DOCTORAL THESIS

Students' Reasoning about Learning and Well-Being in School

On the Epistemic Privilege of Swedish Early Adolescent Students

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Education

LULEÅ UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

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[Elevers resonemang om lärande och välbefinnande i skolan: Om svenska yngre ungdomars epistemiska privilegium]

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ABSTRACT

The recent emphasis on performance in standardized testing of Swedish students is visible in reports from both national and international agencies. According to the reports, there has been a steep decline in the internationally measured performance of Swedish students in school since the 1990s. In fact, the performance of Swedish students in the *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA) has declined more dramatically than any other OECD country in the last decade. This has influenced a national debate about factors promoting knowledge acquisition. Alongside the drop in performance, young Swedish people's mental problems have increased since the 1990s. The impact of one's well-being on performance has been widely acknowledged in previous research, and two explicit targets in both current and previous Swedish national curriculum for the compulsory school are learning and well-being. Meanwhile, the importance of encouraging early adolescents' (10–14 years) participation in improving their own standards is acknowledged in several recent reports from influential non-governmental organizations such as the WHO and UNICEF. However, advancing students' development requires a keen understanding of their current situation, something impeded by the fact that data on early adolescents is relatively scarce. Furthermore, a large amount of previous research has been focused on risk factors related to illness in children, rather than factors promoting well-being.

The aim of this thesis is to explore early adolescent students' reasoning about learning and well-being in school. A qualitative design with open-ended writing tasks and interview questions was constructed in order to facilitate the incorporation of students' reasoning about learning and well-being into the research, in accordance with the study's salutogenic point of departure and the specific standpoint epistemology that I propose and use in the thesis.

The empirical data includes (1) written reflections by 200 students in grades 5–9 from 11 classes in four different schools (rural and urban), which were part of the Swedish compulsory school system and which were located in two municipalities in the northern part of Sweden, and (2) interviews with 24 students, from 12 to 15 years old, from two municipally run schools, which were also part of the compulsory school program in northern Sweden. Four sub-studies were conducted and presented in four journal articles. The data in sub-studies I, II, and IV consisted of the written reflections described above, while the data in sub-study III consisted of the interviews described above.

The first sub-study concerned early adolescent students' previous positive experiences and indicated that the students found aspects both within and beyond the classroom relevant for having a good time in school. In more detail, the students' positive experiences concerned (i) interaction with teachers, (ii) freedom of choice

regarding work and workmates, (iii) the atmosphere for discussions, (iv) school subjects and success, (v) learning processes in outings, (vi) friends, and (vii) primary (basic) needs. The results show a perceived complex relation between learning and well-being in school, which may well be studied further in future research.

The second sub-study investigated students' preferred states of affairs. The students emphasized a variety of views of what kind of structures, content, actions and attitudes may have a positive impact on the learning environment in school. The various reflections provided by the students were understood as falling under four themes: (i) influencing educational settings; (ii) striving for reciprocity; (iii) managing time struggles; and (iv) satisfying well-being needs. Besides providing perceived opportunities for change in school concurring with previous research, the results also point towards great variety and certain inconsistencies in the students' perceptions about factors promoting learning.

In the third sub-study, the interview data was analyzed using a distinction between decision methods and criteria of rightness, which has rarely been used in empirical research. Six forms of variety in the students' moral reasoning were found, denoted as follows: (i) interpersonal variety in decision method dimension, (ii) intrapersonal variety in decision method dimension, (iii) interpersonal variety in criterion of rightness dimension, (iv) intrapersonal variety in criterion of rightness dimension, (v) interpersonal variety between the two dimensions, and (vi) intrapersonal variety between the two dimensions. The use of the distinction between decision methods and criteria of rightness enabled a nuanced understanding of varieties in students' moral reasoning, and may be useful in large-scale studies, for example, to explore the rate of occurrence of each respective form of variety. Future research could also examine the potential context dependence of the different forms of varieties.

In the fourth sub-study, five perceived bidirectional crossovers of subjective well-being (i.e., perceived two-way transmissions between happiness and other aspects within the school domain) were noted in the students' written reflections. These were: (i) happiness and learning, (ii) happiness and school engagement, (iii) happiness and appreciation of subjects or lesson content, (iv) happiness and others' happiness, and (v) happiness and prosocial behavior. Besides providing novel hypotheses about bidirectional crossovers of subjective well-being, this sub-study supplied a systematic framework for interpreting qualitative outputs and provided conceptual as well as analytical direction for future research about happiness in education. I provide a definition of the formal expression "bidirectional crossovers" of subjective well-being, which may provide analytic categories for future research, while the more informal expression "circles of happiness" could be used in education, allowing teachers and students to conceptualize everyday events in the classroom.

In the final parts of this thesis, students' reasoning about the conditions for and effects of learning and well-being in school in all the four sub-studies are compared

with previous empirical research through the use of established and novel definitions and theory. The comparison shows considerable correspondence between the students' reasoning and previous research, providing evidence to the effect that Swedish early adolescent students' reasoning is trustworthy regarding the conditions for and effects of learning and well-being in school. There are also novel research-generating hypotheses formulated directly based on the students' reasoning. The trustworthiness and novelty of the students' reasoning about the conditions and effects of learning and well-being in school provides evidence for an epistemic privilege for the students participating in this study. This constitutes a starting point for future research in which the claims about epistemic privilege in the standpoint epistemology proposed here can be further tested for Swedish early adolescent students in general.

KEYWORDS: education, epistemic privilege, happiness, learning, moral reasoning, standpoint epistemology, well-being

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ARTICLES INCLUDED IN THE THESIS

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II. Backman, Y., Alerby, E., Bergmark, U., Gardelli, Å., Hertting, K., Kostenius, C. & Öhrling, K. (2012a). Improving the School Environment from a Student Perspective: Tensions and opportunities. *Education Inquiry, 3*(1), 19–35.

III. Backman, Y. & Gardelli, V. (2015). Six forms of variety in students' moral reasoning: an age-old distinction enabling new methods and findings. *Ethics and Education*, *10*(2), 227–240.

IV. Backman, Y. (2015). Circles of Happiness: Students' perceptions of bidirectional crossovers of subjective well-being. *Journal of Happiness Studies*. First online: 09 July 2015. DOI: 10.1007/s10902-015-9658-0

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INTRODUCTION

The recent emphasis on performance in standardized testing of Swedish compulsory school students is visible in reports from both national and international agencies (OECD, 2015; Swedish National Agency for Education, 2009). Swedish students performed well in school in international comparisons in the beginning of the 1990s (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2009). However, since then, the internationally measured performance of Swedish students has declined (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2009), and is now low compared to many other OECD countries (OECD, 2015). Both achievement and school engagement have decreased over the last decade, with large numbers of low performers and few high performers in all domains of the *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA) (OECD, 2015). According to OECD, no other country participating in PISA experienced a steeper decline over the past decade than Sweden, and this trend has influenced the national educational debate to a large extent, resulting in a broad consensus on the need for change in Swedish schools. Factors that might have influenced the decline have become a central issue in the debate (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2009).

It has been widely acknowledged in previous research and reports that well-being has impact on performance (Helliwell, Layard & Sachs, 2012; 2013; WHO, 1997; 2014), and well-being is itself also an explicit target in the Swedish national curriculum for the compulsory school (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011). Such a target is in line with well-being goals set by several international agencies such as UNESCO, UNICEF, and the WHO (WHO, 1997). The WHO also emphasizes the two-way relationship between positive learning environments and well-being and states that well-being exerts a powerful impact on the ability to learn, and declares regular school attendance to be one of the essential means of improving well-being. Moreover, research on well-being and both its causes and effects has increased drastically recently (see, e.g., Helliwell et al., 2012; 2013). However, well-being is only included as a student *outcome* in analyses of factors related to the steep decline of Swedish student performance, and not as a potential mediator or cause of such a decline (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2009). Nevertheless, alongside the drop in performance, young Swedish people's mental problems have increased since the 1990s (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2009), while it should be noted that the data on Swedish students' well-being is partly heteronomous (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2009).

Considering student well-being from a global perspective, UNICEF (2011) notes that, among the world's 1.2 billion adolescents (defined as individuals 10–19 years old), depression is the single largest contributor to disease in later adolescence and

mental disorders such as depression and self-destructive behaviors have increased globally in the last 20–30 years. Early adolescence (10–14 years) is an age of bodily and mental change, and about half of all lifetime mental disorders in the world begin before age 15 (Helliwell et al., 2013; UNICEF, 2011). While Sweden is a leading country and considered a positive example in surveys of nationwide happiness (Helliwell et al., 2013) and child well-being (Adamson, 2007), it has been noted that the mental well-being among Swedish early adolescents decreases during the period of lower secondary school (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2011; Swedish National Agency for Education, 2009).

For many regions in most of the world's countries, more than 90% of early adolescents are enrolled in lower secondary education (Patton et al., 2012), which makes school an opportunity-rich arena for research on and interventions for student well-being. In Sweden, the lower secondary school gross enrollment ratio (i.e., the number of children enrolled in lower secondary school, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the total number of children of official lower secondary school age) for the years 2008–2011 is 97% (UNICEF, 2013). It is widely acknowledged that the educational arena is both important for, and benefits from, promoting student health, a notion defined by the World Health Organization as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (WHO, 1946, p. 100). When "well-being" in turn is understood as "what is 'good for'" people (Crisp, 2014, #1.1), the broad concept of health is narrowed down to what is good for people in the physical, mental, and social domains. For each of these domains, there have been plenty of previous studies suggesting effects on achievement in education. Furthermore, according to the Swedish National Agency for Education (2011), promoting both learning and well-being are considered central tasks for Swedish schools, which indicates relevance for studying conditions for both of these targets.

Moreover, in a wide-ranging report about subjective well-being (happiness), the existence of a dynamic relationship between subjective well-being and other important aspects of life with effects running in both directions was observed (Helliwell et al., 2013). However, such theories and empirical evidence are barely touched upon in previous research and lack precise elaboration in different scientific fields. The field of positive psychology is rapidly expanding (Bailey, 2009) and much recent attention has been paid to subjective well-being and its general causes, global state descriptions, and quantitative measures (e.g., Helliwell et al., 2012; 2013). Considering the explicated relevance of student well-being in the school domain, more specific information about both conditions for and effects of well-being in education is needed, which can guide teachers' decisions and the distribution of resources in practice.

While adolescence has been described as an "age of opportunity" (UNICEF, 2011, p. 10), this part of the population seldom comes first on the international development agenda (UNICEF, 2011). This contrasts to the fact that health interventions are noted to be especially important during this age because of the evident influence it has on the rest of the lives of the persons and their opportunities to contribute to the society they live in (UNICEF, 2011). Currently, research is needed on the measurement of neglected aspects of adolescent health including mental well-being and protective factors in adolescents' immediate social contexts (e.g., Patton et al., 2012).

According to UNICEF (2011), promoting adolescents' development requires a keen understanding of their current circumstances, and it is imperative that adolescents be encouraged to contribute as integral partners with adults in decision-making, debates, and policymaking on mental well-being. Gillander Gådin, Weiner, and Ahlgren (2009) found that students in grades 1–6 suggested health-promoting changes similar to ones that members of a health committee proposed when the students participated in a health education intervention. The WHO (2014) notes that schools can play particularly important roles in protecting adolescents from a range of health-compromising behaviors and conditions, and as noted above, each of the physical, mental, and socials domains of well-being constituting health has an effect on student achievement in school. However, more specific aspects of student well-being that are perceived by students to benefit their learning remain to be explored.

While taking children's views into consideration in research on their well-being in both qualitative and quantitative research (Awartani, Whitman & Gordon, 2008; Bradshaw, Keung, Rees & Goswami, 2011) and in recent educational theory in the field (Noddings, 2003) has been emphasized, adolescents' voices are rarely heeded, which is in stark contrast to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 2011).

Adolescents are in a socially disadvantageous situation in several respects, such as not being allowed to work as researchers (Hood, Mayall & Oliver, 1999). Their being legally minors with limited rights leads organizations such as the WHO (2014) to conclude that their participation as a force for their own health and for the health of their families and communities needs to be advocated and facilitated. This is in line with basic ideas in standpoint epistemology, which prescribes paying scientific attention to the underprivileged and to attempt to understand the world from their perspectives (Grasswick, 2013). However, employing methods in research on children's well-being that are similar to those used on adults leaves out important data about the quality of students' present experience of happiness (Noddings, 2003). Noddings argues that "we need to ask where children find happiness in present experience and also how best to prepare them for future happiness" (Noddings, 2003, p. 29). Such a statement accords well with a salutogenic model for guiding health promotion, emphasizing the importance of paying attention to

"salutary factors," i.e., factors which "actively promote health, rather than just being low on risk factors" (Antonovsky, 1996, p. 14). Much previous research has been particularly focused on risk factors related to mental illness in children, rather than on what promotes health in a positive sense (Warne, 2013). Hence, it is relevant to study early adolescent students' own reasoning about learning and well-being in school from a salutogenic perspective and with methods adapted to the age group.

Aim and research questions

In the previous section, it was established that it is important to study early adolescent students' reasoning about learning and well-being in school from a salutogenic perspective in order to give early adolescent students participatory opportunities, as well as to allow the research community to arrive at more knowledge about conditions for and effects of learning and well-being in school. However, whether it is possible to arrive at such knowledge through early adolescent students' reasoning, depends on the trustworthiness and novelty of their reasoning, which in turn depends on both its consistency and how well their reasoning corresponds to previous research (i.e., two factors that determine its trustworthiness), as well as whether there can be new research-generating and relevant hypotheses formulated directly based on their reasoning (i.e., a factor that determines its novelty). Hence, it is relevant to study, on the one hand, early adolescent students' reasoning about the conditions for and effects of learning and well-being in school, and, on the other hand, the variety in content of such reasoning, in order to determine consistency.

The aim of this thesis was to explore early adolescent students' reasoning about learning and well-being in school. To fulfill this aim, the following three research questions were asked:

1. What conditions do early adolescent students find conducive to learning and to well-being in school?
2. What effects do early adolescent students consider learning and well-being to have in school?
3. What forms of variety are there in early adolescent students' reasoning about learning and well-being?

Each sub-study (I–IV)—presented in Articles I–IV—is used to answer each research question (1–3). The answering of each research question is done explicitly in the section "Results and discussion," where the students' reasoning is then also discussed with reference to its trustworthiness and novelty.

BACKGROUND

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), the reliability of a research study partly depends on the research's connectedness to previous theory and how clearly specified the basic paradigms and analytic constructs are. In this section, some basic terms are defined, and in the subsequent sections of the Background, selected empirical background theory is described.

Definitions and general remarks

Education, learning and knowledge

In order to understand some of the distinct ways this thesis aims to contribute to the field of education, one influential analysis of the concept of education provided by Hirst and Peters (1970) and Peters (1973) is used as a point of departure. According to this definition, a person has been educated if and only if:

(i) the person has been changed for the better,
(ii) this change has involved
    a. the acquisition of knowledge,
    b. the acquisition of intellectual skills, and
    c. the development of understanding, and
(iii) the person has come to care for, or be committed to, the domains of knowledge and skill into which he or she has been initiated.

According to Phillips and Siegel (2015), to whom I owe most elements of the above representation of Hirst and Peters' analysis (Hirst & Peters, 1970; Peters, 1973), this analysis is one of the most influential products of analytic philosophy of education, and attempted to reflect normal language usage. When this thesis is considered in relation to this analysis of education, one hope of mine is to contribute knowledge about the conditions for furthering education in certain ways presented in this analysis, that is, knowledge about factors promoting, for instance, knowledge acquisition. Also in the Swedish educational context, both of the conditions (ii) and (iii) are emphasized in the national curriculum for the compulsory school (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011). This is evident in the following quotations, where the students' knowledge acquisition and development of intellectual skills (see condition (ii) above) as well as their development of positive attitudes towards learning (see condition (iii) above) are considered responsibilities in school:

> The school should take responsibility for ensuring that pupils acquire and develop the knowledge that is necessary for each individual and member of society. This will also provide a basis for further education. The school should support the harmonious development of the pupils. A sense of exploration, curiosity and desire to learn should form the foundations for school activities. […] Teachers should endeavour in their teaching to balance and integrate knowledge in its various forms. (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011, p. 15)

In common language usage, knowledge is considered to be dividable into three different forms: *propositional* knowledge, *acquaintance* knowledge, and *practical* knowledge. Horsthemke (2004) describes this matter in the following way:

> In everyday language use, we distinguish between three kinds of knowledge. In common understanding, 'knowledge' includes knowledge of a person, place or thing (knowledge by acquaintance), knowledge how (practical knowledge or skill) and knowledge that (factual or propositional knowledge). (Horsthemke, 2004, p. 582)

All three kinds of knowledge are acquired in educational contexts today, while propositional knowledge has been mostly elaborated theoretically, and is considered very relevant in most school subjects. The most commonly known analysis of propositional knowledge was given already by Plato, according to which a person S knows a proposition *p* if and only if (i) *p* is true, (ii) S believes that *p*, and (iii) S is justified in believing that *p* (Gettier, 1963). In other words, knowledge is considered to be true, justified belief. Further on, I will call this the "classical analysis." This analysis was considered intuitively valid for more than two thousand years, and often remains so besides some minor changes due to certain criticisms most famously provided by Gettier (1963). In this thesis, I will just settle with using "knowledge" as referring to a classical analysis. There is neither sufficient space nor relevance of specifying such a definition further.

When the word "learning" is used, this attempts to (not exclusively) denote knowledge acquisition, in line with the analysis of education above—assuming that education necessarily concerns learning in everyday language usage and that each of a–c in (ii) is a form of learning. Such a denotation is also in line with the Swedish National Agency for Education's (2011) conceptual and terminological framework of learning and knowledge. In the curriculum for the compulsory school, the following is stated: "The task of the school is to promote learning by stimulating the individual to acquire and develop knowledge and values" (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011, p. 11). Hence, knowledge acquisition is considered closely related to learning. This quotation concurs with writings in the two previous national curricula for the compulsory school (Skolöverstyrelsen, 1980; Swedish National Agency for Education, 2006), showing a consistency in the conceptual and

terminological level regarding learning and knowledge in national curricula. Thus, my interpretations of the words are in line with common usage in the educational domain.

Finally, in this thesis, the relationship between social factors and learning is considered an issue open for empirical investigation. Social factors are thus not considered a *necessary* part of learning, but my understanding of the relationship between social environment and learning is dependent on the empirical evidence of the relationship provided by previous and present research and educational practice. This position allows for knowledge acquisition to take place during, for instance, individual reflection or an individual's interaction with a non-social environment, such as a lonely walk in the forest. However, as is shown below in "Conditions for an efficient learning environment," previous empirical research indicates strong relationships in which social well-being is conducive to learning. Hence, empirically founded theories about social factors' promotion of learning presented in this thesis remain compatible with, for instance, Wenger's (1998) concept of learning which seems to presuppose social factors' influence on meaning making.

Health, well-being and happiness

My initial work with this thesis fell within the broader context of the Swedish research project *"School stinks" … or? Giving voice to children's and youths' experiences of psychosocial health in their learning community*, which aimed to explore students' perceptions of the psychosocial environment in school and to study aspects perceived to have effects on the psychosocial environment. The project took as one point of departure the WHO's definition of "health" in terms of well-being: "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (WHO, 1946, p. 100). In my further work with this thesis, peoples' "well-being" was, in turn, understood as "what is 'good for' them" (Crisp, 2014, #1.1), narrowing down the broad concept of health to what is good for people in the physical, mental, and social domains. This interpretation was in line with the formulations in data collection procedures in the research project (asking for student reflections on "good times" in school).

It is common to distinguish between subjective and objective theories or factors of well-being (Bailey, 2009; Crisp, 2014), where subjective theories often are hedonistic or desire fulfillment theories and objective theories often are theories listing some objective factors supposed to constitute people's well-being whether or not particular people experience them as valuable (Bailey, 2009). I adopt a pragmatic fusion and inclusion of both subjective and objective factors in my description of conditions for well-being, so that the relevance of parts of the thesis are sufficiently high for the reader despite the reader's choice of well-being definition.

According to Brülde (2007), it is a rather uncontroversial claim that a person's well-being is to a great extent dependent on how happy she is, even though our well-being may also be determined by other things. In this thesis, happiness is put for practical reasons in the mental domain of well-being (as is psychological and emotional well-being), while it could have joined both the mental and the physical domains at the conceptual level. Happiness, or subjective well-being, is considered a broad category of phenomena (Diener, Suh, Lucas & Smith, 1999). A clarifying trend in recent empirical research on subjective well-being has been to distinguish between two aspects: *emotional* and *cognitive* (Diener, 1984; Helliwell et al., 2012; 2013). The emotional aspect is in turn considered constituted by two different factors—positive affect and negative affect—while the cognitive aspect is considered equivalent to life satisfaction (Helliwell et al., 2013). Methodologically, this division corresponds to plenty of quantitative measurements of perceived instances of a range of positive and negative emotions (emotional reports), and life evaluations (cognitive reports) in previous research (Helliwell et al., 2013). In accordance with the terminological usage in the *World Happiness Report* for the years 2012 and 2013 (Helliwell et al., 2012; 2013), the terms "happiness" and "subjective well-being" were used synonymously in sub-study IV. In *World Happiness Report* for 2012 the expression "subjective well-being" is used to designate "a range of individual self-reports of moods and life assessments," while "happiness" is considered attracting attention more quickly (Helliwell et al., 2012, p. 12).

Conditions for an efficient learning environment

According to the Swedish National Agency for Education (2011), education in the Swedish school system should promote "the development and learning of all pupils, and a lifelong desire to learn" (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011, p. 9). However, previous research condemned teaching and schooling to a marginal role compared to the overwhelming role played by home and student background (Lovat & Toomey, 2009). According to Lovat and Toomey, recent educational research has uncovered flaws in earlier thinking about the limited role that schools play in effecting change in student achievement. The authors state that these earlier beliefs are now being re-evaluated worldwide. One of the complex contributors to an effective learning environment is good student health, a claim supported by the WHO (2014), which considers it to be in the interest of the education sector for adolescents to be healthy because good health makes them better able to learn and benefit from their years in school. Research supports the idea that good health is conducive to learning in each of the physical, mental, and social domains of well-being, which will be illustrated below.

