their lives to feel satisfaction (Statham and Chase 2010). For the younger children here this included gaining recognition for and developing competence in developmentally appropriate tasks, reaching milestones, and individual or personal goals. Children find it rewarding and satisfying to gain mastery of themselves and their environment and this in turn supports their positive engagement with life and feelings of self-worth.

Children often expressed their developing knowledge and understanding, skills and competence in what they were able to undertake or allowed to do. The children often articulated a sense of pride, when they gained the validation of key people in their lives. In developing a sense of self, many children deemed it an achievement if given the opportunity to demonstrate a skill or take responsibility. Activities referred to in the data, often drawn and then discussed, included being allowed to steer a boat, feeding fish, competence in riding a bike, playing football, numeracy and literacy, being good at Xbox and PlayStation games, helping to clean a car, tidying up, and looking after younger siblings, cousins or pets.



“Going on a boat with Daddy, Mummy, Nanny and Patch (cuddly dog): sailing”. (NM1A) He discussed how he was allowed to steer the boat and the fun he they had on their boat (field notes).

In the following drawing the knowledge, skills, competence and feelings of a child who drew and then discussed football and his competence at playing the game was evident.



“That’s me and Joe ((friend) playing football. That’s the net and seats and grass. Playing football makes me happy and healthy”. (Y1M1A) He gave me a detailed description (using football terms) of playing football and his skill at getting the ball into the goal (field notes).

4.4.2iii Play

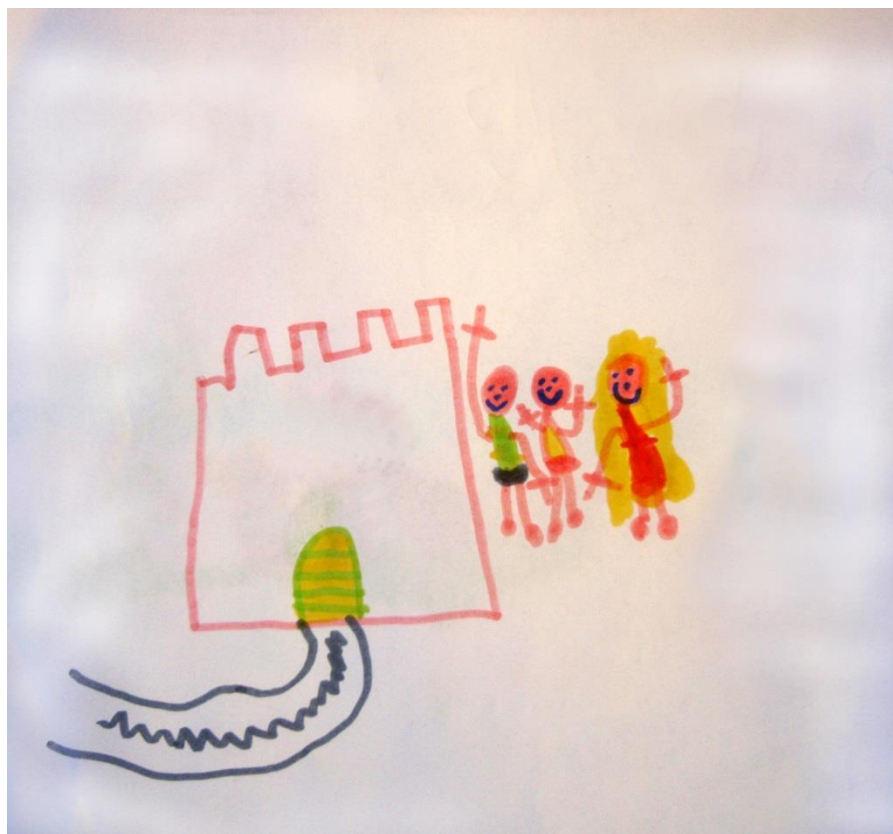
Play was an important feature of many of the children's visual and narrative perspectives across the year groups and essentially comprised of unstructured, structured, physical or pretend play. The majority of children also included “key” people’s involvement. It was always family or friends referred to, which suggests that play is valued as a social activity for sharing and enjoying with others. It was the act of being with key persons, which was most important to the children on many occasions. Siblings and pets were often included as playmates with whom they have many more opportunities (within the same household) to share experiences:



“This is me playing with my little sister Bryony and Scram (cat)” (Y1M4B)

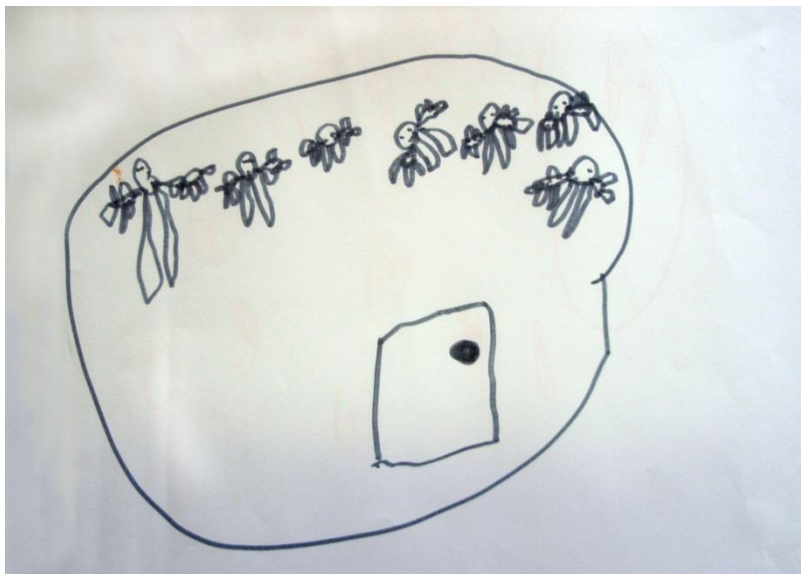
Three times he said, *“I love playing with Scram”*. He talked about how Scram liked to play and chase things, that sometimes he scratched and bit, but didn’t hurt him (field notes).

At other times, it was about sharing similar play preferences with friends:



"I'm with my friends and we're playing princesses..." (Y1F6B)

Many children referred to games, which suggest these may be "games with rules", rather than play (which if child initiated tends to follow their own flow of ideas). Games with rules go from the simple to the complex, for instance from a simple game of "tag" to the most complex strategy type games. This age group are developing cognitively so often enjoy the challenge of this type of structured play, gain capability skills whilst involved, learn social rules, and get a sense of belonging from being part of the game (Moyles 2010, Smidt 2011). It was evident that key people often supported their development of skills in this type of play.



“That’s daddy and me playing with the Moshi-monsters (picture cards and toy figures). I like being with my Mum and cousins, my little sister Caitlyn, my brother Mark. We’re playing a game of dinosaurs at my cousin’s house...” (RM2B)

For some children, the play they referred to was outside, either in their garden, in the park, at the beach or a specific location. Reference to play with others and frequently in “fun” terms was frequent in these environments. Children this age and in this culture probably would not be used to being unsupervised outside, however it is evident from the children’s perspective that outdoor spaces provide very different environments and resources to enjoy with others, as can be seen from the following drawings and narratives:



"I like my garden and playing with Marie (sister). We dig holes with our spades"

(Y1F4A) She was animated at the recollection of their play outside, and talked about the fun they had together (field notes).

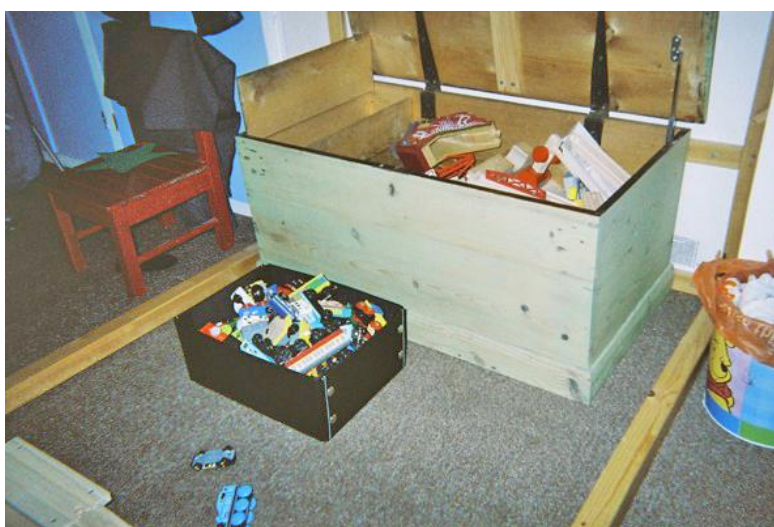


"I love playing in the garden with my cousin. It makes me happy. I play with my friends and I have a tent, but I don't sleep in it. I find snails and spiders and cats sometimes". (Y1F5B) Very animated and used "fun" word often in conversation (field notes).

A few children referred to play they could do on their own and enjoy. Children often amuse themselves in the home environment, but it may also indicate these children are only children or have baby siblings who are too young to share their play activities.



"I like mud, Granddad helps me dig holes" (NM5B) He told me his Granddad sometimes filled the holes with water, and he explained how he loved playing in the mud and making things out of the mud (field notes).



"... inside my toybox. ... (Y2M1A) 1st photo: He told me this was

the best place, where he could play with all his favourite toys whilst his cat watched. He said his uncle often played with him and helped him build Lego models and set up his train track. *“It makes me happy when I’m playing”* he said (field notes).

Some of the children chose electronic games to draw or discuss. Only one female included this and the rest were male. There are gender differences in game choice (Smidt 2011, Fisher 2013) with boys tending to prefer action, fighting, and racing games, which was evident in the data. Although it can be a solitary pursuit, all the children discussed playing with family members, suggesting it is the sharing of the play, which is important to this age group.



“Me playing (Nin) tendo and my favourite car game. I play it with my dad and uncle and my cousins as well” (Y2M3A) (dad taken photo of him). He said this was his favourite photo because he liked *“playing my games”*. He said he didn’t have any photos of his favourite playthings which is why he had chosen this photo (field notes).

4.4.3 Theme Three: Outdoor World

The outdoor world was the third theme identified and encompassed two components: being outdoors, and enjoying nature and the natural world.

4.4.3i Being Outdoors

The joy at being outdoors came through quite strongly in the data from the children. A prominent feature was sharing the experience with key people or friends. Being outdoors appeared to give the children a sense of freedom and happiness that was not available elsewhere to them. The children often referred to “liking” or “loving” to be outside in different environments, whether garden, park, beach, river, pond or wood:



“It’s a picture of me and Jake (dog) in the park. He’s likes being outside as well. (RF3A) As she was drawing the park she was talking about spiders and bugs and throwing a stick for Jake (Field notes).

Play outdoors was frequently part of children’s narratives. This is probably because it allows for the freedom of physical play and large muscle movement, is more spacious and has fewer restrictions than indoors:

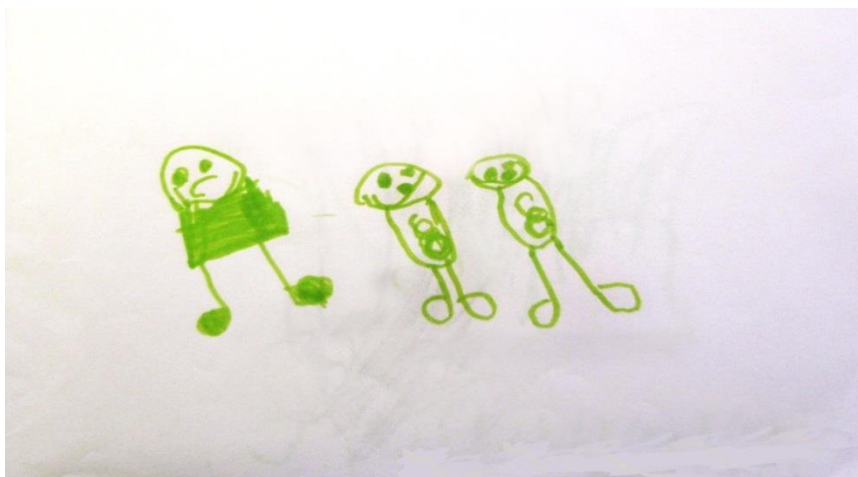


"I like playing outside, hide and seek with my friends..." (RM4B)



"We go to the park and play. I hide behind the trees...." (Y1F4B)

Learning from the outdoors and its properties was also an important inclusion for many of the children. The resources provided by nature and the natural environment, and the opportunity for discovery and exploration, were included in many drawings, photos and narratives:



"My mummy and my nanny grow beanstalks –we all do – beans and peas. I don't like the wind; I like the sun- it makes me happy. I like the moon and the stars as well, but not the dark." (RF4A) She explained in detail how the beans are grown, how you feed them and protect them with netting and then what they taste like. I could almost hear the voice of her nanny coming through in some of the conversation. I understood her connections to the weather (field notes).



