

Constructions of Wellbeing by Undergraduate students: A Discourse
Analysis of Secondary Data

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Abbreviations

AUDIT-C: Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test

CES-D: Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale

DA: Discourse Analysis

DASS: Depression and Anxiety Stress Scale

FDA: Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

FMI: Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory

HADS: Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale

IPA: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

MHC-SF: Mental Health Continuum Short Form

MJTP: Mindful Jeddah Training Program

MTP: My Time Program

NHS: National Health Service

OTFS: On Track For Success Scale

p: Page number of Journal Article

PANAS: Positive and Negative Affects Scale

PAS: Perception of Academic Stress Scale

PhD: Doctor of Philosophy

QEWB: Questionnaire for Eudaemonic Wellbeing

QSA: Qualitative Secondary Analysis

SMaRteN: The Student Mental Health Research Network

SSI: Student-life Stress Inventory

STAI: State-Trait Anxiety Inventory

SWEMWBS: Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale

SWOT: Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats

TA: Thematic Analysis

UK: United Kingdom

UoL: University of Leeds

WEMWBS: Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale

WHO: World Health Organization

WHO-5: World Health Organizations Wellbeing Scale

WoW: Wheel of Wellbeing

Abstract

Introduction: Wellbeing is described in multiple ways in the literature and therefore continues to defy a simple definition. Phrases like wellness, psychological wellbeing, subjective wellbeing, and mental health are commonly used. Principles of Discourse Analysis were applied to the student wellbeing literature to deconstruct the language researchers used within their studies. The constructions and discourses identified were wellbeing as reckless behaviour, something that was linked to productivity, and something which could be 'easily fixed'. The discourse of mental health was also dominant throughout most of the literature. The study explored how undergraduate students constructed wellbeing and what dominant discourses were being drawn on, as well as the consequences and implications of this.

Method: The study was a secondary analysis of a pedagogical wellbeing study which explored how to facilitate and develop student wellbeing in the curriculum at the University of Leeds. The data was analysed using Foucauldian Discourse Analysis on six semi-structured interviews.

Results: Three dominant constructions were found which were connection with peers, success at university, and security in accommodation. These were located within several macro discourses some of which included community, human rights, achievement, family, and psychological safety. Students' constructions and discourses allowed them to manage their personal agency and collective relationship with wellbeing differently. For some this elicited control and power over their circumstances, for others it created stuckness and disempowerment.

Discussion: The findings highlight the need for NHS and counselling services to continue to think holistically about student wellbeing and to remain cautious of labelling wellbeing as mental health. Also, for future researchers to be mindful of how they define and capture wellbeing, and whether the language they use reflects the students' perspective, or

whether it is influenced by their own constructions. Strengths and limitations were also considered as well as recommendations for future research.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This research explored how wellbeing is constructed amongst undergraduate university students and what dominant discourses they drew on. It also explored the consequences and implications of why students constructed wellbeing in particular ways. The chapter will begin by presenting some common definitions and validated measurements of wellbeing. An example of models and frameworks of wellbeing will also be discussed. The chapter will then deconstruct a selection of literature exploring university student wellbeing. As most of the student wellbeing literature is written from a positivist/ realist stance, this deconstruction will show the value of a critical/ social constructionist view which recognises the active role researchers' play within their research and the consequences of this. This alternative approach offers a different perspective of student wellbeing compared to what currently exists within the literature.

Defining wellbeing

The term wellbeing is used in different ways in the literature to label a variety of concepts. Some examples of how wellbeing is described include psychological wellbeing, subjective wellbeing, and wellness (Dodd et al., 2021; Stallman et al., 2018). There have been attempts to define wellbeing throughout the years. One definition suggests that wellbeing is a combination of conceptual metaphors which incorporate different constructs, such as considering wellbeing a 'coping reservoir' directed by personality, coping style, and external stressors (Dunn et al., 2008). The World Health Organisation (WHO; 1946) initially defined wellbeing as something which was constructed alongside a physical health discourse. They have since updated this definition (WHO, 2023) and now propose that mental health is a state of wellbeing which involves an individual realizing their own potential, being able to cope with normal stresses of life, working productively, and contributing to their community. In addition, when wellbeing and mental health are discussed in the literature they also are often

constructed as one. This imprecision in language can at times make it unclear what researchers are investigating.

Measurements of wellbeing

There are multiple ways in which wellbeing is being measured within the literature. Most commonly, researchers use validated instruments which often attempt to measure individuals' levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and satisfaction, rather than their overall wellbeing (Lonka et al., 2008). One validated instrument which was designed to measure wellbeing is the Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS; Tennant et al., 2007). The measure focuses entirely on positive aspects of mental wellbeing such as positive affect (feelings of optimism, cheerfulness, and relaxation), satisfying interpersonal relationships, and positive functioning (clear thinking, self-acceptance, personal development, competence, and autonomy). The WEMWBS (Tennant et al., 2007) is used within the National Health Service (NHS) and education sectors such as universities and colleges (Warwick Medical School, 2021). Other validated instruments that also measure wellbeing include, the Positive, and Negative Affects Scale (PANAS; Watson et al., 1988) which looks at self-reported anxiety, depression, and recovery, and the Questionnaire for Eudaimonic Wellbeing (QEWB; Waterman et al., 2010) which looks at self-discovery, sense of purpose and meaning in one's life. Due to the variability and subjectivity between the different validated instruments present in the literature, it could be suggested that the way in which wellbeing is measured is reliant upon how researchers choose to construct it. This is often based on researchers own constructions and positions of what wellbeing should look like and what they believe contributes to good and bad wellbeing.

Constructs of wellbeing

Tripartite model of subjective wellbeing

There are different theoretical conceptualisations and frameworks which have attempted to construct what wellbeing is, and what factors may influence it. Below are two examples which demonstrate how wellbeing can be constructed differently by researchers within the literature. The tripartite model of subjective wellbeing (Diener & Ryan, 2009; See Figure 1) is one example of a model which is frequently used within the wellbeing literature. This model predicts that for one to achieve good wellbeing there must be a positive relationship between three key areas which are contextual factors (life events, sociodemographic factors), cognitive factors, and affective factors (low levels of anxiety and depression). The model also concludes that there are distinct, but related, components of wellbeing which include having a good balance between pleasurable feelings (positive affect) and negative emotional reactions (negative affect), and life satisfaction (aspirations and goals). However, there have been criticisms of this model regarding its assumptions about causal relationships. For example, Diener and Ryan (2009) proposed that positive and negative emotions could predict changes in life satisfaction over time and across situations. This was later disputed by Busseri and Sadava (2011), who claimed that there was no direct evidence to support this conclusion as previous studies mostly focussed on a correlational design where all three factors (life satisfaction, positive emotions, negative emotions) were measured concurrently. In a later study by Metler and Busseri (2017), they found that both positive affect and negative affect jointly influenced life satisfaction, but not vice versa. This suggests that the causal structure of the model may not be bidirectional as once thought.

Figure 1- Diener and Ryan (2009) Tripartite model of subjective wellbeing



Wheel of Wellbeing (WoW)

The wheel of wellbeing (WoW) is an example of a framework which constructs wellbeing differently compared to the tripartite model of subjective wellbeing. The WoW was developed by researchers in 2009 to improve the public's understanding of mental health and wellbeing as part of the Well London city-wide health program. The overall aim of the WoW is to positively promote wellbeing by encouraging individuals to focus on specific interventions to enhance their day-to-day life to increase positive emotions and social interaction (Hann, 2017). The framework is based on theory of change (Hann, 2017) which has five main components which are resources (client group, venues and materials), facilitators and barriers (what needs to be in place to allow others to engage in activities), activities (what needs to happen to implement these), outcomes (what effect do you think this will have) and impact (what do you want to change about the current situation). The WoW has six components (See Figure 2) linked to associated actions: body (being active), mind (life-long learning and creativity), spirit (giving and receiving positive emotions), people (connecting with others), place (neighbourhoods), and planet (caring for the environment). These components have been included in training packages across different cultural

communities within and beyond the UK to help enhance psychoeducation and understanding of wellbeing (Hann, 2017).

In summary, the Tripartite model of subjective wellbeing and the WoW are two examples of the different ways in which wellbeing is constructed within the literature. The Tripartite model of subjective wellbeing constructs wellbeing as happiness, trait anxiety, and trait depression, whereas the WoW takes more holistic stance by highlighting the importance of connecting with others, being active, and individuals' environments as key components of wellbeing. The lack of appreciation for the variations between how models and frameworks are constructed within the literature is not always acknowledged by researchers. Thinking more critically about this would help recognise the active role that researchers play within their constructions and would also highlight what the consequences of not acknowledging this might be.

Figure 2 - Wheel of wellbeing (WoW)



Note. This model was developed in 2009 as part of the Well London program. It was taken from “Wheel of Wellbeing (WoW) health promotion program: Australian participants report on their experiences and impacts” by Spain et al., (2021), *BMC Public Health*, 21, 1-11.

University student wellbeing

Literature in relation to the wellbeing of university students is currently high on the political agenda throughout the United Kingdom (UK) and continues to be a growing concern (Brown, 2018; Hughes et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2021). Poor student wellbeing is often reported in the literature as being associated with high levels of chronic stress and university demands (Byrnes et al., 2020). Research has suggested that low levels of wellbeing can be prevalent right at the beginning of student's university journey (transition stage) due to challenges in adapting to new circumstances and absence of social support (Brown, 2016). Wrench et al. (2014) found that transitioning to university was complex for many students' and that there were various factors which could impact on their wellbeing during this time. Some of these included feeling like they didn't fit in or belong, managing competing course demands, and trying to make sense of their university course during their first year. It has also been reported that for some students' low levels of wellbeing and increased levels of distress can continue to remain consistently high even after the initial transition stage to university. For example, Bewick et al. (2010) found that self-reported psychological distress failed to return to pre-registration levels for students throughout their time at university.

In the UK, charities and networks have been developed to help provide additional types of support for university students. For example, Student Minds is a UK based charity which was developed to support students who were struggling with their mental health. They provide free online self-help resources and tools, such as a 'wellbeing toolkit' (Student Minds, n.d.) which aims to help students identify triggers and coping strategies to support their wellbeing. The Student Mental Health Research Network (SMaRteN) is also in partnership with Student Minds. SMaRteN is a national research network funded by UK research and innovation and aims to help build an understanding of what institutional and systemic factors contribute to distress amongst the student population. Once

SMARteN have this understanding, they can then investigate ways to further support students' mental health.

Deconstructing university student wellbeing literature

There appears to be a lack of appreciation for the construction and complexity of student wellbeing within the literature, particularly within studies which adopt a quantitative methodology. Therefore, a literature review was carried out to deconstruct the language used by researchers. This construction offered a critical perspective and provided a deeper understanding of how researchers were constructing student wellbeing. It also highlighted some of the consequences of constructing wellbeing in particular ways. A summary of each study was provided on a selection of student wellbeing literature which was followed by a deconstruction using principles of Discourse Analysis (DA). Using principles of DA throughout the deconstruction provided coherence and consistency with the methodology used within the analysis below.

The process of the literature review involved searching for research papers using a wide range of databases (e.g., Google Scholar, PsycINFO, and the University of Leeds online library) and search terms (e.g., 'Student Wellbeing', 'Student AND Wellbeing', 'Student OR Undergraduate Wellbeing' and 'University AND Wellbeing'). This generated a large number of journal articles some of which have been included below. The journal articles selected for the literature review were those which gave the clearest examples of dominant constructions and discourses found in the literature. The deconstruction of these papers revealed four dominant constructions and discourses which were wellbeing as reckless behaviour, wellbeing as productivity, wellbeing as something students could 'easily fix', and wellbeing as mental health.

Wellbeing as reckless behaviour

Language present in the student wellbeing literature at times constructed student wellbeing as reckless behaviour. This was linked to the way in which researchers chose to talk about wellbeing throughout their studies as well as the language they drew on within their conclusions. One example of a study which constructed student wellbeing as reckless behaviour was by Skead and Rogers (2014) who investigated whether there was a correlation between how law students spent their time (at and away from university) and their wellbeing. They also looked at students' sense of belongingness and their self-reported levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. Skead and Rogers (2014) recruited 206 Australian Law students (years one to five) and asked them to complete a 30-minute online survey. The survey included measures such as the Student-life Stress Inventory (SSI; Gadzella, 1994), State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI; Spielberger, 1983), and the Depression and Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). They also measured students' sense of belongingness using a four-point Likert scale for the following two questions, 'I feel a strong sense of belongingness to my year group' and 'I feel a strong sense of belongingness to the University of Western Australia'. Skead and Rogers (2014) proposed that students who felt more aligned with their cohort had lower levels of self-reported anxiety and depression. Additionally, they also concluded that law students spend less time doing things they enjoy (e.g., exercise and meditation) and more time engaging in university related activities (e.g., preparing for classes, completing assignments), which had a negative impact on their wellbeing.

Skead and Rogers (2014) used language throughout the paper which insinuated that law students were engaging in negative or reckless behaviours which is why their wellbeing was low "They may not have been making the wisest and healthiest choices as to how they spent their time" (p.5). They also constructed that students were somewhat avoiding doing things that may have improved their wellbeing and instead were "choosing" to engage in

behaviours which may have been more reckless “Is it now time then for Law students to re-evaluate and make better choices as to how they are spending their time?” (p.22). This construction attributed responsibility towards students for their wellbeing and dismissed the multiple personal and academic demands students’ experience at university. This attribution was also present when Skead and Rogers (2014) suggested that those who choose to study law were more likely to struggle with poor wellbeing because the profession disproportionately attracts more individuals with difficulties with their mood compared to other undergraduate courses “There seems there is something about the students who choose Law that makes them more prone to depression” (p.3). Finally, Skead and Rogers (2014) also drew on a dominant discourse of mental health within their research when they constructed wellbeing as something which was determined by students’ levels of anxiety, depression, and stress. This discourse was demonstrated through their use of validated instruments as well as the language they used throughout “Stress, Anxiety, and Depression in Law students: How student behaviours effect student wellbeing” (p.1) and “Much has been written on the multi-factorial cause of mental illness in law students” (p.2).

Another piece of research that constructed student wellbeing as reckless behaviour was by McNeill et al. (2014) who explored undergraduate university students’ identification within groups and whether this was positively related to wellbeing. The research also looked at perceptions of negative group norms and whether these could lead to unhealthy behaviours in university students. To gather data, McNeill et al. (2014) conducted a 15-minute online survey with 92 medical students in Australia. The survey included a Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977), a Satisfaction with life Scale (Diener et al., 1985), two seven-point Likert scales (to measure identification and positive affect), and a five-point Likert scale to measure norms (partying and reluctance to seek help). McNeill et al. (2014) concluded that a positive correlation was found between students’ identification as a medical student and their overall

wellbeing. Additionally, they also concluded that students who perceived unhealthy behaviours as normative were less likely to seek help for their own wellbeing.

The construction of wellbeing as reckless behaviour was present throughout most of the paper by McNeill et al. (2014) where they engaged in language which constructed medical students as having a reputation for drinking heavily and taking drugs during their degree “Medical students also report high levels of binge drinking and use of other drugs and perceive this to be normative for their group” (p.103) and “We also know from the literature that there are high levels of binge drinking at medical student parties which is certainly detrimental to wellbeing” (p.109). Similar to Skead and Rogers (2014), this also constructed poor wellbeing as a choice and located the responsibility for this within medical students and the negative behaviours which they take part in. McNeill et al. (2014) also drew on a discourse of mental health within their paper where they constructed poor wellbeing as being mood related through using language like depression, anxiety, and stress. They also constructed poor wellbeing in medical students as unavoidable and as something they just had to deal with “Stress itself is seen to be the norm for the medical field” (p.103). This language again positioned poor wellbeing as students’ responsibility and as something that was both expected and accepted in the medical field.