Physical factors promoting learning

Physical activities and a healthy lifestyle are emphasized in the Swedish national curricula for the compulsory school (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011). However, the WHO (2014) states that fewer than one in every four adolescents meets recommended guidelines for physical activity and that as many as one in every three is obese in some countries. This indicates that there is a long way left to go until the physical well-being of adolescents is sufficiently high to contribute sufficiently to student achievement. According to Quendler (2002), many children today, from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, face increased risk for undernutrition, obesity, heart disease, and other chronic diseases as a consequence of the lack of physical activity and poor nutrition. Furthermore, undernourished and untrained children tend to attain lower scores on standardized test and are more likely to have difficulties concentrating, to become sick, to miss school, and to fall behind in class (Quendler, 2002). Quendler concludes from numerous studies that even moderate undernutrition and a total lack of physical activity can have lasting effects on children's ability to learn and their school performance, while good nutrition and daily physical activity lead to improved scholastic performance, attentiveness, concentration, interest in school, and calmness in class. Moreover, the implementation of breakfast programs with nutritious food is associated with significant improvements in academic functioning among schoolchildren (Quendler, 2002).

Mental factors promoting learning

According to UNICEF (2011), young people's mental health problems present a major public health challenge worldwide. But it is also more positively stated by the same organization that preventive efforts can help forestall the development and progression of mental disorders, and early interventions can limit their severity. While unaddressed mental health problems among adolescents are associated with low educational achievement, young people whose mental health needs are recognized function better socially, perform better in school, and are more likely to develop into well-adjusted and productive adults (UNICEF, 2011).

According to Sznitman, Reisel, and Romer (2011), there is a lack of attention to emotional well-being in education policy discussions, which is particularly problematic in relation to growing evidence indicating that many common early stressors lead to adverse mental well-being outcomes that can interfere with academic achievement. They state that path analyses show that the status of a country's or state's adolescent emotional well-being is a strong predictor of its educational achievement, and that there is also evidence at the individual level that emotional well-being is a predictor of educational outcomes (Sznitman et al., 2011). Their own empirical study supports the

idea that emotional well-being in adolescents is related to average national and state educational achievement scores (Sznitman et al., 2011).

Several researchers and theorists in educational and happiness research support a causal relationship running from happiness to achievement. Noddings (2003) argues from her more than five decades of teaching and mothering that both children and adults learn best when they are happy. In reviewing studies about subjective well-being conditions for workplace productivity, Helliwell et al. (2013) note that the experience of positive feelings is beneficial to workplace success because it promotes workplace productivity, creativity, and cooperation. Mediators emphasized by the authors were motivation for people to succeed at work and to persist with efforts to attain their goals, traits positively influenced by happiness. In general, employees who are high in subjective well-being are more likely to achieve more while at work (Helliwell et al., 2013). Job satisfaction predicts future performance, while performance does not predict future job satisfaction, something supporting a causal relation from job satisfaction to performance and not in the opposite direction (Helliwell et al., 2013).

Other cognitive factors such as quality of reasoning are also, indirectly, relevant for achievement, through its importance for promoting social well-being. This will be described in further detail below under "Conditions for social well-being."

Social factors promoting learning

Antisocial behavior increase dramatically during adolescence (Kuther, 2000), a finding that is complemented by plenty of research studies reporting positive causal relationships running from positive social relationships and traits to achievement. Positive school climates, understood as the quality of teacher-student relations and the general atmosphere, can contribute to success in learning (OECD, 2015). According to the OECD, there is a specific need to encourage a culture of collaboration and peer learning in Sweden in order to enhance student performance. In research reviewed by Hattie and Yates (2013), student achievement was positively influenced by teachers improving their relationships with their students and the method of collaborating with their classes. In general, the authors argue that teachers must demonstrate qualities supporting positive and open communication in order to achieve or maintain an efficient learning environment. According to a large number of studies using student interviews, treating students fairly, with dignity, and with personal respect were teacher qualities expected by students (Hattie & Yates, 2013). There are also studies showing relationships between how students are treated in school and their mental well-being, which in turn influences their performance (Hattie & Yates, 2013).

Furthermore, in research reviewed by Lovat and Toomey (2009), it was found that a sense of care and trust was the paramount teacher quality described by those students

who achieve best at school. According to the authors, while the more predictable measures of demonstrable content knowledge and stimulating pedagogy were as evident as one would expect, they rarely stood alone and appeared to be relative to the greater indicator of student confidence that the teacher was trustworthy and had the students' best interests at heart (Lovat & Toomey, 2009). In their own research and theoretical frameworks for values education, Lovat and Toomey focus the attention of teachers and their systems on a fundamental item of all effective teaching: the teacher's capacity to form relationships of care and trust.

Conditions for well-being

As has become evident in the foregoing sections, previous research strongly suggests that physical, mental, and social well-being factors are important for promoting learning in school. The next issue to turn to is what promotes such well-being factors, i.e. the conditions for well-being.

Conditions for physical well-being

There is plenty of existing literature on the conditions that influence physical well-being. In general, health problems and behaviors that arise during adolescence affect physical development (WHO, 2014). Mental factors seem to have considerable effect on physical well-being. For instance, negative affect can worsen health, even making illness more likely (Helliwell et al., 2013). Depression is the single largest contributor to the global burden of disease for people aged 15–19 (UNICEF, 2011) and the top cause of illness and disability (WHO, 2014). On a more positive side, there is plenty of evidence indicating causal connections going from subjective well-being to physical well-being in people, providing reduced inflammation, improved cardiovascular health, healthier immune and endocrine systems, lowered risk of heart disease, stroke, and susceptibility to infection, and faster speed of recovery, as well as increased survival and longevity (Helliwell et al., 2013). According to Helliwell et al. (2013), links between happiness and physical well-being are not simply relative in nature as they persist in aggregate and cross-national studies, and happiness can therefore influence physical health outcomes for both individual citizens and entire societies.

According to Helliwell et al. (2013), mediators in the causal link running from happiness to physical well-being are practicing good physical health behaviors and having positive social relationships. The authors state that greater happiness can lead to more positive and fulfilling social relationships, which in turn promotes physical well-being. For instance, the experience of prolonged stress can lead to poor physical well-being, while the presence of supportive friends and family can help individuals during such times (Helliwell et al., 2013). In a school context, the social environment or

ethos of the school can contribute positively to physical and mental health (WHO, 2014), something also noted in research reviewed by Hattie and Yates (2013), who reported relationships between social characteristics in school as experienced by students and severe medical symptoms. Moreover, the WHO (2014) maintains that preventing adolescents' deaths from interpersonal violence is a matter of counteracting negative attitudes and harmful actions of peers, besides improving adolescents' knowledge and skills.

Conditions for mental well-being

Most people agree that societies should foster the happiness of their citizens (Helliwell et al., 2012), and the focus lately on what is sometimes called "the Happiness Industry" is according to Bailey (2009, p. 802) obvious in many western countries' governments' recent attention to well-being, emotional literacy, social and interpersonal development, and the like in school curricula. But while mental well-being is an important factor for educational achievement, for instance, the world definitely has a lot more to offer to contribute to the mental well-being of adolescents globally. Mental health problems account for a large proportion of the disease burden among young people in all societies (UNICEF, 2011). As many as half of all mental health disorders start by age 14, but most cases go unrecognized and untreated, with serious consequences for mental health throughout life (WHO, 2014). According to Patton et al. (2012), mental disorders rise sharply during the adolescent years. The WHO (2014) acknowledges mental well-being as an emerging public health priority and notes that mental health problems take a particularly big toll in the second decade of life. The prevalence of mental disorders among adolescents has increased in the past 20–30 years (UNICEF, 2011). Unfortunately, only a few studies have focused on adolescent mental well-being (Sznitman et al., 2011).

According to Helliwell et al. (2013), the public is told, and generally believes, that the key to greater happiness is through greater economic growth. However, the authors state that research evidence consistently shows that other factors are stronger and more consistent predictors of subjective well-being. In general, economic, social, psychological, as well as ethical factors help to account for the differences across individuals and nations in measured life satisfaction (Helliwell et al., 2013). Social factors through educational initiatives could have considerable importance for happiness levels, according to the authors: "[A]fter the baseline has been met, happiness varies more with quality of human relationships than income. Other policy goals should include a strong community with high levels of trust and respect, which government can influence through […] a decent education for all" (Helliwell et al., 2012, p. 10).

According to UNICEF (2011), safeguarding adolescent mental well-being begins with parents, families, schools, and communities. According to Noddings (2003), there is much empirical evidence to back up our intuition that good friendships contribute to happiness. She also notes that the social scientists' belief in general is that companionship is the single greatest factor in producing a subjective sense of well-being. According to Helliwell et al. (2012), about 80% of inter-country differences in subjective well-being can be attributed to the same few variables measuring material, social, and institutional factors, where all of these supporting factors are stronger in the high-ranking countries. For instance, people are much more likely (95% vs. 48%) to have someone to call on in times of trouble, when comparing the top four to the bottom four countries (Helliwell et al., 2012).

Besides social factors' influences on mental well-being, mental factors themselves have positive effects on mental well-being. According to Helliwell et al. (2013), happiness itself has the potential to generate positive snowball effects in society. According to the authors, research shows that people who are happier are likely to bring happiness to those around them, resulting in networks of happier individuals, where happiness extends up to three degrees of separation, and where individuals who are surrounded by happy people are likely to become happier in the future (Helliwell et al., 2013). Also according to Noddings (2003), present happiness is instrumental for future happiness. This is in line with a study by Bredmar (2014), who interviewed 19 primary education teachers about their experiences of work enjoyment in school. One conclusion was that instances of experienced happiness have positive emotional consequences even after an actual event, when the teacher recalls the event.

According to Helliwell et al. (2012), physical well-being is also correlated with happiness, and they determined that it has a large impact on happiness. While mental health problems represent the most important explanatory variable for misery and are thus more important than physical illness (Helliwell et al., 2013), the latter has a significant impact on happiness (Helliwell et al., 2012) and is in turn more important than income or unemployment for adults (Helliwell et al., 2013). Regular physical activity is in turn associated with improved mental well-being, for instance reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression (Ekkekakis, 2015).

Conditions for social well-being

One condition that has evidential influence on different aspects of social well-being is mental well-being. According to Helliwell et al. (2013), happy people are more sociable and experience higher-quality social relationships. In their review of previous research, they note that children who are put in a positive mood in experimental settings showed greater social skills and confidence in social behavior than those not induced with positive moods. The authors found that there is a powerful link between

high subjective well-being and social behavior, such as being a better friend, colleague, neighbor, and citizen, and that frequent positive emotions create a tendency in people to be more sociable. Two major reasons why happiness benefits social relationships are because happiness increases a person's level of sociability and improves the quality of social interactions (Helliwell et al., 2013). Happier people have a larger quantity and better quality of friendships and family relationships (Helliwell et al., 2013). In their review, the authors found that happy participants spent about 25% less time alone and about 70% more time talking when they were with others, where the happy participants moreover engaged in less small talk and more substantive conversations compared to their unhappy peers. In their *World Happiness Report 2013*, the authors conclude:

> In sum, there is substantial evidence connecting positive moods to higher sociability and better quality of social relationships, and the opposite is the case for negative moods and depression. Happier people enjoy the company of others, and find that interacting with people is more rewarding compared to less happy individuals. Others in turn enjoy interacting with happy individuals. Those high in subjective well-being thus have more rewarding and stable social relationships. (Helliwell et al., 2013, p. 69)

While it is apparent that there is evidence for the idea that mental well-being is conducive to social well-being, Patton et al. (2012) argue that few previous reports have thoroughly addressed the measurement of protective factors in the social contexts of child and adolescent development. The authors state that such protective factors are not only important determinants of adolescent health, but that they are also aspects for which evidence concerning prevention often exists. They argue that more comprehensive approaches would include relevant social determinants of health (Patton et al., 2012).

Research about relationships between levels of moral reasoning and behavioral competence indicates that lower levels of moral reasoning in adolescent students predict perceptions of low behavioral competence, which is also associated with engagement in risky activity (Kuther, 2000). Furthermore, higher quality of moral reasoning has been found to correlate with a lower tendency to delinquent behavior in adolescents and to fewer criminal offenses and behaviors (Beerthuizen, Brugman & Basinger, 2013; Palmer, 2003; Raaijmakers, Engels & Van Hoof, 2005). According to Senland and Higgins-d'Alessandro (2013), educating students to develop their moral reasoning is also important in order to "promote mutually rewarding relationships" (Senland & Higgins-d'Alessandro, 2013, p. 209).

Imperatives for studying students' reasoning about learning and well-being

Growing attention is given to the well-being of nations, communities, schools, and individuals, including children (Awartani et al., 2008), a reasonable development if considered in relation to the above referred research about the positive influences on learning in school. According to Adamson (2007), it is even the case that the true measure of a nation's standing is how well it attends to its children, where some of the most important of such well-being factors are considered to be their physical and social well-being as well as their education (re-stated in my well-being terminology). However, Ecclestone (2012) states that a very powerful political and social consensus has emerged in the last decade that we have a crisis of well-being, that it is getting worse, and that governments need to intervene. More and more world leaders are talking about the importance of well-being as a guide for their nations and the world (Helliwell et al., 2013).

In a UNICEF overview of child well-being in rich countries, European countries dominate the top half of the overall league table, with Northern European countries claiming the top four places (Adamson, 2007). Sweden is one of few countries that come close to featuring in the top third of the rankings for all six dimensions of child well-being considered in the report, which are: material well-being, health and safety, education, peer and family relationships, behaviors and risks, and young people's own subjective sense of well-being (Adamson, 2007). Also in regard to measures of subjective well-being in nations' populations reviewed in *World Happiness Report 2013*, Sweden is one of five top countries, along with Denmark, Norway, Switzerland and the Netherlands (Helliwell et al., 2013).

In the Swedish national curriculum for the compulsory school, it is stated that: "Concern for the well-being and development of the individual should permeate all school activity" (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011, p. 9). Similar emphases are given to well-being or physical and psychological health in the both previous national curricula for the compulsory school (Skolöverstyrelsen, 1980; Swedish National Agency for Education, 2006). Hence, well-being is strongly emphasized in important national educational documents throughout (at least) the last 35 years. But as we have seen, well-being in the different domains also promotes learning, which in turn is of course directly targeted in the present curriculum for the compulsory school (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011), along with the two previous curricula for the compulsory school (Skolöverstyrelsen, 1980; Swedish National Agency for Education, 2006). Aiming for student well-being or research about conditions for student well-being is thus not restricted to a particular ethical theory ascribing intrinsic value or the like to the well-being of people. I maintain that

the writings in the curriculum for the compulsory school along with the instrumental value of well-being for learning is sufficient for studying conditions for well-being in Swedish early adolescent students.

Hence, on a general level, for adults and children, Sweden is considered a positive example in different well-being domains. This means that research about conditions for well-being in Sweden has the potential to provide guidance for other nations. However, there is also reason to conduct research about the conditions for well-being in Sweden because of the importance of maintaining already existing positive well-being and learning environments, something that is constantly needed. Unfortunately, young Swedish people's mental problems have increased since the 1990s (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2009), alongside a declination of the performance of Swedish students (OECD, 2015; Swedish National Agency for Education, 2009). Particularly, it has been noted that mental ill health among Swedish early adolescents increases during lower secondary school (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2011; Swedish National Agency for Education, 2009).

In 2009, adolescents formed 18% of the world's population, and adolescent numbers have more than doubled since 1950 (UNICEF, 2011). However, while increasingly many, adolescents are one of the groups that existing health services serve least well (WHO, 2014). One reason for this might be that, for most of human history, it was not widely acknowledged that adolescence is a phase separate from both early childhood and adulthood, requiring special attention and protection (UNICEF, 2011). According to UNICEF, widespread acceptance of the importance of adolescence is relatively recent, with many societies and communities still barely demarcating the line between childhood and adulthood. In these societies, adolescents, and often even younger children, are expected to work, pay their own way, and even bear arms, being regarded as smaller and less developed adults (UNICEF, 2011).

According to Patton et al. (2012), young people are commonly regarded as healthy, leading to few attempts being made to systematically measure their health, despite the fact that adolescence and young adulthood coincide with major changes in health problems and determinants of health in later life. Globally, an estimated 71,000 adolescents commit suicide annually (where suicide is also one of the three leading causes of mortality among people aged 15–35), while up to 40 times as many make suicide attempts (UNICEF, 2011), and several Nordic countries are notable for high rates of youth suicides (Patton et al., 2012).

Adolescence is a key phase of human development (WHO, 2014). The rapid biological and psychosocial changes that take place during one's second decade affect every aspect of adolescent lives, and these changes make adolescence a unique period in life, as well as an important time for laying the foundations of good health in adulthood (WHO, 2014). Health and development during adolescence affect health during the adult years and the health and development of the next generation (WHO,

2014). According to Helliwell et al. (2013), because of the tangible benefits to individuals and societies of moderately high well-being, it is imperative to act in order to "effectively put well-being at the heart of policy and generate the conditions that allow everyone to flourish" (Helliwell et al., 2013, p. 72). The WHO (2014) indicates that schools play particularly important roles in protecting adolescents from a range of health-compromising behaviors and conditions, stating that "[a]mong all the sectors that play critical roles in adolescent health, education is key" (WHO, 2014, p. 12).

According to UNICEF (2011), systematic research on the nature, prevalence, and determinants of mental well-being problems in adolescents will be pivotal to ensuring adolescents' rights to health and development in these settings. However, realizing the rights of adolescents and advancing their development requires a keen understanding of their current circumstances, something impeded by data on early adolescents being relatively scarce, thus denying knowledge of "the most important and crucial period of adolescence" (UNICEF, 2011, p. 71). While there are some comprehensive research initiatives aiming at engaging young people in reshaping their formal and non-formal learning environments so that they become more conducive to their holistic development and well-being (e.g., Awartani et al., 2008), there is a risk that the needs and voices of adolescents may not be given sufficient consideration and that their voices, though heard, may only rarely be heeded (UNICEF, 2011). UNICEF states that, despite the benefits of enabling children to exercise their participation rights, and despite the formal commitment of governments to do so, such principles are not yet being implemented effectively or consistently. Many longstanding practices and attitudes, as well as political and economic barriers, continue to impede adolescents' right to be heard (UNICEF, 2011). According to UNICEF, "[a]dolescence is an age of opportunity for children, and a pivotal time for us to build on their development in the first decade of life, to help them navigate risks and vulnerabilities, and to set them on the path to fulfilling their potential" (UNICEF, 2011, p. 10).

According to the WHO (2014), to ensure that programs and policies meet their needs, adolescents must be heard and must contribute to the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of services. Adolescents themselves should also be encouraged to contribute to debates and policymaking on mental health (UNICEF, 2011). Encouraging participation not only empowers adolescents, it also has numerous benefits for the societies in which they live (UNICEF, 2011). In line with this claim, the WHO states that adolescents are a force for their own health and for the health of their families and communities. They are considered "actors for social change, not simply beneficiaries of social programmes" and their participation needs to be advocated and facilitated, all the more so since many of them are legally minors (WHO, 2014, p. 16).

Yonesawa, Jones & Joselowsky (2009), who have actively worked in encouraging the development of youth engagement and making room for their voices in school

reform across America, argue that future work on youth engagement should move towards a vision that perceives young people as active and critical participants in the creation of educational institutions. They hold that students are an excellent source of information when asked to participate and consider them to be thoughtful contributors to educational change. However, Stoll (2009) states that the notion of student "leadership" is considered to be quite a new concept in the question of whose leadership is important in educational change. Furthermore, Stoll emphasizes the relevance of taking into consideration the capacity of students to be "leaders of their own learning" (Stoll, 2009, p. 122). Similarly, Westling Allodi (2002) argues that children are competent informants and that they have important things to say.

According to Uusitalo-Malmivaara (2012), the study of children's and youths' well-being has lagged behind the study of adults' well-being, and Batcho, Nave & daRin (2011) note the lack of previous research studying what constitutes a happy childhood. Moreover, García and Sikström (2012) argue that standard current psychometric scales of subjective well-being do not provide the sufficient degree of freedom that would allow participants to fully express the complexity of their positive experiences. Similarly, Dias and Menezes (2014) argue that there is a need for more inclusive research methods that allow children to become research partners and to make visible what they feel and think. According to UNICEF (2011), advancing adolescents' development requires keen understandings of their current circumstances, and adolescents should be encouraged to contribute as integral partners with adults in health-related decisions. Occupying a socially disadvantageous situation in several respects, adolescents are not allowed to work as researchers (Hood et al., 1999). While recent research and educational theory in the field underline the importance of taking children's views into consideration to advance knowledge about their health and happiness (Awartani et al., 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2011; Noddings, 2003), adolescents' voices are rarely heeded, counter to the guidelines in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 2011).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section, I present the most relevant theoretical underpinnings for the thesis in total. I begin by outlining the standpoint epistemological approach proposed in this thesis and how it is connected to the imperatives just described along with its relationship to standpoint and social epistemology. I then continue by showing how this standpoint theory is related to a correspondence theory of truth, previous definitional remarks about knowledge and education, and a realist theory about an external world. I then proceed by describing the study objects of the four sub-studies and relating these to already described theory along with a salutogenic approach and overarching assumptions in Searle's (1983) theory about the capacity of speech acts to represent states of affairs.

Standpoint epistemology

According to Grasswick (2013), standpoint epistemology, or standpoint theory, indicates a prescription for paying scientific attention to the underprivileged and to attempt to understand the world from their perspectives. As previously noted, the WHO (2014) and UNICEF (2011) underline the importance of understanding the perspectives of the underprivileged group of early adolescents. Such a standpoint epistemological prescription in combination with these remarks by, e.g., the WHO (2014) and UNICEF (2011) is directly in line with paying considerable attention to early adolescent students' perspectives. However, because standpoint theory is rarely applied in education in the concrete manner that it is in this thesis, some broad theoretical lines are first drawn, before turning to the specific standpoint theory outlined and used in this thesis.