"Outdoors is my favourite place to be.....at the duck pond with mum and dad and Chidi (dog) –we made a snowman...I love making snowmen. At

home we make one each (with parents) and use carrots...see noses, sticks and stones. We had soup after ... it was very cold”, (later) “I like making castles at the beach when we go there” (Y1M4A). As this was the spring term there was lots of talk about snow and the fun it gave all the children. He was animated at talking about this subject. The change to beaches was instigated by him proudly showing me other pictures from his journal and one in particular from the previous September of his family at the beach (field notes).

4.4.3ii Nature and the Natural World

As with being outdoors (4.4.3.i), many of the children included within their drawings, photos and narratives, nature and the natural world. The sharing of the experiences with family or friends often made them more memorable and pleasurable. That many of these children were fascinated with nature and the natural world and appeared enthralled with what it has to offer signified its importance to them, and this came through strongly in the data. Natural environments can positively influence the physical, mental and spiritual health and wellbeing of all people (Ernst and Thrower 2011, Kellert 2005, Mayer and Frantz 2004, Kuo 2003). Elements of the natural world, such as rainbows, were a key feature from the children, alongside the sun, grass and flowers. Animals, birds, insects, butterflies, and ladybirds were often included in their representations and narratives. As children discover and learn about the properties of nature and the natural world, it was evident that there were certain aspects that they particularly liked:



“Seeing a rainbow makes me happy – it’s always there after the rain...”
 (RM5B) He told me he always rushes to the window to look for rainbows
 (field notes).



*“I’m painting long grass in the field...in the park... the sun... There
 are butterflies and ladybirds and I’m with mummy and Tia (sister)”* (NF1A).
 She discussed how this made her feel happy and the memory made her
 smile (field notes).

Animals and birds were also an important part of nature, which gave the children much delight. Becoming aware of other creatures, often stumbled upon or introduced by family, meant the children, often from a secure base, were able to learn, respond to, and appreciate

the wonders of nature and the natural world.



"I like the zoo, and all the animals best...we went there with Nanny and Granddad..." (RM3A). He gave me information and detail about many of the animals he had seen (field notes).



"Going to the park with Nanna Jane.... Mummy comes sometimes. We go to the one in town and feed the ducks...." (NF2B).

4.5 Comparing Children's Themes with Researcher's themes: Similarities and differences

My research question 4, "How does the data analysis of the researcher compare with the children's interpretation and understanding", was now my focus of attention. My key themes: 1. key relationships; 2. sense of self; and 3. the outdoor world, brought together the children's categorisations of 1. Family; 2. Doing things with Family; 3. Being outside; 4. Pets and animals; 5. Activities, games and toys; and 6. Friends, more succinctly, but did not detract from their findings and ratings of importance.

I included within the leading theme of "key relationships", the children's themes of family, doing things with family and pets, because of the many associations and overlap evident in the children's visual and narrative data and subsequent initial analysis. The children's own categorisation, frequency and ordering, firmly placed the family, being with them and doing things with them as their primary focus. The children saw pets, as important members of the family, so were included in my theme.

My second theme "sense of self" included the children's categories: activities, games and toys, and friends, to show that as children develop preferences and make personal choices they are beginning to gain a greater understanding of themselves as individuals. It also included their growing competences, which traversed many of the children's themes of being with family, doing things with family, playing with pets or friends, being outside, and doing things I like, as all of these at times demonstrated their increasing knowledge, understanding and skills.

My third theme "outdoor world" comfortably included their categories of being outside, playing outside, playing with pets and seeing animals, and suggests that their specific focus was part of a wider theme that was frequently expressed.

In essence, I answered research question 3, with the children's interpretation, categorisation, and then analysis of the data when they put the data in order of frequency and importance. This determined their ability in understanding their own and other's perception of well-being. It revealed they could recognise and express some multifaceted associations from the data, and were capable of agreement in representing the voice of the other participants.

This establishes that young children are capable and competent in expressing themselves, but need appropriate means in which to do so. It also demonstrates that they can focus in on quite complex abstract concepts, such as well-being, when given the opportunity. They also demonstrated that they have their own opinions about elements of importance in their lives and sometimes the lives of others.

The children's categorisation and initial analysis were compatible with my in-depth analysis. This focused ability of the children to express their perspective of well-being, and the perceived ease with which the children took part in the research, negates any adult viewpoint of this age group being developmentally incapable and incompetent of a perspective, particularly one that affects them and is important to them in their lives. It is therefore surprising that the literature on children's well-being, such as that put forward by UNICEF (2007), Hansen and Joshi (2008), Wolpert et al (2009), Tennant et al (2007) and the Office for National Statistics (2011), neglect or essentially disregard younger children's involvement in their research, which devalues their status and agency.

The main findings are similar with the main differences being degrees of emphasis and depth of analysis. The children did tend towards simplifying their interpretations and categories, often making quite quick judgements about the data, and where it belonged. However, their developmental stage and life experiences would mean that in-depth and complex analysis, including the time it would take, would not be a reasonable expectation anyway. The fact that

young children can construct notions of being well and happy qualifies young children to be authoritative on what concerns them, and therefore validates the need for young children particularly in these type of situations to have a voice, be heard and have some agency (Bradshaw 2011).

Research on well-being with 8-12 year olds by Nic Gabhainn and Sixsmith (2005), also found there were general similarities in findings from the older age group of children, and those of their parents' and teachers', but each group also showed some difference in perspective and emphasis which aligned with my findings. However, as long as the differences and emphasis are given adequate voice then this is acceptable, but it would appear that in much of the research on well-being to date, findings are skewed and generalisations made which reflect the primacy of either adults' or adolescents' perspective (The Children's Society 2013, 2012).

4.6 Summary

The key themes from my analysis: 1.Key relationships, 2.Sense of self, 3. Outdoor world, have enabled an identification and analysis of the important aspects from the data, to be established. These include important elements: key persons; key persons who provide physical safety and emotional security; family activities and a sense of belonging. It also included having a sense of self; which encompassed developing competence; and play. Finally, being outdoors, and enjoying nature and the natural world were considered.

The themes and elements closely aligned to the children's own interpretations of what made them feel well and happy. This clearly demonstrates that young children understand and can interpret the concept of well-being and can articulate it competently through visual and narrative means.

In Chapter 5 a discussion of the children's interpretation and understanding of "wellbeing", alongside my analysis and the literature will be considered.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Main Findings

In this chapter, a discussion of the main findings from the research will take place.

The overall key themes from my analysis of the data were:

1. Key relationships
2. Sense of self
3. Outdoor world

When considering the children's categories with my own analysis, process of coding then bringing together of sub themes to key themes, and the layers of meaning that became evident; I can see there is noticeable correspondence.

The final categorisation and ordering from the four pairs of children across the classes resulted in their key themes being:

1. Family
2. Doing things with Family
3. Being outside
4. Pets and animals
5. Activities, games and toys
6. Friends

This correspondence validates the methods used in capturing children's constructions of notions of being well and happy, and demonstrates both the children's own understanding and "meaning making" or interpretation of wellbeing, and their ability to articulate it through the visual medium and spoken word.

5.1.1 Theme One: Key Relationships

Feelings of being well and happy and of well-being mostly involved the key people in children's lives or emanated from the close relationship they had with these people. Family and wider family members were central to this, and spending time with them and doing things with them, corresponds strongly with the children's own categorisation. There was a combination of explicit and implicit references to include the key relationships children had with these key others, but all the children's depictions were of happy times, fun and laughter, including family times and outings, shared activities and celebrations. Positive emotions and feelings, such as happiness, laughter and fun were strongly associated to the children's thoughts on well-being and were apparent throughout the data (RM2A (p 90), Y2M4A (p 87), RF1A (p 94), RM3B (p 101), Y1F6A (p 101), NF1B (p 104), Y1F5B (p 110)).

It was evident from the children that the key relationships they had, supported many of the fundamental elements that were essential to them growing and developing. Some children spoke about their physical safety and security needs being met (Maslow 1970) such as NM3B (p 93), who spoke about being frightened and how his father looked after him. Others drew attention to the recognition and support key people gave them, which is necessary for the development of a sense of identity (Dunn 1988). In Y1M3A's (p 103) narrative, it is evident when he discussed his father and grandfather supporting him at football games.

The relationships developed with key people can also provide a basis for learning about and understanding how friendships are maintained, which can support the development of stable relationships being achieved in the future (Goleman 2005). In addition, key people can provide reassurance and the learning of resilience, essential in times of change and adversity (Seligman 2007). Whereas older children and adults can source some or all of this outside the home from friends or colleagues as well, for young children dependent in the most part on their families, this is often the only avenue of support and comfort they have to rely on.

Laevers (1997) believed that if children had high levels of emotional well-being it would mean they would engage more positively with all aspects of life and learning. Laevers' theory of "Involvement" is particularly pertinent with young children who are more likely to encounter new experiences day by day, and need the "safety net" and love of the family in particular, to support that involvement, their development and progress (Axford 2009).

Within the data, it was unsurprising to see family and wider family members providing a sense of well-being. The sense of belonging (Bernard van Leer Foundation, 2008) also came through strongly in the data, such as Y1F1A's (p 100) depiction and narrative on her family grouping and the regular "family night" they had together watching a film. The relaxed and happy familiarity the participants had from these close relationships was also evident as in Y1F6A's (p 101) narrative on family get-togethers. Grandparents were significant in many of the children's lives, as in NM4A (p 88) visit to his grandmothers, and his narrative on how she looks after him. With increasing changes to many family structures, the importance of ongoing contact with grandparents may be an element that requires conscious consideration from parents and policy makers in the support of young children's well-being (Griggs et al 2009).

In research by the European Commission (2010 p41) which included 11-15year olds, they found no association between family breakdown and child well-being, but within the analysis of subjective well-being found that family conflict and quality of parent-child relationship strongly influenced well-being. Wollny et al (2010) found in their research, that changing family structure was an area considered influential in determining well-being, and that the well-being of young children is closely aligned to that of their families. In times of parental conflict or family breakdown when adults are dealing with their own feelings and concerns, there must be recognition of the impact on younger children particularly, as they are more reliant and dependent on family, and will not have the same ability to understand the situation that older children and adolescents may have.

Pets were included within key relationships because they afforded an attachment and abundant pleasure for some children, as in Y2M2B's (p 95) photo of his granddad's dog and subsequent narrative "...I love him so much". This clearly shows that they provide an additional emotional and reliable resource within the family, for children to respond to in a positive and enjoyable manner (Williams et al 2010). In Nic Gabhainn and Sixsmith (2005) research on well-being, they also found that pets were significantly more important to children's sense of wellbeing than that of the adults in their study. Although my study was with younger children, I also found this aspect significant.

There were instances in the data collection process when children were hesitant but wanted to explore changing situations. In each instance a stable situation had changed and included changes to a family grouping (RF2), birth of a new sibling (NF3B p99), death of a pet (RF3), and moving away (Y1M1). These situations certainly appeared to create uncertainty or anxiety from the children in my study, and demonstrate that in times of change these children wanted to explore and understand the situation and their feelings. In each case the opportunity to discuss the situation appeared to be a release in itself, for example Y1F6's narrative about why her mother was not there on a particular occasion when she was younger. Key people in the lives of young children do not always deal with sensitive and sometimes distressing issues sufficiently (Gottman 2011). Some adults take the approach of playing down situations or protecting children from change because young children cannot understand or should not understand. However, from a child's perspective, wanting to understand and come to terms with issues where it affects them or those that they love, is often the preferred stance.

The foremost key relationships theme found in this research, reflects much of the literature on well-being. Layard and Dunn's (2009) research entitled the "Good Childhood Inquiry" with 5-17 year olds found "relationships" the most important area cited in ensuring a sense of well-being and hence a good childhood. However most of the children's data came from the older

age range 10-15 years, but it is a constant and permeating theme across both national and international research with older children, and suggests that the quality of relationships with important others is paramount (Statham and Chase (2010), Parker Rees et al (2010), Nic Gabhainn and Sixsmith (2005)).