During the deconstruction of the student wellbeing literature the construction of reckless behaviour and poor student wellbeing was also linked to staff within the university. For example, in a paper by Tharani et al. (2017) they explored factors which negatively affected university students’ emotional wellbeing as well as students understanding of the term emotional wellbeing. They conducted semi structured interviews with 15 undergraduate nursing students (years one to three) at a private nursing institution in Pakistan. Tharani et al. (2017) used Thematic Analysis (TA) to analyse their data and concluded that the most common factor which negatively affected students’ emotional wellbeing was the quality of

their learning environment. This included lack of positive feedback from university staff, unrealistic scheduling of assessment demands, and lack of resources (computer facilities). From these findings Tharani et al. (2017) suggested that for university students to sustain good emotional wellbeing their academic environment must be adapted to incorporate these findings.

Within the study Tharani et al. (2017) drew on negative constructions regarding staffs' reckless behaviour and how they may be responsible for a decline in students wellbeing and motivation at university "Students who look up to their faculty as perfect moral and academic role models tend to become de-motivated with educators if those educators exhibit unexpected and negative behaviours" (p.85). They also drew on similar language around staffs' unprofessionalism at university and how this may be negatively impacting future students "This is indeed a threat to the future of the nursing profession, as students might be prone to learning the unprofessional attitude of their faculty" (p.85). Tharani et al. (2017) also drew on constructions around students age and how younger university students were prone to experience psychological difficulties compared to older students "Their young age and accompanying emotional instability may exacerbate psychological issues" (p.2). These constructions allowed Tharani et al. (2017) to manage multiple positions of blame and therefore attribute the responsibility of poor wellbeing as residing in university staffs' behaviour and students' young age.

Overall, the researchers in all three papers drew on dominant constructions of reckless and negative behaviour when discussing students' wellbeing. At times, this construction was more explicit within researchers' language whereas other times it was more subtle. The construction of reckless behaviour also allowed researchers to predominantly shift responsibility for wellbeing onto the students' and university staff. The discourse of mental health was also present throughout most of these studies where researchers focussed on

language which was linked to students' levels of anxiety, depression, and stress rather than their overall wellbeing.

Wellbeing as student productivity

The construction of wellbeing as productivity was also found in some of researchers' language during the deconstruction of the literature. This construction often coincided with language regarding students' academic performance at university. One example where this construction was present was within research by Schmidt and Hanson (2018) who conducted a systematic review to investigate strategies that could help improve the wellbeing of doctoral students. They compared 17 studies published between 2011 and 2017 and used a Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis to identify strengths and weaknesses of the studies and to help provide suggestions for areas of future research within student wellbeing. The researchers concluded that there was inconsistency in how wellbeing was described within the literature (e.g., emotional wellbeing, subjective wellbeing and socio-psychological wellbeing), which could create confusion for the reader. Schmidt and Hanson (2018) also reported that a more student-centred approach should be implemented to help enhance doctoral students' wellbeing. However, the contents of what this approach would entail were unclear.

Throughout the research paper, Schmidt and Hansson (2018) drew on literature that constructed wellbeing as something that was linked to productivity and enhancing PhD students' performance rather than understanding and supporting student wellbeing "Given that wellbeing has been found to be closely related to employee productivity and efficiency, strategies associated with maintaining wellbeing during PhD studies might be crucial for higher education" (p.1). In addition, the researchers also mentioned university staff within the construction of productivity where they suggested that poor staff wellbeing could affect their own productivity levels which could ultimately impact their job "Wellbeing of academics

might affect their productivity in both research and teaching” (p.1). Therefore, although this was not explicitly acknowledged by Schmidt and Hanson (2018) it was clear through the deconstruction of the paper that they were positioning wellbeing as something that was closely tied to academic performance and productivity levels in both students and staff at the university. The language they used constructed positive student wellbeing as something that benefitted the university as a whole, rather than individual students.

Research conducted by Al-Ghalib and Salim (2018) also focused on language of productivity throughout their study. The researcher’s carried out a pilot study that involved a three-week mindfulness program aimed at helping students deal with anxiety and depression as well as increasing their overall wellbeing and life satisfaction. Participants were all undergraduate students from a university in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia and were between the ages of 17 to 24 years. Sixty participants were randomly assigned to either an experimental group which was the Mindful Jeddah Training Program (MJTP), or a control group, which was a My Time Program (MTP). The MJTP practiced daily breathing exercises and meditation for two hours per day over a three-week period, while the MTP group received a program for two hours per week which involved analytical thinking, critical appraisal, reflection and reading materials. Both groups were administered the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory (FMI; Walach et al., 2006), the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985), the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995) and the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (SWEMWBS; Houghton et al., 2017). At the end of the three weeks only 26 participants remained. Al-Ghalib and Salim (2018) reported that those in the MJTP group showed increased wellbeing and life satisfaction, as well as lower levels of anxiety, depression, and stress compared to the MTP group.

Within the main body of the paper Al-Ghalib and Salim (2018) used language of productivity when constructing student wellbeing. Like Schmidt and Hanson (2018) they also

positioned wellbeing and productivity as factors which could benefit the university rather than the students “This vision is timely for academic institutions looking to boost wellbeing, address student stress, and boost productivity” (p.143). Al-Ghalib and Salim (2018) also drew on constructions of productivity when discussing the role of mindfulness and how it could be used to make students university experience more enjoyable “Such programs should be made widely available and perhaps even mandatory in order to make the university experience more pleasant for students as well as enhance their productivity” (p.153). In addition, the discourse of mental health was again present in Al-Ghalib and Salim’s (2018) paper where they drew on the same language of anxiety and depression during their constructions of wellbeing.

Despite differences in research method and findings, the deconstruction of the research papers revealed that both Al-Ghalib and Salim (2018) and Schmidt and Hanson (2018) used similar language around how increasing students’ wellbeing could enhance their productivity levels. This construction positioned students in both papers as units of production rather than individuals attending university.

Wellbeing as something which can be ‘easily fixed’

During the deconstruction of the student wellbeing literature wellbeing was also constructed as something that could be ‘easily fixed’ or improved by the student. For example, in a study by Stallman et al. (2018) they analysed archive data from 6195 Australian university students to investigate whether social support and self-kindness amongst university students could improve their wellbeing. Students’ levels of self-kindness were measured using a single item ‘I have positive feelings about myself, even when things are going wrong’. Wellbeing was measured using the World Health Organizations Wellbeing Scale (WHO-5), and social support was measured using four questions: ‘I had at least one person I could confide in’, ‘I had at least one person I could call on in a crisis’, ‘I had at least

one person who really listens to me’ and ‘I had a least one person who really appreciates me’. Questions used to measure social support and self-kindness were taken from the On Track For Success scale (OTFS; Stallman, 2013). Stallman et al. (2018) proposed that their findings revealed that receiving social support and practicing self-kindness were predictors of positive student wellbeing at university.

In the study by Stallman et al. (2018) they constructed wellbeing as something which could be improved or ‘easily fixed’ by students engaging in social support and self-kindness. This minimised the complexity of student wellbeing and located the responsibility of improving wellbeing onto students by suggesting that they must actively find ways to engage in more social support and self-kindness. This also reduced wellbeing into binary factors which positioned wellbeing as something which could be easily influenced, with seemingly fewer implications for institutions. Additionally, during the deconstruction of the student wellbeing literature Stallman et al. (2018) engaged in a process of listing where they highlighted well-known figures in clinical psychology (e.g., Maslow and Beck) to support their findings that self-kindness and social support could ‘easily fix’ or improve wellbeing. Within this construction the researcher’s used language that positioned these influential figures (especially Aaron Beck) as superior compared to others in the field “The leading clinical psychology scholar Aaron Beck also acknowledged the importance of self-kindness in his work” (p.366). Stallman et al. (2018) may have drawn on this language to highlight to the reader that their research aligned with influential clinicians, lending credibility and power to their findings.

Deconstructing university student wellbeing literature during COVID-19

Throughout this literature review, it also felt important to deconstruct a selection of student wellbeing literature during COVID-19 to see what constructions and discourses were present during this time. COVID-19 was first identified in Wuhan, China in December time

2019 and reports indicated that it was causing several physical health issues such as respiratory problems, coughing, fever, and loss of taste and smell (NHS, 2023). As COVID-19 spread globally, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared it a public health emergency in January 2020. This led to mandated restrictions across various countries which included lockdowns and quarantines, resulting in the closure of all universities.

Consequently, online learning was implemented using platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams. This was a new way of learning for most university students, requiring them to quickly adapt while also attempting to maintain virtual relationships with peers and staff (Burns et al., 2020).

Wellbeing as mental health

The discourse of mental health was present throughout most of the student wellbeing literature above, but this seemed to become slightly more prevalent and diagnostic during the deconstruction of student wellbeing literature in COVID-19 (El-Gayar et al., 2021). This was possibly due to an increase in the presence of diagnostic language by the mainstream media and those who were perceived as having power within society (e.g., top medical experts and members of the government) during that time.

In a study by Evans et al. (2021) the researchers consistently used language associated with mental health despite claiming to be investigating the impact of the pandemic on student wellbeing. Evans et al. (2021) administered an online survey to 254 UK undergraduate psychology students. The survey measured sleep quality (Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index; Buysse et al., 1989), levels of anxiety and depression (Hospital and Anxiety Scale; HADS; Zigmond & Snaith, 1983), wellbeing (WEMWBS; Tennant et al., 2007), alcohol use (AUDIT-C; Bush et al., 1998) and loneliness (De Jong Gierveld Loneliness Scale; Gierveld & Tilburg, 2006). Lockdown specific questions were also included in the paper such as 'Do you feel that your mental health has been impacted by COVID-19' and 'How well do you

feel you have adapted to isolation and social distancing?'. The survey was conducted during two time points (October 2019 and April/ May 2020) to represent baseline/ pre-pandemic and the first UK lockdown. Evans et al. (2021) concluded that over half of the undergraduate students reported that COVID-19 had impacted on their mental health 'Quite a lot' or 'Very much indeed'. Worries about catching the virus and family members falling ill were also common amongst participants. The WEMWBS (Tennant et al., 2007) revealed that undergraduate student wellbeing decreased significantly between the two time points, and the percentage of students meeting the criteria for depression on the HADS (Zigmond & Snaith, 1983) more than doubled between baseline and lockdown. The study also found that alcohol consumption decreased during the two time points whereas loneliness and sleep quality remained the same.

Within the study Evans et al. (2021) drew on language which was mostly mental health specific throughout their literature review and discussion "Restrictions have impacted mental health" (p.3) and "This study provides valuable data on young people's mental health" (p.12). Although they briefly reported the findings of the WEMWBS (Tennant et al., 2007) in the results section, they did not elaborate on this in the discussion. Instead, they focussed most of their talk on the findings from the HADS (Zigmond & Snaith, 1983) regarding students' levels of anxiety and depression. Additionally, Evans et al. (2021) also drew on dominant language which focussed on young people's mental health in general, rather than the focus being on university students' wellbeing "Results point to the need for comprehensive public health approaches to support young people's mental health as the crisis continues to evolve" (p.16). This language suggests that their primary aim was to advocate for better support for young people's mental health during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, rather than specifically exploring university students' wellbeing.

Capone et al. (2020) also drew on a discourse of mental health during their study which explored students' wellbeing during the COVID-19. The research involved 1124 Italian university students who were recruited in March 2020. Self-reported questionnaires were administered to students via an online survey, some of which included the Mental Health Continuum Short Form (MHC-SF; Petrillo et al., 2015), Sense of Belonging at University (Capone et al., 2013) and the Perception of Academic Stress Scale (PAS; Bedewy & Gabriel, 2015). Capone et al. (2020) concluded that levels of wellbeing was in line with normative values in young Italian adults and that levels of stress were not significantly higher than what was found in other student samples pre-COVID-19. Additionally, they also reported that students with higher levels of information seeking had higher levels of wellbeing and risk perception. Finally, Capone et al. (2020) also reported that the pandemic did not lead to significant academic stress and that a sense of belonging at university could be considered as a protective factor for student's mental health.

Like Evans et al. (2021), Capone et al. (2020) also drew on a discourse of mental health with regards to the language they used throughout the study. They consistently used talk which was in line with mental health diagnoses such as anxiety and depression throughout "Common mental health disorders ranging from anxiety and depression" (p.2). Although they did briefly address wellbeing "What factors promote wellbeing" (p.2) and "We will employ the mental health continuum model to estimate participants wellbeing" (p.2), the dominant language they drew on was mental health specific. An example of this is when Capone et al. (2020) spoke about university students having 'complete' or 'incomplete' mental health based on the mental health continuum "People with complete mental health are flourishing in life" (p.3) and "People with incomplete mental health are languishing in life" (p.3). This positioned positive mental health as a determining factor of success in one's life rather than focussing specifically on wellbeing. As the study progressed Capone et al. (2020)

began using the term “Mental wellbeing” which reinforced the notion that mental health and wellbeing are one construct “Levels of mental wellbeing appeared in line with normative values in Italian young adults” (p.12).

Summary of university students’ constructions and discourses of wellbeing

The constructions and discourses highlighted in this thesis are examples of some of the ways in which researchers construct student wellbeing in the literature. One of the constructions present was around reckless behaviour which positioned blame and responsibility for poor wellbeing as residing within students’ behaviour at university (drinking and partying), their age, and how their choice of course disproportionately attracted more students who exhibited destructive behaviours. This construction also positioned blame as residing within university staffs’ “negative” behaviours and unprofessionalism at work. In addition, the construction of student wellbeing as productivity was also present in the literature which was linked to improving academic performance in staff and university students to benefit the university. Wellbeing was also constructed as something students could ‘easily fix’ or improve by seeking more social support and practicing self-kindness. This again positioned the responsibility of wellbeing onto students and did not account for other factors that could have also impacted their wellbeing. As part of this construction, the researchers also drew on powerful figures within Clinical Psychology (e.g., Aaron Beck) to help enhance the validity of their claims to the reader. Overall, there was a strong theme of individual responsibility towards students for their wellbeing across the studies which focused largely on the negative aspects of wellbeing rather than the positive.

Furthermore, during the deconstruction of the literature a discourse of mental health was also prevalent which predominantly featured language of anxiety, depression, and stress. This language seemed to increase further within the literature during COVID-19. The discourse of mental health was also present in validated instruments researchers included in

their studies (e.g., DASS, HADS) whilst measuring and comparing students' wellbeing. This positioned mental health and wellbeing as the same construct, rather than separate constructs across two continuums (Keyes, 2012). Attempting to measure and define wellbeing into diagnostic labels places further responsibility onto students and moves away from complex socio-political understandings of wellbeing. Engaging in qualitative research that explicitly explores how students themselves construct wellbeing would offer the opportunity for students to define wellbeing on their own terms and construct their own experiences, rather than something which is constructed for them. This could be achieved through exploratory interviews and by adopting the same DA principles used to analyse and critique the literature above.

Rationale

This study explored how students constructed their wellbeing at university. Previous research exploring university student wellbeing mostly used a positivist approach which often constructed wellbeing into predefined categories of mental health (i.e., depression, anxiety, and stress) rather than exploring students' own constructions and experiences. Previous student wellbeing literature which has adopted a qualitative methodology often employed Thematic Analysis (TA) or Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to analyse the data. These approaches focus mainly on patterns, the frequency of codes, and students' inner reality, rather than naturally occurring talk (Goodman, 2017). Therefore, the study explored university student wellbeing from a social constructionism perspective using Discourse Analysis (DA). This analysis allowed the study to lead with the students' voice to better understand how students constructed their own and others wellbeing at university. The branch of DA used was Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) which helped aid understanding of the wider social and political contexts in which student wellbeing occurs as well as the link between students' discourses and power within society. Within FDA power is

described as a relational process that helps construct meaning and reality (Foucault, 1979). Therefore, the use of FDA also helped identify how discourses in students' transcripts transmitted, produced, and exposed power (Foucault 2013). Willig's (2013) six stages of FDA was used to analyse the data, further details of this were provided in the method section.