The basic idea of standpoint epistemology is that social position and epistemic position is sometimes closely connected, where some social locations are argued to offer the potential to be more epistemically reliable than others (Grasswick, 2013). While standpoint epistemology has roots other than in feminist epistemology (Bar On, 1993), the former is often considered an important theoretical development in the latter field, where the prominent figure Sandra Harding made a tri-part taxonomy in feminist epistemology, referred to as "*feminist empiricism*, the *feminist standpoint*, and *feminist post-modernism*" (Harding, 1986, p. 24). Feminist standpoint theorists, according to Harding, argue that there are epistemically privileged standpoints on social reality, where a "standpoint" is defined as "a morally and scientifically preferable grounding for our interpretations and explanations of nature and social life" (Harding, 1986, p. 26).

Bar On (1993) provides evidence to the effect that the attribution of epistemic privilege to socially marginalized subjects is not a feminist innovation. In line with this, Wylie (2003) argues that both advocates and critics of standpoint theory disagree about its parentage, but Harding (1986) states at least quite generally that the focus historically lied on systematic power relations and their influence on epistemic perspectives. However, feminist epistemologists were criticized on the basis of focusing only on gender issues, and during the 1980s and 1990s it became apparent that the feminist epistemologists' focus on power relations solely regarding gender issues were incomplete and that other social positions played important parts in the complex frameworks of knowledge production (Grasswick, 2013). Hence, the field of feminist social epistemology developed from a simple focus on issues in women's contributions in knowledge production to a more recent regard for the implication of other social categories for knowledge production and its different qualities, such as its objectivity (see, e.g., Harding, 1996).

The field has subsequently been important for the development of the understanding of the social dimensions of knowing (Goldman, 2010), and is often considered a part of social epistemology (Wylie, 2003), which is often distinguished from sociology of knowledge in the former's attempt to provide normative theories about knowledge production (Goldman, 2010), something that is true also more specifically for standpoint epistemology (Grasswick, 2013). The expression "social epistemology" does not have a very long historical tradition. However, as Goldman (2010) notes, epistemological issues connected to social phenomena (broadly interpreted) can be traced back even to Plato's dialogues and is also, for instance, visible in the classical empiricists' (e.g., Locke's and Hume's) philosophies. In the 1970s, Goldman attempted to divide epistemology into *individual epistemology*, concerning intrapersonal psychological processes of relevance for a person's building knowledge, and *social epistemology*, concerning social conditions, including interaction with others, and social methods' and practices' causal connections to justified belief and true belief. Goldman considers a broad conception of the social as *any interaction between two or more individuals* a good point of departure for social epistemology, and he expects the field of social epistemology to develop further into an interdisciplinary field with empirical input from scientific domains outside philosophy, of which the present thesis is an attempt through the elaborated standpoint epistemological approach presented below.

According to Fricker (1998), there is likely to be social pressure on attributions of credibility to imitate the structures of social power. Fricker terms the state in which that imitation brings about a mismatch between rational authority and credibility, so that the powerful tend to be given mere credibility and/or the powerless tend to be wrongly denied credibility, as a "phenomenon of *epistemic injustice*" (Fricker, 1998, p. 170). According to Goldman (2010), issues of epistemic injustice are issues that social

epistemology should be concerned with. It is open for empirical investigation how certain subdominant standpoints offer epistemic privilege in different scientific fields (Wylie, 2003), and this thesis is an attempt to provide information about such epistemic privilege for Swedish early adolescent students. I have chosen *Swedish* and no other nationality, because of my limited knowledge of the common school conditions (with extensive social implications) in other countries and the nature of the data in this thesis. However, an analogous theory could be applied in the future by other researchers with more knowledge about conditions in other geographical areas. Hence, what I denote by "Swedish early adolescent students" in this thesis, are *students (10–14 years) enrolled in the Swedish compulsory school system*.

According to Harding (2009), standpoint theories are very productive in their applicability in research, a reason for my applying such epistemology in this thesis. As a methodology, it has been disseminated across many research disciplines and is often used to frame research projects (Harding, 2009). However, it has been highly important for standpoint theories to specify their claims, for instance, because they have been criticized for overvaluing the epistemic agency of certain oppressed groups (Bar On, 1993). Hence, a more detailed description of the standpoint epistemological theory adopted in this thesis is provided below.

As previously noted, there are several reasons for taking into account adolescents' considerations about learning and well-being. In a standpoint epistemological perspective, the most important of such reasons would be that this group is epistemically privileged in respects concerning learning and well-being. In this thesis, I propose a specific standpoint theory for Swedish early adolescent students, where the two main ideas about their reasoning, based on their social position, about the conditions and effects of learning and well-being in their school are that it:

(1) corresponds to actual states of affairs, and
(2) provides novel (not tested in previous research) hypotheses.

In other words, (1) is a truth-tracking condition for the students' epistemic privilege, while (2) is a novelty condition. In the rest of the sections below here in the super section "Theoretical framework," it is shown how (1) is connected with the underlying underpinnings of the thesis regarding, for instance, a correspondence theory of truth and realism about an external world.

According to Anderson (2015), the following details (the italicized parts in (i)–(vii) below) should be provided for a specific standpoint theory. Below, I present an attempt to give sufficient, though indeed not exhaustive, details about an epistemic privilege of Swedish early adolescent students concerning the conditions and effects of learning and well-being in their school:

(i) *the social location of the privileged perspective.* It goes without saying that the general group of Swedish early adolescent students have diverse socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds, and are thus not unified in such respects. However, they have certain common conditions with extensive social implications, such as limited legal rights (e.g., not being allowed to vote in parliamentary elections), certain duties (e.g., school attendance), and being participants in practices with certain power relationships (e.g., student-teacher relationships). Early adolescent students can be considered marginalized in society in respects corresponding to some of their limited legal rights.

(ii) *the scope of its privilege—what questions or subject matters it can claim a privilege over.* The scope of the group's privilege is conditions for and effects of Swedish early adolescent students' learning and well-being in school.

(iii) *the aspect of the social location that generates superior knowledge—for example, social role, or subjective identity.* The conditions specified in (i) entail a certain formal social role (e.g., being under the authority of teachers and society, while at the same time being obstructed from equal societal participation as adults) and distinguish this group of people from others. Their experiences are thus special in relation to others', and comprehension of a first-person perspective of the conditions for and effects of learning and well-being in the targeted group is impeded for a non-student who does not possess the same formal properties as a Swedish early adolescent student.

(iv) *the ground of its privilege—what it is about that aspect that justifies a claim to privilege.* Swedish early adolescent students have a first-person perspective of the environment under consideration as well as everyday experiences of when and why their learning and well-being occurs, and what direct effects their learning and well-being provide. Hence, the type of perspective as well as the continuity and amount of experiences warrants the group's privilege. The first-person perspective and personal experiences also facilitate more detailed formulations of conditions for and effects of their learning and well-being.

(v) *the type of epistemic superiority it claims—for example, greater accuracy, or greater ability to represent fundamental truths.* As previously noted, the two main ideas about the type of superiority of their reasoning (based on their social position) about conditions and effects of learning and well-being in their school are that it (1) corresponds to actual states of affairs, and (2) provides novel (not tested in previous research) hypotheses. If (1) is true for the totality of the students' reasoning, it speaks to a very large extent in favor of the trustworthiness of the students reasoning, and if (2) is also true, it speaks in favor of applying the novel hypotheses in future research. If both (1) and

(2) are false, it speaks to a very large extent in disfavor of taking the students' reasoning into account in research for the reason of determining actual states of affairs (there could, however, be other reasons for having students participating in research which are not elaborated here). If (1) is true but (2) is false, it speaks in favor of the trustworthiness of the students reasoning, and it would still be appropriate to search for novel hypotheses in other similar data than in this thesis, since the selection of participants here is not representative for the whole country's early adolescent students. Finally, if (1) is false and (2) is true, it speaks in disfavor of the trustworthiness of the students' reasoning, which in turn would speak in disfavor of testing the novel hypotheses in future research. It could thus be noted that the truth of (1) is necessary for the relevance of (2).

In the "Results and discussion" section of this thesis, I attempt to lay grounds for determining the truth-value of (1) and (2) for the data in this thesis, through comparing their reasoning with previous research (presupposing that previous research corresponds to actual states of affairs) and consider inconsistencies in their reasoning. (If there are logical inconsistencies, their reasoning does not in total concur with actual states of affairs.) If their reasoning in total corresponds to previous research and are free of inconsistencies, this speaks to a large extent for the truth of (1) and thus also for the trustworthiness of the students' reasoning. It could, however, already here be noted that to what extent the students' reasoning corresponds with previous research, what amount of inconsistencies there are in their reasoning, and the novelty of the students' reasoning come in degrees. Based on the judgment about the correspondence and inconsistency parameters (which lays grounds for determining the truth-value of (1)) along with the judgment about the novelty parameter (which lays grounds for determining the truth-value of (2)), I will in the "Concluding remarks" section draw conclusions upon the truth-value of (1) and (2) along with determining potential epistemic privilege of Swedish early adolescent students.

(vi) *the other perspectives relative to which it claims epistemic superiority*. The claim about epistemic privilege presented here is not relative to other groups. The theory does not claim epistemic superiority over other perspectives, because I have not sufficient data to conclude upon such epistemic superiority. However, the epistemic privilege claimed is absolute, which here means that the students (given the truth of (1) and (2) above) are likely to contribute to the research community's acquiring of new knowledge through being allowed to be research informants under fitting circumstances, and that their views as a consequence of this should be heard by the research community.

It could of course still be the case that other groups, for instance, the global community of researchers studying the conditions for and effects of students' learning and well-being, overall produces more knowledge about the conditions and effects of learning and well-being for Swedish early adolescent students because of its access to a plethora of previous empirical research studies, well-defined expressions, and operationalized concepts. Indeed, such an idea is compatible with the above claims (1) and (2).

(vii) *modes of access to that perspective (is occupying the social location necessary or sufficient for getting access to the perspective?).* The social location as understood and described in (i) is a necessary condition for being part of the group (being a Swedish early adolescent student).

Knowledge, truth and realism

As noted, the standpoint theory presented above claims that Swedish early adolescent students have reasoning based on their social position about the conditions and effects of learning and well-being in their school that (1) corresponds to actual states of affairs and (2) provide novel hypotheses. If these two claims are correct, the students are likely to be important research subjects that, under fitting research methodological circumstances, can provide the research community with true and novel information about the subject matter. Such information increases the probability for the research community to acquire new scientific knowledge, e.g., by testing novel hypotheses in future research studies. Through such testing, it would be possible to conclude upon the correspondence between the students' novel assertions and actual states of affairs, and thus also upon the truth or falsity of the assertions. In my view, further research increases the probability of acquiring scientific propositional knowledge about the assertions, because research procedures amount to rigid explorations of the correspondence of statements to actual states of affairs.

In the "Background" of this thesis, I described a commitment about a so-called "classical analysis of knowledge". In line with this, I would, in Goldman's terminology (Goldman, 2010), commit to a classical approach to social epistemology. Classical epistemology has been concerned with justification, rationality, and the pursuit of truth, in accordance with the classical analysis of knowledge (Goldman, 2010). Social epistemologists adopting a "classical" epistemology (Goldman, 2010, #2.1) or a "traditional" epistemology (Anderson, 1995, p. 51), including feminist epistemologists such as Anderson (1995), attempt to provide a social angle to the pursuit of justified belief or true belief. Such approaches do indeed not imply any disconnection from the social identities of the participants in epistemic practices (Fricker, 1998). Hence, feminist social epistemologists' critique of analytic epistemologies on the basis of them

being more concerned with the general conditions of knowledge than specific methodologies and activities of knowledge production are at least partly misguided (Fricker, 1998). Another criticism is that there is individualism inherent in dominant epistemic theories. This critique builds on an assumption that traditional and modern epistemic theory takes for granted that the knowing individual is generic or interchangeable and self-sufficient, what has been called "the atomistic model of knowers." A general idea in this critique is that assuming such properties for knowers leads to an exclusion of research about the knowledge production dependent on specific groups' specific experiences. A result was feminist epistemologies' development of the concepts of *situated knowers* and *differentiated knowers*. However, atomist epistemologists can also acknowledge that different experiences lead to different knowledge, and the question seems rather to be about research interest, i.e., what kind of epistemological questions that are found relevant to pursue (Grasswick, 2013).

Goldman (2010) states that contemporary epistemology no longer confines to the rigid introspective epistemic perspective of Descartes. However, he notes that contemporary epistemology still aligns with another aspect of Descartes' epistemology, namely the pursuit of truth, which is in accordance with a classical analysis of knowledge adopted by me. Among the most widespread types of theories about the nature of truth are correspondence theories, which are neo-classical theories with roots considered developing during the beginning of the 20th century (Glanzberg, 2014), but which can be traced back even to Aristotle (Blackburn & Simmons, 1999). The basic idea of a correspondence theory is that "what we believe or say is true if it corresponds to the way things actually are," and a correspondence theory is an ontological theory (Glanzberg, 2014, #1.1.1). Hence, the correspondence theory of truth defines truth in relation to how things actually are, which calls for a theory about the nature of the world.

In common terminological usage, the dispute between realists and non-realists concerns "[t]he standard opposition between those who affirm, and those who deny, the real existence of some kind of thing, or some kind of fact or state of affairs (Blackburn, 2008, p. 308). It is common to be a realist selectively about some specific topic, and also to be more or less realistic about some specific subject matter. For instance, one could be a realist about the every day world of macroscopic objects (such as children, adults, houses, or computers) and their properties without accepting realism about aesthetics or moral values. Such a realist position would include two types of aspects: first, a claim about existence (that is, the house or the child exists and they have certain properties), and second, a claim about independence (that is, that the objects and their properties exist independently of people's beliefs, linguistic practices, or conceptual schemes). Such claimed independence is not empirical or causal independence—of course, the realist about macroscopic objects also accepts that the

house has been constructed dependently on both mental (such as intentions about shape and purpose) and physical influence (hand made or machine made) from persons.

I settle here with noting that my position regarding truth follows the above general description of a correspondence theory and that I accept a realist position about an outer (external) world, in line with more than 80% of the graduated philosophers in a large-scale study by Bourget and Chalmers (2014), and about macroscopic objects such as students, schools and teachers. The relevance of these theories is further described in the following sections.

Salutogenic perspective

As the aim of the thesis is to explore early adolescent students' reasoning about learning and well-being in school, the general study object was the thoughts of the participating students. Furthermore, one general point of departure in designing the sub-studies was a salutogenic orientation, emphasizing the importance of paying attention to "salutary factors," i.e., factors that "actively promote health, rather than just being low on risk factors" (Antonovsky, 1996, p. 14). According to Warne (2013), much previous research has been particularly focused on risk factors related to mental illness in children, rather than what promotes and increases the probability of health. According to Bailey (2009), a new commitment has developed in research to focus attention on the sources of certain forms of well-being, thereby going beyond prior emphases on disease and disorder. Antonovsky (1987) recommends trying to "contribute to movement of individual persons for whom [one] is responsible toward the health pole" (Antonovsky, 1987, p. 4), and not merely prevent persons from moving towards the unhealthy pole, which was the preliminary focus of the traditional pathogenic perspective.

In accordance with this orientation, the general study object was divided into previously experienced positive states of affairs and preferred states of affairs. This should here be contrasted with the two kinds of potential study objects being previously experienced *negative* states of affairs and *un-preferred* states of affairs. If these (negative) study objects along with perceived conditions for such negative states of affairs, rather than the positive ones, would have been the actual study objects of the four sub-studies, the contents of this thesis would have cohered with a rather more traditional, pathogenic, point of departure in research about health in school, focusing on preventing unhealthy behavior and other factors negatively influencing student well-being. As the actual study objects were positive, the thesis has the potential to produce knowledge about perceived and actual factors contributing to movement towards the health pole, in line with Antonovsky's (1987) recommendation.

The study object of the four sub-studies was thus divided into previously experienced positive states of affairs (Articles I and IV) and preferred states of affairs (Articles II–IV). Hence, Article I focused only on previous experiences, aiming to describe, reflect upon, and create a deeper understanding of aspects relevant for promoting a positive school environment from a student perspective. For Article II, the aim was to explore students' reflections on what they would do if they were to decide how to make school the best place for learning, and thus concerned only preferred states of affairs. Article III explored students' preferred states of affairs about behavior in school and aimed to find out what forms of inter- or intrapersonal variety in the students' moral reasoning become evident by employing the distinction between decision method and criterion of rightness in the analysis, as well as if the standard social-cognitive domain theory explanations, based on variations in context, account for such potential variations. Finally, the aim of Article IV was to explore students' perceptions of the role of happiness in school, where the study objects were both the students' previous experiences and preferred states of affairs.

Phenomena

If the study objects or methodological procedures of the four sub-studies were considered in relation to a phenomenological terminology (as is partly done in Articles I–II), it could be noted that one established definition of phenomenology is in terms of studies of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view, such as pure descriptions of types of experience just as we find it in our own past experience (Smith, 2013; Zahavi, 2012). Since the study objects of the four sub-studies are second-order studies of thoughts, that is, studies of students' thoughts and not of my own thoughts, a standard phenomenological terminology would not be applicable. But for the moment disregarding the issue of second-order interpretation rather than first-order interpretation, which I will return to below, the sub-studies can be considered to satisfy other conditions for being phenomenological studies in a general interpretation of the expression. In its root meaning, phenomenology is considered the study of phenomena, that is, appearances of things (Smith, 2013). Furthermore, Smith states that in 18th and 19th century epistemology, "phenomena" were used to denote the starting points of building knowledge, and was commonly understood as *whatever we perceive and seek to explain*. Later, phenomena became commonly understood as things as they are given to our consciousness, whether in perception, imagination, thought, or volition (Smith, 2013). Moran (2000) also interprets "phenomenology" along somewhat similar lines. He argues:

> Phenomenology is best understood as emphasizing the attempt to get to the truth of matters, to describe *phenomena*, in the broadest sense as whatever appears in the manner

> in which it appears, that is as it manifests itself to consciousness, to the experiencer. (Moran, 2000, p. 4)

If "phenomenology" is understood in line with this terminology, then the study objects of the four sub-studies—experienced positive states of affairs and preferred states of affairs—could be considered phenomena. Moreover, in Article II, the word "life-world" is used to partly denote the study object of sub-study II, a word that in my conceptual framework refers to the full range of a person's thoughts, perceptions, experiences, and the like, in line with the latter interpretations of "phenomena" described above. In these interpretations of the expressions "phenomena" and "life-world," the study objects of the four sub-studies could be termed "phenomena" or parts of the participating Swedish early adolescent students' "life-worlds."

The previously described acceptance of realism about an outer world and about macroscopic objects such as students makes studying the students and their thoughts reasonable. If the students did not actually exist independently, there would be less relevance in studying their thoughts. Furthermore, as I conceive of it, it is *because* they exist that they have been able to provide actually existing texts about their thoughts or sound waves captured through sound recording, which in turn constitute the raw data underlying all of the four sub-studies. Hence, the acceptance of realism about an outer world and about macroscopic objects facilitates the transmission from studying first-person perspectives to the second-order perspectives of the students, and therefore makes a phenomenological study in the second order sense possible.

A central concept in phenomenology is *intentionality*, a concept elaborated in detail by analytic philosophers such as John Searle and continental philosophers such as Edmund Husserl. According to Searle (1983), sentences, i.e., the sounds that come out of one's mouth or the marks that one makes on paper, are, considered in one way, just objects in the world like any other objects. He states that:

> [Sentences'] capacity to represent is not intrinsic but is derived from the Intentionality of the mind. The Intentionality of mental states, on the other hand, is not derived from some more prior forms of Intentionality but is intrinsic to the states themselves. An agent uses a sentence to make a statement or ask a question. But he does not in that way *use* his beliefs and desires, he simply has them. (Searle, 1983, p. vii)

For Searle (1983), a sentence is a syntactical object on which representational capacities are imposed, while beliefs and desires and other intentional states are not syntactical objects (though they may be and usually are expressed in sentences). He states that beliefs' and desires' representational capacities are not imposed but are intrinsic. All of this is consistent with the fact that language is essentially a social phenomenon and that the forms of intentionality underlying language are social forms (Searle, 1983).

According to Searle (1983), the capacity of speech acts to represent states of affairs in the world is an extension of the more biologically fundamental capacities of the mind (or brain) to relate the organism to the world by way of such mental states as belief and desire, and especially through action and perception. Searle holds that, since speech acts are a type of human action, and since the capacity of speech to represent states of affairs is part of a more general capacity of the mind to relate the organism to the world, any complete account of speech and language requires an account of how the mind relates the organism to reality. As noted, I conceptualize the students' thoughts as experienced and preferred states of affairs, that is, that their statements refer to states in the world. Then, through a realist framework, their statements about actual and preferred states as well as conditions and effects of learning and well-being in school can be compared with previous research about actual relationships between factors of learning and well-being, in order to explore whether the perceived relationships expressed by the students are factual. If they are in line with a significant amount of previous research studies about conditions for and effects of learning and well-being, there is evidence to the effect that their statements are true according to the correspondence theory of truth. Given a classical analysis of knowledge, this would contribute to the claim that the Swedish early adolescent students express knowledge about the subject matter in question. This would speak in further favor of paying scientific attention to the perspectives of the group.

As noted earlier, one hope of mine with this thesis is to contribute to the field of education, and more precisely to contribute knowledge about conditions for furthering education in respects (such as knowledge acquisition) presented in Hirst and Peters' (1970) and Peters' (1973) analysis of education. If it shows that the reasoning of the Swedish early adolescent students participating in the studies presented in this thesis satisfies conditions (1) and (2), this would provide evidence for the potential of Swedish early adolescent students to contribute to acquiring knowledge in the research community of how to further educational practice. Furthermore, on a research methodological level, if Swedish early adolescent students are found epistemically privileged in the described respects, then the research community is provided information about groups of research subjects and research methods relevant for future knowledge acquisition by the research community regarding conditions for knowledge acquisition by the students in school. Hence, if the students satisfy conditions (1) and (2), this thesis contributes with novel information about both conditions for learning or knowledge acquisition (i.e., conditions for furthering education), and how to acquire further knowledge about such conditions (i.e., conditions for the conditions for furthering education).