“The Good Childhood Report” (The Children’s Society 2012, 2013) also highlighted some corresponding areas of importance to children in the 8-15 year age group: family, home, and friendships; but also found other areas included that were different for this older age group; money and possessions, school, health, appearance, time use, choice and autonomy, and the future. Both of these studies suggested the significance of children wanting stability in their lives, and the ways in which adverse life events may have a substantial impact on their well-being. My study also suggests some of these key findings, but the developmental stage of my participants indicates that the differences found are age or stage differences. Older children have more self- awareness and developed autonomy, that 3-8 year olds do not yet have, indicating their priorities being different.

As highlighted in the literature review, there are to date limitations to research on well-being because it is mainly with older children, young people and adults. However, the research undertaken here with younger children identifies the primacy given to key relationships, which is comparable and compatible with other research in this area. It does signify that family and key relationships within the family are crucial to making young children feel well and happy. These findings indicate that time with key people must be valued and not eroded in society, by the pressures of work, the need to make ends meet, or modern day living. It is possible as Earls and Carlson (2001) implied that the continuing emphasis on economic growth and material wealth in many societies might ultimately be to the detriment of many peoples’ (children and adults) health and well-being.

5.1.2 Theme Two: Sense of Self

Within this second theme, having a sense of self; developing competence; and play, were the three main components. It was clear within the data that young children are developing their sense of self as they gain experiences in the world (Hala 2013), as in RF3A's (p 113) visual and narrative data on what she liked and enjoyed doing. The participants' developing skills and competence is closely allied to the development of a sense of self, and could be linked to Steuer and Marks (2008, p 9) Whitehall Well-being Working Group's findings that "...having a sense of purpose and... feel(ing) able to achieve important personal goals", is important to all ages for having a sense of well-being. The children referred to their many accomplishments, which included riding a bicycle (Y1M2B see p 87), bowling (RM5), being good at football (Y1M1A see p 106). Also, electronic games (Y2M3A see p 112), swimming (RM1A see p 84), numeracy or literacy (RF1), being helpful around the house (Y2F5), knowing how to grow beans (RF4A see p 115). They were all proud of either the mastery achieved, or being given the opportunity to undertake and talk about the things they were good at or enjoyed doing.

It was also understandable that when they had their accomplishments validated by key persons around them, this reputation recognition, led to higher feelings of self-esteem and self-efficacy (Gottman 2011). Alongside the need for young children to gain mastery, be good at something, or take responsibility, the response and encouragement from loved ones and key people is crucial. Children will usually persist with activities they find enjoyable and that intrinsic motivation can be sufficient in itself. However if they see their efforts valued, recognised and supported, this can have long term effects on their sense of self and developing competences. The home environment is a bigger driver of children's outcomes in the main (Field 2010), therefore parents and key people in the lives of young children need to recognise the positive and enduring influence they can have during these formative years. Prioritising time to share and engage with young children, who are developing a sense of self and mastery of the world, is a fundamental requisite, but in an ever demanding and

economically driven society where time can be squeezed by so many pressures, this can be challenging.

Play was an area frequently cited by the children for giving them a feeling of well-being. Play is an accepted medium for learning in all areas, socially, emotionally, physically, and cognitively (Moyles 2010, Brock et al 2009). Vygotsky (1978 p100) stated:

“A child’s greatest achievements are possible in play, achievements that tomorrow will become her basic level of real action and morality”.

This reflects and demonstrates the importance of play in a child’s world. It can provide opportunities for learning to negotiate and co-operate with others thus supporting social skills and the building of friendships and relationships, as in Y1F1B’s (see p 92) dialogue on playing with her friends. This accords with Smidt (2011 p55) who considered play from many perspectives, including its value as a cultural tool in supporting children exploring “who they are and where they fit in”. This was evident in the play preferences that maintained friendships between children, as in Y1M3B’s (see p 104) play of console shooting games with his cousin and father, and Y1F6B’s (see p 108) princess play with her friends. For many of these children play was valued as a social activity to share with key people or friends (Garvis and Pendergast 2014), as also evidenced in Y2M1B’s (see p 97) play-dough activity with his father.

Children were actively involved in or in control of play (Fisher 2013). Gross motor skills were used in activities such as running (Y1F1B see p 92), climbing or jumping (NF4), hide and seek (RM4B see p 114), and digging (NM5B see p 111). Fine motor skills were used in gaining mastery over tools such as paintbrushes (RF4), digital devices (Y1M3B see p 104), and play materials such as Lego (Y2M1A see p 111).

Crucially play was seen by the children as fun and enjoyable, and in practising skills and

exploring abilities, it was evident the children were extending or consolidating their learning, at their own pace, without fear of failure. Sutton-Smith (1997) makes clear the immediate benefits of play and its importance in children's social, emotional and cognitive development, and as demonstrated in the data collected, it is of particular importance to younger children's feelings of being well and happy. This suggests that adults must recognise play's innumerable benefits, and provide time and space for it.

5.1.3 Theme Three: Outdoor World

Being outdoors and enjoying nature and the natural world were significant elements evident in the data gathered from these children. It corresponds with the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE 2012) public health guidance, which recognised that young children are a separate group especially influenced by contexts and environments. The outdoors certainly provides opportunities for fresh air and daylight, freedom to move, and space conducive to feelings of well-being (White 2014). It was a theme referred to frequently by the children for gaining pleasure, enjoying time with others, for playing and appreciating natural elements in the world. Many outdoor opportunities included the sharing of those experiences and being with key people and pets or friends, as in Y1M4A's (see p 115) building snowmen with his family, and RF3A's (see p 113) visit to the park with her dog and her discovery of spiders and bugs.

Nairn and Ipsos MORI's (2011 p1) Well-being Report with children aged 8-13 years indicated that well-being and happiness:

“...centres on time with a happy, stable family, having good friends and plenty of things to do, especially outdoors” (Nairn and Ipsos MORI 2011 p1),

this further supports the importance of the outdoors for children and adolescents.

However, it is not a prominent feature in much of the literature on well-being, suggesting it could be particularly prioritised by younger children in their discovery of the world around them, and need for space which is less restrictive than indoors.

Children appeared unconcerned with weather conditions in the main, and their attention to detail and their representations, often demonstrated their perspective and interest in being physically more active, exploring and discovering, understanding and getting to know the environment outdoors.

In a society where the weather both governs many adult conversations and determines their use of the outdoors, and where adults currently view “risk” for children outdoors with much aversion or apprehension, it is clear there is some dissonance to these perspectives from the young children (Kernan and Devine 2010). Policy at national and local level needs to reflect children’s desire to be outdoors, and have access to play spaces and public spaces. The long-term loss or demise of outdoor public spaces for young children is significant for their well-being (Brockman et al 2011).

Many children were also fascinated or in awe at many aspects of nature and the natural world. This accords with the “biophilia” hypothesis of Edward Wilson (Kellert and Wilson 1993) who put forward the theory that humans have an affiliation with and an affection for nature and natural elements, and this brings positive or restorative effects to health and well-being (Grinde and Patil 2009). That these were considered as constituents that brought the children feelings of being well and happy determines how meaningful these opportunities and experiences are, as was demonstrated in RM5B’s (see p 117) visual and narrative on the joys of seeing rainbows; and RM3A’s (see p 118) detailed painting of animals at the zoo. In my field notes for RM3A, I wrote:

“Attention to detail and amount of recall was unexpected - the zoo sign, the flag and the animal feed container (which I asked him about). It made me realise that as adults we become habituated to stimuli around us whereas children are still exploring their worlds so

take so much more in!”

In some respects, that moment of realisation that children were so sharply aware of their surroundings, made me all the more respectful of their capabilities and competences. It also made me more aware of how nature and the natural world have so much to offer children in the way of real life and meaningful experiences (Fisher 2013). The positive effects of enjoying nature and the natural world include health benefits such as physical exercise, together with the opportunity to be social, and to play. In addition there is also an appreciable interaction with the outdoors that young children particularly enjoy. Adults must provide, plan for, and encourage this to ensure the benefits and positive effects are prolonged, and this trait is not suppressed in any way.

5.1.4 Main Findings conclusion

The key themes make evident the correspondence between the children’s data and their initial analysis, and my own analysis. The degree of analysis where I was able to uncover further layers of meaning was where I found the distinction, but it still highlighted the children’s ability to be able to articulate the same fundamental areas of importance.

The literature on well-being although with older children and adults, was useful in considering similarities and differences. Essentially the differences were due to the differences in developmental need and life stage. However, this has resulted in adults and professionals giving an adult perspective when speaking on young children’s behalf in this area (Gutman et al 2010, Wolpert et al 2009, Office for National Statistics 2011, 2005). As stated in the literature review, 2.3.6 Measures of Well-being: Research Measures and Children (see p 17); this means young children’s priorities are distinctive and the emphasis is different to those put forward by older children and adults, because of these developmental needs and life stage.

For this age group, it would mean many tools for measuring well-being, for example, the

“Satisfaction With Life Scale” (Diener et al 1985), and “The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale” (Tennant et al 2007), would need considerable adjustment of emphasis, to reflect young children’s perspective. The scales would have to include the physical and emotional stability and security, and pleasure gained from family and key relationships that children value. The scales would also need to include children’s desire to develop a sense of self, and develop competence, together with exploration and enjoyment of the outside world.

5.2 Methodological Issues and limitations

In this section, methodological issues and limitations are considered. I deliberate on research with young children and their recruitment and inclusion in this study. I also reflect on the use of the children’s visual and narrative data, their contribution and involvement, and finally I consider the process of analysing the data.

5.2.1 Research with young children

The aims and research questions in this research with children required reflexivity and responsiveness to ensure the voice of the child and their perspective was genuinely heard (Clark and Moss 2011). From a reflexive position I always considered myself in relation to the contexts I was in, which enabled deliberately designed strategies, greater understanding of my values, and my effect on the process and outcomes of the research. I was also mindful of establishing “trustworthiness” as Lincoln and Guba (1985) put forward. I considered the adult role in a school environment and the power dynamics that may hamper this, so took time in getting to know the school and its ethos, and letting them get to know me, which was helpful. I genuinely wanted to hear the children’s voice coming through the data so ensured I gave the children time, listened to them, was responsive and gave them my attention. I believe in so doing the children let me into their worlds and trusted me whilst doing so.

That these young children are increasingly trying to make sense of their worlds, as Dahlberg et al (2006) put forward, was established in much of the visual and narrative data. A

developmental consideration was included in deciding data collection methods, and in the analysis to support my understanding, which was invaluable for in depth understanding of these children's perspectives (Sharma and Cockerill 2014, Smidt 2013). Planning to include the children in the initial analysis gave me further evidence of children's competence and agency.

UNICEF (2010 p28) stated that one of the limitations of their research on well-being, was "... a glaring lack of comparable information on the critical years of early childhood", because the majority of their research had been with those over 11 years of age (UNICEF 2007) resulting in a narrow emphasis.

Although recognised as challenging by many research reports on well-being (The Children's Society 2013, 2012; Bradshaw and Richardson 2009, and Ben-Arieh 2008), all advocate research with children as essential in ensuring that their voices and perspectives are put forward.

Bradshaw (2011) further suggested that if subjective well-being and young children's perspective was missing from well-being research, the full picture would not be seen, and it would devalue the status of children and the research findings. Therefore, it was disappointing to see in the "The Good Childhood Report 2013" (The Children's Society 2013) that previous research with 8-15 year olds, had not followed through on its findings for the need to research younger children's views, and had instead added 16 and 17 year olds views to their update.

The perception that research with young children is challenging comes through in most of the literature. As long as young children are not viewed negatively from the outset and they are not regarded as incomplete, deficient or lacking; given the time, ethical regard, and appropriate methods, research with young children can be undertaken successfully (Clark and Moss 2011). Those who work with young children, and who have a good understanding of

young children, are at an advantage with the knowledge, understanding and skills they possess as I was, but any social research requires the engagement of people on a regular basis and learning the skills necessary to be effective. My research demonstrated that children are able to self-report, therefore I believe the research community must get over any hesitation they may have in this area and make use of this valuable yet largely untapped group, rather than continuing to ask parents and professionals to speak on their behalf.

It was crucial that ethical principles throughout all stages of the research (Alderson and Morrow 2011), were met. As the study took shape and progressed, I considered, planned for, implemented and reviewed various elements. I was confident in my own professional and personal awareness and understanding of what is and what is not acceptable, but still kept my attention on this area recognising my research was with young children, deemed particularly vulnerable in research terms (Bryman 2012). The core areas of, no harm to participants, informed consent, invasion of privacy, and deception, was my starting point but I also believed strongly as a professional that reciprocity and particularly the planning in of enough time for the children, was necessary from the onset.