Research questions:

The primary research questions that I considered are:

- How is wellbeing constructed amongst undergraduate university students and what dominant discourses are being drawn on?
- What are the consequences and implications of why students are constructing wellbeing in this way?

Chapter 2: Methodology

Overview and context of the primary pedagogical wellbeing study

This research is a secondary analysis of the data collected from a pedagogical wellbeing study that aimed to explore how to facilitate and develop the embodiment of student wellbeing in the university curriculum at the University of Leeds (UoL). There were approximately 1000 students who took part. Students were all over 18 (ages ranged from 18-63) and were asked to complete an online survey between November 2019 and July 2021. The survey included some open-ended questions that encouraged students to share and articulate times when they felt connected and supported by the university as well as times when they felt that the university did things that made their student experience more difficult than it needed to be. The survey took approximately 30 minutes to complete, and students were given a thank you sheet at the end (See Appendix E). Students who indicated a willingness to receive information about the interview stage of the project were contacted and invited to participate in semi-structured interviews. Students were given a participant information sheet (See Appendix A), consent form (See Appendix B), and a photo task sheet (See Appendix C). The photo task sheet asked students to bring a selection of photos that represented their wellbeing and their university experience to the interview to generate discussion and to help understand students' wellbeing experiences. A word cloud was also included in the photo task sheet, which students could use as inspiration when selecting which images to bring to the interview (See Appendix C). Some examples of prompt questions within the interviews included "Why does that matter to you?" and "What would you like me to understand by that image?" (See Appendix D for Interview Topic Guide). All interviews were recorded on an encrypted Dictaphone and were anonymised and transcribed verbatim by an approved UoL transcriber.

Ethical aspects

The pedagogical wellbeing study received ethical approval from the UoL (Ethics reference number MREC-19-017). All transcripts were stored on a UoL secure drive (N, M or OneDrive) which was password protected. Students had the option to withdraw their data within four weeks after the interview, including the interview audio recording, interview transcript and images. All primary data had permission to be archived. It is important to acknowledge that while students consented to their research being used for secondary purposes, they did not know the exact context of the secondary analysis when they signed the consent form. This is a common issue when using secondary data (Morrow et al., 2014). To ensure confidentiality, all identifiable data was anonymised, and pseudonyms were given to participants. Photos brought by students to the pedagogical wellbeing interview were also not part of the analysis in my study. Instead, students' verbal discussions of the photos were analysed as part of the transcripts.

Service user involvement

As the interviews for the pedagogical wellbeing study are being used as secondary data in my study, it was not possible to implement new aspects of service user involvement. However, during the development and implementation of the pedagogical wellbeing research, the student expert advisory group and compassionate curriculum network were involved in helping to shape the project. Additionally, the method which was used in this study (i.e., photo elicitation) allowed the interview conversation to be primarily student-led and initiated by students.

Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) study

Secondary analysis

The use of secondary data can be particularly useful as it allows for the maximisation of existing data, whilst also gathering further insight on sensitive topics in a non-intrusive way (Mitchell, 2015). Qualitative research can require significant resources such as extra time and financial costs, in comparison to quantitative research. Therefore, when possible, Qualitative Secondary Analysis (QSA) can serve as a useful and a cost-effective alternative (Tate & Happ, 2018). Heaton (2008) identified three modes of data sharing for QSA: formal (accessing and analysing archived data), informal (requesting access from a researcher's data for use alone or with another pool of data) and auto-data (further exploration of a qualitative data set by the primary research team). However, formal data sharing can be limited to certain geographical areas and participant samples. Additionally, researchers involved in formal data sharing may not have access to certain information, such as the quality of data collection or important documents included in the primary research. Furthermore, using auto-data may make it challenging for researchers to determine where the previous research questions and analysis ends, and where the new one begins (Heaton, 1998). Therefore, for my study, I used an informal sharing method where the researcher of the pedological wellbeing study shared their data (whilst being part of the research team) with me, even though I was not part of the primary research team.

Participant information

My study will include six transcripts from undergraduate students currently studying at the UoL. There are no strict guidelines for calculating sample sizes in qualitative research, only that a sufficient number of participants must be used in order to answer the research question (Vasileiou et al., 2018). Similarly, in DA sample size is generally not a concern as

the main focus is on the way language is used in the data (Potter and Wetherell 1987). In addition, as large variations in linguistic patterning can emerge from small participant samples in DA, a larger sample size may make the analytic task unmanageable rather than adding to the analytic outcome. I also decided to focus solely on undergraduate students' constructions of wellbeing in my study. This was to allow me to gain a deeper understanding of one population group, rather than attempting to compare students across different degree levels, especially given that DA has not been used to explore student wellbeing in the university population.

Interviews in the pedagogical wellbeing study were conducted between March 2020 and June 2021 (either face to face or online) and lasted between one and three hours. Interview transcripts of undergraduate students were selected at random by the researcher from the pedagogical wellbeing study. Chatfield (2020) proposed that randomisation is problematic when used on qualitative secondary data and that researchers should select interviews which best address their studies purpose. All undergraduate interviews conducted in the pedagogical wellbeing study were appropriate to use in my study and therefore randomisation was carried out. I have also included demographic information of participants (See Table 1). To ensure confidentiality students demographic information in my study only included students gender, year of undergraduate study, and school, and was not provided to me until after my analysis. I also used pseudonyms throughout which I selected myself and cross checked with the researcher of the pedagogical wellbeing study. This was to protect confidentiality by making sure that the pseudonyms I had chosen were not the same as students' real names. Cross checking my pseudonyms also allowed me to adhere to students' correct gender within the sample.

Table 1 - *Undergraduate students' demographic information*

Characteristics	Number of students
	<i>n</i>
Gender	
Cisgender female	2
Cisgender male	2
Transgender male	1
Nonbinary/Gender fluid/Gender apathetic	1
Year of undergraduate study	
First year	3
Second year	2
Fourth year	1
School	
Design	1
Languages, Cultures, and Societies	1
Law	1
Medicine	1
Music	1
Psychology	1

Epistemological stance

Social constructionism.

The epistemological stance adopted within my project is social constructionism, which is concerned with how individuals construct knowledge, and how versions of reality exist through the use of language. It proposes that there is no objective truth (anti-realist), but rather a diversity of interpretations of experiences that can influence individuals' perspectives and values (Andrews, 2012). Burr (1995) suggested that social constructionism differs from

traditional positivistic approaches in several ways. For example, she proposed that social constructionism does not believe in innate psychological processes such as personality or cognitions, but instead emphasizes that our language is central to how we view and perceive the world. Burr (1995) also stated that knowledge is bound by time and culture and should not be seen as something which a person *has*, but rather something which people *do* together. An appropriate analysis which aligns with these views and is underpinned by social constructionism is DA.

Data analysis

Discourse Analysis.

DA is a collective term for several different approaches to language, which draw on influences from linguistics, hermeneutics, and ethnomethodology (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). DA provides insight into language and how it impacts on individuals' experiences and relationships. Therefore, it is best conducted on data sets which exhibit naturally occurring talk (He, 2017). The researcher of the pedagogical wellbeing study conducted semi-structured interviews which were of an exploratory nature, which generated data suitable for DA. Other qualitative analyses such as TA and IPA were considered, however they are not designed to capture the nuances of DA such as how students position themselves and others in relation to wellbeing. TA and IPA also do not attend to the constructive power of discourses within their analysis and therefore would not be an appropriate fit for my research questions.

Furthermore, qualitative research which uses interviews as part of their data collection process can increase the occurrence of flooding within their research which is where researchers may unintentionally construct questions in specific ways during their interviews (Potter & Hepburn, 2012). This can potentially influence participants responses and steer them towards the researcher's area of interest. This can also be present during the

introductory stage of research interviews, where the researcher may engage in detailed or specific language which can influence the interest and trajectory of the interview. These issues are common in qualitative studies conducted as part of doctoral research, potentially blurring the boundaries between the researcher and the interviewer and affecting the interviewees' ability to express differing viewpoints or resistance (Potter & Hepburn, 2012). In my study the use of secondary analysis meant that the interviews were conducted by a different researcher which mitigated these challenges and allowed space to think more critically about the interview process.

Foucauldian Discourse Analysis.

There are several different versions of DA (Hassan, 2022), including Multimodal Discourse Analysis (analyses language and modes of communication such as gestures), Discursive Psychology (focuses solely on language and how individuals construct their experiences) and Foucauldian Analysis (focuses on language as well as the influence of social and cultural influences and power within society). FDA was used to analyse my data in the current study which is largely based on ideas of Michel Foucault who was influenced by post-structuralist concepts. FDA gave me the opportunity to explore the different functions of students' language, as well as the social, psychological, and cultural context in which their language exists (Shopen, 2013). FDA also acknowledges the link between discourse and power and provides opportunities to explore the consequences of students' constructions and discourses in terms of how students are managing responsibility for their wellbeing (Action orientation), how they are positioning themselves (Subject positionings), what they are doing (Practice) and how they may be thinking and feeling (Subjectivity), which is explored further in Willig's (2013) six stages of FDA below.

Willig's (2013) six stages of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA).

Stage one: Discursive constructions.

This stage will involve me exploring how university students constructed wellbeing during the interviews. This will include what students are explicitly and implicitly referencing to within the text and what the consequences are of talking about wellbeing in particular ways.

Stage two: Discourses.

Once I have identified sections of text that contributed to the construction of the discursive object (i.e., wellbeing) I then explore the differences between the constructions. This will include how similar discursive objects of student wellbeing can be constructed in multiple ways. During this stage I will also locate students' constructions of wellbeing within wider discourses in society. Foucault (1989) proposed that discourses construct a structural reality which holds power over how we understand and talk about the world. This will also be thought about and drawn on during this stage of the analysis.

Stage three: Action orientation.

I will then move on to think about what students are gaining by constructing wellbeing in particular ways at different points in the text. This will include considering the function of students' constructions and discourses, and how students are managing these within the transcripts.

Stage four: Positionings.

Once I have identified students' constructions of wellbeing within the text and located them within the wider discourses, I will then turn my attention to the subject positions that these offer for students. For example, as discourses construct subjects as well as objects, this opens up space for available positions students can take up as well as exploring whether students' are responsible for the presence or absence of wellbeing.

Stage five: Practice.

In this stage I will focus on the relationship between discourse and practice. This stage will look at the ways in which discursive constructions of wellbeing and positionings, open up and close down opportunities for action. For example, by constructing versions of the world, and by positioning subjects in particular ways, discourses can limit what can be said and done.

Stage six: Subjectivity.

In the final stage I will explore the relationship between discourse and subjectivity. In the previous stages I will be looking at the consequences of students taking up various subject positions and how this impacted on their subjective experience. Having thought about what could be said and done from within different discourses (stage 5), I will then explore what may have been felt, thought, and experienced from within subject positions.

Chapter 3: Analysis

Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) was conducted on six interviews using Willig's (2013) six stages of FDA. This guided the process and identified how wellbeing was discussed throughout the transcripts. This analysis led to the identification of constructions and discourses of wellbeing which are outlined in the sections below. To make the text clearer, constructions will be presented in *italics and underlined*, and discourses will be presented in **bold**. Furthermore, to simplify the presentation and maintain clarity between sections, Willig's (2013) six stages of FDA will be discussed under the following three headings: Discursive Constructions and Discourses, Action Orientation and Positionings, and Practice and Subjectivity.

FDA showed that there were overlapping and contradictory constructions and discourses of students' wellbeing within the study. Attempting to reduce all discursive constructions and discourses to singular themes within the analysis is not in keeping with the use of FDA or the aim of the study. Some sections involved more than one student drawing on similar constructions and discourses, while others were singular. First, students' discursive construction of wellbeing as *connection* at university is discussed within a **discourse of community** by Brody and Alfie¹. The construction of a *lack of connection* from peers is then discussed, which is located within **relational, legal, and human rights discourses** by Scout. In section two, students' constructions of wellbeing as *success* are discussed which entails both wellbeing as *success for self*, which was located within **discourses of achievement and capitalism** by Jessica, and wellbeing as *success for others*, which also located within a **discourse of achievement** as well as a **discourse of family** by Annisa. Section three discusses students' constructions of *security* in relation to their wellbeing and their living accommodation at university. James constructed this as a *lack of security* and feeling unstable

¹ Pseudonyms were given to each student to protect confidentiality.

which was located within a **psychological safety discourse**. Brody constructed *security* as feeling welcomed and as experiencing a sense of belonging at university, which were located within a **discourse of benevolence**. At the end of the analysis, a synthesis is presented which will compare and contrast the results of the analysis and provide further insight into the findings.

Wellbeing as connection

Discursive Constructions and Discourses

This section will describe how students constructed wellbeing as connection with peers at university. It will be discussed in two parts. The first part will focus on how Brody and Alfie talked about the positive aspects of their construction and how they located this within a **community discourse**. The second part will discuss how Scout constructed their lack of connections at university as threat to their wellbeing which they attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. Scout located their construction within **relational, legal and human rights discourses**. All three students constructed wellbeing as something which was contingent on other individuals, rather than themselves.

Brody located his construction of wellbeing in the connections he made with his peers from the beginning of his university experience. He described an example of a time when the university arranged an event for students and how he got to share this experience with his peers “I got to meet different flats and that was the flat I’ve sort of stayed with throughout” (lines 376 – 378) and “I was really glad because I made some really good friends from that and stayed friends throughout” (lines 382 – 383). Brody later described these peers as family and used language that implied he was confident the connections he had made would remain overtime “We were kind of this was our little family for the next sort of nine month” (lines 805 – 806). He discussed how he and his peers would frequently take time out to do things together that they enjoyed, such as cooking meals during important holidays:

I remember this being another really nice time where umm, everyone chipped in with the cooking; umm, Christmas songs playing. Umm, you can see we’re having a laugh and a good time umm, and I think it was another, another just like really nice flat evening that we had (line 866 – 871).

Brody went on to say that this experience brought his *connections* closer “Umm, and it was, yeah, it was really enjoyable. Umm, and yeah, I think again it was just another nice time where the flat comes a bit closer again” (lines 876 – 878). Brody constructed his wellbeing as involving shared experiences of *connection* and togetherness with his university peers.

Similarly, Alfie also constructed wellbeing as *connection* regarding his university peers. He constructed a similar sense of togetherness where he also talked about cooking with his university housemates “I really enjoy it and I really enjoy hosting, it’s a really nice way to get everyone together” (lines 514 – 515). He emphasized this again as a way of demonstrating how much he valued his university peers and how important they were to each other:

It’s just a really good way getting everyone together it’s really important to be together. It’s really important and it’s something that everyone’s really down for. And you can share, if you cook someone’s meal, I think you really show them how much you care about them. (lines 528 – 533).

Alfie described his *connections* at university as his favourite part of his university experience “I really found like that at uni, just a really, really great circle of people um, which I, yeah, which is one of my favourite things that’s come out of the past four years for me” (lines 154 – 157). He also later described his peers as a tribe, “I’ve very much found my tribe at uni” (line 655), highlighting the same language as Brody that the *connections* he had formed were in it for the long run.

The construction of wellbeing as *connection* resonates with a **community discourse**. Both Brody and Alfie drew on powerful language within their construction such as togetherness, contribution, and bond to show they had shared experiences with their peers at university. Brody described weekly routines he had with his peers to show his sense of **community** “Every Sunday night we’d sit down in front of the TV together; we’d watch

something. And I think it set the ball rolling a little bit to form a tighter, tighter bond” (lines 823 – 826). When discussing one peer in particular Brody used language of sacrifice to show that his housemate was invested in maintaining their **community’s** togetherness:

It was just impressive that she managed to make the time for it still, but could still have umm, a usual routine and things and umm, so I think it was nice that we were willing to compromise and make little sacrifices to kind of umm, have this, this time and experience together (lines 914 – 919).