However, as previously noted, it is also important to consider what would speak against paying scientific attention to the perspectives of the group of Swedish early adolescent students in regard to the conditions and effects of learning and well-being

in their school age. If the group provides contradictory statements, this would speak in disfavor of knowledge claims of the group, since two contradictory statements cannot both be true at the same time, given a correspondence theory of truth and a realist ontology about the subject matter. Varieties in the students' reasoning are therefore of relevance to pay attention to in this thesis (see Research question 3).

METHOD

In this section, I give brief over-viewing accounts of the methods used for data production and processing, alongside related discussions of reliability, validity, and some aspects of research ethics. Further sub-study specific information is to be found in the respective articles. In the Discussion of this thesis, I will also return to some methodological considerations, specifically regarding the external validity (Miles & Huberman, 1994) in the over-arching research study presented in this thesis.

Participants and data production

Written reflections

Written reflections were used as data in three sub-studies (I, II, and IV), presented in Articles I, II, and IV, in order to answer Research questions 1–3. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), in order to increase the reliability in a research study, data should be collected across the range of respondents suggested by the scope and theoretical background of the study. The participants in sub-studies I, II, and IV were two hundred students in grades 5–9 from 11 classes in four different schools (rural and urban). The schools were part of the Swedish compulsory school system and were located in two municipalities in northern Sweden. The same year as the data were collected, that is 2009, the Public Health Agency of Sweden conducted a national mapping of ninth-graders' mood states, presenting open comparisons in 2011 at the national and individual school level (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2011). Examples of questions in that survey include *Think about last week: Did you feel happy?* and *Think about last week: Did you have fun?* The assessments provided data about the number of students in each school who scored among the lowest 10% nationally. Two of the 11 classes participating in sub-studies I, II, and IV comprised ninth-graders from two different schools. In the survey, one of these schools ranked in the upper half and one in the lower half. This accords with an inclusive perspective permeating this thesis and its salutogenic orientation, which directs research "to encompass all persons, wherever they are on the continuum, and to focus on salutary factors" (Antonovsky, 1996, p. 14). According to the Swedish national curriculum for the compulsory school (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011), schools should promote the development and learning of *all* students. The OECD (2015) also notes the Swedish national school system's democratic foundation and its characteristic philosophy that all students have the same right to personal development and learning experiences. Hence, following Antonovsky's (1987) recommendation to "contribute to movement of individual persons for whom [one] is responsible toward the health pole"

(Antonovsky, 1987, p. 4) in the context of the Swedish compulsory schools would include contributing to a positive development of students in schools scoring both higher and lower in the previous national mapping conducted by the Public Health Agency of Sweden (2011).

The empirical data collected during ordinary school activities consisted of the 200 students' written reflections. Open-ended writing tasks were designed to facilitate incorporation of the students' own perspectives into the research, allowing for their participation, in accordance with the recommendations of UNICEF (2011) and the WHO (2014). While designing the data collection procedure, an inclusive perspective was adopted in formulating the writing task in common terms and in giving every student in the participating classes the opportunity to accomplish the writing task. The attempt was to let every student in the participating classes have their voice heard. Uusitalo-Malmivaara (2012) argues that there is a need in research exploring students' perceptions of happiness and its causes to shift the focus to things that are desired but missing. Corresponding to the two timely aspects of present and preferred future positive experiences outlined by Noddings (2003), the students were asked to complete the following sentences (here translated):

1. Now I will tell you about one time when I had a good time in school, it was…
2. If I were to decide how to make school the best place for learning, I would like to…

The study's inclusive perspective (Antonovsky, 1996) permeated the data collection. The writing task was formulated in common terms, and every student in the participating classes was provided an opportunity to accomplish the task.

Article I used all of the data from sentence 1 above and Article II used all of the data from sentence 2, while Article IV used all of the data from sentences 1 and 2. Sub-studies and Articles I, II, and IV thus used data from the same 200 students. The total number of handwritten pages by the students amounted to 353. The quantity of handwritten text differed a lot between the students.

Before the actual data collection took place, the headmasters and the teachers were informed in writing about the purpose of the research study, research ethical principles, potential consequences of the research conducted, and the nature of the data collection. They also participated in meetings separate to the actual data collection, in order to meet the research group. After the teachers had consented orally, we (i.e., the research group in *"School stinks" … or? Giving voice to children's and youths' experiences of psychosocial health in their learning community*.) proceeded to distribute information about the research to the students' parents. The information contained the purpose of the research study, research ethical principles adhered to in

the research study, potential consequences of the research conducted, and the nature of the data collection.

After the obtaining of informed consent, the data collection was scheduled to fit into each participating school class' current schedule. At the minimum, one researcher in the research group orally introduced the students to the writing task. Each such introduction was based on information in writing that the research group had jointly decided to use. This contained information adapted for the age group about the purpose of the research study, the research group, potential consequences of the research conducted, and the way the results would be shared with the public (including information about the anonymity of the students). Often, one or two of the researchers participated during the whole data collection session, and if not, the students' written reflections were put in a non-transparent envelope, after they had completed the writing task, in order to keep secrecy in regard to the teachers at place. The students were provided the information that their written reflections would be anonymous in regard to the teachers before the students started writing.

Since the research conducted had the potential of being informative for developing conditions for learning and well-being in the participating school classes and thereby the potential of contributing to the utility of the participating students, and because of the explicit interest in the research from the teachers and headmasters, we returned to the teachers and headmasters after the data processing with information about the students' perceived conditions for learning and well-being. This information regarded the data in total and did not represent specific school classes' experiences or preferences.

Despite the certain relevance of reporting students' perspectives on their school situation, there are several difficulties connected to research on children's views. One of these is the asymmetric relation between the adult researcher and the young students. As researchers, a presumed right to design a writing task and interpret the students' stories was utilized, while the students had no equal, symmetric opportunity. The problematic consequences of this asymmetric relation was attempted to be reduced by formulating open writing tasks that allowed the students to express their positive experiences in their own words and to an extent that they would find appropriate, an attempt which is in line with the standpoint theoretical claims in this thesis.

Another consideration is the risk of revealing problematic experiences or raising issues that are difficult for students to cope with. However, because the writing task focused on positive experiences, this risk was reduced, and the classroom teachers did not report any problematic consequences.

Interviews

Interviews were used as data in sub-study III, presented in Article III, in order to answer Research questions 1–3. Twenty-four students, aged 12 to 15 years, from two municipally run schools, which were part of the compulsory school program, and located in the northern part of Sweden participated in the study. A qualitative design with open-ended interviews was used to collect data. I conducted five interviews and the co-author (fellow PhD student) conducted 19 interviews. I conducted the five interviews in one of the school classes participating in the research project *"School stinks" … or? Giving voice to children's and youths' experiences of psychosocial health in their learning community*. Hence, the headmaster, class teacher, parents and five students in question received the same information as described above in "Written reflections". The 19 students that were interviewed by the co-author belonged to another municipally run compulsory school in the same municipality, and the data collection procedure followed along lines not differing substantially from the already described above.

The interviews were conducted using interview protocols with general questions such as "How do you think people should behave towards each other in school?", as well as hypothetical moral dilemmas with social content, concerning behavior such as lying and interfering in bullying situations. The description of the dilemmas was followed by supplementary questions concerning what the student thought that a hypothetical student ought to do, and the reasons for that stated position, as well as the meaning of different expressions the student used. The frequency and nature of the supplementary questions were adjusted to aspects of the interview situation, such as how much the students talked, as well as the perceived self-confidence of the interviewed student. The transcriptions totaled 75 pages (12 points, Cambria).

Indeed, the use of hypothetical moral dilemmas in research is not unproblematic. Studies on individuals' moral reasoning that use these kinds of dilemmas run the risk of excluding factors that might be morally relevant in actual situations, such as intuition, intense emotion, and personal risk (Berk, 2008). This is important to have in mind when considering whether the findings are generalizable to the students' total range of reasoning. However, the present qualitative study makes no claims for such generalizability, but rather reaches conclusions on the existence of certain forms and content of moral reasoning. Moreover, the dilemmas were rather realistic, and some students commented that they had experienced similar situations. According to Aspengren (2002), children reason from values such as justice, equality, and empathy, although it is difficult to know if they also act in accordance with their reasoning. More generally, the so-called "moral judgment-moral action gap" has been questioned and discussed more extensively by Williams and Gantt (2012), for instance. However, the students' actions were not of primary interest to the sub-study presented in Article

III, but rather their reasoning about acting and their reasoning about behavior towards each other in school.

Formal research ethical remarks

The sub-studies were approved by the Regional Ethical Review Board in Sweden (Dnr 45-2009 and 760-2010). According to The Act concerning the Ethical Review of Research Involving Humans (2003:460) (Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs, 2003), participation in a research study is voluntary, and the participants are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason why. The law also involves confidentiality, which means that unauthorized persons have no access to the empirical data (cf. Backman et al., 2012a). Information about the study was given to the students and their parents, orally and in writing, and informed consent was obtained.

Data processing

In this sub-section, I describe the common cores, in a general level, in the data processing regarding all the four sub-studies along with brief discussions of reliability and validity issues, while I leave the detailed descriptions of the data processing procedures to the respective articles. The common cores were both the subject of analysis and the method of analysis. The subject of analysis was the thoughts of the participating students, divided into previous positive experiences (Articles I and IV) and preferred states of affairs (Articles II–IV). Turning to the method of analysis, traditional hermeneutical procedures were used, tracing as far back as to Plato and Aquinas (Ramberg & Gjesdal, 2013). Common elements of hermeneutical procedure used in all the four parts studies have been some *hermeneutical circles* (Ramberg & Gjesdal, 2013), such as an *object–object-part circle* and a *context of discovery–context of justification/falsification circle* (cf. Backman, T. Gardelli, V. Gardelli & Persson, 2012). However, the more specific hermeneutical procedures have differed across each of the sub-studies.

In Article I, an inductive hermeneutic method inspired by van Manen (1997) was used in order to describe, reflect upon, and create a deeper understanding of aspects relevant for promoting a positive school environment from the student perspective. In Article II, besides the hermeneutical common core of all the part studies described above, the analysis was inspired by Merleau-Ponty's concept of the intentional bow-arch (Merleau-Ponty, 1996), attempting to explore students' reflections on what they would do if they were to decide how to make school of the best place for learning. In Article III, the age-old distinction between decision method and rightness criterion commonly employed in normative ethics (e.g., Sidgwick, 1907), but rarely used in

empirical research, was used in the analysis, in order to obtain detailed data about students' moral reasoning and provide a nuanced understanding of inter- and intrapersonal variety within the students' moral reasoning. In Article IV, elements from Føllesdal's (1979) theory of hermeneutical procedure as hypothetico-deductive method applied to meaningful material, in combination with the common data-processing procedure of clustering: "the process of inductively forming categories" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 249) were used to explore students' perceptions of the role of happiness in school.

Miles and Huberman (1994) note the distinct possibility of researcher bias in qualitative research and provide certain measures of reliability and validity. Articles I–IV display condensed data through explicit examples of student quotes for each theme, which facilitates other researchers' reanalysis and the reader's check of the conclusions' link with exhibits of condensed data as well as to enable a "vicarious presence" for the reader (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 279). These methodological choices enhance internal validity and confirmability or external reliability, which is in accordance with the recommendations for qualitative studies by Miles and Huberman. Furthermore, internal coherency of the results is considered a measure of a study's internal validity. As noted especially in Article II, the students at some points expressed opposing opinions about how the school could be the best place for learning. However, the themes presented in Article II display the students' views *including* such interpersonal inconsistencies, and do not attempt to present an unequivocal picture of the students' whole range of perspectives. The findings as such, however, should be coherent, which was attempted in all of the articles through extracts of the students' statements in combination with the thematic structures respectively.

Boeije (2002) argues that qualitative research tends to lack clarified analysis description. A related measure of external reliability is whether the reader can follow the actual sequence of how data was collected, processed, condensed/transformed, and displayed for drawing specific conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In Articles III and IV, I aimed to provide detailed and step-by-step information and explicitness in descriptions of the data-processing procedures, something that enhances external reliability (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), whether negative evidence was sought for and competing hypotheses and explanations as well as rival conclusions were considered and correctly dismissed is a question of a research study's external reliability and internal validity. Examples of such a procedure is given in Article III, where rival interpretations of student statements are considered during the data processing procedure and different explanations are considered in some detail in the discussion section. Also in Article IV, alternative hypotheses with alternative interpretations of the student statements about perceived causal roles of happiness than those initially hypothesized were considered during the data processing procedure. When

encountering incorrectly grouped and labeled student statements, either the label was changed to more accurately fit the whole group of statements in the preliminary themes or the instance was excluded from the preliminary theme and the label was reconsidered to accurately fit the remaining student statements.

The connectedness to theory is also a measure of reliability, according to Miles and Huberman (1994). They recommend that basic paradigms and analytic constructs be clearly specified. Certain basic definitions in the fields are used as starting points in the sub-studies, such as the standard definition of "health" (WHO, 1946) and recent definitions of "subjective well-being" (Helliwell et al., 2012; 2013), and scene-setting managerial documents used as starting points are referred to in the articles. In Articles III–IV, I attempted to provide clear descriptions of the analytic constructs. In the final parts of this section, the analytic constructs used in Articles III–IV are re-stated, because of their relevance for the reliability in this thesis and for the reader's understanding of the Discussion.

As previously noted, in Article III, the material was analyzed using the distinction between decision methods and criteria of rightness. The criteria of rightness are principles determining whether a given action is morally correct or not, while the decision methods are general ways of behaving in practical matters (Tännsjö, 1998). For instance, some utilitarians advocate the rightness criterion called "The Principle of Utility," which Bentham described as:

> that principle which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever, according to the tendency which it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question: or, what is the same thing in other words, to promote or to oppose that happiness. (Bentham, 2000, p. 14)

Tännsjö (1998) claims that one should utilize a decision method that corresponds well to one's criterion of rightness. Accordingly, one alleged decision method for utilitarianism is to attempt to maximize expected happiness (Tännsjö, 1998).

Another influential principle of moral rightness, often attributed to Kant, is the categorical imperative: "Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law" (Kant, 1988, p. 268). According to Kant, immorality involves a violation of the categorical imperative, and is thereby irrational. Johnson (2014) has considered this formulation of the categorical imperative to recapitulate a certain procedure for moral reasoning. He describes the first three steps of the procedure, according to his interpretation, as follows:

> First, formulate a maxim that enshrines your reason for acting as you propose. Second, recast that maxim as a universal law of nature governing all rational agents, and so as holding that all must, by natural law, act as you yourself propose to act in these

> circumstances. Third, consider whether your maxim is even conceivable in a world governed by this law of nature. (Johnson, 2014, #5.1)

If a maxim fails to pass the third step, the negation of the maxim is a perfect duty (one that must always be followed).

The term "decision method" is not taken to be restricted to decisions regarding risk, including calculations of consequences, as commonly acknowledged in decision theory (Resnik, 1987). Rather, it can as well include the imperatives to be just, brave, or pragmatic, provided that they are considered applicable to practical matters and hold some (while not necessarily exhaustive) generality. Moreover, the term "criteria of rightness" can refer to principles determining whether a given decision method is morally correct or not, and not only to principles determining the moral status of a certain action. Decision method and rightness criterion are often conceived of (e.g., Sidgwick, 1907; Tännsjö, 1998) as two relevant parts of a moral framework. In Article III and in this thesis more generally, these two parts are denoted as different moral reasoning "dimensions."

In Article IV, terms "subjective well-being" and "happiness" is defined in accordance with relevant theory, as already described in the "Background" of this thesis. Furthermore, in the article, it is noted that happiness in closely related senses has been considered both a means and a desired end in education, and that relationships between happiness and other important aspects of life, such as prosocial spending, with effects running in both directions were observed very recently (Helliwell et al., 2013). Furthermore, a few theories about dynamic relationships (Helliwell et al., 2013) and bidirectional crossovers or spillovers (Rodríguez-Muñoz, Sanz-Vergel, Demerouti & Bakker, 2013) have been put forward, where crossover refers to a transmission within the same domain (e.g., within school) and spillover refers to the transmission between domains (e.g., from work to home) (Rodríguez-Muñoz et al., 2013). Such theories about reciprocal relationships have barely been touched upon in research, which lacks precise elaboration in various scientific domains. In sub-study IV, the concept of bidirectional crossover is utilized in the data processing, where I further previous conceptual remarks by Helliwell et al. (2013) and by Rodríguez-Muñoz et al. (2013) and define a bidirectional crossover between A and B as a relationship within a domain where:

- An instance of type A directly or indirectly promotes an instance of type B, and
- An instance of type B directly or indirectly promotes an instance of type A.

More concretely, if there would be a factual (and not merely perceived) bidirectional crossover of happiness and prosocial spending, then happiness would be both a means

and an end seen in relation to prosocial spending, and prosocial spending would, in turn, be both a means and an end seen in relation to happiness. However, because of the timely aspect of causality, the same instance or token of happiness (or prosocial spending) could not both promote and be promoted by an instance of prosocial spending (or happiness). An instance of happiness would promote an instance of prosocial spending, while the same or another instance of prosocial spending would promote another instance of happiness but not the same instance as the one experienced from the start. Hence, for each actual bidirectional crossover, there must be at least three instances with casual influence or dependence.

Division of labor in the research groups

Articles I–II were written by the whole research group that participated in the research project *"School stinks" … or? Giving voice to children's and youths' experiences of psychosocial health in their learning community*. I took a great responsibility for conducting the sub-studies I–II and I took an active part in all steps of the research procedure:

- formulating the aims of the sub-studies,
- designing the data collection,
- collecting the data,
- processing the data,
- writing the articles, and
- administrating the submissions to and correspondence with the scientific journals

Article III was written by me and a fellow PhD student. Also there, I took an active part in all steps of the research procedure. I also contributed with the majority of the theoretical background and discussion in the article, while my share of the conducting of the interviews was in minority, as described in "Interviews" above.

Sub-study IV and Article IV was conducted respectively written by me as sole researcher and author. The point of departure in that sub-study was the previously collected data from sub-studies I–II.

SUMMARY OF THE ARTICLES

This chapter contains summaries of Articles I–IV.

Article I

In Sweden, it is considered the responsibility of schools to create good learning environments that facilitate knowledge processes and personal growth for students (Swedish Government Proposition, 2001/02, 2009/10; Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011).

Several studies (Berntsson, Köhler & Gustavsson, 2001; Borup, 1998; Marklund, 1997) reveal that psychosomatic complaints such as headaches, stomach pains, and feelings of depression are increasing among students even though many view themselves as healthy. The results by Clausson, Petersson, and Berg (2003) indicate that despite the fact that most students in Sweden are physically healthy, many show psychosocial problems, both in psychosomatic terms and in terms of having problems with low self-esteem. Students seemed to have a great need to talk to and trust in someone. According to Carlgren and Klette (2008), teachers report that social tasks take more and more of their time.

Drawing on previous research, it is important to proceed and study students' perceptions and experiences through methods that allow greater space for students' expression of their own experiences of school. Further inquiry is needed to elucidate positive experiences in learning environments (Linder & Breinhild Mortensen, 2008; Reed, 2007), and therefore, we have chosen to focus on students' positive experiences.

The aim of the study was to describe, reflect upon, and create a deeper understanding of aspects relevant for promoting a positive school environment from a student perspective.

The empirical material in this study consists of written stories from 200 students, grades 5–9, in 11 classes in 4 different schools in the Swedish compulsory school system. The schools are located in two municipalities in northern Sweden. Each student in the classes that participated was given a task to continue an open letter with a starting sentence in Swedish, corresponding to the following English sentence: "Now I will tell you about one time when I had a good time in school; it was...."

The data was analyzed using a hermeneutic phenomenological method inspired by van Manen (1997). When we analyzed the data, we found that the content of the students' written stories was diverse and that the students thus described different kinds of positive experiences that they considered important for a positive school environment. Moreover, the students discussed formal and informal conditions and

considered social as well as structural circumstances important for having a good time in school. The results indicated that the students found aspects within and beyond the classroom relevant for a positive school environment. In more detail, the students' experiences concerned:

Interaction with teachers. The students stated that teachers are important persons who function as facilitators for learning in the classroom. They articulated a need to be seen by their teachers and get help with questions concerning the school subject when needed. The manner in which the teachers teach and instruct was deemed to be essential by the students, both in terms of how the former vary the education and how they succeed in motivating their students. The students articulated that feedback from their teachers was important. They expressed that they wanted to be appreciated by their teachers for what they do. The students appreciated being noticed by the teachers as individuals. Interacting with teachers in ordinary classroom settings thus appeared to be important for the students.

Liberty of choice regarding working form and workmate. The students articulated that cooperation with another school friend during lessons was important for their learning processes. In their stories, the students expressed a belief in the importance of having the possibility of choosing what they want to do in ordinary classroom settings and to take responsibility for their own studies and learning processes. They wanted to have a chance to explore their own ideas and to have free choice in learning activities, as well as the opportunity to choose the method of working. They gave the opinion that it is important to have pleasurable school situations and to have fun during the lessons.

Atmosphere for discussion. The possibility of having discussions in the classroom with other students during the lessons was expressed as valuable. At the same time, many students liked to have silence and harmony while working in ordinary classroom settings. The students declared that it is possible to both discuss in an appropriate and suitable way and, meanwhile, have calm and peace in the classroom. Nevertheless, it was acknowledged that discussions and talk had to be open and preferably organized by the teacher rather than free chat, which could be more disturbing than creative. An open atmosphere and having the opportunity to take their own responsibility as leaders was seen as central.

School subjects and success. Some of the students' stories involved a noticeable focus on positive experiences of learning and working with everyday school subjects in the classroom, as well as succeeding in performing ordinary school tasks. Many mentioned that school subjects were significant. The students felt joy about their school subjects and gave many examples of subjects they liked or loved, such as Math, Physical Education, English, Music, Art, Handicrafts, and reading. A good time was expressed as having the opportunity to work with the school subject. Moreover, having a good time in school was related to a feeling of being good at schoolwork. Positive experiences were often associated with success in school subjects. Some students

viewed learning as important. The feeling of satisfaction after a period of hard work was a positive experience. Fulfilling a task and achieving their goals were valued.