5.2.2 Study population, recruitment, and inclusion

The research took place in a school context to enable access to a sample of children who were typical of the population and have “characteristics similar to the population” (Greig et al 2013 p92). Including younger children would have added to the research in giving even younger children a voice, but I recognised the time and manageability of this was not possible. I would also have needed to further develop and refine my skills in listening and responding to the verbal and non-verbal cues these young children may have shared with me.

The head-teacher’s support was invaluable from the start in ascertaining the most appropriate classes to enable data gathering. I was therefore able to gain the age range, gender balance and range of voices in the data gathering process that was necessary.

The school is ethnically diverse but I was unable to gain informed consent from many of the ethnic minority group parents, even with translated information and consent letters. This suggests that these parents were either unsure of my proposal, my letters needed additional information or context, or I should have spent time considering this further, in an attempt to include their children's perspectives. It could also suggest that there were cultural differences, they may not have been familiar with our procedures or approaches to research, and this made them suspicious. It is also possible that their perspective on children and childhood is different and they may think it strange to want to include the voice of the child. I discussed this with the head teacher on return of the consent letters, and she informed me that many of the ethnic minority group parents had not been educated in England and were often unsure of educational practices. She added that the school were trying to "open up" their processes and procedures in order to support understanding and develop a working relationship with these (and all) parents. It would have been useful to have greater ethnic diversity in the sample, but I did capture some, finding that the data from these children was in line with the others from their year groups, and there were no significant differences to what made them feel well and happy.

5.2.3. Visual and narrative data

The methodology used in this piece of research with children was experimental but was effective and worked well. The visual data (paintings, drawings and photographs) set the focus and provided dialogue opportunities (Clark and Moss 2011). Including a developmental perspective to the younger children's visual data (paintings and drawings) consequently supported the value placed on each contribution, and meant individual children's "making meaning" was contextualised (Smidt 2013).

The visual methods were of value in giving participants a voice. They enabled and allowed participants to control the material generated thus retaining an emic perspective (Gallacher and Gallacher 2008, Greene and Hogan 2005). Creative constructivist tools such as these

make a positive methodological contribution to research and can support young participants in communicating or analysing their experiences.

In the Year 2 class where disposable cameras were used, I took into account some may not be returned. However when two returned, one broken and one dismantled, I had to think carefully how to deal with this situation. The children were quite matter of fact with the reasons for them not being able to be used, one child using too much force on the wind-on mechanism and the other said he wanted to see what was inside and how it worked. This did not perturb me and on reflection seemed quite understandable. However if I had been presented with this by many children doing the same thing I would have had to revert to painting or drawing as an alternative. Although the children from this class were able to take the disposable cameras home and capture real life images, I think there were limitations to what they could take, with regards time of year, time available, and opportunities to include the experiences and people they wanted. On reflection, it would have been more useful or interesting to see their drawings or paintings and the use of their memory to represent the things that made them feel well and happy. This would have allowed consistency in the process if all participants had used the same painting or drawing methods, and may have emphasised even greater continuity in some of the themes (Bryman 2012).

The children remained focused on the brief throughout and appeared to enjoy the process. This was mostly due to careful planning, giving the children time and ensuring they had my attention (Clark and Moss 2011). I did have to return to the Nursery class later in the academic year to resume data gathering, because of "settling in" issues for some of the participants, but found this to be a valuable lesson for contingency planning. I believe in research that however carefully you think you have planned, some issue will arise that requires more thought and or some flexibility. However careful consideration of context and environment meant a degree of flexibility was included anyway, therefore the successful collection and management of the data, resulted in detailed rich material for consideration.

In planning the research, I believed the narrative data would enrich and bring to life the visual data and be the element that would allow me a glimpse into the children's worlds, and their interpretation and understanding of well-being. It became apparent that the narrative data was akin to what interview data with adults could afford (Bryman 2012). I initially factored in the need to provide prompts for the children, but found this unnecessary in most cases, as the children were more than happy to share with me their experiences and thoughts on what made them feel well and happy. I believe this demonstrates that this age group are keen to articulate their own lived experiences and do have a perspective which they are happy to share, given the right conditions in which to do so. I provided the right conditions by giving the children time, attention and having a positive viewpoint on this age groups competences and capabilities.

5.2.4 Children's involvement

As an adult in an environment where the adults traditionally hold power, I wanted to enter the children's world as a welcome visitor and not someone they may not want to share their ideas and thoughts with, so an emic perspective (Harcourt and Einarsdottir 2011) permeated my planning. Although focused on my research aims and questions, I wanted the children to be the experts in their lived worlds, so saw my role throughout as principally facilitator and scribe. I had planned for the children's voice to come through the data, and in taking this approach, the children did not disappoint. I wanted to get close to them as a researcher and connect with their lives, so the dialogic element would support their perspectives and voices, which is exactly what it enabled. I think the area of research had resonance for the children in giving them the opportunity to think about, represent and talk about what made them feel well and happy. The opportunities children may have in a school context for meaningful discussion with adults working there was a question that I reflected upon.

5.2.5 Analysis of data

Including the children in the interpretation of the visual data, and then in the categorisation

process for each class meant again their voices were central to the data gathering and initial analysis process.

When the pairs of children from each class came together for further categorisation and ordering, there was such a supportive atmosphere, yet authoritative voice emanating from the group, I felt privileged to experience the phenomenon. Including the four pairs of children in this was without doubt experimental, particularly as the age range could have resulted in the more articulate older children silencing the younger ones. However, the older children always included and involved the younger ones in all discussions and decisions, almost like older siblings, enabling and empowering them, so that I was confident at the end of this process that all their voices had been included. It was the group as a whole who made the categorisations. The older children showed empathy when trying to tease out exactly what the younger children were saying, which in turn facilitated greater contribution. This mediating factor in the social context was particularly facilitative, particularly when I reflected on how adults might behave in similar situations.

Although the children's narrative descriptions, categorisation and initial analysis gave me my first impressions, I made a conscious effort to put these to one side when undertaking my own analysis. I recognised that if I was influenced by the children's interpretation, this could devalue their perspective and would undermine my own. Commencing this process from an impartial stance was daunting, but I found as I immersed myself in the analysis from an adult perspective, it became both fascinating and exciting as I peeled back the layers of meaning.

It took me some time to decide on my analytic approach, as there is a multiplicity of analytic tools available, but I found Barthes (1973, 1977) visual semiotic approach fitting. To see what or who was depicted, the images were initially analysed "denotatively", which together with the developmental perspective supported the descriptive element. Then a series of "connotative" layers of analysis meant the layers of meaning were uncovered and interpreted. Firstly, from

the visual depiction, then from the child's narrative, and finally, adding any relevant field-notes so the parts were brought together, and the meanings were unravelled and highlighted. This was followed by a thematic analysis of the data as a whole, which supported identification of recurring elements. In qualitative research, multiple interpretations are possible, but I believe the analytic approach taken enabled a much more confident, clearer, and stronger analysis. I was reflexive of my position throughout the analytic process, and still found subsequently there was marked correspondence between the children's interpretation and position and my own.

5.3 What was missing, what was unexpected?

Having explored the literature on well-being, there were some elements that I expected to come across which were missing or not put forward with any significance. The first was about positive health and feeling well, which reflects a bio-medical perspective (Annandale 2014). In Nic Gabhainn and Sixsmith (2005) research, they found the adult participants identified a specific bio-medical component, whereas the children did not. I also found this lacking in the children's consciousness and only occasionally added as an afterthought when children included food or being physically active. Most children of this age are only starting to understand what being healthy is and often these two elements are the starting point in that learning. The emotional element connected to being well or unwell was however evident in some narratives, but only by children in the consideration of parents and key people providing comfort and support. This suggests that children view life through a different lens to that of adults (Christensen 2004) and that their perspective is a positive one, possible because of their more limited life and learned experiences.

The children did not mention school, although a few children discussed their growing competency in numeracy or literacy. School is a substantial part of a child's life; therefore, my participant's perspective on well-being may be more egocentric, or centred on emotional determinants. Although schools are communities, it is probable this becomes more important

with age, growing friendships, and growing autonomy, whereas for young children the family dimension is apposite (Axford 2009).

In a society where economics and consumerism is central, it was surprising that material possessions were not a focus for these young children feeling well and happy. They spoke about some of their possessions, but it was always from the perspective of who had bought it for them, and who had shared it with them. These children in this age group, appeared unaware of any possible economic inequalities in their lives or the lives of loved ones, and had a positive perspective on those things provided for them. Again, the children's stage of development, the family influence, and the limited influence of the outside world may all be contributory (Buckingham 2007).

I found the often open and frank discussions that emanated from the visual material, initially unexpected. My field notes frequently confirmed this and at times the depth and detail of communication, the willingness to share, and the delight at sharing well and happy times was touching. As an adult they did not know well, who was only in their class one day a week for approximately six weeks I did feel privileged to enter their worlds, however briefly. Reflexivity enabled analysis of this and I think my surprise was in their openness and sometimes their frankness in discussing their own lived experiences. I think because I had the time, showed interest, was not judgemental and was able to sensitively probe for further understanding where necessary, they sensed this and happily brought me into their worlds. I reflected on the school environment following these episodes, recognising that the demands of the school day did not often allow children to share elements of their lives that were important to them.

For children to engage fully in school life and learning, emotional aspects of their everyday lived experiences should also be included and considered (Goleman 2005). When I spoke to one teacher about a young child's excitement at the imminent return of her father from Afghanistan (Y1F2A, see p 102), she replied that she did not know her father was in the army.

This same teacher at the beginning of my time in her class had remarked on this particular child's apparent quietness and reserved nature, which given the family situation and probable concern over his deployment would be understandable. However, I did not see or experience any of this quietness when she shared with me her obvious excitement.

A key to the development of teacher pupil relationships is the relationship-building period, and if a teacher's knowledge of the children lacks essential detail, then this can hinder the relationship development, support that could be available, and can affect learning and learning opportunities. (Goleman 2005)

There were occasions when I observed suppressed emotions and some confusion or distress, in a few of the children. These children were not always initially so open in sharing their experiences, but once they knew I was really listening, often opened up a dialogue with me. I was able to recognise this and sensitively respond ensuring an ethical stance. I did not avoid any of these moments, knowing the release or the following discussion may be helpful to them. I was confident that following data collection, none of these children left still feeling ambivalent, confused, or in any distress. In all cases the memory of what made them feel well and happy, also uncovered some confusing or negative feelings, which were present. On these occasions, I shared the essential elements with the teacher, knowing they could support the child in the longer term.

5.4 Reflexivity

According to Finlay (2002 p212) reflexivity has a firm place in the "qualitative research agenda". My research aim, to explore young children's interpretation and understanding of well-being focused my attention on the participants, and so kept me from disproportionate self-analysis. However, I was reflexive of my social context, background and values throughout the research. I recognised how these had influenced decisions such as selecting the topic, planning the various aspects of the research process, and presenting my findings, conclusions

and recommendations. My professional stance, one that takes a “child centred approach” and “multi- disciplinary” perspective was influential in much of what I wanted to achieve. I think having time with the children made me much more aware of their open and welcoming stance, their frankness and their competency, which was enlightening. It also made me more aware of other adults’ professional stance in this social context often highlighting their perspective and discipline priorities. During data collection, I was reflexive of the fact that children did not often have the opportunity for meaningful discussion with adults and I saw this as a tension in facilitating children’s development in this social context. This contrasted with my own position, which was to give children a voice, whilst gaining understanding of this hitherto age groups unexplored perspective. I saw myself as a visitor in the children’s worlds whilst gathering the data and this enabled sufficient emotional and intellectual distance for me to present their perspective and not my own.

5.5 Summary

From the above discussion, young children’s interpretation and understanding of well-being was evident and they were able to articulate this through a visual and narrative medium (answering research question 1, 2, 3). The key themes from the children when compared with my own, demonstrated that the degree of correspondence was marked (answering research question 4). The key difference was in the children’s ability to categorise and analyse (answering research question 3) against my ability where I had analytic tools at my disposal, and used Barthes (1973, 1977) visual semiotic approach to uncover the layers of meaning present, and then employed a thematic analysis .

The key themes discussed, key relationships; sense of self; and outdoor world encapsulate the six themes that the children put forward. The importance of the family, children’s developing competences and their regard for the outdoors were distinct features present in the data.