Alfie discussed how having a sense of **community** and connection was able to keep him going at university, including during the restrictions of the COVID-19 “It's like being able to keep going and keep you through and so I think it’s been like, like really important in that sense”(lines 208 – 210) and “That's what’s been able to keep me going as well like just making sure we’re doing things as a house together a lot and having reasons to get together” (lines 576 – 578). Both students drew on a dominant **discourse of community** and togetherness to assert the importance of having relationships with their peers on their wellbeing.

Discourses of community and constructions of connection at university are often viewed in society as an essential part of the university experience. Experiencing togetherness with peers and building your own **community** is emphasised in university brochures, websites, and advertisements. This can lead to pressure for students to form connections and **communities** quickly, particularly those who are moving away from home for the first time to attend university (Downing, 2012). This transition can be intertwined with societal expectations that once students begin university; they will meet like-minded individuals or find their tribe.

Therefore, the **discourse of community** also resonates with broader discourses of striving to find ‘authentic’ or ‘real’ friendships at university. Connecting with others is

normally viewed as an important aspect of the university experience; however, during the pandemic, the idea of having ‘real’ *connections* with others was seen as more precious. Throughout this period, the **discourse of community** was reinforced by newspaper articles, social media, and daily government press conferences, where the country was encouraged to stand together and unite as one to ‘stop the spread of the virus’. Those who resisted this narrative were criticised by government officials who were urging the public to report individuals seen as disobeying the rules. This may have reinforced the idea for students that finding their own **community** at university was crucial not only for forming and maintaining social *connections* but also for coping and surviving. Students who rejected this narrative may have been viewed as challenging and, therefore, became isolated from their peers.

Action orientation and Positioning

Engaging in frequent talk regarding *connection* and **community** at university allowed Brody and Alfie to demonstrate that they were able form *connections*. By referring to university *connections* as family, Brody was demonstrating his ongoing sense of togetherness and the attachment he had with his peers. The term bond was also mentioned repeatedly by Brody which emphasized his capability of forming relationships and reinforced the strong sense of **community** he had with his peers “That helped us kind of form a tighter bond over the course of the term” (lines 807 – 809). By constructing wellbeing this way, he showed he had a shared experience with his peers and that this had now become a part of his identity, which lives up to societal ideals of being able to form and maintain *connections* at university. By drawing on a **discourse of community** it allowed Alfie to indicate a sense of belongingness and show he had gratitude for his *connections*, particularly when he described finding ‘his people’ at university “I’m just so blessed to have, having found um, my people at uni” (lines 770 – 771). Alfie used this phrase again when describing his life back home to

demonstrate that the connections he had formed at university were now stronger than his previous connections:

Try limit the time I spend in [hometown]! Not cause I don't like my family, but I just find it boring and like it's just not for me. It's not busy; there's not enough going on. Er, it's not like, there's not like people like my people (lines 1197 – 1201).

Students' constructions and discourses of connections and **community** allowed them to show they were responsible in establishing connections at university. The construction of connection also positioned students' wellbeing as collective and therefore reliant on others, rather than themselves. This minimized their overall responsibility for their wellbeing and instead positioned wellbeing as dependent on their relationships with their peers.

Practice and Subjectivity

Constructing wellbeing this way opened up opportunities for Brody and Alfie to give time to their shared experiences and the success they had in their relationships. By positioning their wellbeing in a collective relationship with their peers, they displayed their sense of loyalty and togetherness. As Brody and Alfie primarily engaged in positive constructions regarding their peers, it prevented them from acknowledging the possibility that they may also have struggled at times to form meaningful connections at university.

When considering the subjective nature of Brody and Alfie's emotional experiences, it is evident that they felt protected and happy that they had formed connections at university. These connections may have provided them both with a sense of security and support, enabling them to rely on their peers when needed. Therefore, both students were likely to be appreciative of this and therefore motivated to sustain their connections throughout the remainder of their studies. For Alfie, finding his "tribe" at university was a coping strategy that he may have relied more on during the pandemic when many individuals were losing connections due to isolation, social distancing, and the passing of friends and family. It could

also be suggested that because both students constructed their connections as positive and collective, they may have felt pressure to keep these relationships going, fearing that they might lose their **community** and have to start again and build new connections. This could have left them feeling vulnerable and worried.

Wellbeing as a lack of connection

Discursive Constructions and Discourses

This section extends the discussion of wellbeing as connection above. Brody and Alfie constructed their wellbeing as forming and maintaining connections with their peers at university. Scout goes on to discuss how their lack of connections led to isolation and became a threat to their wellbeing. Scout mostly talked about wellbeing and their university experience as something they missed out on “But its, I feel like I’ve missed out on the uni experience” (lines 402 – 403). They stated that although they tried to engage in media dominant stereotypical behaviours (e.g., drinking alcohol, partying) they still struggled to form meaningful connections at university “I’ve had the university experience, the late night, the drinking, but I haven’t physically had a good time, like I have no friends at university” (lines 293 – 296). Party culture and drinking are often advertised to students as soon as they start university during fresher’s week. These advertisements can be dominated by western discourses where alcohol companies and venues publicize events on social media and via posters on campus. This contributes to the creation of a perceived cultural norm which promotes that these behaviours are an expectation of university life. Some students who choose to not participate in these may feel like they are missing out on important aspects of the university experience, or that they appear boring or dull to their peers. Additionally, partying and drinking at university also contributes to the narrative that attending these social events is a quick way for students to build and connect with university peers.

Scout continued to construct wellbeing as something they found difficult due to limited face-to-face interactions and changes to extra-curricular activities during COVID-19.

And see if my lecturer is there and I knock on his door, I can’t do that and I can’t just go and join a club. Like I can’t, I was going to join this society and then realized if everything’s online and what’s the point of joining. (lines 426 – 430).

They constructed their wellbeing as restricted and lonely due to COVID-19, which goes against their values of wanting physical contact with others “My university experience has been on a screen. So, I’m very, very like I, I love hugs um, and then you go months, I used to go from having like four hugs a day...Not having a hug for months, it’s really strange” (lines 1019 – 1024). Collectively these examples demonstrate that experiencing a *lack of connection* had a negative impact on Scout’s wellbeing during their time at university. It is also important to note that there were moments in Scout’s transcript where they talked about online *connections* they had made at university. They utilized these temporary *connections* to support their wellbeing, demonstrating how some students used the same construction (e.g., *connection*) to create different meanings in the transcripts.

The discursive construction of being disconnected from others at university was created through a **relational discourse**. It was important to Scout that they were able to connect and build relationships with lecturers and various members of staff at university:

But it’s, it feels like I've missed out on the uni experience. So no, I don’t mean like partying, all that, which everyone thinks it is. I mean being, being with lecturers or cause people have relationships with their lecturers (lines 402 – 406).

During the pandemic, the government imposed strict restrictions on the public regarding social interaction, allowing them to determine what was deemed as socially acceptable and issue fines to those who violated the rules. This demonstrated institutional power and authority over the public, especially regarding university students. As a result, some students may have felt isolated from their peers and grieved the loss of a traditional university experience, which is largely based on in-person interactions with peers and members of the faculty. The government also prioritized physical health over emotional and **relational** wellbeing which sent the message that these aspects of wellbeing were no longer a priority during COVID-19.

In addition, although Scout referred to their experiences of wellbeing at university as COVID specific, they shared similar narratives with Brody and Alfie around the importance of face-to-face connections and interactions at university. For example, having the right to engage in sociability is constructed as normal in society and something that should be freely accessible to individuals. Hearing daily messages from the government on TV and social media stating that students were not allowed to socialize or return to normal lectures, despite other aspects of life returning to normal, may have conveyed the message that they were somewhat responsible for the spread of the virus. It could have also suggested that students were not trusted to follow the government's social distancing rules, unlike some of the general public.

Scout's construction of a lack of connection with others is also located within language of injustice and unfairness in terms of missing out on a traditional university experience "I've lost the university experience of people. Like getting relationships with your peers, with staff and professors and even just like disability services or the careers team" (lines 43 – 440). This language resonates with **legal** and **human rights discourses** regarding the right to have access to the university experience Scout has paid for. **Legal** and **human rights discourses** are powerful within society because they are rooted in the law and are embedded within a system which is designed to protect the public and ensure fairness. This system is based on historical principles and rules that the public must adhere to in order to avoid negative consequences such as legal action or fines. Therefore, Scout may be drawing on these discourses to highlight they did not get the university experience they felt they deserved during COVID-19 and as a result may be seeking some form of justice for the isolation and lack of connection they experienced.

Action orientation and Positioning

Scout's discursive construction of wellbeing as a *lack of connection* demonstrated how much they were struggling at university without normal social interaction. Within this construction they drew on language which typically elicits an empathic response when describing their isolation "I can't go and do anything.....It was horribleIt's really difficult um, cause you feel just alone and just unloved" (lines 975 – 1027). By constructing their wellbeing this way, it enabled Scout to draw on **legal** and **human rights discourses** to emphasize the unfairness of limited in-person interaction at university. These constructions and discourses also allowed Scout to shift the responsibility of maintaining their relationships and demonstrate that their *lack of connections* resided within the outcome of COVID-19 rather than themselves. This helped them to deflect blame and seek validation and sympathy from the interviewer. They used their constructions to communicate their difficult experiences and prompt the interviewer to acknowledge their struggles.

In contrast by engaging in talk about online platforms they joined to seek support, Scout demonstrated they were capable of building some online *connections* when necessary, locating themselves as a social person at times. This was further emphasized when they talked about having online date nights with their partner "So, me and my partner do like date night, which is where we both watched a movie at the same time-well, it started at the same time, and we were on Skype or Discord or something" (lines 1474 – 1477). Scout located their wellbeing as something which was intertwined with the absence and presence of others, rather than something they could maintain on their own. This was similar for Brody and Alfie who also located their wellbeing as something which was collective and dependent on the people around them.

Scout positioned themselves in different ways within the transcript when constructing wellbeing as a *lack of connection* at university. For example, they positioned themselves as

someone who was vulnerable, constrained, and isolated during their university experience. They also presented themselves as powerless and a victim of their circumstances of being denied access to normal university life, especially in relation to physical contact:

There's something different about being on a screen and staring at your screen compared to physically being with someone. Hearing them breathe, just feeling a bit of warmth near them. It-it just makes me feel like I am a person (lines 1029 – 1033).

Scout also positioned themselves as someone who was able and who exhibited the skills needed to build and maintain meaningful social connections online “Cause I, I don’t game but I like watching them game, so sometimes they share that and I, I get to be involved or get to play the game” (lines 999 – 1002). They spoke about these online relationships as something which were relaxed and laid back and allowed them to come and go without pressure “If we don’t fancy talking don’t join the call. Umm, so there’s always someone free if you just need five or ten minutes to relax, talk to them and then just pop off” (lines 1007 – 1011). This positioned Scout as someone who was powerless in the in-person world, but who was also able and capable to utilize the online world to build *connections* at university.

Practice and Subjectivity

By constructing their wellbeing at university as something that was isolating, Scout’s wellbeing was shown to be dependent on physical *connections*. By drawing on a **legal discourse**, Scout added weight to the conversation regarding their **human rights** and the sense of injustice they were experiencing. In contrast, they also positioned themselves as able and skilled to engage in online relationships, which opened up the opportunity for them to discuss online dates they had arranged with their partner. These online interactions and *connections* gave Scout a sense of control and further solidified that they were capable and worthy of online relationships. This allowed Scout to experience autonomy and choice despite the government’s restrictions.

Scout's initial emotional reactions were likely to have been that they felt lonely during their university experience, and that it may not have been what they expected. The way they positioned themselves allowed them to feel aggrieved, but also justified in their frustration and loneliness. Therefore, experiencing an element of needing to adjust to their previous expectations of university life pre-pandemic. Engaging in online activities was a way to prove to themselves that they deserved connections with others at university. The online connections they formed provided a sense of normality and hope that their university experience was not wasted. Overall, Scout occupied a dual position of experiencing powerless because of their current circumstances, but who was also someone who was capable of adapting during difficult periods.

Wellbeing as success for self and others

Section two will explore how students constructed wellbeing at university as success. Jessica constructed wellbeing as success for self which drew on **discourses of achievement** and **capitalism** within society. She constructed self-success as something which involved self-gain and self-development. Whereas Annisa constructed wellbeing as success for others which was located within **discourses of achievement** and **family**. Annisa's success was interdependent and relied heavily on providing stability for her **family** back home in East Asia.

Discursive Constructions and Discourses

Jessica constructed wellbeing and the university experience as something which involved self-success both during and after her university course "At the end of the day I am here to work and to become more employable and to succeed in my career cause that is an important thing" (lines 478 – 482). She drew on language of self-gain and the importance of graduating with good grades "I feel like studying my degree is very much my self-gain. The only person gaining is me getting a degree is myself and getting a good grade at the end" (lines 223 – 227). Whilst discussing her life before moving to university, she constructed her success at university as being above her peers back home "I feel like I am kind of prevailing over growing up in a small town and not getting stuck in the same path everyone else has kind of thing" (lines 832 – 835). Her talk regarding self-success and self-development also drew on constructions of being productive and proactive with her time at university:

You know I like to have something on going like at the moment I have lots of applications that I've sent off and I'm not waiting back on. Rather than just being sat around not with any kind of goals going on (lines 1230 – 1235).

Jessica also used language which focused on self-improvement and self-determination which draws on discourses within western **capitalism** which centres individuals within a capitalist

society. This is especially common in western democratic systems, where the construction of *self-success* is widely promoted in education and election campaigns, where “winning” is seen as a powerful construct linked to personal and professional *success*.

By constructing wellbeing and the university experience as *success for self* this was located within a **discourse of achievement**. Jessica was demonstrating she could manage and juggle different aspects of her university degree alongside working and volunteering:

This one is my, two of my jobs which are, so I have four part-time jobs while I'm at university and this is two of them. And these are two of my, yeah, my two favourite ones that's for sure. And they're both with umm, well, the first one is with the university on the outreach team and the second one is as a welfare rights worker (lines 69 – 77).

Jessica also located the **discourse of achievement** as being linked to validation she received from one of her supervisors “I think I'm doing very well. But I've also received quite a lot recognition from my supervisor and from the [name] school, so this is the one where I really feel like I've done very well on” (lines 1637 – 1642). By drawing on a **discourse of achievement**, it denied any room for failure and demonstrated that Jessica was willing to engage whatever she could to enhance *self-success* “I feel like I've kind of got it perfect with volunteering and working. Like I'm really taking, making the most of those opportunities” (lines 464 – 468).

Discourses of achievement at university often draw on societal narratives about needing to accomplish high grades or secure a high paying job after university to achieve *success*. Often these narratives are influenced by **capitalist** ideologies which can lead individuals to try and overachieve in order to avoid oppression. **Discourses of capitalism** have deep historical roots associated with conflicts related to social class and wealth. **Capitalism** is often viewed as perpetuating financial and social inequalities, where wealthy

individuals maintain financial stability while the poor continue to struggle (Streeck, 2017). However, for Jessica, the **discourse of capitalism** is a positive thing as it gives her a sense of control over her future.

In addition, Jessica's language is also linked to social mobility which encourages equality of opportunity. It uses language of self-improvement and breaking free of expectations based on people's circumstances at birth. Jessica used language similar to this throughout where she emphasized individual opportunity and breaking free from inequalities her peers were experiencing back home. These narratives of **capitalism** and social mobility may be driving Jessica seek power and control over her future success.

Discourses of achievement and **capitalism** are also tied to economic growth. Attaining a university degree can provide individuals with the power to contribute economically and thrive within society. Considering the rise in tuition fees there is much discussion in the media about the financial worth of pursuing higher education. Jessica justifies her decision to attend to university by emphasizing personal success as a way to demonstrate it is worth her while. The interconnectedness of **achievement**, **capitalism**, and success influences Jessica to go above and beyond her peers to ensure she can thrive in society after completing her degree. This would also serve as validation for Jessica that she made the right decision by financially investing in her university degree.