Learning processes in outings. Outdoor experiences created opportunities to do new things that were supportive of learning and also created a new event in the school routine. Outdoor experiences seemed important in several respects—both for the individual learning process and for friendships (see "Friends" below). Outdoor learning was often related to winter experiences when the climate makes such activities possible. For example, opinions were expressed about skiing days. Many of the students meant that these outdoor experiences gave an extra boost to the ordinary school days inside the school building. However, for a few, outings could also serve as a kind of safety valve when someone did not like to be in school. Outdoor experiences were important, and they seemed to fill several needs.

Friends. Friendship was important to the students in several ways, and environments outside the classroom gave important opportunities to build new, as well as maintain old, friendships. The students described the meaning of being with new and old friends in other contexts than being inside the school building. Outings offered different tasks other than the school surroundings, something that in some stories from the students were described as positive in terms of cooperation and in the creation of new friendships. The outings played a particular role in the students' stories concerning building new friendships. In situations outside the classroom, the opportunity to build relations with someone special occurred.

The breaks were also important for the students in relation to building relationships with friends. The feeling of support from friends, when no one was left outside the sense of togetherness, was another way to conceive of friendship. To have the opportunity to do something else with your classmates other than being in the classroom was viewed as being important. Breaks were considered important for maintaining friendships.

For some, friends were very important for support and well-being. For some students, having friends was related to a new start; for example, after being bullied and treated like an outsider. Starting a new level in school could also be viewed as a new start. Friendship can also be about longing for a time when one had friends, which also affected the learning experiences in school. This indicates that the students considered friendship important for learning processes outside the classroom.

Primary needs. The students emphasized the importance of fulfilling several primary (basic) needs for having a positive school environment. It was apparent that the students valued school meals and the quality of the food. Besides the taste of the food, nutritional comments and even the temperature and texture were noted. The relationship between not being hungry and the capacity to study was referred to. Food is a primary need for well-being and learning, and in the students' stories, this was acknowledged as something important. It was found that good experiences of school

were also related to the start of the day at home. Having extra time for sleep in the morning created a good start for the school day.

Several of the results in this study correspond with findings in earlier studies, regarding for instance the importance of teachers (Decker, Dona & Christenson, 2007; Stornes, Bru & Idsoe, 2008; Thuen, Bru & Ogden, 2007), the importance of outdoor activities for a positive school environment (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Kellert, 2002), the relevance of informal educational settings for maintaining friendships (Westling Allodi, 2002), and the relevance of good friend-relationships for learning and well-being (Lindberg & Swanberg, 2006). Previous research indicates that positive health in school is beneficial for students' academic success (e.g., Murray, Low, Hollis, Cross & Davis, 2007; Strolin-Goltzman, 2010). In the present study, however, the students' emphasized another side of the relation between learning and well-being as they highlighted the relevance of learning for having a good time in school. If the students' experiences are to be taken seriously, we should also take under consideration the possibility that the relation between students' learning and their psychosocial well-being in school is more complex than commonly conceived.

Article II

The managerial documents for the national school system in Sweden stress the importance of taking students' voices and experiences as a starting point in educational settings, with the aim of increasing educational achievement (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011). A recent study by Gillander Gådin et al. (2009) emphasizes the competence of students when given the opportunity to participate. They found that students in grades 1 through 6 can participate in health education interventions and that students suggested health-promoting changes similar to what members of the health committee had proposed. According to researchers in both Sweden and around the world, students' abilities and their participation should not be underestimated (Alerby et al., 2008).

Against the background of previous research, it is interesting to give voice to students in order to understand their perspectives on what constitutes a positive learning environment in school. The aim of this study was to explore students' reflections on what they would do if they were to decide how to make school the best place for learning.

In this study, 200 students, 11 to 15 years old, from four schools (rural and urban) in two municipalities in the northern part of Sweden participated. The empirical data were collected during 2009 and consisted of the students' written reflections. The students were given the task to continue an open letter with a starting sentence in Swedish, corresponding to the following English sentence: "If I were to decide how

to make school the best place for learning, I would like to…." Inspired by Merleau-Ponty's concept of the *intentional bow arch* (Merleau-Ponty, 1996), i.e., the ability to bridge former, present, and future experiences, the analysis proceeded through hermeneutical comparisons between wholes and parts of the students' reflections.

The students raised both tensions and opportunities in their reflections on the potential to develop a positive learning environment in school. Some students considered negative experiences or hypothetical situations and concluded that the best place for learning would exclude such situations. Some took already existing positive aspects of their school environment as their point of departure and argued that these positive aspects should apply to a greater number of educational settings. Hence, the themes do not automatically highlight deficiencies in the participating schools. On the contrary, the students also mentioned positive aspects they want to sustain in their schools.

The students emphasized different, and sometimes opposing, views of what kind of structures, content, actions, and attitudes may have a positive impact on the learning environment in school. The variety of reflections provided by the students is represented in the four different themes: (i) influencing educational settings; (ii) striving for reciprocity; (iii) managing time struggles; and (iv) satisfying well-being needs.

Influencing educational settings. In this theme, the emphasis was on freedom against control in connection with work, structures for learning, and teacher competence. The students reflected on working structures in ordinary school lessons and content in educational situations. They underlined variation, regarding both the content and the forms. For instance, the students put forward their preferences for variation between practical and theoretical work. They preferred more practical schoolwork (for example, music lessons) and their reflections included learning in different ways (for instance, with cooperation and valuation exercises). In addition, the students expressed an interest in freedom of choice in school, regarding both the form and content of the learning practices.

Striving for reciprocity. According to the students, to be the best place for learning, schools must offer an environment of mutual understanding and respect. They emphasized the importance of having the opportunity to be heard and listened to. Mutual understanding was understood in relation to both classmates and teachers. The students underlined the importance of keeping promises and listening actively to students' views. They wanted others at school to treat them kindly. The students emphasized caring and understanding as important aspects of the teachers' role. Some highlighted the importance of speaking to each other in a kind and respectful way. This involved ending both the use of swearwords and the projection of negative comments onto others. They also expressed that conversation, in small groups, about things that matter to them represents one way of preventing bullying and increasing

the well-being of the students. Their striving for reciprocity reveals tensions between different kinds of relationships—student-student, student-teacher, and an individual student-school community.

Managing time struggles. The students presented a number of different time struggles in school, concerning both the form of structural aspects and the actual content of the time spent. They wrote about how the school was organized (for example, when the school day begins and ends). They also pointed out the inadequate structure of time within the framework of a school day. This could, for instance, concern the timing of the lunch break and whether there are free periods during the day. The students expressed dissatisfaction regarding the structure of time in school and offered suggestions on how to manage them on a personal as well as a classroom level. They wrote, for example, about the length of the school day, the value of ending the school day early, the importance of having free periods (although some also highlighted the importance of not having such free periods), a preference for doing their homework during the school day, instead of doing it after school at home, even though that would result in longer school days, the possibility of having more free time after school, that the lessons should be shorter, and that there should be more breaks since it is during breaks that contemplation and reflection can occur. The students did not limit their considerations of time in school to a concern with managing schoolwork and social life at school; they also connected the structures of time in school to the effect such structures have on their leisure time.

Satisfying well-being needs. The students expressed the importance of having well-being needs met in order for school to be the best place for learning. These include the physical, mental, and environmental aspects of well-being. Concerning nutrition, the students mentioned the quality of the food and the level of enjoyment from consuming it. The need for their bodies to be active was emphasized. Another well-being need put forward by the students was sleep. The students suggested relaxation as another way of learning more effectively. Taking breaks was another idea to satisfy students' well-being. To increase the students' well-being, it was considered important to improve the environment of the school, both indoors and outdoors. Several places were mentioned, such as the bathrooms, classrooms, schoolyard, and corridors. The students wrote that they wanted the bathrooms to be repainted to create a more pleasant environment. They described how they wanted cleaner corridors and more material in the schoolyard for activities (for instance, an improved basketball court). One student argued that the classrooms should be nicer and cozier, with calming colors. Other students noted their preferences for a higher temperature in the classrooms so they would feel comfortable. Some students explained they wanted better material circumstances (for example, an improvement of the quality and comfort of the classroom chairs).

Several areas of tensions between previous experience and future visions, as well as between different students' views and perspectives, appeared in this study and they can stimulate discussion and help give direction concerning aspects of the learning environment in school that could be improved.

The fact that the students wanted to influence their education in certain respects—for example, in deciding when, how, and where to do tasks in their school—is not unexpected, but nevertheless should be addressed. To develop or maintain a positive learning environment in school, student participation seems highly important, something that is confirmed by Ahlström (2010). Cook-Sather (2006) urges teachers to listen to students, not only because learning and relationships would improve but also because a contribution to educational change can be achieved. Processes that improve schools and result in educational change can encompass the strengthening of a student's commitment to learning, and help to develop interpersonal relationships through mutual respect and trust (Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007). In addition, it is possible to change a school's organization by taking account of the views not only of adults but of students as well (Robinson & Taylor, 2007).

It is hoped that the judgments and opinions of students can be taken into consideration and regarded as a relevant part of future school improvement, resulting in us, as adults, supporting them in their role of being so-called "leaders of their own learning" (Stoll, 2009, p.122). If students are listened to and given the opportunity to participate and affect their learning environment, their voices could lead the way forward to educational change and improvement.

Article III

Interpersonal variety in students' moral reasoning and opinions has been of great concern to contemporary researchers in various fields (Backman et al., 2012a; Rique & Camino, 1997; Smetana, 2006). According to Öhman and Östman (2007), it is a common experience today that our moral judgments vary in time and place. A typical idea in the extensive field of social-cognitive domain theory (SCDT) (Nucci & Turiel, 1978; Turiel, 1983) is that varieties in moral judgments can be explained by variations in context.

In this study, we employed the distinction between decision methods and criteria of rightness—which is well-established in the field of normative ethics (e.g., Sidgwick, 1907) but has rarely been used in empirical research—as an analytical tool in order to obtain detailed data about students' moral reasoning and provide a nuanced understanding of inter- and intrapersonal variety within the students' moral reasoning. The criteria of rightness are principles determining whether a given action is morally

correct or not, while the decision methods are general ways of behaving in practical matters (Tännsjö, 1998).

The study aimed to answer the following two questions:

1. What forms of inter- or intrapersonal variety in the students' moral reasoning become evident by employing the distinction between decision method and criterion of rightness in the analysis?
2. If there are such varieties, do the SCDT explanations based on variations in context account for them?

Twenty-four students, 12 to 15 years old, from two municipally run schools that are part of the compulsory school program and located in the northern part of Sweden participated in the study. A qualitative design with open-ended interviews was used to collect data. The authors conducted the interviews using interview protocols with general questions such as "How do you think people should behave towards each other in school?", as well as hypothetical moral dilemmas with social content, concerning behavior such as lying, interfering in bullying situations, and violating a friend's integrity on the Internet. The description of the dilemmas was followed by supplementary questions concerning what the student thought that a hypothetical student ought to do, and the reasons for that stated position, as well as the meaning of different expressions the student used.

The material was analyzed using the distinction between decision methods and criteria of rightness. Through utilizing the two dimensions of moral reasoning in the analysis, we found six forms of variety in the students' moral reasoning, denoted as follow: (i) interpersonal variety in decision method dimension, (ii) intrapersonal variety in decision method dimension, (iii) interpersonal variety in criterion of rightness dimension, (iv) intrapersonal variety in criterion of rightness dimension, (v) interpersonal variety between the two dimensions, and (vi) intrapersonal variety between the two dimensions.

Interpersonal variety in decision method dimension. The students had several different ideas about how to behave towards each other. For instance, they emphasized virtues, such as being fair, kind, and honest as a basis for acting towards others. Some underlined the importance of spending one's time and using one's powers to help other students in need, even if one runs the risk of being bullied or exposing oneself. On the one hand, some students argued that we should keep our promises, as well as never lie, and never promise to lie. On the other hand, some students explicitly claimed that it is acceptable to break promises as, for example, when someone else's well-being depends on it, or when it is perceived as necessary to break a promise in order not to violate someone's rights. Another position that was emphasized was that one has the moral right to control what information about oneself is posted online.

Intrapersonal variety in decision method dimension. Examples analyzed shows that the students explicitly adhered to both pragmatic and non-pragmatic decision methods regarding the same hypothetical dilemma, but in different actions or different preconditions within it, which is concluded to be a case of intrapersonal variety in reasoning in the decision method dimension.

Interpersonal variety in rightness criterion dimension. The students emphasized duties as well as actual and hypothetical consequences as motives for behaving towards each other in school in the ways previously described. Accordingly, different rightness criteria were interpreted as being grounds for different decision methods. They also reasoned from diverse ethical perspectives in regard to both the same and different situations. Hedonistic qualities, such as pleasure or happiness, were characterized as morally significant. Some students also pointed to the relevance of maintaining a pleasant and nice atmosphere in school as well as being true to oneself. Some justified their views of the moral status of some behavior by referring to roles and to powers that one possesses when playing a certain role in a situation. Motives in terms of both egoistic and less narrow consequentialist reasoning were put forward, and duties such as compulsory school attendance were referred to as reasons for actions.

Intrapersonal variety in rightness criterion dimension. Some intrapersonal variety of reasoning regarding rightness criteria was manifested in the combination of referring, on the one hand, to consequences of actions and, on the other, to duties such as compulsory school attendance, regarding the same hypothetical situation. The above comparison of the different parts of the students' reasoning led to the more general interpretation that the students seemed to have argued from actual consequences as well as hypothetical consequences after recasting a maxim as a universal law. Both kinds of reasoning were utilized in regard to the same behavior or character trait. In sum, one reasonable interpretation of this is that the students adhered to different rightness criteria and applied them to the same decision method.

Interpersonal variety between decision method and criterion of rightness dimensions. The existence of interpersonal variety between the two dimensions of moral reasoning can be inferred from the findings presented above, and the content of it follows from what is described in (i) and (iii) above.

Intrapersonal variety between decision method and criterion of rightness dimensions. In line with the findings of intrapersonal varieties in the students' reasoning in decision method dimension and rightness criterion dimension, there were some examples of intrapersonal divergences between decision method and criterion of rightness in the students' reasoning. For instance, one student expressed allegiance to a virtuous decision method, while the criterion of rightness for that decision method was a consequentialist one. Another student considered it morally correct to have one kind of rightness criterion (an egoistic principle determining the moral status of the action in question) and another kind of decision method (behaving kindly, which, according

to the student, included behaving non-egoistically). This seems intrapersonally complex as it indicated a divergence between decision methods and criterion of rightness.

The interpersonal varieties found in and between both dimensions of moral reasoning in this study might very well be explained by interpersonally different external contextual factors, such as gender, ethnicity, or socio-economic background (Smetana, 2006), or by different informational assumptions (Turiel, Hildebrandt & Wainryb, 1991; Wainryb, 1991). Indeed, variation in children's moral reasoning in connection to different actions has been noticed in previous research (Smetana, 2006), and this might also be conducive to the interpersonal varieties.

However, the SCDT explanations do not suffice to explain the case of intrapersonal variety in moral reasoning in the criterion of rightness dimension as cited above. If so, new explanations need to be proposed. However, since the present study is exploratory research with just a small sample, further studies are required.

Finally, while previous research has distinguished between issues of, for example, interpersonal and intrapersonal varieties in moral reasoning, this study provides a framework for and has found empirical evidence for the existence of six forms of varieties in moral reasoning, based on the distinction between decision method and criterion of rightness in moral reasoning. Some of these are suggested as not fitting into standard models of explanation. Since this is a small sample explorative research study, it would be beneficial to have larger-scale studies test the results. Moreover, these findings lead to at least two interesting future research questions that cannot be explained using present data; first, an examination of the nature (and degree) of context dependence of each of these forms of varieties, and second, a revisiting of prior models of explanation of varieties in moral reasoning.

Article IV

In recent decades, mental disorders such as depression have increased among the world's 1.2 billion adolescents (UNICEF, 2011). Such a trend is also visible in Sweden, where young people's mental health problems have increased since the 1990s (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2009), alongside a decline in Swedish student achievement (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2009). Early adolescence (10–14 years old) is an age of bodily and mental change (UNICEF, 2011), and while various international studies have reported findings of an overall positive level of life satisfaction among adolescents (Proctor, Linley & Maltby, 2008), about half of all lifetime mental disorders in the world begin before age 15 (Helliwell et al., 2013; UNICEF, 2011). Though Sweden is a leading country in child well-being (Adamson, 2007), poor mental well-being among Swedish early adolescents increases during

lower secondary school (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2011), a tendency also manifested in other nations (Proctor et al., 2008).

Worldwide, more than 90% of early adolescents are enrolled in lower secondary education (Patton et al., 2012); thus, school provides opportunities for research about and interventions in early adolescents' health. In Sweden, the lower secondary school gross enrollment ratio in the period 2008–2011 was 97% (UNICEF, 2013).

Happiness in closely related senses has thus lately been considered both a means and a desired end in education. And very recently, relationships between happiness and other important aspects of life, such as prosocial spending, with effects running in both directions were observed (Helliwell et al., 2013). Theories about dynamic relationships (Helliwell et al., 2013) and bidirectional crossovers or spillovers (Rodríguez-Muñoz et al., 2013) have barely been touched upon in research, which lacks precise elaboration in various scientific domains.

However, as Diener and Oishi (2005) note, research investigating how moods and emotions influence aspects such as performance and prosocial behaviors is still lacking. Moreover, García and Sikström (2012) argue that standard current psychometric scales of subjective well-being do not provide the sufficient degree of freedom that would allow participants to fully express the complexity of their positive experiences. While recent research and educational theory in the field underline taking children's views into consideration to advance knowledge about their health and happiness (Awartani et al., 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2011; Noddings, 2003), adolescents' voices are rarely heeded, contrary to the guidelines in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 2011).

In accordance with Helliwell et al. (2012; 2013), the terms happiness and subjective well-being are here used synonymously. Subjective well-being is a broad category of phenomena (Diener et al., 1999). In Helliwell et al. (2012), the expression is used to designate "a range of individual self-reports of moods and life assessments" (p. 12), while happiness helps attract attention more quickly.

Two hundred students in grades 5–9 and from 11 classes in four different schools (rural and urban) participated in the study during 2009. The schools were part of the Swedish compulsory school system and were located in two municipalities in northern Sweden. The same year, the Public Health Agency of Sweden conducted a national mapping of ninth-graders' mood states, presenting open comparisons in 2011 at the national and individual school level (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2011). Two of the 11 classes participating in the present study comprised ninth-graders from two different schools. In the survey, one of these schools ranked in the upper half and one in the lower half. This accords with an inclusive perspective permeating this study and its salutogenic orientation, which directs research "to encompass all persons, wherever they are on the continuum, and to focus on salutary factors" (Antonovsky, 1996, p. 14). Corresponding to the two timely aspects of present and wished-for future positive

experiences outlined by Noddings (2003), the students were asked to complete the following sentences (here translated):

1. Now I will tell you about one time when I had a good time in school, it was…
2. If I were to decide how to make school the best place for learning, I would like to…

This study used elements from Føllesdal's (1979) theory of hermeneutical procedure as a hypothetico-deductive method applied to meaningful material, in combination with the common data-processing procedure of clustering: "the process of inductively forming categories" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 249).

Five perceived bidirectional crossovers of happiness (i.e., perceived transmission between happiness and other aspects also within the school domain, such that both A promotes B and B promotes A) were noted in the students' written reflections:

Happiness and learning. The students indicated that happiness in several ways promotes learning, or success in specified school tasks. They stated that being happy helps one learn more and that having fun has positive implications for learning. Some contended that there is an indirect and weak promoting relationship between happiness and learning. Positive moods were seen to facilitate learning in several ways.

The students held that learning, or success in specified school tasks (such as finishing school books or passing tests) promotes happiness.

Happiness and school engagement. The students held that positive moods allow them to work well in school. The motivational aspects of having a good time in school were also emphasized.

Engaging in different ways in schoolwork was thought to contribute to happiness. Focusing on schoolwork, working diligently, and being motivated to learn were emphasized as ways of engaging in school. The students also described positive experiences in which the whole class's engagement made lessons fun and contributed to happiness.

Happiness and appreciation of subjects or lesson content. The students argued that being happy and being allowed to have fun contributes to liking school subjects or lesson content. There were also examples where students perceived the promoting relationship as running both ways: an appreciation of specific lesson content promoted fun, which in turn promoted further appreciation of the lesson content.

The students described different ways in which having subjects or lesson content that they liked contributed to their happiness. They also wrote about the experience of becoming happy as a consequence of appreciating a school subject, such as math.

Happiness and others' happiness. Only one student statement explicitly mentioned this perceived bidirectional crossover. The student in question argued that a student's

individual happiness in general influences the student's character traits, which in turn influences other students positively such that they also become happy.

The students described experiences in which classmates' happiness had contributed to their own happiness. They also had narrower ideas about whose happiness contributed to theirs, stating that friends' happiness facilitated their own happiness.

Happiness and prosocial behavior. The students described experiences of being happy as contributing to different aspects of prosocial behavior. One student stated that being happy promotes a social environment that lacks certain negative characteristics, such as disturbing interactions. Also described were experiences involving the influence of happiness and other positive feelings on an encouraging atmosphere in school.

The students indicated that supportive social behavior, such as encouragement and appreciation, contributed to happiness. Other students wrote about the positive influence of supportive friends and encouraging words from classmates.

This study shows that students' perceptions in several respects align with decades of previous research about the determinants and effects of subjective well-being, a finding that supports students' trustworthiness in the present area of research. In conclusion, the perceived bidirectional crossovers most lacking in previous studies and most in need of corroboration and verification in future research are (ii) Happiness and school engagement and (iii) Happiness and appreciation of subjects or lesson content. Furthermore, for the theme (i) Happiness and learning, more research is needed to demonstrate whether learning contributes to happiness. Moreover, the results of novel perceived bidirectional crossovers—adding new hypotheses to facilitate falsification or corroboration in future large-scale studies—support the claims of the WHO (2014) and UNICEF (2011) about the benefits of allowing students to contribute their own perspectives as a force for development. This concurs with Noddings' (2003) later theory of moral education, including her proposal of allowing children's present experiences of happiness to contribute to concrete development in the classroom. Finally, this study provides conceptual and analytical direction for future research about happiness in education. The formal expression "bidirectional crossovers of subjective well-being" could function to provide analytic categories in future research, while the more informal expression "circles of happiness" could be used in education, allowing teachers and students to conceptualize everyday events in the classroom.