There was some correspondence with the literature on well-being, but because there was limited data from children, and often parents or professionals spoke on younger children's behalf, the degree of emphasis in the literature was biased. This bias was in favour of older children and the adult perspective. In my study it was apparent that younger children's emphasis is different to older children and adults, and what is important to them can be seen more clearly, when a developmental perspective is included.

A discussion of methodological issues highlighted that this piece of research was successful in gathering the necessary data, and showing children's ability to understand complex abstract concepts. Careful planning, ethical practice, reflexivity, reciprocity, and some flexibility were essential in ensuring that the research was effective. Children demonstrated their ability to understand the concept of well-being, and were capable of expressing an opinion. It was successful because the children expressed it at their developmental level, and in relation to their developmental ability. The children truly engaged with the topic area and research process, and this was the key to their perspectives being heard, and my brief access into their inner worlds (answering research questions 1, and 2).

Chapter 6: Implications, Recommendations and Conclusion

Following the discussion in the previous chapter, this chapter considers the implications of the research undertaken, revisits well-being and the themes from this study, puts forward recommendations for policy and practice and then makes a conclusion.

6.1 Research realised

This research took place in 2011-2012 at a time when well-being was rising in the consciousness of developed nations, and in the actions of policy makers. The growing body of well-being evidence has to date helped to guide policy direction, service delivery, professional practice, and development in many areas. This study has generated new knowledge and greater understanding of an under-researched population in this area.

The aim of the research was to explore young children's (3-8years) interpretation and understanding of "wellbeing". It was achieved within one school setting, with forty participants across the required age range. It was very clear that children in this age group do have a perspective and could successfully articulate it through visual and verbal means, thus answering research question 1, and 2. The children were able to categorise the data thematically and then order it answering research question 3, demonstrating their understanding of the complex construct of well-being, and their ability to analyse the data generated. In comparing the children's data and categorisation with my subsequent analysis, I met research question 4, and found there was considerable correspondence. This established the clarity of the children's perspectives, and demonstrated their perspective was not lost in the process.

The limitations of this research are that it was a small-scale study and therefore not generalizable. However, the children's interpretation and understanding of well-being in the

data gathered was rich and detailed. In the sample determined, it would have been interesting to disaggregate the data further by gender and ethnicity, but it was not possible here. The methodology was appropriate and successful for the research aim and questions. Although this study has limitations of scale, it has the potential to contribute to the well-being arena, as a pilot for a national or international study.

6.2 Well-being Revisited

Well-being is multi-dimensional, but commonly agreed to be the “quality of people’s lives” (Statham and Chase 2010 p2) and includes the subjective elements of happiness, good feelings, and satisfaction with life, which are emotional components. These emotional components, although often seen in research as too individualised and lacking robustness, add to and complement objective instrumental measures ensuring a more comprehensive picture. Although policy looks to objective measures available, the emotional dimension in social science research has an enabling part to play in indicating or informing on what is commonly valued, and in appraising policy with how processes and procedures can meet the needs of people.

There is now a plethora of happiness and life satisfaction scales across the world (Positive Psychology Centre: University of Pennsylvania: USA; and the World Database of Happiness: Netherlands) but these are adult or young people focused and none have truly attended to children under 11 years of age. The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being scale (Tennant et al 2007) used with adults and those over 16 years of age, incorporated subjective well-being, and included hedonic and eudaimonic components. These components with some degree of adjustment to elements included could be applied to younger children, but this has not taken place yet. Bearing in mind how adults and children inhabit very different worlds for much of the time (Hicks et al 2011), young children’s perspective could fill a distinct gap in subjective well-being research, and therefore this needs to be addressed.

Some developments have taken place, and some research purports to include young children's perspectives. Yet, for the most part it is tokenistic, such as in the National Well-being Debate (Office for National Statistics 2011); or doesn't include children under 8 years of age even by institutions that claim to work on their behalf (The Good Childhood Report: The Children's Society 2013, 2012). Young children are either routinely excluded and viewed as incapable of offering a perspective, or parents and professionals speak on their behalf. In this study's, "Review of the Literature, 2.7 Limitations of research on well-being" (see p 31), key issues are highlighted in this area which this study addresses, and signposts future possibilities.

6.3 Themes and Implications

The children in this study highlighted what made them feel well and happy and the key themes emanating from the data analysed centred on key relationships, having a sense of self and, enjoyment of the outdoors. These key themes although separated out for ease of analysis also demonstrated an interconnectedness that was persistent.

It was apparent that children's priorities in the well-being area reflected some of the findings of other studies with older children and adults (Nairn and Ipsos MORI 2011; Nic Gabhainn and Sixsmith 2005), but it was the degree of difference in emphasis that was significant in my findings. The developmental stage, needs and life experiences to date of young children are contributory and differences in emphasis were evident with age and over time.

6.3.1 Key Relationships

Key relationships was the most prominent and important theme for the young children in making them feel well and happy and thus having a sense of well-being. The key people in their lives were immediate family: parents and siblings; then extended family: grandparents, cousins, uncles and aunts. The need or desire for being with these key people was strong, and the enjoyment and pleasure gained from get-togethers and activities with them central to

their feelings of well-being. It is evident young children gain the physical safety, emotional security, stability, and sense of belonging they require from the key people in their lives. It was also evident that at this developmental stage, close family provide for the majority of children's developmental needs and therefore unsurprising that these relationships are a crucial element for their feelings of well-being.

Pets were also included within key relationships, as part of the family, and the relationships enjoyed by the children with these animals was unmistakable and of note. This concurs with the findings of Nic Gabhainn and Sixsmith (2005) who also found pets particular important to 8-12 year olds, but deemed less important by adults.

Friends were also included and become more evident and important with age. This aligns with children's growing independence, autonomy and sense of self. The category which includes friends or peer relationships is evident in much of the literature on well-being with older children and young people (UNICEF 2007), demonstrating that as children gain greater autonomy, these relationships take on greater significance

As young children view close family relationships as central to their feelings of well-being then it has implications for family policy, service delivery, and practice. Time spent with family and on these key relationships must be valued and not diminished or threatened. There must be a balance between economic factors, which currently dominate many of society's national agendas in the global market, with the needs of citizens, and its youngest citizens in particular. This includes enough time to maintain and enjoy key relationships, which support well-being and enable young children to develop and flourish in all areas. In practice, professionals recognise the importance of family and working with families, but time to talk about, celebrate and value these key relationships and their importance to young children must be included. Although society does give time for celebrations such as Mothering Sunday and Father's Day, a child's perspective is in the here and now and at this stage of development should be

acknowledged as such, and not devalued or deferred to adult's timetables or agendas.

Changing family structures are an emerging issue in today's society and have been the focus for much research (Bernardi et al 2013, Amato 2010; Clarke-Stewart, Dunn 2006). It is evident that family forms and dynamics affect children differently. Living in a high conflict family will have negative effects on young children's wellbeing (Harkonen 2013), as would multiple transitions, but any change in family structure has the potential to create considerable stress and major disruption during the period of adjustment, and for some young children it can lead to psychological distress which may have longer lasting effects. Although there is no conclusive proof that changing family structure can lead to lower psychological wellbeing among children, there is an association and increased occurrence of negative outcomes for children. According to Bernardi et al (2013 p29), "almost all studies show that both living in a single parent family as well as a step-family is correlated with negative outcomes". When considering the children's data and the strong message about the importance of the key people in their lives, I could see how changing family structure would have the potential to cause weakened contact between children, parents, grandparents, and other extended family and friends. In this situation, children may experience feelings of sadness and loss long after parental separation, or divorce. It is for this reason I believe there needs to be more conscious consideration by those involved for those they affect (Cowan et al 2014). Young children's need for security and stability has to be a priority, even if proximity to key people has to change.

In this study, it was evident that young children want to understand change so they can begin to deal with it, but it appears some adults do not recognise this or acknowledge it, possibly in their desire to protect young children, or play down certain situations. This study highlighted how important existing key relationships were to young children, and although changing family structure can support new key relationships being developed, it indicated that in dealing with certain situations of a sensitive nature, children often have to accept change without a voice

and often without understanding. The extended or wider family of grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins was frequently cited by the children and evident in the data, demonstrating that young children value the relationships they have with these people, so when changes occur, parents must give consideration to this as well. Critically those providing key relationships are central in supporting the development of resilience. As Lindon (2007 p7) acknowledged “Resilience is built from a foundation of emotional security that key familiar adults will help”, but it also needs to be from an informed knowledge base of the young child as an active competent being with agency and authority, on matters of importance to them in their lives. The power relationship that adults have with children frequently does not address the inequalities present and therefore often makes young children all the more vulnerable in times of uncertainty or change. If it is accepted as the norm, it cannot support young children’s well-being.

6.3.2 Sense of Self

Children’s sense of self came through strongly in the findings from this study. As they were developing their growing awareness of themselves as individuals, their capabilities, competencies and preferences shone through. The validation and reputation recognition from those whom they enjoyed key relationships with were strong, and it was apparent this was an important feature in making them feel well and happy. This corresponds with much of the literature on well-being, where life satisfaction and accomplishment or developing one-self are included as determinants of well-being (Ryan et al 2008).

The need for validation, reputation recognition to develop self- esteem and self- efficacy indicates that key people in young children’s lives, parents, grandparents and wider family members, should value and recognise the positive and enduring influence they can have on young children’s development and sense of self. Policy makers and society should also recognise this and ensure time spent with young children is not diminished by an over emphasis on provision of “material goods”, but on strong interpersonal relations and time spent together with key people in their lives. As children develop, their sense of self begins to

be influenced from outside the family, for instance by peer-groups, friends, the media, popular culture, but the younger the child, the greater the influence from family and those with whom they have key relationships.

Play was an important medium at this developmental stage for enjoyment, exploration, and mastery over the world, and a key vehicle for developing knowledge, understanding and skills. As Foley and Rixon (2008 p6) put forward, “It is widely understood that play is crucial to children’s healthy development and quality of life”. The implications from this study about play and the value young children place upon it however shows some dissonance with current policy, service delivery and adult society’s view of play (Elkind 2008). Parents need to value the contribution learning through play makes for young children as a medium for meaningful learning experiences, particularly when shared with key people (Collins and Foley 2008). Policy makers also need to uphold this influential period of learning and development through play, which supports well-being, development and learning, and when not rushed, can support and prepare young children for the more formal learning that follows.

6.3.3. Outdoors

Being outdoors was an area cited by the children for giving them immense pleasure and feelings of well-being. Many outdoor experiences involved being with key people and so the social dimension to being outdoors was included. The outdoors has many recognised benefits for health and development (Pretty et al 2009), but it was the space that outdoors afforded young children, and the endless possibilities for exploration, discovery and fun that the children focused upon. Children were also captivated by nature and many elements of the natural world. The children enjoyed the connections they made with other living creatures, which accords with the “biophilia hypothesis” of humans having an innate tendency to affiliate with nature and the natural environment (Kellert and Wilson 1993).

That young children’s outdoor spaces tend to be organised by adults and purposefully built

often around contained formal playgrounds is limiting to young children, who show a desire for spaces to run, hide, explore and master. Many adults have a risk-averse view of the outdoors, tending to start from the premise of “danger”, rather than of “possibility”, which is probably why playgrounds and many play spaces are so clearly defined and contained (Gleave and Cole-Hamilton 2012). However, this demonstrates the discord between young children’s desire to master natural environments through real life experiences, and adults desire to influence or prescribe the environments young children inhabit. Safety has to be of prime concern but there will always be a risk to being alive, and this age group can still be supervised without the space or design restrictions that appear to prevail.

The generation of young children in England today do not have the play spaces, community public spaces and access to them that previous generations enjoyed (Lester and Russell 2010). Local and national policy of selling off land for valuable development has led many changes in this area, and taken precedence over children’s evident desire to connect with nature and the outdoor environment. It is imperative that children should be able to voice their opinions on what makes them feel well and happy, so that further outdoor spaces are not lost or compromised. Parents and society’s rather negative view on children being outdoors and in public spaces has also contributed to this situation, so that taken together children are finding that they have less opportunities to enjoy outdoor experiences. This has an adverse effect on everyone’s well-being, particularly young children, and frequently those who are least able to afford to travel to access these precious spaces.

Policy makers must ensure children are able to contribute to public policy decisions on outdoor spaces, and they accurately represent children’s views as well, rather than making assumptions about them. Professionals in service delivery, health, social care and education could and should be advocates for this, and support children in presenting their particular perspectives.