Annisa also constructed wellbeing and the university experience as success, however her success was constructed as success for others rather than success for herself. Although there are some similarities within the construction of success, there are also differences. Annisa constructed her wellbeing and university experience as something she just had to deal with in order to provide a better life for her family in East Asia "Like being away from home is just one of the things that I have to deal with cause I'm doing something good" (lines 197 – 199) and "It means like a better future for my family, I didn't come from like a wealthy

family” (lines 219 – 220). Her construction of *success for others* included language around motivation and how she attended university as a way of showing she cared for her family “You know I’m doing this out of love” and was committed to the process “I have to do my best” (lines 230 – 231). Like Jessica, Annisa stated there was no room for failure “Cause like the failure’s just not an option” (line 973) and therefore she was willing to sacrifice her own wellbeing to achieve her university degree and provide long term stability for her family.

The construction of *success for others* being located as an expectation (rather than a choice) and as a way of providing for one’s family resonates within a **family discourse**. Annisa viewed her university experience as doing something good for her **family** and as a stepping-stone to be able to provide a secure future “I’m doing better things now so I could help people that I care about. I don’t know how! At this point! But like I feel like I’m doing something good here” (lines 193 – 196). For Annisa the idea of failure was not something she had a choice over. She felt she owed *success* to her **family** as an exchange of gratitude, despite the pressure which came with this “Hmm, I don’t know. I just don’t wanna to disappoint people. I don’t wanna disappoint myself. I don’t know. Cause my parents like, they sacrificed a lot for me to be here” (lines 970 – 973). She expressed a sense of duty towards her **family** which was collective and bound up within her identity.

The **discourse of family** holds significant influence in society, especially when embedded within cultures which are different to western societies. For example, Annisa drew on a **family**-first approach which may be more prevalent within East Asian cultures. In these cultures, parents may take more of an authoritarian role and play a more active part in their children’s decision-making process regarding their future, in contrast to western societies (Riany et al., 2017). In East Asian cultures, it is common for children to strive to bring honour to their families by ensuring financial stability through work or education (Cultural Atlas, 2016). The **discourse of family** is ingrained in generational traditions and history.

Challenging these traditions could be seen as disrespectful and pose a cultural threat within the **family**. In addition, providing financial support within the **family** system is also rooted in maintaining and growing the **family's** economic system. This is reinforced by **family** value rhetoric which promotes the idea that financial success is a product of being raised in the “right” type of family. Consequently, if families encounter financial or economic challenges, the blame is often attributed to dysfunction within the **family** rather than existing inequality or injustice within wider systems.

Similarly, Annisa's construction of *success for others* also drew on a **discourse of achievement** which also has links within the **family** system and wider aspects of society. Narratives around the importance of **achievement** from parents, society, education, and religious institutions can lead individuals to believe that **achieving** a university education is a necessity, rather than a choice. These constructions are generally accompanied by language which emphasizes the importance of accomplishing goals, progressing in life, and **achieving** financial stability. This language creates power within the **discourse of achievement** leaving individuals feeling like they must achieve significant milestones in life in order to be considered successful and happy. Although Jessica and Annisa constructed wellbeing as *success* differently, they both highlighted a need to improve their circumstances, whether that was centered on personal gain or for the greater good of their **family**. They both denied themselves a “typical” student experience in order to prioritize achieving their goals at university.

Action orientation and Positionings

Jessica's construction of *self-success* and self-gain demonstrated she was responsible, capable, and invested in her **achievements** at university “I'm taking opportunities and making the most of university” (lines 647 – 648). This was further demonstrated when she engaged in a listing process where she repeatedly used language which allowed her to discuss

her current **achievements** (e.g., various job roles and volunteer roles) at university. The **discourse of capitalism** emphasized Jessica's independence which demonstrated she was qualified and ready to achieve the roles ahead of her after she has graduated from university "You know I like to have something on going like at the moment I have lots of applications that I've sent off" (lines 1230 – 1232).

Jessica's construction of *success for self* positioned her as someone who was driven and in control, and who was able to work through any obstacle which came her way during and after university. The **discourse of achievement** also positioned Jessica as resilient and as someone who was **achieving** more than her peers. Jessica may have positioned herself that way during the interview as she may have viewed the researcher as someone who was in a position of academic power and therefore may hold similar values of *success*.

Most of the talk related to *success* within Annisa's **family** happened in the earlier stages of the interview in response to questions asked by the interviewer (e.g., "So, what does it mean that you're in [city name]?" – line 218 and "So, what does that pressure mean to you?" – line 266). This led Annisa to construct wellbeing as *success for others* to emphasize the responsibility she has to provide for her **family** and to justify to the interviewer why she left her life behind in East Asia. Annisa managed this by frequently drawing on language which referred to herself (I) rather than the **family** as a whole (we) "I'm doing better things now" (line 194), "I'm the first person to study abroad in my whole family from both sides" (line 221 – 222) and "I'm doing this out of love" (line 230). She constructed her language this way to show she was doing the right thing by her **family**, and to compensate for any guilt or regret she was experiencing regarding leaving the **family** unit. Annisa also drew on a **discourse of family** to demonstrate her sense of ongoing duty towards her **family** and to prove the strong connection they had "But it's like comforting to know that there are people waiting for me back there, and I have these like attachments, you know it's very grounding

and I just feel love” (lines 206 – 209). She emphasized this connection to justify the heavy responsibility she held within the **family** whilst studying abroad whilst also demonstrating she is able to fulfil the role of providing for her **family**.

The subject position offered by the construction of *success for others* within Annisa’s **family** positioned her as a giver and as someone whom her **family** depended on. The **discourse of achievement** positioned her as someone who was willing to push herself to her limits and fulfil her **family**’s expectations to gain an education and give back “They sacrificed a lot for me to be here” (line 972). This positioned her wellbeing as interdependent with her **family** which was tied together through investing in her university degree in the UK. This located her wellbeing as collective and bound up with others.

Practice and Subjectivity

By constructing wellbeing and the university experience as *success for self* it opened up opportunities for Jessica to engage in conversation with the interviewer about extra activities she was involved in at university which will help influence her future career. Her construction of *success for self* allowed her to put herself first and prioritize her goals and the associated activities she was invested in. This opened up space for Jessica to be in control of her own narrative and *success*. Her subject position of independence and ambition led her decisions and actions to take on extra responsibilities (e.g., societies) rather than wasting her time at university. She did this by engaging in lots of positive talk about self-promotion and *success* throughout.

Jessica may have been experiencing a range of thoughts and emotions regarding her need to *succeed*. Constructing wellbeing as *success for self* may have led to forms of perfectionism and fear that she will not live up to the high expectations and standards she placed on herself. Similarly, by positioning herself as resilient she may have felt pressure to portray herself as someone who was strong throughout the interview, to avoid appearing

weak or fragile. As Jessica had some control over her future success this may have also increased her sense of independence and helped her feel proud of the decisions and sacrifices, she made during her university experience.

Annisa's construction of wellbeing as *success for others* gave a sense that there was no other option other than to study abroad and give back to her **family**. The subject position of the provider within the **family** unit made it difficult for her to acknowledge any challenges she may have faced during her studies that could have impacted her *success*. This also supported the position of personal perseverance and minimized the importance of Annisa's own wellbeing. Annisa also positioned herself as a contributor within the **family**, which restricted opportunity for her to express resistance or anger towards taking on this role.

The subject position of a giver and provider elicited feelings of being proud that she was able to attend university. She was motivated to *succeed* and to do well for her loved ones. However, as a consequence of studying abroad she also felt she was missing important milestones back home in East Asia "Sometimes I think it's me missing out on like other people's lives" (lines 190 – 191). Annisa may have feared that her **family** might not understand or empathize what it was like for her to move to another country and pursue a degree. She may have minimized her own difficulties of living abroad and studying at university for the greater good of her loved ones. This could have led to an element of loss where she may have felt she was unable to complain about challenges she was experiencing due to fear of seeming ungrateful for her opportunities.

Wellbeing as security

Section three will explore how wellbeing at university was constructed as *security* within students' accommodations. James constructed wellbeing and the university experience as a *lack of security* and feeling unstable which was located within a **discourse of psychological safety**. Brody constructed wellbeing and the university experience as a sense of belonging and feeling welcomed by his university accommodation. He located this within **discourse of benevolence**. Both students located wellbeing within a place rather than themselves within this construction.

Discursive Constructions and Discourses

James constructed wellbeing and the university experience as a *lack of security* within his university accommodation. He first engaged in talk about his previous university accommodation where he had a positive experience and made specific reference to his bedroom in the university halls:

I felt quite grounded last year. Umm. . .yeah, had a lot of interesting times in that room but it felt very grounded overall. Umm, so I think yeah, it's just again more symbolised that, that space and that mindset (lines 120 – 124).

He continued to refer to his previous experience in the university halls as positive "I really appreciated my halls last year and having my own space" (lines 131 – 132), whilst also acknowledging he did not feel as contained this year in his new accommodation "This year I don't feel quite as settled" (line 133). He constructed his current accommodation as something which was dangerous "Because my house this year is umm, a bit of a health hazard, huh!" (lines 139 – 140) and unpredictable "Umm, we have a silver fish infestation umm, which has made living at the house very stressful. Umm, and the house in general is quite stressful to be there; there's like always something going wrong" (lines 1014 – 1018).

The construction of living in an unstable and unpredictable accommodation was located within a **discourse of psychological safety**. James placed a lot of emphasis on the importance of **safety** and *security* in his university accommodation and stated the negative impact this had at times on his wellbeing when he returned home “Just not, not having an area that you can go back to at the end of the day that is clean and safe and secure. For me, I find that quite draining” (lines 1047 – 1049). Experiencing **safety** and stability was a significant part of James’ wellbeing and his university experience:

Whereas this year if I’m feeling overwhelmed because of uni or because of other stuff happening in my life I don’t then have a space where I can go back to that’s, you know clean and secure. Umm, and not having, not having that it’s weird (lines 1060 – 1065).

James drew on language throughout this discourse which fluctuated between the cleanliness in his environment, his health, and his sense of containment. James was experiencing a *lack of security* and stability in his university accommodation which was contributing to the absence of **psychological safety**. This emphasized the connection between James physical environment and his wellbeing.

The discourse of **psychological safety** can often be found in psychological models and frameworks such as Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, which describes **safety** and *security* as a basic human need. According to this model, individuals need access to a **safe** environment with predictability and emotional security in order to function and manage their daily lives effectively. Without **psychological safety** individuals can experience higher levels of distress, which can have a negative impact their wellbeing and performance at work and university (Frazier et al., 2017). More recently, over the last few years the rhetoric regarding **safety** has been observed to be present within political parties around the public’s right to have access to *secure* and clean housing. James may have been drawing on this discourse to

assert his basic human rights and fundamental expectations of what civilised living should look like within today's society. Similarly, Scout also drew on language regarding their rights and sense of injustice that they did not get the university experience they had hoped and paid for during COVID-19.

Brody's constructions and discourses complemented but also differed compared to James. Brody also constructed wellbeing and the university experience as security within his living accommodation. Brody drew on positive language of belonging and feeling welcomed by the university rather than constructions of danger or unpredictability like James. Brody placed emphasis on the furniture and structure of his bedroom within the university halls and how grateful he was to have this "They'd put really good storage above the beds. Umm, they'd made it a space that made me feel comfortable, that allowed me to settle in" (lines 202 – 205) and "There were cupboards that went all along the top-end of the room along the bed. Umm, and underneath the mattress it was a bed where you could store things underneath" (lines 281 – 284). This provided comfortability and a secure base for Brody "It was really nice knowing that umm, going down the line, this would be a really good base for me. Umm, and it just sort of felt very comfortable" (lines 237 – 239). When Brody discussed his accommodation, he talked about how much he appreciated the effort the university put in and how this provided a sense of belonging and safety:

It made me feel extremely welcome. Umm, it made me feel like umm, I sort of belonged there and that they were kind of there to look out for you. Umm, they wanted to kind of give you a good start (lines 355 – 358).

Throughout Brody's construction of security, he engaged in language about how lucky he was to have his current accommodation and compared it to the 'awful' circumstances his sister endured in her previous university accommodation "Having seen the

one my sister lived in [city1] last year, I felt incredibly lucky cause this was so much nicer that she had!” (lines 170 – 172) and

When my sister moved into her flat that it was complete sort of opposite experience. She was sort of thinking, ‘Oh gosh!’ like, ‘This is awful.’ like the room looks awful. It's just breeze blocks and, and, you know it's cold, it's not very big and there's not very much you can do with the room (lines 249 – 254).

The construction of *security* and feeling welcomed in his living environment resonated with a **discourse of benevolence**. Brody's construction and discourse allowed him to demonstrate that he had chosen the ‘right’ university for his studies, which was more favourable compared to his sibling's choice. **Benevolence discourses** are often found to be bound up within power, particularly within institutions such as universities. This power is embedded within the societal idea that one of the roles of a university is to offer protection and maintain good standards for students. This discourse is also amplified within the private renting sector, which is frequently associated with negative rhetoric of neglect and personal profit.

Within the **discourse of benevolence** Brody also drew on language of gratitude towards the university when discussing some of the social gatherings the accommodation arranged “I just thought again, what a really nice thought from the accommodation” (lines 329 – 331). The notion of being ‘thankful’ or ‘grateful’ for what you have received is also seen as an act of goodwill, which can be later accompanied by additional gestures of generosity. This can be linked to spirituality rhetoric where those who ‘give thanks’ and show appreciation will be protected and rewarded with contentment (Loi & Ng, 2021).

Action orientation and Positioning

Discursive constructions of feeling unsafe and unstable due to their accommodation at university was James's way of highlighting he was experiencing some regret about moving out of his halls and into his new living environment. By engaging in positive talk about his previous living environment, he demonstrated that his issues with his current accommodation was something which happened to him without choice. By engaging in talk about these different constructs and experiences it allowed James to position his current living situation as something which was unacceptable and unfair. It also allowed him to shift the responsibility of his wellbeing and accommodation difficulties towards the landlord of the property rather than himself.

The **discourse of psychological safety** positioned James as someone who was quite vulnerable and whose wellbeing was dependent on good living conditions "My environment definitely reflects my umm, mental clarity" (lines 141 – 142). By attributing his wellbeing to the environment he lived in, he was positioning this as something which was located within a place or object, rather than a feeling or emotional state. This positioned his wellbeing as something which was detached from him and as something which he had no control over. The construction of instability in his living environment also offered the subject position of someone who was experiencing a sense of disempowerment and who may require support in order to change their circumstances.

Brody managed his appreciation for his university accommodation by drawing on constructions of positive talk when asked about his experiences. He used words and phrases such as "They kept on putting little things on like this", "Really nice", "Very friendly" and "Comfortable" throughout. This positioned him as fortunate and allowed him the opportunity to highlight that his accommodation had exceeded his expectations. Brody went on to discuss how the university accommodation put on a BBQ and provided free food for students:

Umm, and the accommodation team put on a big barbeque the first day. You can see that huge big pile of potatoes there. Umm, and it was a glorious day as well, which made such a difference for moving in (lines 311 – 315).

This was something he felt proud of, and he appreciated the effort his accommodation put into this “I think especially my accommodation did such a good job” (line 347). Brody demonstrated to the interviewer he felt welcomed by the university “This was a really good start and I felt grateful that this university had actually given some thought to it” (lines 200 – 202) and that he had made the right decision by choosing to study there.

By drawing on a **discourse of benevolence** Brody was positioning himself as someone who placed the responsibility of maintaining his wellbeing on the university accommodation, rather than himself. The subject position offered by feeling welcomed and grateful positioned wellbeing as collective and as something which was bound up within his university living environment. Although Brody and James had different experiences with their university accommodation, they both located their wellbeing as residing within a place rather than something they controlled or had choice over.