Results and discussion

In the "Introduction" of this thesis, it was determined important to study early adolescent students' reasoning about learning and well-being in school from a salutogenic perspective, in order to give them participatory opportunities and in order to provide more knowledge about the conditions for and effects of learning and well-being in school to the research community. As noted then, the possibility of arriving at such knowledge through the students' reasoning depends on the trustworthiness and novelty of their reasoning, which in turn depends on its consistency and how well the students' reasoning corresponds to previous research (its trustworthiness), as well as whether there can be new research-generating hypotheses formulated directly based on their reasoning (its novelty). These matters were targeted again in the "Theoretical framework" of this thesis, where I wrote that I would in the present section, through comparing the students' reasoning with previous research and considering inconsistencies in their reasoning, determine the truth-value of the standpoint theoretical claims presented in this thesis, which are that Swedish early adolescent students' reasoning, based on their social position, about conditions and effects of learning and well-being in their school:

(1) corresponds to actual states of affairs, and
(2) provides novel (not tested in previous research) hypotheses.

In this section, I will target these matters for a first round while answering and discussing the three research questions posed in this thesis, which are:

1. What conditions do early adolescent students find conducive to learning and to well-being in school?
2. What effects do early adolescent students consider learning and well-being to have in school?
3. What forms of variety are there in early adolescent students' reasoning about learning and well-being?

These will be answered under three separate headings representing the three research questions. In order to answer Research questions 1–2, I will cross-summarize and re-interpret the results from sub-studies I–IV by using the framework of the three-legged division of health—i.e., physical, mental, and social well-being (WHO, 1946)—provided in the "Background" of this thesis. Furthermore, I will successively relate the re-interpreted and cross-summarized results to previous research, in order to explore the novelty of the students' reasoning and the correspondence between, on the one

hand, the results of this thesis, and on the other hand, previous research studies about the conditions and effects of learning and well-being. In order to answer Research question 3, I will cross-summarize certain results from sub-studies I–IV and consider possible inconsistencies in the students' reasoning that have implications for the judgment of (1) and thus the trustworthiness of the students' reasoning. Then, in "Concluding remarks," I will discuss the trustworthiness and novelty of the students' reasoning for a second round in relation to the theoretical framework of this thesis and the initially presented hopes for contributing to the field of education.

Conditions found conducive to learning and well-being in school

In this section, I answer and discuss research question 1 of this thesis (What conditions do early adolescent students find conducive to learning and to well-being in school?) by cross-summarizing and re-interpreting the results from sub-studies I–IV in the framework of the three-legged well-being division presented in the Background (WHO, 1946). The cross-summaries are successively related to previous research, showing the novelty of the students' reasoning and the correspondence between, on the one hand, other previous studies about the conditions for learning and well-being, and, on the other hand, the conditions found conducive to learning and well-being by the students in this thesis.

Conditions found conducive to learning

The factors found promoting learning by the students are described under three headlines representing three types of perceived conditions for learning:

- Teaching strategies, organization, and pro-social behavior in teachers and students,
- Engaging in physical activity and fulfilling basic physical needs, and
- Mental well-being.

Each of these sets of conditions is discussed below in relation to previous research.

Teaching strategies, organization, and pro-social behavior in teachers and students

According to the students, their relationships and interaction with teachers were considered important for their learning and their motivation, which is in accordance with previous research studies and reviews (Haapasalo, Valimaa & Kannas, 2010; Hattie & Yates, 2013; Lovat & Toomey, 2009; Stornes et al., 2008; Swedish National

Agency for Education, 2009). Aspects of how the teachers teach and instruct, such as how the teachers vary the instruction and how they succeed in motivating their students, were considered relevant by the students in the present thesis. The students pointed out how important the teacher's pedagogical competence is for their learning processes. According to Swedish National Agency for Education (2009), subject-related didactic competence, which is understood as the ability to vary teaching practice in a given subject, is of greater importance for student outcomes than knowledge only of that subject.

The students preferred teachers to be capable of motivating the student by explaining things better and to be positive and work sincerely to help the students understand better. Hence, one important characteristic of teachers, according to the students, is the ability to explain the subject matter thoroughly and have a genuine interest in their learning. Some students also appreciated the teachers' ability to keep track of students' educational progress. In line with this, Swedish and international research results point to the importance of teachers being active and precise and with an ability to engage and encourage all pupils (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2009).

In addition, the students expressed an interest in freedom of choice in school, regarding both the form and content of the learning practices. Some students emphasized having opportunities of choosing the content on school assignments. According to Stornes et al. (2008), a number of studies suggest that a mastery motivational climate—i.e., where students perceive that teachers and fellow students emphasize attainment of competence or ability through efforts trying to improve and develop skills according to the students' individual capabilities, which in goal theory of achievement motivation is commonly contrasted to a performance motivational climate where an emphasis is rather on attainment of competence or ability by social comparison in competition among peers—in school classrooms is an important prerequisite for learning in schools. According to the authors, their results indicate that a social classroom structure with a certain amount of student influence and a teacher who involves him/herself emphatically with each student influence mastery motivational climates positively.

The students in this thesis made critical remarks about student-teacher encounters in school and offered practical examples of how schools can work to improve such relationships in school in order to enhance learning. This is in line with a study by Haapasalo et al. (2010) in which teacher-student relationships were concluded to be of importance for students' school engagement, which in turn was relevant for their perceived school performance. In the present study, the students emphasized caring and understanding as important aspects of the teachers' role. According to the students, to be the best place for learning, schools must offer an environment of mutual understanding, respect, and fairness in behavior and grading. This is in

accordance with a large number of studies summarized in Hattie and Yates (2013), where student interviews showed consistency in the students' asking to be treated fairly as well as with personal respect and dignity. In the present thesis, the students emphasized having the opportunity to be heard and listened to. The students underlined the importance of keeping promises and listening actively to students' views, with their views being allowed to affect the organization of the school. According to research reviewed by Hattie and Yates, student achievement was also generally positively influenced by teachers' improvement of their relationships with their students. Evidence for the importance of positive student-teacher relationships for student performance is also provided more specifically in a study by Decker et al. (2007).

Besides social aspects in the student-teacher level, the students also considered social aspects in the student-student level relevant for learning, such as maintaining friendships and cooperating with friends during lessons. The students linked behavior of others to learning and suggested that a schools' social culture has an impact on grasping new knowledge, something supported by OECD (2015). It was also noticed that having friendships at all, in contrast to losing your friends, increases motivation to learn both during school time and at home, reading homework and studying. In line with this, Asher, Brechwald Guerry, and McDonald (2014) underline the importance of friendships for achievement and sense of school belonging, and the negative performance outcomes of having no friends.

In more general terms, the students argued that classmates should be nice because that creates a good atmosphere that effects learning positively. The students' preferences also involved issues of language in school. They highlighted the importance of speaking to each other in a kind and respectful way. This involved ending both the use of swearwords and the projection of negative comments onto others. These two kinds of behavior toward each other reduced the possibility of creating a respectful and positive culture in classes, according to the students. They also gave examples of practical activities that could be performed to create a respectful and positive psychosocial culture in school, such as specific types of discussions and compliment giving. They described that a climate where the students do not disturb each other and where the classmates work diligently is conducive to learning. This is supported by the OECD (2015), which stated that noise and disorder are particularly high in Swedish classrooms and that such disturbances or distractions during lessons equate to less time for quality teaching and learning.

The students reflected on working structures in ordinary school lessons and content in educational situations. They underlined variation, regarding both the content and the forms. For instance, the students put forward their preferences for variation between practical and theoretical work. They preferred more practical schoolwork (for example, music lessons) and their reflections included learning in different ways

(for instance, with cooperation and valuation exercises). Moreover, the students appreciated effective lessons with the possibility of the students' being able to learn something new in every course. They proposed working in small groups and having one teacher for each group, while still explicitly noting the problems of limited resources for implementing such working structures. According to Swedish National Agency for Education (2009), the general effect of teacher–student ratios on students' performance is weak, while it does have a significantly greater effect on students with lower academic prospects and weaker support at home. This conclusion is in line with research reviewed by Hattie (2009).

The students focused on having more excursions and educational visits during school time, as well as having lessons outside school (for instance, going to theatres). Educational visits outside school, rather than constantly working with school assignments based on schoolbooks, were considered relevant for relating the subject matter to ordinary life. Much emphasis was also put on days for open-air activities. According to Kellert (2002), children's direct experiences of nature are important for several developmental aspects. However, the specific requests for excursions and educational visits outside school in order for school to be the best place for learning provides input for novel research-generating hypotheses.

The students wrote also about other organizational conditions for learning in school, mainly connected to time aspects. They pointed out the inadequate structure of time within the framework of a school day. This could, for instance, concern the timing of the lunch break and whether there are free periods during the day. They had explicit preferences about changes regarding when the school day begins and ends. Some held that the school day was too long and some that it started too early in the morning. Some students put forward a preference for having mornings off. In contrast to the emphasis on sleeping in, some students stressed the value of ending the school day early. Some students clearly expressed their wanting to avoid all free periods during school days in order to finish earlier; on the other hand, other students want to have more of them because it is during these that they could relax and be together with friends. Flexibility was also suggested, as was having more free time after school and to really feel free to choose what to do after school. The students also stressed that the lessons should be shorter and there should be more breaks since it is during breaks that contemplation and reflection could occur. The interpersonal inconsistencies here described are addressed later on in "Variety in students' reasoning about learning and well-being in school."

Engaging in physical activity and fulfilling basic physical needs

The students underlined the importance of being physically active during the school day. They proposed more sports and described how physical activity has positive

effects for learning. This is in line with what Quendler (2002) states about the positive effect of physical activity on achievement in school, and the negative effect on performance that lack of physical activity has. As previously noted in the Background, daily physical activity is one promoting factor of scholastic performance, attentiveness, concentration, interest in school, and calmness in class. The students in this thesis also argued more specifically that physical activity increases learning in theoretical subjects. Whether there is a difference between physical activity's conduciveness to learning in practical respective theoretical subjects could be further studied.

In accordance with Quendler (2002), the students described their perceived relationship between having nutritious and filling school meals (it is common for students to get free lunches at school in Sweden) and the capacity to study. They wrote that not being hungry contributes to a positive school environment in which everyone does good work and does not disturb each other. The students asked for a greater choice regarding the food offered and for bringing fruit or snacks to school for the purpose of getting enough nutrition to last the day. According to WHO (1997), nutritional deficiencies have negative effects on school performance.

The students also considered the positive effects that enough sleep has on school engagement and learning, noting also that the way school is organized affects the possibility of getting enough sleep. Some suggested that the school day should start later and end later. Relaxation was another suggested way of learning more effectively, as was taking breaks to ease exhaustion.

Furthermore, pleasant material circumstances such as nicer and cozier places with calming colors, higher temperatures, and better furniture were considered relevant for educational attainment. This included both indoors and outdoors, and several places were mentioned, such as the bathrooms, classrooms, schoolyard, and corridors. The students' reasoning regarding material circumstances' effects on learning corresponds with previous research showing that material factors account for inter-country differences in subjective well-being (Helliwell et al., 2012). As previously noted, subjective well-being is in turn conducive to achievement (e.g., Helliwell et al., 2013).

Mental well-being

Besides social, organizational, pedagogical, and physical factors, the students described perceived promoting relationships running from positive moods to increased learning, a relationship that is indeed supported by previous theories, studies, and reports (Helliwell et al., 2013; Noddings, 2003; Sznitman et al., 2011; UNICEF, 2011). The students indicated several ways that happiness promotes learning, or success in specified school tasks. They stated that being happy helps one learn more and that having fun has positive implications for learning. According to Sznitman et al. (2011),

adverse mental well-being outcomes can interfere with academic achievement, and in a report by UNICEF (2011) it is argued that unassisted mental health problems among adolescents are associated with low educational achievement. Noddings (2003) states that her rich previous experiences in educational domains lead her to conclusions about the extreme importance of happiness for learning in both children and adults. In accordance with this, UNICEF (2011) states that young people whose mental health needs have been recognized function better socially, perform better in school, and are more likely to develop into well-adjusted and productive adults.

Some students contended a mediator in the relationship running from happiness to learning is "better work"—that happiness promotes better work, which in turn promotes increased learning. In relation to this idea, the students argued also that positive emotions are conducive to motivation and less playing hooky—aspects of school engagement. According to Helliwell et al. (2013), happiness positively influences curiosity for employees and also leads to greater engagement in social activities (Helliwell et al., 2013). This would indirectly support the claim that happiness promotes school engagement to the extent that school is a social arena. Since pro-social behavior in turn is conducive to performance (see below), it would also speak in favor of a causal relationship running from mental well-being to learning (with pro-social behavior as a mediator).

Conditions found conducive to well-being

Below I describe the students' perceived conditions for well-being with help from the division of health in terms of physical, mental, and social well-being, provided through the WHO (1946) as referred to in the Background of this thesis. However, there were several aspects that the students considered important for having good times in school more generally. Some of the factors considered to promote learning were also considered to promote well-being in general, not specified by the students to any of the three well-being domains. These will be described first, before getting into what was considered conducive to physical, mental, and social well-being respectively under separate headlines below. Because these factors are related to previous research in the more specific well-being domains below, this is also not performed in this section.

The interaction with teachers was in several respects considered important for having good times in school. The students articulated a need to be seen by their teachers and to get help with questions concerning the school subject when needed. It was considered important to receive feedback from the teachers, to be genuinely appreciated by teachers for what the students did, to be noticed as individuals by the teachers, to have the teachers adapt their explanations to the specific individual student that had asked for help, and to have the teachers succeed in motivating the students

(for instance, through varying the instruction and showing practically rather than only writing on the black board).

In order to have good times in school, the students also wanted to exercise freedom of choice regarding work and workmates in school. They expressed a belief in the importance of having the possibility of choosing what they wanted to do in ordinary classroom settings and to take responsibility for their own studies and learning processes. They wanted to have a chance to explore their own ideas, use their imaginations, and have free choices in learning activities, as well as the opportunity to choose the method and content of working.

Furthermore, having the opportunity to have discussions with other students during the lessons was expressed as important for the students' having good times in school. At the same time, many students liked to have silence and harmony while working in ordinary classroom settings. The students declared that it would be possible to both talk in an appropriate and suitable way and, meanwhile, have calm and peace in the classroom. Nevertheless, it was acknowledged that discussions and talk had to be open and preferably organized by the teacher rather than merely free chat.

Conditions found conducive to physical well-being

As noted in the previous description of the perceived conditions for learning, the students described several aspects of the physical environment as important for them in school. They emphasized the importance of moving their bodies in class and during breaks, better material circumstances in the schoolyard (such as an improved basketball court and ice hockey rink), going for outings, and doing physical activities. Factors such as getting enough sleep, the temperature in classrooms, and serving nutritional food were considered relevant. Several such aspects were also considered health-promoting factors by students in a study by Gillander Gådin et al. (2009) and promoted by an expert health committee in the same study. However, I have not noticed the factors emphasized by the students in this thesis to be explicitly described as promoting physical well-being, understood as increased physical soundness, decreased disease, specific bodily sensations, or the like. Rather, these physical factors have been described as promoting general well-being or other aspects, such as social relationships or subjective well-being (which, however, could be considered partly a bodily sensation, as noticed earlier in this thesis).

It should also be noted that the factors important for physical well-being described in the "Background" of this thesis were not brought up by the students in this thesis. They did thus not consider the positive impact that mental well-being (Helliwell et al., 2013; UNICEF, 2011) and social well-being (Hattie & Yates, 2013; Helliwell et al., 2013; WHO, 2014) have on physical well-being. However, the students did not

deny such factors either, so their reasoning does not contradict hypotheses generated from previous research in this regard.

Conditions found conducive to mental well-being

The conditions that the students perceived as promoting mental well-being were diverse and considered physical, social, and mental factors, as well as school engagement and success in school tasks. The students emphasized the importance of fulfilling several physical needs for having positive emotions in school, such as eating nutritional and tasty food at breakfast at home and lunch in school, physical activities, getting enough sleep at home before school days, and not stressing when you go to school. These results are in line with the study on health promotion in schools by Gillander Gådin et al. (2009).

Outdoor experiences such as field days, outings, and excursions created plenty of positive emotions. The outdoor experiences were often related to winter experiences, such as skiing days, when the climate makes such activities possible. Many of the students meant that these outdoor experiences also gave an extra boost to the ordinary school days inside the school building because of the excitement and happiness they brought about. Furthermore, the outings especially provided opportunities for having fun with old and new friends. Sometimes, this was described as an effect of the different tasks and surroundings other than the usual schoolyard. Being able to choose the physical activities and meet people in other classes was described as bringing about happiness and laughter, which in turn made the students conclude that such days were the best days in school. Also this is in accordance with results from the study by Gillander Gådin et al. (2009), where the students preferred more school time spent out-of-doors, such as visits to new places, and more opportunities to influence their own schoolwork.

Also more generally, social relationships and pro-social behavior were considered essential for the mental well-being of the students, which is in accordance with plenty of previous theories, reports, and research studies (Asher et al., 2014; Helliwell et al., 2012, 2013; Noddings, 2003; UNICEF, 2011). The students noticed that supportive social atmospheres where the classmates helped each other and gave positive feedback in different situations contributed to their positive feelings. Having friends made the students feel good, and not having friends led to long-lasting negative emotional states. Asher et al. (2014) note in accordance with this that friendships tend to increase emotional well-being (while there are exceptions regarding some types of friendships) and that the absence of friendships produces several outcomes that are negative for emotional well-being.

Being respected and treated well was thought of as conducive to mental well-being. From the students' perspective, however, establishing conditions for mental well-

being in school is a complex endeavor when the situations are complex and involve, for instance, violations of conventional regulations and different social roles. The conditions for well-being often varied with the character of the situation, according to the students. More generally, however, the students argued for certain general behavioral patterns for achieving mental well-being in school, such as fairness, not bullying or exerting physical violence, caring perspectives, and being non-egoistic. The students indicated that supportive social behavior, such as encouragement and appreciation, contributed to happiness. Some wrote about the positive influence of supportive friends and encouraging words from classmates on their emotive states. Moreover, the students argued that the atmosphere for discussion in the class contributed to their mental well-being. They stated that positive moods stemmed from being able to talk about everything that happens. The idea that being able to share thoughts and emotions with others is conducive to well-being is supported by research reported by Asher et al. (2014). However, these authors also state that part of the complexity of peer relationships is that friendship dynamics can also foster emotional difficulties. They argue that, on the positive side, social support is conducive to lower levels of depression symptoms, which is a conclusion well supported also in, e.g., *World Happiness Report 2013* (Helliwell et al. 2013), but on the negative side, intimate and supportive relationships may stimulate co-rumination, including the tendency to frequently rehash problems, speculate about various aspects of problems, and focus on negative aspects of problems. Such a process is empirically shown to be negative for emotional well-being (Asher et al., 2014).

The students also expressed that an individual student's mental well-being can promote others' happiness, and they noted also that others' mental well-being promoted their own happiness. Both of these perceived causal lines are in accordance with previous research reported by Helliwell et al. (2013).

Other perceived conditions for mental well-being regarded learning, school engagement, and appreciating subjects or lesson content. So, first, the students held that learning, or success in specified school tasks, promotes mental well-being. They experienced positive moods as consequences of learning and success in certain tasks. Positive emotions stemmed from achieving goals and fulfilling tasks such as completing a lot of math exercises, getting full points on a test, or singing a song they did not think they could sing. The students' perception that succeeding in specified school tasks is conducive to happiness gains some empirical support from a review by Proctor et al. (2008), which notes that perceived goal attainment, goal importance, and goal fulfillment are positively related to positive affect. Moreover, according to a study by Khalkhali and Golestaneh (2011), winning contributed to experiences of happiness, a result that aligns with students' perceptions in the present study. In contrast, however, previous studies demonstrate that when one's life is organized around the pursuit of extrinsic goals, personal well-being is diminished, whereas the reverse is true of a life

formed around the pursuit of intrinsic goals (Proctor et al., 2008). The students in this thesis did not explicitly distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic goals, or, what appears similar in a conceptual level, mastery motivational climate and performance motivational climate (Stornes et al., 2008) as previously discussed. They noted that grades, test passing, finishing a large number of tasks (such as math exercises), knowledge attainment, and managing to succeed in other kinds of tasks they did not believe they would succeed in all contributed to happiness. However, they did not describe explicitly any experiences or beliefs about benefits to mental well-being from their own success when contrasted to other students' failure. But they did state that engaging in different ways in schoolwork contributed to happiness. Focusing on schoolwork, working diligently, and being motivated to learn were emphasized as ways of engaging in school. Some described their own school engagement as contributing to positive emotions and some described positive experiences in which the whole class's engagement made the lesson fun and contributed to happiness. I interpret the students' ideas of school engagement's conduciveness to mental well-being as rather regarding a mastery motivational climate than a performance motivational climate.

Furthermore, the students described different ways that having subjects or lesson content that they liked contributed to their happiness. Some described how experiences of loving a specific sports activity contributed to happiness and some wrote about the experience of becoming happy as a consequence of appreciating a school subject, such as math or music. Such a general relationship running from appreciation of school subjects or lesson content to happiness may well be studied more thoroughly in future research. More specifically, the students described this relationship through reference to practical subjects in a majority of the cases exemplified.

Conditions found conducive to social well-being

As previously noted, environments outside the classroom were considered to give important opportunities for physical activities that included pro-social behavior and promoted building new, as well as maintaining old, friendships. The students emphasized being with new and old friends in other contexts than inside the school building. The students wrote that outings offered different tasks than what is usually offered inside the school, something that was described as positive in terms of cooperation and in the creation of new friendships. The outings played a particular role in the students' stories concerning building new friendships, but the breaks were also important for the students for the same reasons. The feeling of support from friends, when no one was left outside the sense of togetherness, stemmed from physical activities on breaks, according to the students. Some also wrote about the

importance of changing class composition, describing how joining a new class provided the first sense of togetherness after earlier experiences of being bullied. The relevance of having informal educational settings, such as breaks, during school-time for being with friends in a positive way was experienced by students in a study by Westling Allodi (2002). However, the specific relevance of outings and excursions for social well-being is open to further study.