6.4 Research with Children

This study demonstrated that research with younger children is valuable and that younger children have a perspective on important issues in their lives. Although their lived experiences are more limited than older children and adults, they can when allowed confidently and competently express themselves, given the appropriate means in which to do so. If children were included in more research, it would allow them a degree of authority, and this could result in more policy, service delivery and practice reflecting their needs and interests.

The literature around well-being often portrays younger children's voices as being absent but very little has been done nationally or internationally to change this. There are challenges to research with younger children, including rather pessimistically the view that "children may not be able to reliably report on their inner feelings" (Steuer and Marks 2008 p5). This means finding appropriate methods in which to hear their voices, respecting them as capable and confident beings, giving them time, and truly listening and attuning to their worlds. This latter point of attuning to young children's worlds I believe can be a perceived barrier to research with children, because the worlds they inhabit are very different to those of adults and older children. However, it is possible and this study has shown it can be successful. It now needs a commitment from professionals, practitioners, and researchers to ensure that the younger members of society have a voice, and can influence areas of importance to them, including the well-being arena.

Further research, of instrumental and objective measures together with subjective measures in providing a whole picture of well-being for young children, should be undertaken. In addition, disaggregated data should be analysed to ensure comprehensive understanding of such aspects as gender, age, disability and ethnicity.

6.5 Recommendations

In this section, the key recommendations are given. I believe the recommendations are interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary by nature when I refer to service delivery for young children.

1. This study demonstrated that young children (3-8 years) are able to express an understanding of well-being. It is an indicator that young children are capable, competent and can be authoritative on matters of importance to them in their lives. I believe my study could act as a pilot for a wider study in this area. Therefore, further research with children of this age in this area, and other areas that affect them, must be undertaken. Including young children's perspective would then add to relevant policy and service delivery thus reflecting their needs and interests.
2. Young children's developmental stage, their needs, and life experiences are distinct from those of older children and adults. Therefore, young children's priorities are different or there are specific differences in emphasis. Parents, families, policy makers, and all those providing services for young children must recognise these distinct differences and emphasis, to ensure the needs and interests of young children are met.
3. Key people, and the relationships and activities they enjoyed with them, was the principal theme emanating from the data in this study. This corresponds with the literature on older children and adults need for stable relationships to satisfy feelings of well-being, with the distinct difference that young children can usually only source this from their families or key people in their lives. It is essential that parents and policymakers must recognise the time needed for family relationships to flourish. This time is particularly important to young children, and must not be diminished by competing priorities or pressures.

4. Changes in family structure can have a significant impact on young children's well-being. Where change is inevitable, specific consideration of young children by all concerned and where relevant, young children's desire to understand the situation must be included.
5. Life satisfaction and accomplishment or developing one-self is significant in the literature on determinants of well-being for adults, but for young children it is akin to developing a sense of self, of gaining validation and reputation recognition for the capabilities, competencies and personal preferences that are developing. This is gained principally from key people / family, who are a huge influence. Key people in young children's lives must firstly recognise the positive and enduring role they play and provide time for this in order to support young children. Policy makers and service providers must recognise the time young children want to spend with key people in their lives at this stage of their development, as this will have long-term benefits to well-being.
6. For young children play is a key medium for having fun, learning and developing. Its position must not be compromised in providing meaningful experiences for young children. To ensure it is not reduced, it needs to be further validated by professionals who work with young children. Policy makers and all adults also need to recognise its fundamental and foundational importance, and its place in providing feelings of well-being, particularly for young children.
7. Children paid particular attention to being outdoors and experiencing nature and the natural world when interpreting their ideas on being well and happy. The possibilities of the outdoors, and what it affords young children, must be provided for, and prioritised. Society must enable and allow children to enjoy and learn from the outdoor

environment; and policy makers must protect valuable outdoor public spaces, and play spaces and ensure they are not lost or eroded.

6.6 Conclusion

This study explored young children's interpretation and understanding of well-being, and the findings highlight young children can competently interpret and understand well-being. Their capability in doing so demonstrates that more research with this age group could support practice and policy developments, across all areas that affect their lives. The participants welcomed the opportunity to voice their opinions on what made them feel well and happy and thus having a sense of well-being.

Some of the findings reflected other studies with older children and adults such as "key relationships" holding primacy. Young children having a "sense of self" is aligned to older children and adults having a sense of purpose and being able to achieve personal goals, but there is a distinct difference in emphasis with this age group, which has to be recognised. The "outdoors" was the third key theme from the children but again the emphasis is different to that put forward by older children. In considering the implications of the differences put forward from young children and those put forward for young children, there is some dissonance.

Overall, this study has highlighted the importance of listening to young children and the contribution they could make to informing relevant policy, provision and practice in health, social care and education. In their research "The Children Left Behind", UNICEF declared, "there is a glaring lack of comparable information on the critical years of early childhood" (UNICEF 2010 p28), this could be transformed if governments, professionals, practitioners and researchers realised the possibilities that young children can present in contributing to this.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1: Literature Search Strategy: Initial Approach

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Appendix 1: Literature Search Strategy: Initial Approach

Key concepts used: well-being, children and well-being, subjective well-being, happiness, quality of life.

Initial thoughts and consideration:

Why is well-being of interest? Who is interested in well-being? What are the models, dimensions, indicators of well-being? Where does subjective well-being fit? What methodologies determine and evaluate well-being (research on well-being)? Who participates in the data production of well-being? How has well-being influenced policy and practice?

Parameters:

Disciplines: Social Care, Health, Education, Sociology, Psychology, Social Policy.

Key Time Period & Publication Date Range: 1989-present day. Starting from the time of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) plus cross-referencing contemporary literature and working from present day backwards.

Geography: UK initially, then Europe and International publications.

Databases: ProQuest (Central, Health, Psychology, Education, OxResearch, Social Science), Oxford Journals, Sage Premier, Taylor & Francis online; Wiley online; JSTOR Arts and Sciences, EBSCO (including CINAHL), Dawsonera, Ebrary.

Content-type: Periodicals (Journals and articles): Abstracts, Bibliographies and Citations, Reports, Government Reports, Non-Government & Voluntary Organisations (Children's Society, UNICEF, OECD).

Strategy: I mainly used my own University library, and University of Essex library. I used SCONUL to access other HE libraries when necessary.

I started with the search engine Summon (Library Google) and then refined my search. I started with UK literature initially and then widened my search. I then refined my search by selecting the most relevant literature. I obtained the full text from any useful abstracts. I also considered bibliographies and citations where appropriate.

Appendix 2: Information and consent letter for Head teacher

Dear.....

Firstly, I would like to thank you for allowing me to undertake regular voluntary work in the school since January. It has been invaluable to me, allowing me to gain an insight into the school and develop positive relationships with the staff and children.

As you know, I am currently undertaking a Professional Doctorate in Social Care and Education at the University of Essex and I originally asked if you would permit me to work in the school with a view to undertaking some research with the children in the near future.

The research area I would like to focus on is young children's interpretation and understanding of well-being. The research is designed to be child centred and children's understanding of "being well and happy" will be central to it. It will involve activities where I can collect children's drawings from a Nursery, Reception and Year 1 class sample and photographs from a Year 2 class sample. Following the collection of data some of the children will categorise, order, value and interpret the contributions with me to inform my later analyses. This will happen in normal classroom activities and the time will be at the convenience of the class teacher. Research with young children has been a previously neglected area and so the findings from this research will generate new knowledge and understanding and thus have relevance and value to professionals and policymakers.

It is important to state that the school, staff and children would remain anonymous throughout and any data collected will be coded to ensure this. Parental information and consent letters will be sent out to parents and a child's participation would be voluntary. I would appreciate your knowledge of any parents who may have English as an additional language so that I can contact them in an appropriate manner. Any parent wishing to withdraw their child from the research or any child wishing to withdraw can do so at any time, without questions asked. Consequently, the child's contribution would not feature in the data and would be returned to them. All information and data will be stored securely in accordance with strict University of Essex guidelines. The eventual key findings of the research will be disseminated in the most appropriate manner to the school.

I believe the time is now right to undertake the research and would like your permission to do so with children in those particular year groups.

If you have any questions please do contact me via any of the following:

E-mail: XXXXXXXX Telephone (work): XXXXXX Mobile: XXXXXX

If you wish to contact my supervisor at the University of Essex, please use the following e-mail XXXXXXXX

Below is a consent form for your consideration. A copy of this will be returned to you for your records.

Many thanks
Beverley Nightingale

Area of Research:

An exploration of young children's interpretation and understanding of "well-being".

Name of Researcher:

Beverley Nightingale

- I confirm that I have read and understood the information and consent letter.
- I confirm I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these satisfactorily answered
- I understand that the school, staff and children will remain anonymous throughout the research.

I give my consent / do not give my consent to Beverley Nightingale undertaking the above research at the school.

Name: Signature:

Date:

Appendix 3: Information and consent letter to Class Teachers

Dear.....

Firstly, I would like to thank you and your colleagues for your welcome since I have undertaken regular voluntary work in the school since January 2011. It has been invaluable to me, allowing me to gain an insight into the school and develop positive relationships with the staff and children.

As you know, I am currently undertaking a Professional Doctorate in Social Care and Education at the University of Essex and I originally asked the Head teacher if I could work in the school with a view to undertaking some research with the children.

The research area I would like to focus on is young children's interpretation and understanding of well-being. The research is designed to be child centred and children's understanding of "being well and happy" will be central to it. It will involve activities where I can collect children's drawings from a Nursery, Reception and a Year 1 class sample and photographs from a Year 2 class sample. Following the collection of data some of the children will categorise, order, value and interpret the contributions to inform my later analyses. This will all happen in normal classroom activities and the time will be at your convenience.

Research with young children has been a previously neglected area, so the findings from this research will generate new knowledge and understanding and thus have relevance and value to professionals and policymakers.

It is important to state that the school, staff and children would remain anonymous throughout the research and any data collected will be coded to ensure this. Parental information and consent letters will be sent out to parents and a child's participation would be voluntary. I would appreciate your knowledge of any parents who may have English as an additional language so that I can contact them in an appropriate manner. Any parent wishing to withdraw their child from the research or any child wishing to withdraw can do so at any time, without questions asked. Consequently, the child's contribution would not feature in the data and would be returned to them. All information and data will be stored securely in accordance with strict University of Essex guidelines. The eventual key findings of the research will be disseminated in the most appropriate manner to the school.

I believe the time is now right to undertake the research and would like your consent to do so with children in your class.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

For more information, please contact me via any of the following:

E-mail: XXXXXXXX Telephone (work): XXXXXX Mobile: XXXXXX

Below is a consent form for your consideration. A copy of this will be returned to you for your records.

Many thanks
Beverley Nightingale

Area of Research:

An exploration of young children's interpretation and understanding of "well-being".

Name of Researcher:

Beverley Nightingale

- I confirm that I have read and understood the information and consent letter.
- I confirm I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these satisfactorily answered where necessary
- I understand that the school, staff and children will remain anonymous throughout the research.

I give my consent / do not give my consent to Beverley Nightingale undertaking the above research with children from my class.

Name: Signature: Date:

Appendix 4: Information and consent letter for Parents (+ copy of information to children)

Information letter for Parents

Dear Parent

My name is Beverley Nightingale and I have been a voluntary helper at the school on a regular basis since January. I normally work as a senior lecturer at XXXXX in XXXXX teaching on an early childhood studies degree course. I am also a part-time Professional Doctorate student at the University of Essex and as part of my studies about to undertake a piece of research. This research is the reason I am writing to you because I would like to ask your permission for your child to participate. **I am interested in undertaking some research with the children at the school exploring their ideas about well-being or being well and happy.**

I would like to provide you with some information about the research. In order for your child to participate, I need to gain consent from both yourself and your child. If however you prefer your child not to participate then no further action needs to be taken, and no further attempts will be made to contact either you or your child.

In order to gather the information I will be asking those Nursery, Reception and Year 1 children, who want to be involved and whose parents have given their consent, to do some drawings associated with being well and happy. Year 2 class children who want to be involved, and whose parents have given their consent to participate, will take photographs associated with being well and happy outside school, on single use cameras provided by me. Following this, the drawings and photographs collected will then be interpreted by a smaller group of the children. Original drawings and photographs will be given to the child once they have been copied... All information and data will be stored securely. The school, staff and children will remain anonymous throughout the research ensuring confidentiality.