Practice and Subjectivity

By constructing wellbeing as the absence of security in his accommodation it opened up opportunities for James to talk about the importance of feeling contained and **safe** in his living environment “It’s a lot easier to study and have a good time doing your degree if you’re not worried about . . . simple things” (lines 323 – 325). By drawing on a **discourse of psychological safety** James was constructing his accommodation as something that was unstable and something he had no control over. Student accommodations typically have yearlong leases, which provides some stability, however these tenancies are also generally not permanent. This can leave university students, especially those of lower socioeconomic backgrounds, residing in a ‘medium term stuck ness’. The subject position of unwillingly

being put in an unstable and vulnerable position by his landlord closed down opportunity for James to discuss whether he also had some responsibility to 'fix' or 'change' his circumstances "Like I just felt life was one bad thing after another" (lines 175 – 176). This allowed James to remain in a position of helplessness and fragility.

In terms of subjectivity living in an unstable environment may have triggered thoughts of powerlessness that he was unable to move to a different accommodation. By drawing on a **discourse of psychological safety** James may have been experiencing uncertainty and feelings of hopelessness of wanting to live somewhere **safe** and secure which mirrored the previous accommodation he was happy in, triggering feelings of regret and frustration "When there's a singular thing to blame that's completely out of my control, I don't like that cause it's just the most frustrating thing" (lines 1034 – 1037). This may have led to him to highlight concerns of **safety** and feeling unstable as a way of expressing fear regarding his current living accommodation.

Brody's construction of experiencing security and feeling welcomed in his university accommodation opened up conversations to explore the positive aspects of this. It also gave Brody the opportunity to become more aligned with the university and express his appreciation for being there. In addition, by engaging in negative talk about the difficult experience his sister had in student accommodation he may have emphasized his own positive experiences to reinforce his appreciation. However, drawing on a **discourse of benevolence** limited the opportunity for the interviewer to ask about times when things may not have been so perfect for Brody within his university accommodation.

Brody may have been feeling different emotions during the interview. Due to constructing wellbeing as a sense of belonging and feeling welcomed by the university he may have felt that staff cared about his wellbeing. The **discourse of benevolence** may have led to enhanced feelings of gratefulness towards staff at the university who supported him

during an important milestone (i.e., transition to university) of his life. The subject position of locating wellbeing within his living accommodation could have led to feelings of pressure to reiterate his appreciation, particularly since other students did not get so “lucky”. This could have led to suppressed feelings of guilt that he did not deserve to have positive experiences with his accommodation whilst others were struggling.

Synthesis

In this section, I will synthesize key messages identified in the analysis. I will also highlight similarities and differences both within and between the stages of the analysis to help demonstrate and make sense of the complexity of the data. The analysis revealed ways in which students used language to construct their wellbeing. This was captured in three dominant constructions which were further broken down into six-sub constructions and located within several macro discourses (See Figure 3).

In the current study commonalities occurred between the words students used and the location of their discourses within society. These discourses included educational institutes (e.g., **Community, Relational, Benevolence**), the government (e.g., **Achievement, Capitalism**), the law and legal system (e.g., **Legal, Human rights, and Psychological safety**), and culture (e.g., **Family**). In some instances, student's constructions and discourses demonstrated that they were responsible for maintaining their wellbeing at university. Students did this by drawing on language that highlighted their ability to form face-to-face *connections* with their peers (Brody and Alfie), that they were capable of choosing and managing *secure* living accommodation (Brody), and that they were responsible for attending university abroad and achieving *success* for their family (Annisa). By attributing responsibility for themselves for their wellbeing it allowed students to reduce opportunity for passivity and inaction, which created space to focus their attention on the positive aspects of their constructions, as a way of highlighting their capability. This reinforced a sense of responsibility and reduced the likelihood of feeling shame associated with incompetence. Interestingly, despite students emphasizing their responsibility, they also drew on language which was collective and was therefore dependent on other individuals (e.g., peers or family) or a place (e.g., their university accommodation). This dependency revealed tension between students' responsibility and a lack of personal agency and showed that they were managing

these two things separately. The incompatibility between responsibility and personal agency can create inconsistency where individuals switch between taking personal responsibility for their wellbeing and locating the outcome of their wellbeing as something which is determined externally.

Other students used different aspects of the same dominant constructions to talk about the absence of face-to-face connections (Scout) and a lack of security in their living environment (James). They drew on these constructions to deny responsibility for their wellbeing and blame their current circumstances and actions on others (e.g., COVID-19 and the properties landlord). This minimized their accountability over their wellbeing and opened up the subject position for a collective relationship. Further, it allowed students to manage their personal agency and collective relationship together rather than separately. Managing these two things together positioned students as having little choice or control over their current circumstances. This limited their ownership of their wellbeing, perpetuating feelings of stuckness and disempowerment. This contrasted with other students who used their constructions and discourses to prove that they had some form of control or power over their wellbeing (e.g., maintaining friendships, secure living environment, and successfully supporting family).

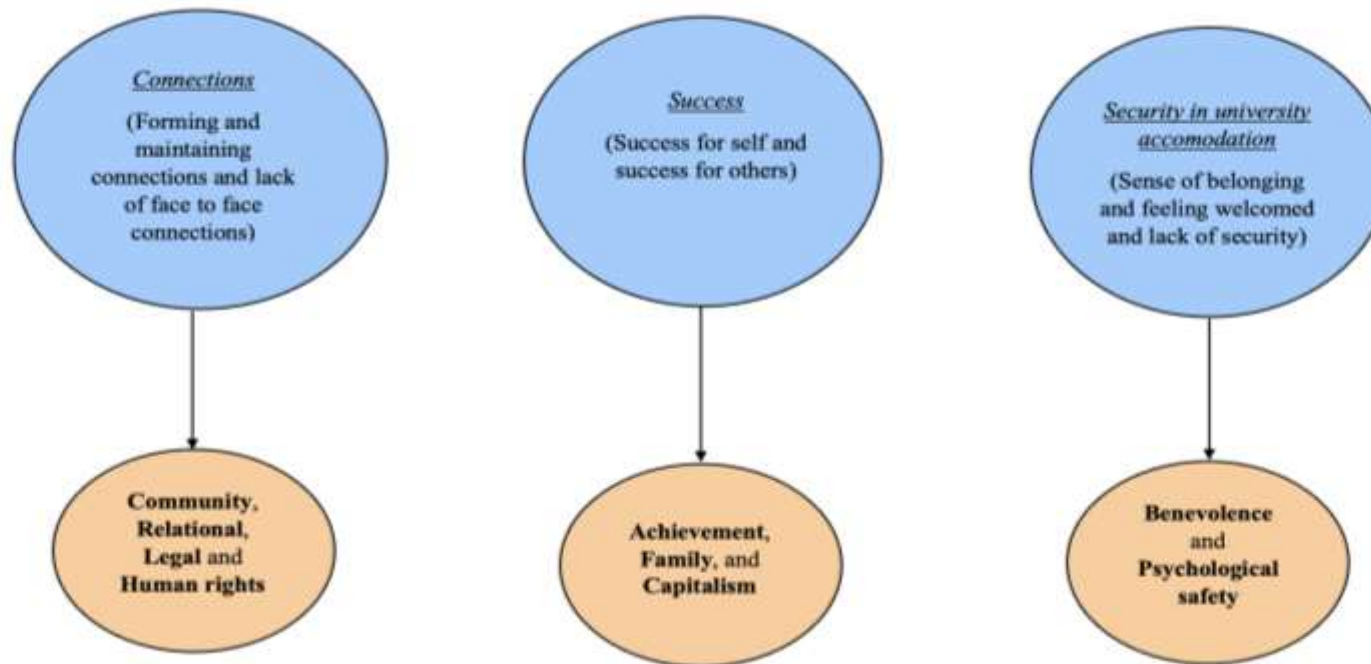
It is also important to acknowledge that Scout, who predominantly constructed a lack of wellbeing resulting from the absence of face-to-face connections also at times drew on language which constructed online connections they had formed with their peers. Therefore, this meant that Scout located responsibility both within themselves as well as their current circumstances. This was also similar for Annisa who constructed her wellbeing as success for others by studying abroad. This was grounded within her family and East Asian culture rather than herself, which limited opportunity for control and choice. At times this was similar to Scout and James who attributed their absence of face-to-face connections and their lack of

security as something which was external (e.g., residing in COVID-19 or the landlord of the property). This demonstrated that the constructions students drew on had different consequences for responsibility and the opportunities for action and subjective experiences that followed.

The construction of success was talked about in two ways. The first was success for others (Annisa) and the second was success for self (Jessica). Despite the differences between these constructions, they revealed some overlap in that both students drew on language of motivation and achievement when talking about their success. In other instances, they differed in that the construction of success for self was centred on language of self-improvement and self-determination rather than something that was constructed to support others. The construction of success for self was promoted as individualistic and goal driven through having access to various job roles and extracurricular activities. This presented Jessica as responsible and able to manage and maintain her own wellbeing and success at university. This opened up the subject position of individualism meaning that it contrasted with the other students' whose relationship with wellbeing was collective. Instead, by positioning wellbeing as something that resided within themselves, it allowed Jessica to experience feelings of control and choice over her circumstances which both complemented and contradicted other students. Finally, by positioning wellbeing as individualistic and attributing the responsibility for this within themselves, it restricted the role of others or the university environment in determining their wellbeing. This reinforced the notion of hyper-independence and achievement at university.

In the next chapter I will discuss these findings in the context of my two research questions. This will include an overview of the current research findings, and how these relate to the context of the wider literature. Strengths and limitations of the study will also be discussed, as well as implications and avenues for further research.

Figure 3 - Undergraduate university students' constructions and discourses of wellbeing



Note. Students' constructions are highlighted in the blue circles and discourses are highlighted in the orange circles.

Chapter 4: Discussion

I will begin this chapter by reiterating the research questions, summarising the constructions and discourses present in the literature, and comparing this to what I found in my analysis of interviews. The potential impact of COVID-19 on students' language and the role of culture in wellbeing will also be reflected on. Strengths and limitations of my study will then be presented, followed by suggestions of future research. Finally, clinical and research implications of my study will be discussed, and overall conclusions will be presented.

Summary and comparison to the current literature

The two research questions in my study were addressed using Willig's (2013) six stages of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA). The questions were:

- How is wellbeing constructed amongst undergraduate university students, and what dominant discourses are being drawn on?
- What are the consequences and implications of why students are constructing wellbeing in this way?

Researchers' constructions of wellbeing have restricted the opportunities for students to articulate their understanding of wellbeing and can lead them to conform to the researchers' constructions rather than articulating their own. The dominant constructions and discourses present in the student wellbeing literature were wellbeing as reckless behaviour (McNeill et al., 2014; Skead & Rogers, 2014; Tharani et al., 2017), wellbeing as productivity levels at university (Al-Ghalib & Salim, 2018; Schmidt & Hanson, 2018) and wellbeing as something that students could 'easily fix' through self-kindness (Stallman et al., 2018).

However, with regards to my first research question, I found that students constructed their experiences of wellbeing differently to what was present in the literature. For example,

students drew on constructions of building and maintaining connections with peers, achieving success for themselves and others, and as security in their university accommodation. These constructions resonated with several macro discourses (See Figure 3) of students' wellbeing some of which included discourses of community, achievement, human rights, and psychological safety. Although my study's findings largely differ from what I found in the literature, a study by Smith et al. (2022) that interviewed support staff across six UK universities found some similar conceptualizations of wellbeing as students in my study around connection and community at university. It could be hypothesized that the reason for this is because student support staff have lived experience of the 'student voice' and how students construct their wellbeing. Therefore, they may be less influenced by predetermined factors which are present in the current literature around reckless behaviour, productivity, and self-kindness.

The most dominant discourse which was present in the student wellbeing literature was mental health. The language regarding this was very diagnostic (i.e., anxiety, depression, and stress) and located wellbeing and mental health as a single construct. However, when students constructed wellbeing from their own perspective in my interviews, they did not use language that was disorder specific, suggesting that they located wellbeing and mental health as two separate constructs. The idea of viewing these as separate concepts aligns with a dual continua model, which states that it is possible to experience high levels of wellbeing alongside low levels of mental health and vice versa (Tudor, 2013). If wellbeing and mental health continue to be viewed as part of one continuum, it could have long-term implications for services that are designed to support students' mental health and wellbeing, such as student counselling services. I will explore this further in the implication section of my thesis.

Attribution, Responsibility, and Blame

In this next section, I will address my second research question, which will focus on some of the consequences and implications of students' constructions and discourses, and what this meant within my analysis. Within this I will discuss the process of attribution, responsibility, and blame, and how this was managed by students within my interviews. According to Edwards and Potter (1993), the process of attribution does not stem from cognitive processes, but instead can be understood through language, which allows us to explore what people do and how they position themselves. They highlighted the importance of examining individuals' language through the discursive actions they perform in their everyday life which involves interpersonal or intergroup issues such as blame, responsibility, and reward. These were also highlighted in my study and will be explored further below.

In my study, I found that students managed and positioned responsibility for their wellbeing differently based on their constructions and discourses. Some students took responsibility for their wellbeing, others located responsibility for their wellbeing in others, and some did both, illustrating that the way students constructed responsibility for their wellbeing differed between interviews. For instance, when students in my study constructed their university experience and wellbeing as something positive and going well, such as having connections with peers, succeeding at university, and having secure living arrangements, they attributed the responsibility for their wellbeing to themselves. This elicited control and power over their wellbeing. Whereas when students struggled with aspects of their wellbeing such as experiencing limited face-to-face connections or dealing with an unstable living environment, they attributed blame and responsibility towards external factors such as the landlord of their property and COVID-19. This rejection of responsibility instilled powerlessness into students' narratives and minimized their sense of control over their wellbeing. Montada (1991) explained that language of injustice implies that

other agents or agencies are responsible for our experiences of loss or hardships. He proposed that this often leads to blame or resentment, which is directed towards other individuals or powerful institutions who are perceived as being responsible. This aligns with the findings from my study, where the attribution of blame was centred on human rights and psychological safety discourses, which were constructed through language of unfairness and injustice. This language made space for students to locate their negative experiences and responsibilities at university as residing in people or aspects of society that were deemed as powerful (i.e., landlords and COVID-19). These findings show how blame and resentment can be directed through language and demonstrate how attributions can serve as social and relational functions, as opposed to purely cognitive ones (Edwards & Potter, 1993).

Similarly, in my deconstruction of the student wellbeing literature, blame and responsibility attributions were also prevalent in researchers' constructions and discourses. For example, Skead and Rogers (2014) attributed blame and responsibility for wellbeing to university students by positioning their difficulties with their wellbeing as residing within the "poor" choices they made at university. Similarly, Tharani et al. (2017) also attributed students' poor wellbeing as being linked to their young age and instability. Attributing blame and responsibility towards students removes the need for powerful institutions (i.e., universities) to take accountability for students' wellbeing. Moreover, it illustrates again how blame and responsibility can be shifted towards external factors when things are not going well, as opposed to when things are more favourable. This further illustrates that attributions are not fixed and can be deployed to perform social actions and manage particular stakes dependent on social contexts. Further challenging the traditional assumption that attribution is solely a cognitive process.

The impact of COVID-19 on language

Part of the method of FDA is to think about the context in which discourses are found (Willig, 2013). Dominant discourses can change over time depending on shifts in language and their relationships with power (Foucault, 1979). Therefore, students' constructions and discourses present in my study may have been impacted by COVID-19. The interview data used in my study was collected between March 2020 and June 2021. The first national lockdown in the UK started on 23rd of March 2020 meaning it is likely that all students who took part in my study had been affected by COVID-19 in some way at the point of the interviews or, as a minimum, had heard of the spread of the virus and the impact this was having on individuals' health and wellbeing. The COVID-19 pandemic is one example of how when society is placed in a negative situation that involves collective fear, specific blaming rhetoric can start to emerge (Moreno Barreneche, 2020). For instance, during the initial stages of the spread of the virus, 'the Chinese' were positioned as responsible in the UK by the government and therefore blamed for the origin of the virus. Whereas a short while later, in February 2020, a new narrative started to emerge by the UK government that attributed blame towards 'the Italians' for the spread of the virus. In addition, the government also used blaming rhetoric to reduce their own responsibility for the spread of COVID-19 and instead positioned this within the UK public (Williams & Wright, 2024). An example of this was when the UK government blamed the public's reckless behaviour for failings during the pandemic, rather than their mismanagement or misjudgement of the virus (Strange, 2022). Therefore, it is possible that this narrative of blame also influenced some of the language and constructions students drew on when talking about wellbeing during that time.