Mental well-being was also considered conducive to pro-social behavior by the students, which is in accordance with research reviewed by Helliwell et al. (2012; 2013). The students described experiences of being happy as contributing to different pro-social aspects. They stated that being happy promotes a social environment that lacks certain negative characteristics, such as disturbing interactions. Also described were experiences involving the influence of happiness and other positive feelings on a supportive atmosphere in school. According to Helliwell et al. (2013), positive moods contribute to greater social skills and confidence in social behavior. The authors argue for a powerful link between high subjective well-being and being a better friend and for how frequent positive emotions create a tendency in people to be more sociable in general.

Summary and conclusions

Research question 1 of this thesis (What conditions do early adolescent students find conducive to learning and to well-being in school?) has hereby been answered and discussed in the previous sections by cross-summarizing and re-interpreting the results from sub-studies I–IV. The students found that several different factors promoted learning in school, described above under three headlines

- Teaching strategies, organization, and pro-social behavior in teachers and students,
- Engaging in physical activity and fulfilling basic physical needs, and
- Mental well-being

The cross-summaries were successively related to previous research, showing that the vast majority of the students' perceptions of promoting relationships corresponded to previous research findings. This speaks in favor of the trustworthiness of the students' reasoning.

Regarding the novelty of the students' reasoning, four previously untested (that is, as far as I have seen) hypotheses can be formulated more or less directly based on the students' reasoning. Those that I have noticed are the following and regard conditions for learning in early adolescent students in school:

- Excursions and educational visits outside school are conducive to learning,
- Physical activity promotes learning in theoretical subjects more than in practical subjects,
- School engagement functions as a mediator in a causal relationship running from happiness to learning,

In turn, the factors perceived as promoting well-being were divided for the physical, mental, and social well-being domains, in line with the WHO's (1946) three-legged well-being division. For the physical domain, the students described physical conditions for general well-being (having good times in school), subjective well-being (which could be understood as a physical well-being state), and positive social relationships, while it lacked descriptions of perceived conditions for physical soundness, decreased disease, or the similar. Some domains of factors (mental well-being or social well-being) promoting physical well-being described in the "Background" of this thesis were not brought up by the students, but neither did they deny such factors. Hence, this does not speak against the trustworthiness of the students' reasoning.

The factors that the students perceived as promoting mental well-being were physical, social, and mental, as well as school engagement and success in school tasks. As described, there are previous research findings corresponding to the students' reasoning in all of these domains of factors, something that speaks in favor of the trustworthiness of the students' reasoning.

Finally, regarding conditions for social well-being, the students perceived that mental well-being promoted social well-being, which is in accordance with plenty of previous research. The students also considered outings, other outdoor events, physical activity on breaks, and in general being in other contexts than inside the school building important for social well-being. These perceptions include some quite specific ideas of promoting relationships that, as far as I have seen, have not been elaborated upon sufficiently in previous research.

Regarding the novelty of the students' reasoning about conditions for well-being, two previously untested hypotheses regarding early adolescent students in school can be formulated directly based on the students' reasoning:

- Appreciation of school subjects or lesson content is conducive to happiness,
- Practical subjects are more conducive to happiness than theoretical subjects, and
- Outings and excursions promote social well-being.

Effects considered emanating from learning and well-being in school

In this section, I will answer and discuss research question 2 (What effects do early adolescent students consider learning and well-being to have in school?) of this thesis. As for research question 1, I will cross-summarize and re-interpret the results from sub-studies I–IV in the framework of the three-legged well-being division presented in the "Background" and relate the results to previous research. This demonstrates the novelty of the students' reasoning and the correspondence between the students' perspectives on the effects and previous research about effects emanating from learning and well-being.

Effects considered emanating from learning

As previously noted and discussed, the students held that learning, or success in specified school tasks, promotes mental well-being. Learning new songs during music lessons, finishing school books, passing tests, and scoring lots of goals during sports lessons all contributed to positive moods, according to the students. Learning new things were conceived as conducive to mental well-being by the students. Some wrote about the experience of initially believing that they would not pass a test or handling high tones in a solo song in, e.g., music class, and then actually handling the situation and passing the test or singing the song, which provided strong positive emotions, according to the students. As previously discussed in relation to what produces mental well-being according to the students, Proctor et al. (2008) describe how perceived goal attainment, goal importance, and goal fulfillment are positively related to positive affect. But more specifically, previous studies show that trying to achieve extrinsic goals in life has negative effects on well-being, while attempting to fulfill intrinsic goals has positive such effects (Proctor et al., 2008). On a general level, the data concerning the direct effects of education on happiness appear mixed and vary between countries (Helliwell et al., 2012). Yakovlev and Leguizamon (2012) found that higher education (college degree) in 50 American states influenced subjective well-being positively, while secondary school education did not. This could align with Swedish results that mental ill health increases during lower secondary school (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2011). According to Uusitalo-Malmivaara (2012), grades or overall academic success are not strong correlates of students' global happiness or correlate only mildly.

Effects considered emanating from well-being

Effects considered emanating from physical well-being

The students perceived fulfilling physical needs such as getting enough sleep, having sufficiently warm classrooms, and eating nutritional food as having several positive effects. Such physical factors were experienced as promoting both mental well-being and learning. Happiness, satisfaction, school engagement, and calm working atmospheres were some noted effects.

Having a good breakfast at home together with reduced stress was considered conducive to mental well-being in school, something that is in accordance with previous research in that implementation of breakfast programs with nutritional breakfasts are associated with significant improvements in academic functioning among schoolchildren (Quendler, 2002).

Concerning further nutritional factors, the students mentioned the quality of the food and the level of enjoyment from consuming it. The students asked for a greater choice regarding the food offered and to be able to bring fruits or snacks to school in order to make the school the best place for learning. That nutritional factors, such as having breakfast and the quality of the food, together with physical activity promote learning has been shown in previous research (Quendler, 2002). Quendler notes that undernourished and inactive children tend to attain lower scores on standardized tests and are more likely to have difficulties concentrating, to become sick, to miss school, and to fall behind in class (Quendler, 2002). Quendler concludes from numerous studies that good nutrition and daily physical activity lead to improved scholastic performance, attentiveness, concentration, interest in school, and calmness in class. According to the students in this thesis, physical outdoor experiences that created opportunities to do new things and strenuously exert themselves were supportive of learning. One mediator in this relationship suggested by the students was happiness. The idea presented was that appreciated physical activity adds to happiness, which in turn promotes the ability to engage with schoolwork in other subjects. In line with this, Helliwell et al. (2012) conclude from a number of previous research studies that physical well-being has a large impact on happiness. Regular physical activity is associated with improved mental well-being, for instance, reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression (Ekkekakis, 2015), and, as previously noted, promoting relationships running from happiness to performance has been noted in plenty of previous research studies (Helliwell et al., 2013).

Having enough sleep was considered positive for the ability to work with theoretical subjects in school. Relaxation was another suggested way of learning more effectively. Taking breaks or having some time every day for reading or writing was another way to relax and let go.

A comfortable physical atmosphere such as having comfortable chairs to sit in would, according to the students, promote their ability to concentrate on the schoolwork rather than on their physical constraints. Warmer classrooms were similarly described as positive for concentration in the classrooms. In order to learn better it was considered important to improve the physical environment of the school, both indoors and outdoors. Several places were mentioned, such as the bathrooms, classrooms, schoolyard, and corridors. Students described how they wanted cleaner corridors and more material in the schoolyard for activities. The students wrote that they wanted the bathrooms to be repainted to create a nice, cozy, and generally more pleasant environment, which in turn would promote the students' learning. According to Helliwell et al. (2012), material factors is one out of a few variables accounting for about 80% of inter-country differences in subjective well-being.

Effects considered emanating from mental well-being

The students stated that mental well-being promotes learning, or success in specified school tasks, in several ways. Different positive emotions, such as having fun and feelings of comfort and satisfaction were considered conducive to learning. The students argued that being happy helps one learn more and that having fun has positive implications for learning, a relationship supported by Helliwell et al. (2013). One mediator suggested by the students was "working a little better," which could be interpreted in several ways, but quite readily as concentration, focus, and school engagement. Such a relationship was thus considered to run from fun schoolwork to positive emotions to working well to increased learning. The motivational aspects were sometimes emphasized in that experiencing fun learning increases positive attitude towards doing homework and motivation for learning new things. The students also argued that having fun in class would reduce the number of students playing hooky and that funny teachers would benefit the students by giving them more energy and the ability to do more schoolwork in class. Considering previous research about happiness' conduciveness to learning, there is quite clear evidence to be found. According to UNICEF (2011), young people whose mental health needs are recognized perform better in school, and Helliwell et al. (2013) conclude from reviewing several research studies that happiness functions as a reward mechanism in neurological learning processes. Furthermore, Helliwell et al. also argue that in regard to studies on workplace happiness, job satisfaction predicts future performance, while performance does not predict future job satisfaction. The authors' conclusion is that happiness has positive effects on employees' productivity, performance, and success. On a very general level, a country's adolescent emotional well-being is a strong predictor of its educational achievement (Sznitman et al., 2011).

According to the students, being in better moods had benefits for working with subjects that they were not very interested in. On the other hand, they also noted that happiness contributed to the very appreciation of subjects or lesson content, making them liking or loving a subject because of the happiness it imparted. According to the students, being happy and being allowed to have fun contributed to liking and longing for school subjects or lesson content. For instance, they wrote about happiness stemming from practical subjects and "girl talk," (where groups of only girls talk in the presence of a teacher about matters sometimes a bit sensitive in nature) a happiness that made the students appreciate such activities. That such a relationship would hold actually gets slight indirect support from the fact that happiness positively influences curiosity for employees and also leads to greater engagement in social activities, which is described as empirically verified by Helliwell et al. (2013). This would slightly support the claim that happiness promotes school engagement to the extent that school is a social arena. Another slight support is that happier people tend to enjoy other things than lesson content more than people low in positive moods, such as social interaction (Helliwell et al., 2013). If generalizable to activities other than social activities, this would support the students' idea of mental well-being's positive influence on appreciation of school subjects or lesson content. However, there seems to be a lack of research supporting or falsifying this specific claim.

Another described effect of mental well-being was mental well-being. The students argued that the classmates' happiness positively affected their own happiness in that they became happier and that an individual student's happiness could generate happiness in classmates. Positive emotions were considered as stemming from surrounding persons' happiness and sometimes especially from friends' happiness. This promoting relationship is supported by Helliwell et al. (2013). According to the authors, happiness has the potential to generate positive snowball effects. People who are happier are more likely to bring happiness to other people who are close by, who are in turn more likely to bring happiness to those close to them (2013).

Happiness was also considered promoting pro-social behavior. The students described experiences of being happy as contributing to different pro-social aspects, such as a social environment inheriting encouraging behavior and lacking certain negative characteristics, such as disturbing interactions. According to Helliwell et al. (2013), there is substantial evidence connecting positive moods to higher sociability and better quality of social relationships.

Effects considered emanating from social well-being

In accordance with Helliwell et al. (2013), the students noted the importance of positive social circumstances for happiness. The students indicated that supportive social behavior, such as encouragement and appreciation, contributed to happiness,

and that the absence of pro-social behavior had negative impact on mental well-being. For instance, bullying was considered negative for mental well-being, while kindness and fairness were considered positive for happiness. According to Asher et al. (2014), being treated badly is negative for emotional well-being, while the opposite is true for being treated well. Moreover, Hattie and Yates (2013) state that there is evidence for causal relationships between student treatment and their mental well-being. According to the students in this thesis, being cheered on by peers in sports classes contributed to experiences of fitting in, which in turn contributed to quite long-lasting positive emotions. Some students wrote about the positive influence of supportive friends, encouraging words, and the ending of swear-words from classmates on happiness. Having an open discussion climate where the students were able to talk about everything that happened was positive for feeling good in class, according to the students, which is in accordance with studies reviewed by Asher et al. (2014). The students emphasized the importance of spending time with friends in school for their mental well-being. Also Noddings (2003) notes that there is significant empirical evidence for the idea that good friendships contribute to happiness. Furthermore, having social activities in which the students could meet other peers than those that they usually hung out with was considered conducive to having fun. Experiencing that you were one in the group was considered one of the best things that had ever happened, and losing the sense of belonging had perceived negative emotional effects. This is also in line with results discussed in Asher et al. (2014).

According to the students, besides effects on mental well-being, a positive social atmosphere had a very strong impact on their learning, something that is supported by Lovat and Toomey (2009). The students in this thesis articulated that cooperation with another school friend during lessons was important for their learning processes. According to Asher et al. (2014), there is evidence for students having more productive interactions when engaged in a cognitive task with a friend versus a non-friend. The students in this thesis also wanted both teachers and students to be nice and treat them kindly in order to create a good atmosphere and learn more, where one mediator suggested by the students was mental well-being. A sense of belonging to a group and having friends were considered essential for motivation, a sense of meaningfulness in studying and learning, which is in accordance with research reviewed by Asher et al. (2014). Pro-social behavior being conducive to achievement is supported by plenty of previous research studies (Hattie & Yates, 2013).

Summary and conclusions

In the previous section, I answered and discussed Research question 2 (What effects do early adolescent students consider learning and well-being to have in school?) of this thesis. The effect that the students' perceived stemmed from learning or success in

specified school tasks was mental well-being. However, as noted, the aggregate picture of many previous research studies attempting to verify or falsify such a relationship is dubious. In conclusion, this speaks neither in favor nor in disfavor of the trustworthiness of the students' reasoning in total.

The perceived effects of well-being, were divided in accordance with the WHO's (1946) well-being division into physical, mental, and social well-being. First, for physical well-being, the students considered fulfilling physical needs such as eating nutritional food and engaging in physical activities as having positive effects on both mental well-being and learning, which is in line with previous research. This speaks in favor of the trustworthiness of the students' reasoning.

Regarding effects stemming from mental well-being, the students' perceived several such effects. They argued that mental well-being promotes learning, or success in specified school tasks, school engagement, appreciating subjects or lesson content, greater mental well-being, and pro-social behavior. Most of these promoting relationships gain support from previous research and this speaks in favor of the trustworthiness of the students' reasoning. The students also provide previously untested hypotheses, regarding effects stemming from mental well-being in early adolescent students in school:

- Happiness is conducive to school engagement.
- Happiness is conducive to appreciation of school subjects or lesson content.

This speaks in favor of the novelty of the students' reasoning.

As for social well-being, the students perceived it as promoting both mental well-being and social well-being. Both these promoting relationships are widely supported in previous research, which then also speaks in favor of the trustworthiness of the students' reasoning.

Variety in students' reasoning about learning and well-being in school

In this section, I will answer and discuss research question 3 (What forms of variety are there in early adolescent students' reasoning about learning and well-being?) of this thesis. In order to do this, I will cross-summarize and re-interpret results and discussions from sub-studies I–IV and Articles I–IV.

There were several forms of variety in the students reasoning and I do not claim to be exhaustive in my presentation. Rather I have chosen three forms that are relevant to discuss in relation to the trustworthiness and novelty of the students' reasoning. The

forms of variety are described under three headlines representing these three forms of variety in the students' reasoning:

- Interpersonal variety
- Intrapersonal variety
- Causal variety

All forms of variety are relevant to discuss in relation to the consistency aspect of the trustworthiness of the students' reasoning, while for the causal variety, I will also attempt to determine whether there can be novel research-generating hypotheses formulated directly based directly on their reasoning.

Interpersonal variety

The wide array of experiences of good times in school are described and exemplified in Article I, where the students assert that several different kinds of factors, both from within and beyond the classroom, have influence on their well-being in school. The data represents a wide variety in students' experiences. However, the interpersonal variety in that sub-study does not show any explicit inconsistencies in opinions, since it regards previous private experiences rather than preferences, which will be touched upon in the discussion about causal variety below. Hence, I turn hereby rather to the interpersonal variety in sub-studies II–III as presented in Articles II–III.

In Article II, the wide variety of preferences put forth by the students gives proof of some interpersonal inconsistencies. Some students argued that, in order to make school the best place for learning, there should be more mornings off, while some argued for skipping all mornings off. To take another example, some preferred having more free periods and some wanted to skip all of them. If the students as a group would have put forward consistent opinions about the school as the best place for learning, and if these opinions would have corresponded to previous research findings about conditions for learning in school, it would have provided a more clear cut case for straightforwardly adopting and implementing student proposals in practice, after considering related factors such as economical and organizational ones. However, such interpersonal inconsistencies make room for looking more closely at certain aspects and scrutinizing solutions for potential problems due to inconsistencies in the students' suggested changes. For instance, one could consider a flexibility solution that was proposed by the students themselves in order to give room for personal differences in time-related and other structural preferences. This example highlights the relevance of understanding how the students interpreted the starting sentences for the written reflections. It may have been interpreted as regarding conditions for learning and well-being for all students or for the individual student writing the reflection. If the

students interpreted the task as only concerning their own learning and well-being, their interpersonal inconsistencies would not express logical inconsistencies in Article II.

From sub-study III, the most interesting interpersonal varieties to consider are the variety in decision method dimension and the variety in criterion of rightness dimension, because it says the most about possible inconsistencies in the students' reasoning. As noted in Article III, regarding the interpersonal variety in decision method dimension, the students had several different ideas about how to behave toward each other. For instance, they emphasized duties, rights, virtues, and caring traits, actions, or relationships, and there was some explicit interpersonal inconsistency. On the one hand, some students argued that we should keep our promises, as well as never lie, and never promise to lie. On the other hand, some students explicitly claimed that, in some conditions, it was acceptable to break promises. Again, if there had been only consistent reasoning, it would have been easier to attempt to follow the students' suggestions about how to behave towards each other and use their reasoning as, for instance, values for transmission in moral education and input to curriculum development regarding, for instance, the "fundamental values" in the Swedish national curriculum for the compulsory school (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011, p. 9).

Similar lines of argument are the case for the interpersonal variety in rightness criteria dimension. On the whole, the students expressed such interpersonal variety extensively. They emphasized duties as well as actual and hypothetical consequences as motives for behaving toward each other in school in the ways previously described. Accordingly, different rightness criteria were interpreted as being grounds for different decision methods. They also reasoned from diverse ethical perspectives in regard to both the same and different situations. Hedonistic qualities, such as pleasure or happiness, were characterized as morally significant. Some students also pointed to the relevance of maintaining a pleasant and nice atmosphere in school as well as being true to oneself. Some justified their views of the moral status of some behavior by referring to roles and to powers that one possesses when playing a certain role in a situation. Motives in terms of both egoistic and less narrow consequentialist reasoning were put forward, and duties such as compulsory school attendance were referred to as reasons for actions. That the students referred to central characteristics of very different theories within normative ethics, makes the attempt to interpret their reasoning in a consistent way less appropriate, since such normative theories are in themselves sophisticated attempts to provide consistent normative approaches and exclude each other more or less by definition. Following one normative theory exhaustively in all possible actions, typically makes following another impossible. Thus, the occurrence of such variety in rightness criteria dimension makes the trustworthiness of the students' reasoning lower than if such variety had not occurred.

Intrapersonal variety

In Article III, three forms of intrapersonal variety in the students' moral reasoning were also found, which were: intrapersonal variety in decision method dimension, intrapersonal variety in criterion of rightness dimension, and intrapersonal variety between the two dimensions. One example presented in Article III of intrapersonal variety in decision method dimension was when a student explicitly adhered to both pragmatic and non-pragmatic decision methods regarding the same hypothetical dilemma, but in different actions or having different preconditions within it. Variation in children's moral reasoning in connection to different actions has been noticed in previous research (Smetana 2006). Such interpersonal varieties do not necessarily speak in disfavor of the trustworthiness of the students' reasoning, because there could be several consistent moral reasoning schemas prescribing different decision procedures for different kinds of actions.

One instance of intrapersonal variety in rightness criteria dimension was when a student argued from actual consequences as well as hypothetical consequences after recasting a maxim as universal law. In that case, the student adhered to different rightness criteria and applied them to the same decision method.

In line with the findings of intrapersonal varieties in the students' reasoning in decision method dimension and rightness criterion dimension, there were also examples of intrapersonal divergences between decision method and criterion of rightness in the students' reasoning. However, as noted previously in "Data processing," Tännsjö (1998) claims that one should utilize a decision method that corresponds well to one's criterion of rightness. However, there are other acknowledged ethicists who contest this claim, such as Hare (1981), which makes judging the trustworthiness of the students' reasoning regarding the variety between decision method dimension and criterion of rightness dimension more difficult.

In all, however, there are forms of intrapersonal varieties that speak slightly in disfavor of the trustworthiness of the students' reasoning.

Causal variety

In Articles I and IV, it was noted that the students presented a very complex picture of what factors influenced and were influenced by learning and well-being or subjective well-being. In Article I, it was noticed that the students not only held that well-being promoted learning, but that learning also promoted well-being. In Article IV, five perceived relationships between subjective well-being and other factors were found in the students' reasoning. These were:

(i) Happiness and learning
(ii) Happiness and school engagement

(iii) Happiness and appreciation of subjects or lesson content
(iv) Happiness and others' happiness
(v) Happiness and prosocial behavior

For a visual overview, see Figure 1:

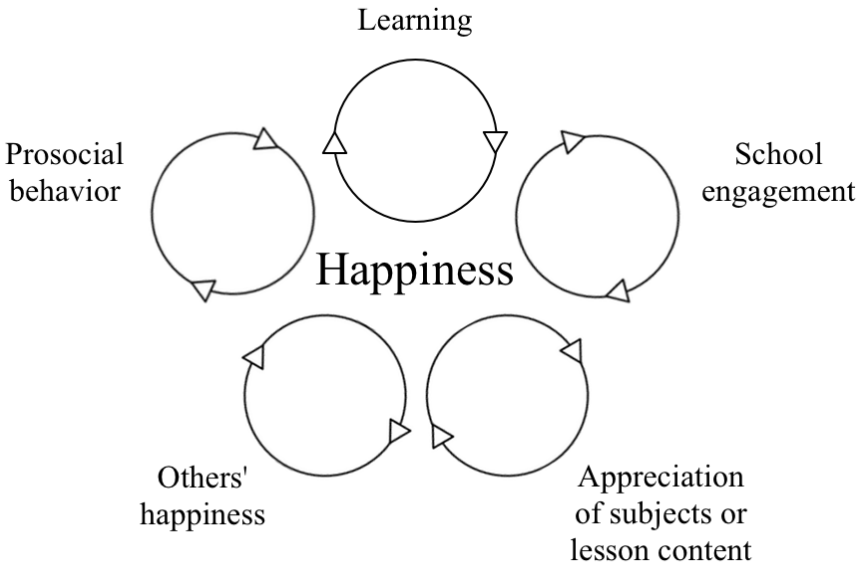

Figure 1: Comprehensive representation of the students' perceived bidirectional crossovers of happiness.