Participation in this research is voluntary and participants are able to withdraw at any time during the process without explanation. If this was to happen the child's contribution would not feature in the data and would be returned to them.

I am more than happy to discuss any questions you may have concerning your child's participation in this research, so please contact me via the school or my workplace XXXXXXXX or telephone (work) XXXXXX

Please be reassured that I have an up to date Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check, have worked for many years with or for young children, and am experienced in talking and working with young children in education and care environments.

I have also enclosed the information sheet I will use as a basis for explaining the research with the children. **If you wish to discuss the content with your child in order to further support your decision, please do so.**

I hope you will consider consenting to your child's participation in the research, as I am keen to enable young children to participate and their views to be heard. The eventual key findings of the research will be shared in the most appropriate manner through the school. The findings should provide new knowledge and may help to inform professionals and policymakers.

On the next page is a consent form for your consideration. Please complete, sign and date, detach and return to the school via your child by.....

With many thanks,

Beverley Nightingale

Consent letter for Parents

Please complete and return via your child to the school by

One copy will be returned to you and one copy will be retained by the researcher

Area of Research:

An exploration of young children's interpretation and understanding of "well-being".

Name of Researcher:

Beverley Nightingale

- I confirm that I have read and understood the information letter on the above research.
- I confirm I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these satisfactorily answered
- I understand that my consent to my child's participation is voluntary and that I am free, without giving a reason, to stop at any time and withdraw consent to my child's participation in the research.
- I understand that my child's identity will remain anonymous throughout the research.

I give my consent / do not give my consent to my child participating in the research.

Name of child:

Year group/class:

Parent /Guardian Name:

Parent/Guardian Signature:

Date:

Please complete and return via your child to the school.

One copy will be returned to you and one copy will be retained by the researcher

I have also attached the information about my research to share with the children

Information about research for Children (to discuss with them)

My name is Beverley and I would like to tell you about some work I want to do at the school.

I am interested in finding out what you consider makes you well and happy. Some people use the word “wellbeing” which you may have heard of.

I will be in school one morning a week to do this work and if you decide, you want to be involved I will be able to work with you when your teacher says so.

If you agree to be involved and your parents have said you can be, then:

a) If you are in Nursery, Reception or Year 1 I will ask you to do some drawings of what makes you feel well and happy

b) If you are in Year 2, I will ask you to take some photographs of what makes you feel well and happy (I will provide the single use cameras and we can practise in class how to use them. I will have them processed when you give them back to me.)

c) When the drawings and photos have been collected, some of you who want to be involved will also be able to help me understand the drawings and photos, by telling me what you think they mean.

It is up to you if you want to be involved. You do not have to say “yes”. You can also stop when you want to or have a break if you want to.

If you say yes to being involved, whilst we are working together you will wear a green smiley-face badge. If you do not want to be involved any more or want a break, you can change your badge to a red smiley-face so I know you want to stop. If you want to get involved, again you can just change your badge back to green.

I will copy the drawings and photos from our working together and keep them safe and secure the whole time. Once I have copied your drawings and photos I will return the originals to you.

When I talk or write about what I have found out, I will not name or identify you.

If you appear to be at risk at any time whilst I am working with you then I would have to tell an appropriate adult of my concerns, this is the only time I would break confidentiality.

The main findings of the work we do will be shared with you at school.

If you do not understand something, you must let me know.
If I do not understand something can I let you know as well?

I have already told your parent(s)/ guardians so you might like to talk about this with them before you decide whether you want to be involved.



**YES PLEASE
I WANT TO BE INVOLVED**



NO THANK-YOU

Child's Name:

Date:

Appendix 5: Information about research for Children (to discuss with them)

My name is Beverley and I would like to tell you about some work I want to do at the school.

I am interested in finding out what you consider makes you well and happy. Some people use the word “wellbeing” which you may have heard of.

I will be in school one morning a week to do this work and if you decide, you want to be involved I will be able to work with you when your teacher says so.

If you agree to be involved and your parents have said you can be, then:

a) If you are in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 I will ask you to do some drawings of what makes you feel well and happy

b) If you are in Year 2, I will ask you to take some photographs of what makes you feel well and happy (I will provide the single use cameras and we can practise in class how to use them. I will have them processed when you give them back to me.)

c) When the drawings and photos have been collected, some of you who want to be involved will also be able to help me understand the drawings and photos, by telling me what you think they mean.

It is up to you if you want to be involved. You do not have to say “yes”. You can also stop when you want to or have a break if you want to.

If you say yes to being involved, whilst we are working together you will wear a green smiley-face badge. If you do not want to be involved any more or want a break, you can change your badge to a red smiley-face so I know you want to stop. If you want to get involved, again you can just change your badge back to green.

I will keep copies of the drawings and photos from our working together and keep them safe and secure the whole time. Once I have copied your drawings and photos I will return the originals to you.

When I talk or write about what I have found out, I will not name or identify you.

If you appear to be at risk at any time whilst I am working with you then I would have to tell an appropriate adult of my concerns, this is the only time I would break confidentiality.

The main findings of the work we do will be shared with you at school.

If you do not understand something, you must let me know.
If I do not understand something can I let you know as well?

I have already told your parent(s)/ guardians so you might like to talk about this with them before you decide whether you want to be involved.



**YES PLEASE
I WANT TO BE INVOLVED**



NO THANK-YOU

Child's Name:

Date:

Appendix 6: Camera Letter to parents

5th March 2012

Dear Parent,

Thank-you for agreeing to..... taking part in my “wellbeing research study” at school. I am grateful for your support.

I have now given a camera to record:

- a) experiences that they consider make them feel well and happy.
- b) places, persons or things that they associate with being well and happy.

We have practised using the camera in class, so please **only** support him/her if he/she is finding it difficult to handle the camera or get started. Inside the camera plastic wrapping, are instructions if necessary!

As I am keen to get children’s ideas, please do not take over or tell the children what photos should be taken.

The camera should be returned to school by **21st March 2012** latest. I will then get the film processed and a copy of the photos will be given to to bring home, share and enjoy.

If you have any questions, do contact me via the school.

Many thanks with your help,

Regards

Beverley Nightingale

Appendix 7: Reminder letter to parents

21st March 2012

Dear Parent,

I do hope enjoyed taking photos on the disposable camera.

Please return it to school before the Easter holidays and I will make sure the film is processed and the photos back to the first week back after the holiday.

If you have any questions, do contact me via the school.

Regards

Beverley Nightingale

Appendix 8: Children's categories by class (paired) + summary

NURSERY CATEGORIES BY 2 CHILDREN (paintings) NB: Brackets include summary of my field notes.	Narratives relating to Category
Family + home (includes named people and their roles, extended family, includes the relationship)	15
Doing things with family (visiting, places, special events, going out)	11
Being outside(park, garden, beach, stars, sun, rainbows, flowers, digging holes, mud, hiding)	8
Being Happy (laughing, being silly, being tickled, funny,)	7
Playing with toys & games (cuddly, popular culture/entertainment, traditional)	7
Animals (zoo animals, pets, ladybirds, butterflies)	6
Food	2

RECEPTION CATEGORIES BY 2 CHILDREN (drawings) NB: Brackets include summary of my field notes.	Narratives relating to Category
Family + home (people: who they are and what they do: favourite home places)	14
Doing things with family (visiting, places, special events, going out)	11
Being outside (park, garden, beach, sun, seeing the stars, rainbows, rain, mud, rivers, flowers, growing veg)	8
Pets and Animals	5
Feeling happy (smiling, cuddles, laughing, being tickled)	5
Toys & games	4
Food	4

YEAR 1 CATEGORIES BY 2 CHILDREN (drawings) NB: Brackets include summary of my field notes.	Narratives relating to Category
Family (including extended)	14
Doing things with family (visiting, special events, going out)	10
Being Outdoors (park, garden, field, beach)	8
Playing with friends	8
Playing with Pets	6
Seeing nature (grass, sun, rainbows, flowers)	6
Animals	4
Special Places (home, bedroom, garden)	4
Toys and games	4
Food	3

YEAR 2 CATEGORIES BY 2 CHILDREN (Photos) NB: Brackets include summary of my field notes.	Narratives relating to Category
Family (including extended)	12
Doing things with family (parties, celebrations, going out, sharing hobbies)	8
Playing with Friends	8
Pets /Animals	6
Being outside (park, riding bike, swings, sunshine, rainbows, grass)	6
Playing with Games /Toys	6
Fun & Laughter (jokes, cuddles, play fighting)	5
Food	5
Activities (belonging to Brownies, football, karate)	4
Helping out	3
Getting good (mastery)	3
Rewards and treats	2

Researcher summary following paired categorisation

Children's Categories	Nursery narrative	Reception narrative	Year 1 narrative	Year 2 narrative	Narrative Totals
Family and home	15	14	14	12	55
Being with/doing things with family	11	11	10	8	40
Pets	0	5	6	6	17
Being outside/playing outside	8	8	8	6	30
Seeing nature and animals	6	0	10	0	16
Playing with friends	0	0	8	8	16
Playing with toys and games	7	4	4	6	21
Having fun /being happy	7	5	0	5	17
Doing activities	0	0	0	4	4
Food	2	4	3	5	14
Special places	0	0	4	0	4
Helping out	0	0	0	3	3
Getting good (mastery)	0	0	0	3	3
Rewards and treats	0	0	0	2	2

Frequency of Categories	Narrative Totals
Family and home	55
Being with/doing things with family	40
Being outside/playing outside	30
Playing with toys and games	21
Pets	17
Playing with friends	16
Having fun/being happy	16
Seeing nature and animals	16
Food	14
Doing activities	4
Special places	4
Helping out	3
Getting good (mastery)	3
Rewards and treats	2

Appendix 9:
The process of children's categorisation of their peer groups drawings and/or verbal explanations by frequency and order of importance.

Stage 3a, 3b: The categories from the pairs of children were brought together and used as a starting point:

1. Family and home
2. Being with/doing things with family
3. Pets
4. Being outside/playing outside
5. Seeing nature and animals
6. Playing with friends
7. Playing with toys and games
8. Having fun /being happy
9. Doing activities
10. Food
11. Special places
12. Helping out
13. Getting good (mastery)
14. Rewards and treats

Stage 3c: Reconsidering the data by 4 pairs of children: overlap and connection review

This left 8 categories following review:

1. Family (and home)
2. Being with/doing things with family
3. Pets and animals
4. Being outside/playing outside
5. Seeing nature
6. Playing with friends
7. Doing activities, Playing with toys and games
8. Food

Stage 3c: Frequency:

I then asked the children about the size of the categories:

Q. What is the biggest category herethat makes you all feel well and happy? What is the next? Next? Next? (consensus taken)

1. Family (and home)
2. Being with / doing things with family
3. Being outside / playing outside
4. Seeing nature
5. Pets and animals
6. Doing things: Activities, playing with toys/games
7. Playing with friends
8. Food

Stage 3c: Order of importance (value) by year group pairs:

The children in pairs from their year group then ordered them by importance.

Q. What is the most important category (grouping) that make you feel well and happy? What next? next? next? (paired by class)

Theme/Category	Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2
Family	1	1	1	1
Being with / Doing things with family	2	2	2	2
Being outside, playing outside	3	4	5	5
Seeing nature	4	5	6	6
Pets and animals	7	3	3	4
Doing things I like (activities, games, playing with toys)	5	7	7	7
Playing with friends	6	6	4	3
Food	8	8	8	8

During this ordering by importance (value) by the pairs of children, some of the children decided that “being outside” and “nature” went together and that “food” was connected to “family” and “doing things with family”, so these categories were reviewed and put in their appropriate category.

Stage 3c: Order of importance (consensus)

I then asked the children whether they could order the categories by importance all together.