Wellbeing and Culture

Within the wellbeing literature, I encountered studies that measured and compared individuals' wellbeing without considering the cultural differences among participants. This

raises concerns about cultural response bias, where researchers, at times, use instruments developed by Western societies to measure wellbeing across different cultures (Lomas, 2015). For example, Cummins (2019) found that Asian individuals tended to report lower average levels of wellbeing on questionnaires. On a scale of 0-10, they were more likely to respond at around a 7 or 8, whereas individuals from Western cultures were more likely to respond with a 9 or 10. This could create the impression that individuals from Asian cultures have lower levels of wellbeing than people from the West. Therefore, highlighting the need to understand how individuals across different cultures construct wellbeing, rather than assuming that wellbeing is context and culture free.

Similarly, other limitations related to translating certain words and identifying word equivalences regarding wellbeing have also been discussed. Layard (2005) highlighted the issue of similar words having multiple meanings across different cultures, which could lead to misinterpretations of participants' wellbeing. For instance, Oishi (2010) suggests that in Western cultures, the word 'happiness' is commonly used to describe someone's wellbeing and is typically associated with an individual's emotional state. Whereas in Eastern cultures, equivalent words are used to refer to fortune and good luck. Further demonstrating that language can be interpreted and experienced differently across different cultural contexts. This emphasizes the need to develop an understanding of wellbeing that is broader and more attentive to individuals' cultures. I hope that in my study, I have been able to contribute towards this by embracing the complexity of my findings and showing the different ways wellbeing was constructed.

Strengths and Limitations of the study

In this section, I will use Yardley's (2000, 2008) four validity principles as a framework to discuss the strengths and limitations of my study. These principles include Sensitivity to context, Commitment and rigour, Transparency and coherence, and Impact and

Importance. Yardley suggested that these principles can be applied to DA research due to their open and flexible criteria.

Sensitivity to Context

Sensitivity to context within qualitative research comprises many facets, one of which is being aware of your own sense making, positioning and patterns, and remaining open to other perspectives. This was a strength of my study through the use of Qualitative Secondary Analysis (QSA) as it allowed me to have a different relationship with the transcripts where I was able to think more critically about the language, strengthening the authenticity of my analysis. QSA holds economic advantages in that interviews are already completed by the previous researcher, which saves time and costs on projects and allows other researchers to overcome any potential problems with data collection (Chatfield, 2020). This enabled me more time to progress my knowledge and skills in FDA, which improved the development of the analysis. There are also social benefits to using QSA in that it allowed me to contribute to an area of research that could be deemed as sensitive without the need for further intrusion through additional interviews (Johnston, 2014). This reduced any additional burden on students' and maximized the value of their contributions to the research (Chew-Graham et al., 2012).

Yardley (2000, 2008) also proposed that another example of adhering to sensitivity of context is intentionally creating environments for naturalistic conversations to allow researchers to capture participants' experiences without being influenced by an agenda. Therefore, another strength of my study is how it focussed on naturally occurring conversations. Instead of using structured interviews, the researcher in the pedagogical wellbeing study allowed students to lead the discussions and construct their own understanding of wellbeing based on their experiences and knowledge. The researcher did this by encouraging participants to talk about their own photos using non-guided questions

such as “Why does that matter to you?” and “What would you like me to understand by that image?”. By using interviewers of this nature, it minimized the effects of the interviewer on my research and allowed me to analyse students’ language within a natural context, increasing the ecological validity of my research (Andrade, 2018). It is important to also acknowledge that interviews have at times been considered a poor substitute for naturally occurring talk as it has been noted that participants may orient themselves to the interview context and therefore present themselves in particular ways (Hammersley, 2003). The limitations of this will be discussed further in the next paragraph.

Yardley (2000, 2008) suggests that the context in which studies are set up as well as the relationship between the researcher and participants is crucial. Taking part in an interview can unintentionally create a formal environment for participants through the use of documentation (consent form, participant information sheet, debrief sheet) and the recording of responses. This formal process draws on an academic discourse that instils seriousness into the interview process and can influence participants talk or limit what they feel they can say. There is a possibility that this was present in my study due to the primary researcher’s role as an academic within the UoL. The hierarchical nature of this relationship, along with students also being part of the same academic institution may have created unhelpful power dynamics within the participant-researcher relationship for some students (Hill, 2013). Although it is difficult to conclude for sure that this influenced the language students used in my study it is possible that it skewed what students chose to say during the interviews. For example, it is worth noting that there were academic discourses present in my study regarding students’ success and achievement, which may have been influenced by the researcher’s position within the university. As a result, for future studies, it could be suggested that the interviews are conducted by another student rather than a university staff member. Another suggestion

could be to have the interviewer come from a different academic institution than the students' own university.

Another potential limitation of my research was the use of a word cloud in the pedagogical wellbeing study. Students were given a word cloud containing the same 13 words (See Appendix C) as part of their participant information sheet (PIS) before the interviews took place. The word cloud was included to give students inspiration when selecting what images they wanted to bring to the interview. I noticed in some of students interviews that some of the language they used was the same as what was written on the word cloud (e.g., success, thrive, and prevail). This was mostly present in the interviews where students constructed wellbeing as success for their self and their family. Therefore, it could be suggested that the word cloud influenced some of participants language in my study. In the future it may be better to remove the word cloud from the PIS as it may give the impression that there is a "correct" way to talk about wellbeing and therefore may influence the constructions and discourses that students draw on during their interviews.

Commitment and Rigour

Yardley (2000, 2008) also highlights the importance of commitment and rigour within her principles. She defines the concept of commitment as encompassing prolonged engagement with the research topic, the development of skill and competence within the method used, and the immersion within the data. She defined rigour as the completeness of data collection and the ability to supply all information needed for a comprehensive analysis. An example of commitment and rigour within the pedagogical study was the use of photo-elicitation. Photo-elicitation refers to the use of single or sets of photographs as stimulus during a research interview (Hurworth, 2003). The use of photo-elicitation has been shown to create a more comfortable environment for participants, especially when discussing challenging or potentially distressing topics (Epstein et al., 2006). Harper (2002) concludes

that photo-elicitation is particularly useful when looking at research that is interested in language such as DA. The main reason for this is because describing the images provides a unique representation of participants' subjective realities through the use of their own discursive language (Olliffe & Bottorff, 2007). Therefore, this increased participant-led dialogue in my study which allowed for a student-centred approach that was not imposed by the researcher or their perception of the topic (Meo, 2010). The use of images also made it less likely to limit participants' responses within my research and allowed students to be positioned as more active, giving them the opportunity to influence the research more strongly.

Another strength of my study was the appropriateness of my choice of analysis. Willig (2013) proposed that FDA can be used wherever there is meaning within text. Firstly, I chose FDA specifically for my study because it enabled me to analyse students' constructions and discourses of wellbeing, as well as the connection between discourse and power. FDA also created space for me to explore how students' constructions and discourses both facilitated and restricted what was said during my interviews. This gave me the opportunity to consider students' discourses from a broader societal perspective, extending my findings beyond the immediate context. Secondly, FDA allowed me to analyse the consequences of students' constructions and discourses some of which included responsibility, how students positioned themselves in relation to their wellbeing, and any emotional responses students may have been experiencing. This also ensured that my research questions and analysis were compatible which increased the rigour and credibility of my study. Additionally, as FDA has not been used to explore undergraduate students' wellbeing it also allowed me to contribute and provide a unique perspective to this research area which I will discuss further within the impact and importance paragraph below.

When deciding on FDA, the framework by Willig (2013) felt the most appropriate as it allowed for the identification of discursive resources, the subject positions they contain, and the exploration of the implications for subjectivity and practice (Willig, 2013). Although I do believe this was a helpful framework, I did notice some limitations in the discourse section (stage two) which may have affected the studies rigour. As I became more confident with FDA, I felt that Willig's framework lacked detail or depth compared to the other five stages, it also did not adequately address the understanding of power within discourse. Therefore, I drew on Parker (1992) to help me develop a broader understanding of discourse. Parker's (1992) 20-step DA helped me better understand the socio-political components of FDA, and how these were interlinked with the remaining four stages of the analysis.

A further limitation of FDA has to do with subjectivity. In FDA, participant's beliefs, attitudes, and emotional states get treated as manifestations or "side effects" of discourses (Burr, 2003). Willig (2001, 2008, 2013) questions whether discourse alone can influence our sense of personal identity and whether further research using FDA should explore participants' individual differences as well as motivations for particular subject positions. It is difficult to conclude how much this impacted on the validity of my own findings within the study, however it is fair to suggest that because of the lack of theory regarding subjectivity it raises questions on the continuity and accuracy of some of my findings. In the future Holloway's (1989) approach could be used to actively explore these processes on a deeper level by combining macro DA and lacanian psychodynamic interpretations. This may be a useful approach to help explain the motivational basis and positionings within which discourses are assumed.

Transparency and Coherence

A further strength of my research is the inclusion of transparency and coherence within my study. One example of how I did this was through the use of reflexivity statements

within my research process. Morse et al. (2002) proposed that practicing self-reflexivity is a significant component of qualitative research, which helps readers to understand the researchers' position and how this may have influenced their understanding of the data. To adhere to this recommendation, I made my own epistemological position clear within my study and included reflexive journals to show the transparency of the process. In these reflexive journals, I discussed assumptions and potential biases that may have arisen from being a university student and how this may have impacted on the interpretation of my findings. I also reflected on the challenges of managing my own wellbeing and how I used supervision to create separation between my own experiences and those of the students in the study. Additionally, during the early stages of FDA, my supervisors helped me identify some of my previous thought patterns, which were naturally diverted towards more of a formulaic way of thinking due to my clinical training. These supervisions encouraged me to question my own thoughts and consider a different perspective that was not so rigidly positioned within clinical psychology. This was a strength of my study as it allowed me to ensure that my findings were not constrained by the influence of my prior experiences, knowledge and assumptions. In addition, by including reflexivity in my study it is hoped that future clinicians can also draw on these statements to help them think about how their own experiences may also impact on how they interpret their data.

Yardley (2000, 2008) also proposed that one way to increase transparency is by presenting excerpts of textual data which allows the readers to identify patterns or constructions highlighted by the researcher. I did this in my study by the inclusion of students' quotes within my analysis. Tracy (2010) also suggests that providing a detailed description of the analytical process and study findings can establish the credibility of the research. I provided a detailed version of the analysis process and included quotes to back up my analytic claims throughout each of Willig's (2013) six stages of FDA. I created an

accessible and logical structure of Willig's (2013) six stages throughout to make the analysis process transparent and easy to follow for the reader.

I would also like to acknowledge that in line with a social constructionist epistemological stance, I am not claiming that the interpretations of my findings are the only ones which exist. Despite my best efforts, my interpretation of the analysis would have been influenced to some extent by my own position and my prior experiences creating some limitations within the transparency and coherence of my research. It could also be suggested that other researchers reading the analysis may interpret my findings and the language students used differently based on their own knowledge and experiences of student wellbeing. By including students' direct quotes as well as reflexive statements, it is hoped that these demonstrate the steps I put in place to try and ensure I was avoiding any preconceived assumptions within my findings.

Impact and Importance

Finally, impact and importance are also a part of Yardley's (2000, 2008) framework of validity principles. She proposed that impact and importance is around challenging current perspectives of topics to help create new understandings and wider ideas. This was a strength of my study as the main implication of the research was to demonstrate an alternative way of exploring student wellbeing compared to what currently exists within the literature. To my knowledge my study is the first to explore undergraduate university student wellbeing from an FDA perspective. As mentioned briefly in commitment and rigour, the use of DA allowed me to go beyond categorical or thematic data to explore students' own language and how they constructed wellbeing. By applying FDA, it also allowed me to delve into the relationship between discourse and power, as well as developing an understanding of the consequences of why students constructed themselves in different ways in relation to their wellbeing (Willig, 2013). The use of FDA also allowed me to highlight how power operates

within society and how it can influence and shape our understanding of how we think about wellbeing.

In addition, the concept of transferability in qualitative research states that the findings from one study can be applied to other settings or groups of people (Houghton et al., 2013). Although some inferences may be transferred from students in my study to students in other urban universities across England, it is important to recognize that the extent to which these findings can be applied to all students is restricted by participants' unique histories, interactions, and institutes (Rogers, 2002). For instance, it would be difficult to conclude that the findings from my study could easily transfer to university students outside of the UK or to students pursuing higher-level degrees, as my study focused solely on undergraduate students at the UoL. This limitation also applies to using small samples within research. In my study I had a sample size of six participants and while there are no definite guidelines for adequate sample sizes in FDA (Bondarouk & Ruel, 2004), it would be impossible to capture all the different constructions and discourses which exist within this population group with such a small sample size. Therefore, although there will be some students which my findings can be transferred to, the use of a small sample size somewhat limits the transferability of my conclusions to larger student populations.

Future research

My study provides a different way of thinking about student wellbeing on which future research can be built. Therefore, it is hoped that my thesis will encourage other researchers to have more awareness of language and create space for alternative ways of understanding student wellbeing. Some suggestions include using reflexivity to think about the ways in which researchers may be constructing wellbeing during the design and methodology of their study. Furthermore, since there were clear differences between the constructions and discourses present in the student wellbeing literature and students' own

constructions and discourses, it would be useful for researchers to reflect on the instruments they incorporate into their studies when attempting to capture and explore student wellbeing. Another suggestion from my thesis is for researchers to also consider the ways in which their own research may be shaping or contributing to the delivery of student counselling services and the types of psychological support being offered to students' regarding their mental health and wellbeing.

A further suggestion for future research could include exploring student wellbeing across different degree levels. My study focussed solely on undergraduate students' constructions of wellbeing, therefore future research could explore how postgraduate and doctorate students construct wellbeing. This would provide an opportunity to consider if there are any similarities with how undergraduate students constructed wellbeing, or whether students draw on alternative constructions and discourses compared to what was found in my study.

Another potential avenue for future research could involve analysing the language used in the UoL policies regarding student wellbeing. This would help shed light on whether these influential documents incorporate similar language to that found in my study relating to connection, achievement and success, and security, or whether they are more in line with a discourse of mental health. It would also offer an opportunity to understand how these policies influence student wellbeing services and whether they enhance or restrict the support students are given for their wellbeing. Additionally, exploring how responsibility is positioned and attributed within these documents may be useful to compare whether wellbeing is constructed as something that students are responsible for (which was present for some students in my study), or whether there is more of a shared responsibility and ownership with the university. This could be explored using FDA to also help consider what

these policies are managing within their constructions of wellbeing, how this allows universities to position themselves, and what opportunities and limitations this creates.

Implications for practice

My research contributes to the limited literature surrounding university students' constructions and discourses of wellbeing. It has a number of practical implications which can be suggested for student counselling services and the NHS. For instance, it could be suggested that student counselling services may also be drawing on similar dominant constructions and discourses of mental health (as seen in the existing literature) to support mental health and wellbeing among students. Therefore, it is likely that they may be using similar standardized instruments which are aimed to capture students' levels of anxiety and depression rather than wellbeing. These instruments are typically used to monitor changes and symptom reduction in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of student counselling services and secure future funding from the government. However, my study did not find discourses of mental health within students' constructions of wellbeing. Instead, I found that students spoke more holistically about their wellbeing which included their need for connection, safe accommodation, stable relationships with peers and family, and success and achievement at university. This highlights the need to continue to think more broadly about student wellbeing and to remain cautious of not labelling wellbeing as mental health. While I believe it is crucial that student counselling services continue to offer mental health support to students', my research suggests that there should be consideration for how effective student counselling services currently are for students who are struggling with their wellbeing. Therefore, going forward it is important to consider whether students feel they are able to access student counselling services if their mental health is stable? And if not, why might this be?