The question in this section is if the students' reasoning should lose trustworthiness because of the students' variety of perceptions of the promoting relationships. If the students' had been interpreted as stating that a causal relationship would have run from an instance A (e.g., an instance of school engagement) to another instance B (e.g., an instance of happiness) and back to the first instance A, this would have been incompatible with the common sense understanding of causality, which would have undermined the trustworthiness of the students' reasoning. However, the students described their own wide array of experiences and their different preferences often closely connected in content to those experiences. The data contained plenty of examples of perceived well-being incidents in school, including perceived promoting relationships between diverse types of instances. The character of the data together with previous theory (Helliwell et al., 2013; Rodríguez-Muñoz et al., 2013) influenced the development of my definition, here again re-stated, of a "bidirectional

crossover between A and B" (Backman, 2015, p. 4) as a relationship within a domain where:

- An instance of type A directly or indirectly promotes an instance of type B, and
- An instance of type B directly or indirectly promotes an instance of type A.

This definition allows for accurate interpretations and divisions of the data. As successively exemplified in Article IV, the students described incidents where an instance of some first type A (e.g., school engagement) promoted another instance of a second type B (e.g., happiness). For each bidirectional crossover of subjective well-being represented in Article IV, there was also another student reflection, describing the inverse promoting relationship, from an instance of the second type B (e.g., happiness) back to *another* instance of the first type A (e.g., school engagement). Hence, alongside provision of means for making accurate data divisions, using this definition as a data processing tool in Article IV reduces the accuracy of interpreting the students' described experiences and preferences as erratic.

Regarding the novelty of the reasoning noted in sub-study IV, it is relevant to compare the five perceived bidirectional crossovers to previous research. This was performed in Article IV, and the conclusion there about this was that the students' perceptions in several respects align with decades of previous research about the determinants and effects of subjective well-being. It was also noted that the perceived bidirectional crossovers most lacking in previous studies and most in need of consideration in future research were (ii) Happiness and school engagement and (iii) Happiness and appreciation of subjects or lesson content, while for the theme (i) Happiness and learning, the conclusions from previous studies were dubious regarding whether learning contributes to happiness. Thus, there were certain novel perceived bidirectional crossovers provided by the students participating in this study.

Summary and conclusions

In the previous section, I answered and discussed Research question 3 (What forms of variety are there in early adolescent students' reasoning about learning and well-being?) of this thesis. The findings of interpersonal varieties gave some indications regarding interpersonal inconsistencies in the students' reasoning. This was the case for sub-study II and III. In sub-study II, such interpersonal inconsistencies were very explicit, which could speak in disfavor of the trustworthiness of the students' reasoning. There were, however, also solutions proposed to such interpersonal inconsistencies by the students, which again would increase the decreased trustworthiness. Because the writing task may have been interpreted either as

regarding conditions for learning and well-being for all students or for the individual student writing the reflection, the interpersonal inconsistencies expressed do not yield evidence for logical interpersonal inconsistencies in the students' reasoning. Hence, they do not speak to a large extent in disfavor of the trustworthiness of the students' reasoning. However, it still remains clear that if the students as a group had put forward consistent opinions about the school as the best place for learning, it would have provided a more clear cut case for straightforwardly trusting, adopting, and implementing student proposals in practice, after considering related factors such as economical and organizational ones. Hence, these interpersonal inconsistencies speak in slight disfavor of the trustworthiness of the reasoning of the group of students regarding conditions for learning and well-being for *all* students.

In sub-study III, inconsistencies were indicated (but these were not as explicit as those in sub-study II) in both decision method dimension and criterion of rightness dimension. These results speak in slight disfavor of the trustworthiness of the students' reasoning.

In sub-study III, two forms of intrapersonal variety, in decision method dimension and in criterion of rightness dimension, were found. The variety in criterion of rightness dimension slightly indicated inconsistencies in the students' reasoning. This also speaks in slight disfavor of the trustworthiness of the students' reasoning. Intrapersonal variety between decision method dimension and criterion of rightness dimension was also found, which does not clearly speak in disfavor of the trustworthiness of the students' reasoning, since the question of a need for correspondence between decision method dimension and criterion of rightness dimension is disputed among leading theorists in the field of normative ethics.

Regarding the causal variety found in sub-study I and IV, these do not speak in disfavor of the students' reasoning. The data together with the elaborated definition of "bidirectional crossovers" of subjective well-being (Backman, 2015, p. 4) facilitate understanding why these varieties do not speak in such disfavor. However, as previously noted, the students' perceived bidirectional crossovers of subjective well-being gain support through previous research in most cases. There was one case where the previous research was dubious. This speaks neither in favor nor disfavor of the trustworthiness of the students' reasoning. There were also some hypotheses not elaborated upon in previous research. This supports the novelty of the students' reasoning.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The three research questions were answered and discussed at length and also summarized in the above chapter "Results and discussion." I will now turn to some concluding remarks about what the described and discussed results say about the epistemic privilege of Swedish early adolescent students. I will start with discussing the trustworthiness of the students' reasoning, followed by the novelty of it, which both have consequences for the standpoint theory proposed in this thesis. As the proposed standpoint theory ranges over Swedish early adolescent students in general, issues of generalizability and transferability emerge as relevant, which I discuss in relation to the standpoint theory and the results in total. Then, I will return to the initially presented hopes for contributing to the field of education and discuss them in relation to the results and discussions in this thesis. Finally, I will give some suggestions for future research.

Epistemic privilege

As noticed in "Theoretical framework" earlier in this thesis, the two claims regarding the type of epistemic privilege attributed to Swedish early adolescent students in the specific standpoint theory proposed in this thesis are that their reasoning (based on their social position) about conditions and effects of learning and well-being in their school age (1) corresponds with actual states of affairs, and (2) provides novel hypotheses. I wrote then that I would later on determine the truth-value of (1) and (2), through comparing their reasoning with previous research and consider inconsistencies in their reasoning. Such comparisons and considerations were performed in the above section and what lies ahead now is to draw conclusions upon the truth-value of (1) and (2) along with determining the potential epistemic privilege of Swedish early adolescent students.

The trustworthiness of the students' reasoning

Let us begin with determining whether the students' reasoning corresponds with actual states of affairs. There were no cases noticed where the students' reasoning contradicted hypotheses established by previous empirical research. It might, however, be that my representation of the students' reasoning let out cases which would have contradicted such hypotheses, but such cases have at least not been noticed by me. It might also be that there is research not known by me that would have contradicted the students' reasoning, but there were at least no such contradictions for the research considered in this thesis, and there were no deliberate attempts by me to exclude

research that would falsify the students' reasoning. To continue, there were some cases where the students' reasoning described conditions or effects of learning or well-being which previous research remains dubious about. Such cases, I have concluded, speak neither for nor against the trustworthiness of the students' reasoning. Furthermore, there were indeed some domains of factors considered in previous research that were not brought up by the students, but as they did not deny such factors, this does not speak against the trustworthiness of the students' reasoning. Finally, there was a vast amount of cases where the students' reasoning corresponded to previous research reviews and reports, as described in the "Results and discussion" section. Hence, in total, the comparison with previous research speaks to a large extent to the idea that the students' reasoning corresponds with actual states of affairs.

However, to conclude upon the truth-value of (1) and thus the trustworthiness of the students, it is relevant to consider also the inconsistencies in the students' reasoning as previously discussed in the section "Variety in students' reasoning about learning and well-being in school" above. As previously noted, there were some indicated inconsistencies of different kinds in the students' reasoning that speak in slight, but not considerable, disfavor of the trustworthiness of the students' reasoning. Put in relation to the very large extent to which the students' reasoning corresponded to previous research, the slight decrease in trustworthiness remains peripheral. I close the judgment of the truth-value of claim (1) for the students' reasoning in this thesis, by stating that the evidence provided here speaks to a large extent for the students' reasoning corresponding to actual states of affairs, that is, for the truth of claim (1) in the standpoint theory presented in this thesis. This means that the students' reasoning regarding conditions for and effects of learning and well-being in school in total is trustworthy to a large extent.

The novelty of the students' reasoning

As noted, the second claim in the standpoint theory presented in this thesis regards the novelty of the students' reasoning. As far as I have seen, in comparison between the students' reasoning and previous research, the students perceived several promoting relationships that have not been previously tested. These were the following:

- Excursions and educational visits outside school are conducive to learning,
- Physical activity promotes learning in theoretical subjects more than in practical subjects,
- School engagement functions as a mediator in a causal relationship running from happiness to learning,
- Appreciation of school subjects or lesson content is conducive to happiness,
- Practical subjects are more conducive to happiness than theoretical subjects,

- Outings and excursions promote social well-being,
- Happiness is conducive to school engagement, and
- Happiness is conducive to appreciation of school subjects or lesson content.

Standpoint epistemology in light of the results and discussions

As previously noted, if claim (1) were true for the totality of the students' reasoning, it would speak to a very large extent in favor of the trustworthiness of the students' reasoning, and if claim (2) were also true, it would speak in favor of applying the novel hypotheses in future research. Since the results and discussions in this thesis speak to a large extent (though not conclusively) in favor of the idea that students' reasoning about the conditions and effects of learning and well-being in their school (1) corresponds with actual states of affairs, and (2) provides novel hypotheses, this in turn speaks in favor of the standpoint theory proposed. However, as the methodological choices were not based on standards for generalizability (e.g., randomized selection of research participants), the claims for an epistemic privilege are not easily generalizable. However, the evidence for the epistemic privilege of the students participating in this study remains a starting point for future research, where the proposed standpoint epistemological claims would be further tested.

Transferability

When it comes to the transferability or external validity of the specific sub-studies, it was found to be relevant to consider whether the transferable theories from the studies are made explicit, and whether the findings are congruent with, connected to, or confirmatory of prior theory (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In each of the Articles I–IV, the findings were compared and discussed in relation to previous up-to-date empirical research, which was also done above for this thesis as such. In general, the findings are congruent with prior theory, and certain cases where this is not the case have been displayed and discussed in the articles in relation to theory development and the relevance of testing new theories through future research.

Besides these remarks about external validity or transferability of all of the sub-studies, it could more specifically be said about sub-studies III and IV that they provide novel (while also deeply connected to previous theory) data processing accounts that are now available for the research community to utilize through the descriptions of the accounts in the respective Articles III–IV. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), the processes and outcomes described should be generic enough to be applicable in other contexts, in order to be externally valid, a condition thus satisfied.

Revisiting initial hopes for contribution to education

One hope of mine with this thesis was to contribute to the field of education. As described, such a contribution could be made through providing knowledge about conditions for furthering education in respects such as knowledge acquisition (see Hirst & Peters, 1970; Peters, 1973). Both learning and well-being are in several ways key in education, which has been demonstrated through reference to an influential definition of education (Hirst & Peters, 1970; Peters, 1973), the Swedish national curriculum for the compulsory school (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011) and plenty of previous empirical research. Besides providing insights into Swedish early adolescent students' rich and nuanced reasoning about learning and well-being in school, this thesis provides a comparative compilation (though indeed not exhaustive), profoundly connected to previous theory and well-established definitions (e.g., Helliwell et al., 2013; WHO, 1946), of previous empirical research about the conditions for and effects of learning and well-being. This provides information about how to further education in two of the respects included in Hirst and Peters' (1970) and Peters' (1973) analysis of education. Those were the acquisition of knowledge and the embracement of positive attitudes towards domains of knowledge into which the students are initiated in school. Hence, this thesis provides information about the *conditions for* furthering education.

In addition to providing insights into the students' reasoning, and being informative for the research and teacher communities about the conditions for furthering education, this research highlights the very complex relationship between learning and well-being. Moreover, the comparison between the results of the four sub-studies and previous research provides evidence (albeit not conclusive) that the reasoning of the here participating Swedish early adolescent students satisfies conditions (1) and (2) of the standpoint theory proposed in this thesis. In consequence, this provides evidence (again not conclusive) for the potential of Swedish early adolescent students to contribute to acquiring knowledge in the research and teacher communities of how to further educational practice. The research community has thus been provided with information about groups of research subjects and research methods relevant for future knowledge acquisition by the research community regarding conditions for, e.g., knowledge acquisition by the students in school. The teacher community has been provided equal information about students as knowledge sources for development of learning and well-being conditions in school practice. Hence, besides contributing with information about the *conditions for* furthering education, this thesis provides researchers and teachers with novel information about some *conditions for* gaining knowledge about how to find *conditions for* furthering education.

Suggestions for further research

The comparison between the students' reasoning in the four sub-studies and previous research showed eight previously un-tested hypotheses generated directly from the students' reasoning (see "The novelty of the students' reasoning" above). These may well be studied further in future research.

The relationship between learning and well-being could be explored further. The idea that well-being is conducive to learning has been established in previous research, but previous research remains dubious about the conduciveness of specific forms of learning and education to well-being. Further research could also make use of the division established by the WHO (1946) of health into the three domains—physical, mental, and social well-being, as in this thesis—because promoting relationships may differ between domains of well-being.

Furthermore, in sub-study III, six forms of inter- and intrapersonal variety in students' moral reasoning were found through employing the distinction between decision method and criterion of rightness. The use of this distinction enabled a nuanced understanding of the variety in students' moral reasoning, and may well be used in large-scale studies, for example, to explore the rate of occurrence of each respective form of variety. Future research could also examine the potential context dependence of the different forms of variety, starting with asking whether there are differences in how each respective form of variety is affected by different kinds of changes in context and to what degree they are sensitive to these changes. Current research on context dependence does not suffice to answer such questions, since the distinction between these forms of reasoning has not been used. Furthermore, studying students' moral reasoning has been widely used as a method in a broad range of educational research. The more fine-grained understanding of moral reasoning presented in Article III could be used to facilitate new findings in future research through employment of the six forms of varieties as analyzing categories. For example, higher quality of moral reasoning has been found to correlate with a lower tendency to delinquent behavior in adolescents (Beerthuizen et al., 2013; Palmer, 2003), and an important future research endeavor could be to study whether certain forms of variety correspond more strongly to such factors than others. Such findings could further guide educational policy and classroom practice.

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), measures of a qualitative study's external validity are whether the processes and outcomes described are generic enough to be applicable in other contexts and whether the study suggests settings where the findings could fruitfully be tested further. Besides the applicability of the method for data processing in sub-study III, it could also be noted here that sub-study IV supplies a systematic framework for interpreting qualitative outputs and provides conceptual as well as analytical direction for future research about happiness in education. The

formal expression "bidirectional crossovers of subjective well-being" could function to provide analytic categories in future research, while the more informal expression "circles of happiness" could be used in education, allowing teachers and students to conceptualize everyday events in the classroom.

Finally, the outlined specific standpoint theory in this thesis along with the evidence for the epistemic privilege for the Swedish early adolescent students participating in this study could function as a starting point for future research in which the proposed standpoint epistemological claims may well be further tested for Swedish early adolescent students in general.

SVENSK SAMMANFATTNING

På senare tid har svenska elevers prestationer i standardiserade mätningar rönt betydande uppmärksamhet i rapporter från både nationella och internationella organisationer. Enligt rapporterna har svenska elevers resultat i internationella tester försämrats drastiskt sedan 1990-talet. Inget annat OECD-land har dalat lika dramatiskt i *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA) som Sverige har gjort. Detta har haft stor inverkan på den nationella debatten om vilka faktorer som påverkar förvärvande av kunskap. Samtidigt som den i PISA uppvisade kunskapsnivån har sjunkit, har svenska ungdomars mentala problem ökat sedan 1990-talet. Tidigare forskning har visat välbefinnandets positiva påverkan på lärande, och två explicita mål i både nuvarande och tidigare svenska läroplaner för det obligatoriska skolväsendet är elevers lärande och välbefinnande. Samtidigt understryks vikten av att möjliggöra yngre ungdomars (10–14 år) delaktighet i att förbättra sina egna villkor i ett flertal aktuella rapporter från inflytelserika icke-statliga organisationer, såsom Världshälsoorganisationen och UNICEF. Dock kräver främjandet av elevers utveckling en ingående förståelse för elevers nuvarande situation, vilket försvåras av att sådana data om yngre ungdomar är relativt sällsynta.

Avhandlingens syfte är att undersöka hur elever i yngre ungdomsåren resonerar om lärande och välbefinnande i skolan. En kvalitativ design med öppna skrivuppgifter och intervjufrågor konstruerades för att underlätta införlivande av elevers resonemang om lärande och välbefinnande i forskning, i enlighet med studiens aktivt hälsofrämjande (salutogena) utgångspunkt och den specifika ståndpunktsteori (ståndpunktsepistemologi) som föreslås och används i avhandlingen.

Det empiriska materialet samlades in från skolor som var del av det obligatoriska skolväsendet i norra Sverige. Materialet bestod av (1) skriftliga reflektioner av 200 elever i årskurserna 5–9 från elva klasser i fyra olika skolor belägna i två kommuner, och (2) intervjuer med 24 elever (12–15 år), från två skolor i en kommun. Fyra delstudier bedrevs och presenterades i fyra vetenskapliga tidskriftsartiklar. Data i delstudierna I, II och IV bestod av de ovan nämnda skriftliga reflektionerna, medan data i delstudie III bestod av de ovan nämnda intervjuerna.

Den första delstudien behandlade tidigare positiva erfarenheter från elever i yngre ungdomsåren och visade att eleverna ansåg att aspekter både inom och bortom klassrummet var viktiga för att ha det bra i skolan. Mer specifikt handlade elevernas positiva erfarenheter om (i) interaktion med lärare, (ii) frihet att välja skolarbete och kamrater att göra skolarbete med, (iii) diskussionsklimat, (iv) skolämne och framgång, (v) lärandeprocesser vid utflykter, (vi) vänner och (vii) grundläggande behov. Resultaten visar en uppfattad komplex relation mellan lärande och välbefinnande i skolan, vilken med fördel kan studeras vidare i framtida forskning.

Den andra delstudien undersökte elevers preferenser om skolan som lärandemiljö. Eleverna framhöll en mängd olika perspektiv på vilka typer av strukturer, innehåll, handlingar och attityder som kan ha positiv inverkan på lärandemiljöer i skolan. Elevernas olika reflektioner sorterades in under fyra teman: (i) att påverka utbildning, (ii) strävan efter ömsesidighet, (iii) att hantera tidsmässiga svårigheter, och (iv) att tillfredsställa välbefinnande-behov. Förutom att bidra med utvecklingsmöjligheter gällande villkor för lärande i skolan som överensstämmer väl med tidigare forskning, så indikerar även resultaten en stor variation och vissa inkonsistenser i elevernas uppfattningar om villkor för lärande.

I den tredje delstudien analyserades intervjudata genom en distinktion mellan beslutsmetod och riktighetskriterium, vilken sällan tidigare har tillämpats i empirisk forskning. Sex former av variation i elevernas etiska resonemang noterades, refererade till enligt följande: (i) interpersonell variation gällande beslutsmetod, (ii) intrapersonell variation gällande beslutsmetod, (iii) interpersonell variation gällande riktighetskriterium, (iv) intrapersonell variation gällande riktighetskriterium, (v) interpersonell variation mellan beslutsmetod och riktighetskriterium, och (vi) intrapersonell variation mellan beslutsmetod och riktighetskriterium. Användandet av distinktionen mellan beslutsmetod och riktighetskriterium möjliggjorde en nyanserad förståelse av variationer i elevernas etiska resonemang. Distinktionen kan vara användbar i storskaliga studier, till exempel för att undersöka hur vanlig respektive form av variation är. Framtida forskning kan också undersöka kontextberoende för de olika formerna av variation.

I den fjärde delstudien noterades att eleverna uppfattade fem ”dubbelriktade crossovereffekter” gällande subjektivt välbefinnande (dvs. de uppfattade två-väga överföringar mellan lycka och fem andra aspekter inom skolans domän) i de skriftliga reflektionerna. Dessa var: (i) lycka och lärande, (ii) lycka och engagemang i skolan, (iii) lycka och uppskattning av skolämnen och lektionsinnehåll, (iv) lycka och andras lycka, och (v) lycka och pro-socialt beteende. Förutom att bidra med nya hypoteser om det subjektiva välbefinnandets dubbelriktade crossovereffekter, tillhandahåller denna delstudie ett systematiskt ramverk för att tolka kvalitativa data och bidrar i begreppslig och analytisk riktning till fortsatt forskning om villkor för och effekter av lycka i utbildning. En definition av det subjektiva välbefinnandets ”dubbelriktade crossovereffekter” föreslås, vilken bidrar till analytiska kategorier för framtida forskning, medan det mer informella uttrycket ”lyckocirklar” kan användas i utbildning, genom att erbjuda lärare och elever medel att begreppsliggöra vardagliga händelser i klassrummet.

I den avslutande delen av avhandlingen jämförs elevers resonemang om villkor för och effekter av lärande och välbefinnande i skolan med tidigare empirisk forskning genom användande av etablerade och nya definitioner och teorier. Jämförelsen visar betydande överensstämmelse mellan elevernas resonemang och tidigare forskning,

vilket indikerar att elevernas resonemang om villkor för och effekter av lärande och välbefinnande i skolan är pålitliga. Nya forskningsgenererande hypoteser formuleras även direkt baserade på elevernas resonemang. Att deras resonemang är pålitliga och lägger grund för tidigare oprövade hypoteser antyder att de deltagande eleverna har ett epistemiskt (kunskapsmässigt) privilegium i dessa frågor. Detta utgör en utgångspunkt för framtida forskning där anspråken om ett epistemiskt privilegium i avhandlingens föreslagna ståndpunktsteori kan testas vidare för svenska elever i yngre ungdomsåren som helhet.

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