Q. What is the most important category (grouping) that makes you feel well and happy? What is next? next? next? (All together)

1. Family
2. Doing things with Family
3. Being outside
4. Pets and animals
5. Activities, games and toys
6. Friends

Appendix 10: Examples of Data Analysis using Barthes Approach

Using Barthes (1973, 1977) visual semiotic approach to analysis:

- a) Denotative (what or who is being depicted)
- b) Connotative (layers of meaning)

NURSERY Paintings : Children aged 3-4years						
Participant	1. Denotative depiction)	2. Initial connotative layer from visual depiction	3. Child's Narrative	4. Second connotative layer using visual and narrative	5. My Field-notes (italics)	6. Final Connotative (layers of meaning)
N M1A	3 red lines including a hull shaped curve at bottom, horizontal line in middle and a vertical line (1/3 pg.)	Boat central in painting with sail and mast	"Going on a boat with daddy, mummy, nanny and patch (<i>cuddly dog</i>)- sailing"	Sailing Boat to depict outing with family central in painting with sail and mast	<i>He discussed how he was allowed to steer and the fun they had on their boat</i>	Family activity Key persons Belonging Emotional security Outdoors Developing Competence Fun
N F1A	Blue and red vertical lines and wavy lines, two round shapes. Yellow blob in centre at top	No distinguishable features. Vertical lines and wavy lines give a sense of movement across whole page. Yellow blob could be the sun. 2 round shapes could be people or objects?	"I'm painting long grass in the field...in the park. The sun. There are butterflies and ladybirds and I'm with mummy and Tia (<i>sister</i>)"	Park scene with mother and sister	<i>She discussed how this made her feel happy and the memory made her smile</i>	Key persons Family activity Natural world Outdoors happiness

N F2A	Red square outline, greeny brown hair and nose, blue hands, fingers, and eyes, which have red surround, turned up mouth, cheeks. Blue sun. Covers full page	Face with big smile, overlarge hands and eyes. It looks animated	"Mummy has a big smiley face....I like being with mummy-she plays with me.... and we watch CBB's. ... I'm doing this for nanna, they visit me and I'm making then a s' prise".	Mothers face	<i>She later added that "It's nice to make others happy but you have to make yourself happy" I wondered where she had heard this. This child has a mother who is blind.</i>	Key persons Play Family activity Belonging Sense of self Self-reliance Giving
N M5B	Blue horizontal lines at top with 3 handprints along bottom sideways	Childs own handprints	"I like mud, granddad helps me dig holes".	Sensory enjoyment of playing with paint and mud. Key person support	<i>He asked whether he could paint his hands and used them to make handprints. I asked whether he wanted the paper rotated, but he enjoyed positioning his left hand to put along the paper. He told me his granddad sometimes filled the holes with water and how he loved playing in the mud and making things out of the mud</i>	Outdoors Play Key person Developing competence Natural world

RECEPTION DRAWINGS: Children aged 4-5years						
Partic- ipant	1. Denotative (depiction)	2. Initial connotative layer from visual depiction	3. Child's Narrative	4. Second connotative layer using visual and narrative	5. My Field-notes (italics)	6. Final Connotative
R F1B	Sky at top with sun, blue shading in part in the middle and sand at	4 varying sized people in the sea and 5 varying	"This is me and daddy at the beach.... (later) I like going to	Family activities at the beach/seaside	<i>She discussed how happy she was going to the beach and in her conversation I</i>	Key persons Family activity Belonging

	bottom, 9 human figures, jelly fish, and a triangular pile of sand	sized people on the sand, one by a pile of sand. Very large jelly fish shape	the beach. I like holidays- swimming and the arcade with mummy, daddy and my sister and brother. I like Ariel the mermaid (<i>Disney</i>)”		<i>could see many connections</i>	Sense of self Natural world
R F2A	Purple flower, yellow person (head with hair, eyes, nose mouth (some attempt at in-filling but only small section of head) small body, legs.	Very large head with big smile is emphasised. Small body. Flower same size as the body. Pastel colours and lightly drawn	“My mummy’s smiley face. I like my mummy. She has yellow hair. She tickles and cuddles me...I like being with mummy”.	Picture of Mother	<i>She was smiling and happy and told me about the cuddles they have together when they are both in their onesies (one piece pyjama)</i>	Key person Emotional security Physical contact
R M3A	Zoo scene with sign and flag. Elephant blowing out water and hanging monkey. Door with container (flower, animal food?)	Animals in a zoo, monkey and elephant have smiles on their faces	“I like the zoo, and all the animals’ best. Mummy says I’m like a cheeky monkey. We went there with nanny, granddad and we had a picnic “.	Family activity at the zoo	<i>Attention to detail and amount of recall was unexpected - the zoo sign, the flag and the animal feed container (which I asked him about). It made me realise that as adults we become habituated to stimuli around us whereas children are still exploring their worlds so take so much more in!</i>	Natural world Key persons Family activity Developing competence
R M5B	Rainbow shape with seven colours (from outside red, yellow, orange, purple, green, purple, brown, black) in the background to left of picture taking up 1/3 of the page	Rainbow	“Seeing a rainbow makes me happy – it’s always there after the rain... I like playing with my friends and riding my bike most”.	Rainbow	<i>He told me he always rushes to the window to look for rainbows. He then told me about his skill at riding his bike and how he hadn’t used stabilisers for years.</i>	Natural world Belonging Developing competence Play

YEAR 1 Drawings : Children aged 5-6 years						
Partici- pant	1. Denotative (depiction)	2. Initial connotative layer from visual depiction	3. Child's Narrative	4. Second connotat-ive layer using visual and narrative	5. <i>My Field-notes (italics)</i>	6. Final Connotative
Y1 F1A	Mum, Dad (written above) self, brother, sister. (females in dresses, dad in suit and tie, brother in trousers and wearing a baseball cap). Skin colour and hair Afro- Caribbean except smaller female who has blond hair. All smiling. Mum and dad arms beside them, children outstretched arms. Butterfly and 2 suns, very detailed. Butterfly and sun given faces and smiles.	Mother and father at sides and self, brother and sister in the middle. Very detailed and colourful people in specific clothes	"My family going out. Sometimes we have a "family night" we all watch a film"	Family activity going out	<i>She told me about all the pretty dresses she has and how recently she was "a princess in the church". She appeared happy to be talking about her family and all the things they enjoyed doing.</i>	Key persons Emotional security Family activity Belonging Animism Sense of self Outdoors
Y1 F2A	3 red figures with stick arms and legs, 2 girls, coloured red with blond hair and blue eyes, 1 man with brown hair and brown eyes and a beret	2 girls greeting their father who is wearing a beret.	"I like playing with Katie, my sister. My daddy's in Afghan. He is a soldier. He's coming back in 10 days. We are going to have a party, a second Christmas. We are going to visit Nanny Smith...a long way away. We have presents for daddy".	Family re-union /greeting of father following tour of duty in army	<i>The excitement on her face and the barrage of details that exploded from her was unexpected. Normally she is quite reserved. I reflected on how in the normal school timetable how children's personal issues are not often aired or given time to be released.</i>	Key persons Emotional security Belonging Anticipation Family activity Celebration Play
Y1 M3A	Grass, 2 nets left and right sides, 2 figures next to nets, 1 ball centre. People	Football pitch with 2 players and spectators.	"I love playing football, dad and gramps comes and	Football game with two players (one is self) on	<i>I asked him about the two sides names but he couldn't remember the</i>	Structured physical play. Developing

	at side-line watching (in background). 16 figures divided-6 one side with heart-shape in front, 9 other side with two shapes in front?	One side shows symbol (?) of Hearts.	watches. I'm very good at football. I like winning".	pitch with spectators. Family activity	<i>opposing team. He proudly said "I play for Hearts".</i>	competence Sense of self Key persons Family activity
Y1 M3B	2 figures standing up to left, holding rifles or bazookas (telescopic sights, grip, and magazine) with bullets and other equipment in foreground. Firing in the distance with smoke/ bullets coming out of the guns	2 people using rifles. Rifles main feature of picture	"I love shooting games, I've got an X Box, Elliott's (<i>cousin</i>) got a Play-station.... We play fighting games and my dad plays with me as well".	Family activity X Box or Play-Station shooting game (self), and cousin or dad	<i>He detailed the components of the guns when drawing them, but didn't know the technical terms. Could explain how they worked. He smiled as he chatted to me.</i>	Family activity Developing competence Sense of self Structured play

YEAR 2: Photographs Children aged 6-7 years						
Participant	1. Denotative (depiction)	2. Initial connotative layer from visual depiction	3. Child's Narrative	4. Second connotative layer using visual and narrative	5. My Field-notes (<i>italics</i>)	6. Final Connotative
Y2 F1B	Small black dog looking up at photographer, on vinyl flooring or stone floor with unit and towel at side and shower head to left (bathroom). Front of slippers at bottom in foreground (of photographer)	Dog in bathroom	"That's Alfie my dog... he's the best dog in the world"	Pet dog at home	<i>2nd favourite photo: She told me all his attributes, how she loved him, and how she spent a lot of time cuddling and playing with him indoors, outside and in the park.</i>	Pet (=key person) Emotional security Physical contact Play
Y2	Boy and man at coffee	Man and child	"Dad and me playing	Father and son	<i>2nd favourite photo: (photo</i>	Key person

M1B	table playing with green play-dough and tools. Child's bottle of drink on table. Sofa behind , clock and picture above on wall, and curtains and radiator (right side)	playing with play-dough	with the (play) dough at his house. I like going to my dad's. I'm going this weekend... Mummy's friend Dan is alright".	activity playing with play dough at father's house	<i>taken by auntie) He told me he loved seeing his dad and his dad loved seeing him and he got very excited when he was going to his dads. He also said he hoped mum would let him keep all his photos.</i>	Family activity Emotional security Play Excitement
Y2 M3A	Boy sitting on games chair with controller in front of TV, which stands on TV unit with games console and wiring, Remote controllers and plant on top of TV. Window, curtains and radiator on left side. Large clock in front to left resting on floor against CD stack unit with speaker on top. To right of TV unit a floor standing speaker	Boy playing on games console at home	"Me playing (Nin)'tendo and my favourite car game. I play it with my dad and uncle and my cousins as well"	Family activity playing computer games	<i>Favourite photo: (dad taken photo of him) He said this was his favourite photo because he liked "playing my games". He added that "being with mum and dad makes me happiest" but he had many photos of them in the family album. He said he didn't have any photos of his favourite playthings which was why he had chosen this photo first...</i>	Key persons Family activity Sense of self Structured play Happiness
Y2 M4B	Rabbit in cage with straw and cardboard tubes, pieces of paper and food/drink bowl	Rabbit in cage	"My rabbit scratchy – mummy helps me look after it".	Family pet rabbit	<i>2nd favourite photo: He talked about how he loved scratchy and how soft and friendly it was. He said he tried to help to clean the cage but mummy said it was easier for him to look after scratchy whilst she did it. In my field notes, I noted he is appreciative of help - it came through strongly in his conversation.</i>	Key person (+pet) Emotional security Family activity Belonging Developing competence

Appendix 11: Overall Themes from My Initial Analysis

Theme and subthemes	NURS-ERY	RECEP-TION	YR 1	YR 2	Totals	Theme
Theme 1. Key persons / relationships (includes pets)	14	17	12	19	62	1
Family activities (+celebrations)	10	12	12	15	49	1
Sense of Belonging (family, friends)	4	9	8	15	36	1
Giving	2				2	Subsidiary to theme1
Emotional comfort/ security	8	22	11	15	56	1
Physical safety, contact, comfort and security	8	7	4	2	21	1
	46	67	47	66	227	Total T1
Theme 2. Sense of self /Developing Competence	4	11	4	2	21	2
Animism			2		2	Subsidiary to theme 2
Play	5	3	5	5	18	2
Discovery & exploration		1	3		4	Subsidiary to theme 2
Sense of self	3	2	5	3	13	2
gender identity	1	1			2	Subsidiary to theme 2
Self-reliance	2				2	Subsidiary to theme 2
	15	18	19	10	62	Total T2
Theme 3: Outdoor World	6	4	9	2	21	3
Sense of freedom			1		1	Subsidiary to theme 3
Nature/ Natural world	5	6	5	1	17	3
Awe and wonder			1		1	Subsidiary to theme 3
	11	10	16	3	40	Total T3
Others: Subsidiary or sub themes						
Anticipation/ excitement	1		2		3	Subsidiary to theme 1
Imagination/Fiction	1				1	Subsidiary to theme 2
Humour	3	1			4	1
Fun	3	2		1	6	1
Enjoyment		1			1	Subsidiary all
Happiness	6	4	5	5	20	All
Laughter	3	3			6	1,2
Food (favourite, healthy, treats)	1	3			4	Subsidiary theme 1
	18	14	7	6	45	Subsidiary / sub themes

Key Themes

- 1. Key relationships:** 1.1 Key persons (this includes pets); 1.2 Physical safety and Emotional security; 1.3. Family activities and feelings of belonging.
- 2. Sense of self:** 2.1 Having a sense of Self; 2.2 Developing Competence; 2.3 Play
- 3. Outdoor world:** 3.1 Being outdoors; 3.2Enjoying nature and the natural world