It is also important to acknowledge that clinical psychologists working in the NHS also offer support to university students in a variety of settings. Therefore, the points made above regarding student counselling services also apply to these services too. Particularly regarding the importance of engaging in holistic psychological assessments, which go beyond measuring symptoms of anxiety and depression. It could also be suggested that clinical psychologists engage more in discussions regarding discourse and power within their therapeutic work. Initiating these conversations could help students make sense of their difficulties from a societal perspective and also acknowledge the role that powerful institutions (such as universities) can have on students' wellbeing.

Additionally, I also believe that the constructions and discourses found in my study could also be used to help the UoL to think more broadly across the institution not just within NHS or student counselling services. For example, my findings highlight a need to incorporate some of these constructions and discourses of wellbeing into other aspects of the university to provide a more holistic approach to student wellbeing. Some suggestions from the findings in my study could include incorporating awards to recognise students' success and achievements at university. Also, thinking about ways in which the university can support students with their careers as well as educating students on tenancies and renting within their accommodations. Another suggestion from my findings could include helping to facilitate ways in which students can feel like they belong and are connected with others whilst at university, as well as considering more ways to support students who may be feeling isolated and alone. By implementing these resources, this would also ensure that the wellbeing of students was considered across the university experience as a whole, rather than limited to student counselling services.

Furthermore, university counselling services are often viewed as primary support options for students struggling with their mental health and wellbeing during their studies.

However, this perspective positions the responsibility of students' mental health and wellbeing as solely residing within these services, diminishing the responsibility of the institution itself. This can lead to several consequences. One of which is that this creates a misleading narrative that students' mental health and wellbeing can be "fixed" by simply accessing these services. This overlooks the broader systemic factors which exist outside of these services. Additionally, this narrative also fails to acknowledge the institutions' role and responsibility in supporting students' who are facing challenges during university. Therefore, I believe that there needs to be more of a shared responsibility with the institution regarding students' mental health and wellbeing. This would further ensure that student support is embedded into the university experience more generally rather than the responsibility of this residing within one specific area.

Research implications

My findings revealed that when students are given the opportunity to discuss wellbeing from their own perspective, they construct it differently to how researchers construct it in the literature. For instance, researchers' often focus on constructions and discourses of mental health and therefore students are expected to fit into researchers' interpretations of wellbeing, rather than constructing their own. In the future researchers should be mindful of how they define and capture wellbeing within their studies, particularly around whether the language they use reflects the students' perspective, or whether it is influenced by their own understanding. Therefore, it is recommended that future research exploring student wellbeing should be led by the students to allow them to shape their own discussions without being limited by researchers' ideas and interpretations. This would help to continue to explore ways to support students' wellbeing at university from their own perspective.

In addition, as my findings differed to the current literature it could also be suggested that researchers could focus their studies on the constructions and discourses present in my study. Not only would this reveal whether the constructions and discourses in my study are shared amongst other students, but it would also further inform how the university should understand student wellbeing and what opportunities or resources they need to put in place.

Conclusion

In my thesis I used Willig's (2013) FDA framework to explore how undergraduate students constructed wellbeing and what dominant discourses were being drawn on. The study also explored how students' constructions and discourses influenced how they positioned themselves, how this opened up and closed down opportunity for action, and what the impact was on students' subjective experiences (Willig, 2013). My findings revealed that students' ideas of wellbeing differed from the language commonly used in the academic literature, which primarily focusses on mental health discourses. Constructions of connection, success and security were dominant within my interviews. Students' constructions and discourses also influenced how they attributed and managed responsibility for their wellbeing. For instance, when students' wellbeing was positive and going well, they claimed responsibility for their wellbeing, whereas when things were going badly, they attributed it to external factors. These differences challenge preconceived ideas of how wellbeing is understood and opens up space to think about student wellbeing from a different perspective.

Overall, the study highlights there is a lack of appreciation for constructions and discourses present in the student wellbeing literature. Although researchers are ultimately responsible for their own studies there is a need for them to remain open to thinking critically and reflexively when designing and interpreting their research. This will allow researchers to embrace the complexity of student wellbeing and help provide further support for university students to manage and maintain their wellbeing.

Reflexive statement: Part 1

Throughout the process of writing my literature review, I engaged in several steps. Firstly, I discussed the topic of university student wellbeing with my supervisors and took notes during meeting. Following this, I began searching for relevant journal articles using search databases such as Google Scholar, PsycINFO, and the University of Leeds online library. I used search terms which included ‘Student Wellbeing’, ‘Student AND Wellbeing’, ‘Student OR Undergraduate Wellbeing’ and ‘University AND Wellbeing’. Once I had read multiple papers, I produced a literature review in the form of a table, which included Journal Articles, References, Aims, Methodology, Findings, Conclusions, Critiques, and a Critical reflection section. The critical reflection section allowed me to draw on principles of DA to explore the language used by researchers in journal articles. This process enhanced my DA skills and prepared me for my analysis.

My passion for student wellbeing is the main reason I decided to complete this thesis. However, the process of conducting the literature review and immersing myself in papers on this topic was not without its challenges, especially considering that I am still a student myself. In addition, although I am not currently an undergraduate student, I do have experience of what this was like and remember myself and various peers struggling with our wellbeing during this time. Whilst writing my thesis I have also found my own personal wellbeing fluctuating throughout my time on the DClin. Therefore, it was crucial for me to maintain a certain level of mental distance, such as taking breaks and checking in with myself, to make sure that my own personal experience did not influence my research.

Throughout this process I also had to hold in mind that I am naturally more drawn towards systemic ways of thinking. This means I lean more towards socio-political and socioeconomic issues, particularly regarding discourses of class, diversity, and social justice. This was something I discussed with my supervisors before I began to deconstruct the student

wellbeing literature. It was important for me to keep revisiting this throughout my thesis to ensure that I was not interpreting students' constructions and discourses based off my own experiences and values.

Deciding on the methodology and analysis of discourse for the project was influenced by my use of DA during my master's degree. During this time, I completed a small research project using DA and quickly became fascinated by discourse and power within society. Once I began my doctorate, I decided to combine my passion for student wellbeing alongside my interest in DA with the hope of contributing to the literature. I improved my knowledge of DA by reading journal articles and literature by those deemed as experts in DA such as Michael Foucault, Jonathon Potter, and Margaret Wetherell. To my surprise, few students had engaged in DA at thesis level compared to other qualitative analyses such as TA and IPA. This left me wondering why that might be and whether DA at doctorate level would be more complex than I anticipated. Despite this, I was keen to get going with my research to help provide a different way of thinking about university student wellbeing and to also increase the use of DA at doctorate level.

Reflexive statement: Part 2

Analysing my interviews using FDA brought up some challenges throughout my journey. In the beginning when reading through participants interviews, I found myself drifting into 'work mode' where instead of analysing the language students were using, I automatically began to formulate their difficulties from a clinical psychology perspective. This was difficult because for a period of time it felt like I was wearing two different hats, one in my day job and another for my research. I discussed this with my supervisors where we reflected that this was normal at the beginning of this analysis. It was important to keep coming back to these conversations in supervision and with time I was able to move between these two roles more effortlessly.

Drawing on Willig's (2013) six stages of FDA was really useful and provided me with structure and clarity on the differences and similarities of each stage. In the beginning of my analysis, I read through each transcript multiple times for each individual stage. This was time consuming, however once my confidence grew and I became more familiar with FDA, I was able to hold all of the six stages in mind as I went through each transcript. I also noticed as I worked through Willig's (2013) six stages there were certain stages which I found easier to learn such as Discursive Constructions, and Subject Positions. I wondered whether this was because these stages were more in line with my previous experience of DA at master's level.

Once I had my first draft of the analysis, I noticed there were lots of entangled concepts sat within a large body of data. I found it difficult during the first few drafts to find a balance between contending with the volume of data and deciphering what to put in the final analysis. I felt like attempting to reduce the data into fewer constructions and discourses was the opposite of what DA would recommend and therefore this challenged my position. What supported me during this time was visually mapping (See Appendix F) the different stages for

each participant which allowed me to take my analysis deeper and explore whether some of students' constructions and discourses had a lot more similarities than I had initially thought. I also continued to hold in mind the limitations of my word count and how it was not feasible to include all of the fine details of my analysis.

Once my analysis was completed, I then began writing my synthesis. Initially it felt overwhelming to synthesise such a large analysis whilst also trying to ensure that it flowed. I had multiple discussions with my supervisors and went through a process of writing different versions several times until I was able to capture the complexity of the data in a synthesized manner. I think this was probably the most difficult part of the analysis for me, however I did find it helpful to condense my analysis down into tables using Willig's six stages so I could see the different stages more easily for each participant.

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Appendix A: Participant information sheet from the pedagogical wellbeing study



Understanding wellbeing and the university experience

Thank you for taking time to participate in the survey on wellbeing and the university experience. I am writing to invite you to take part in the second stage of the project. There is reimbursement for your participation in this stage of the study of up to £10.

The next part of the study will involve you:

- Taking some pictures, downloading images, and/or taking screenshots of things that will help the researcher to understand your thoughts about, and experiences of, wellbeing and the university experience.
- Attending an interview with a researcher (Dr Bridgette Bewick). The interview will be on a day and time which suits you. This interview will last for around 60-90 minutes.

Please find below information explaining the project and what it would involve for you. This information is provided so you can decide whether you would like to take part. If you have any questions, please contact b.m.bewick@leeds.ac.uk for clarification.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study explores wellbeing and the university experience.

Why have I been invited to take part in an interview?

You recently completed an online survey. During that survey you expressed an interest in taking part in this stage of the study.

What will be involved if I agree to take part?

If you decide to take part in the study, the researcher will contact you to arrange a date and time to participate in an online interview. Online interviews will take part by electronic means (e.g., Microsoft Teams (via MS Office 365) WhatsApp, Skype).

You will be asked to complete a task before you meet with the researcher. This task will involve you collecting images to help you talk about your thoughts and experiences. These images can be photographs you have taken, screenshots from social media or images downloaded from the internet. You will be given at least two weeks to complete this task. The researcher will ask you to send your images before you meet at the interview. Most people say it is helpful to bring between 3 and 15 images. The researcher will send you more information about this task before the interview.

When you attend the interview, you will be asked to read and sign a consent form. The interview will last around 60-90 minutes. You will be asked questions regarding your

thoughts and experiences of wellbeing and the university experience. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

What happens to the information I give?

Information collected during the interview will be kept confidential. Any information you do share will be anonymised by Dr Bridgette Bewick. Only the research team will be able to see your data, and only Dr Bridgette Bewick will have access to the entire interview transcript. The interview will be transcribed verbatim by an approved University of Leeds transcriber. The interview transcript and all photos submitted will be anonymised and saved on a secure University of Leeds electronic drive/University of Leeds encrypted laptop.

All the contact information that we collect from you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and will be stored separately from the remainder of the research data.

Once the study has been completed, the anonymised data will be kept securely for use and analysis by the research team. All data obtained will be treated as confidential and stored securely as is required by the Data Protection Act. The data collected will be analysed and findings written up for dissemination and publication. No identifying information about you will be included in any reporting of findings. If any direct quotes/images are used within the report, these will be anonymised (e.g., by blurring of identifying features in images); any identifiable information will be removed from interview transcripts and blurred in images and pseudonyms will be used.

If you share any information that suggests you might be a risk to yourself or others, the researcher will have a duty to act on this. In this circumstances confidentiality may need to be broken to access the right support for you.

For further information about the University's use of personal data, please see: <https://dataprotection.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/48/2019/02/Research-Privacy-Notice.pdf>.

Do I have to take part?

Taking part in this study is voluntary, participants can withdraw at any time without having to give a reason. You do not have to give a reason for participating or not. The decision to participate, or not, will not impact on your studies at the University of Leeds.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

If you decide you no longer wish to take part in the study, please contact Dr Bridgette Bewick (b.m.bewick@leeds.ac.uk). If you have arranged to meet the researcher for an interview, but have changed your mind, you can contact them to cancel your interview. During the interview, you can tell the researcher you want to stop the interview and/or withdraw your data. After the interview is finished, you can withdraw from the study up until four weeks after the interview data. Up until the four-week deadline, you can ask for any data from the interview to be destroyed and not included in the final study. It will not be possible to withdraw data (including interview transcripts/images) four weeks after the interview date due to information being analysed.

Will I be recorded, and how will the recording be used?

thoughts and experiences of wellbeing and the university experience. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

What happens to the information I give?

Information collected during the interview will be kept confidential. Any information you do share will be anonymised by Dr Bridgette Bewick. Only the research team will be able to see your data, and only Dr Bridgette Bewick will have access to the entire interview transcript. The interview will be transcribed verbatim by an approved University of Leeds transcriber. The interview transcript and all photos submitted will be anonymised and saved on a secure University of Leeds electronic drive/University of Leeds encrypted laptop.

All the contact information that we collect from you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and will be stored separately from the remainder of the research data.

Once the study has been completed, the anonymised data will be kept securely for use and analysis by the research team. All data obtained will be treated as confidential and stored securely as is required by the Data Protection Act. The data collected will be analysed and findings written up for dissemination and publication. No identifying information about you will be included in any reporting of findings. If any direct quotes/images are used within the report, these will be anonymised (e.g., by blurring of identifying features in images); any identifiable information will be removed from interview transcripts and blurred in images and pseudonyms will be used.

If you share any information that suggests you might be a risk to yourself or others, the researcher will have a duty to act on this. In this circumstances confidentiality may need to be broken to access the right support for you.

For further information about the University's use of personal data, please see: <https://dataprotection.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/48/2019/02/Research-Privacy-Notice.pdf>.

Do I have to take part?

Taking part in this study is voluntary, participants can withdraw at any time without having to give a reason. You do not have to give a reason for participating or not. The decision to participate, or not, will not impact on your studies at the University of Leeds.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

If you decide you no longer wish to take part in the study, please contact Dr Bridgette Bewick (b.m.bewick@leeds.ac.uk). If you have arranged to meet the researcher for an interview, but have changed your mind, you can contact them to cancel your interview. During the interview, you can tell the researcher you want to stop the interview and/or withdraw your data. After the interview is finished, you can withdraw from the study up until four weeks after the interview data. Up until the four-week deadline, you can ask for any data from the interview to be destroyed and not included in the final study. It will not be possible to withdraw data (including interview transcripts/images) four weeks after the interview date due to information being analysed.

Will I be recorded, and how will the recording be used?

If you feel you require support for your mental health, please contact your GP and book an appointment. You can also contact:

Leeds University Student Counselling and Wellbeing service: Complete an online referral form at: <https://leeds.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/student-counselling-wellbeing-service-self-referral-form-2018-19>

Leeds University Nightline: 0113 3801285 (available 8pm- 8am every night of term including weekends).

Samaritans: 116 123 (available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year).

Leeds Improving Access to Psychological Therapies: email: leedsiapt@nhs.net, phone: 0113 843 4388.

If you feel you are in crisis and are concerned for the immediate safety of you or those around you, please call 999.

Appendix B: Consent form from the pedagogical wellbeing study



I confirm that I have read the participant information and understood what I am being asked to do in this research.	
I understand that my information will remain confidential.	
I have had the opportunity to consider the information sheet and to contact b.m.bewick@leeds.ac.uk if I had any questions about the project. I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I can withdraw my data (i.e., interview transcript and/or images) up until 4 weeks after the interview without giving a reason.	
I understand that if I wish to withdraw my data from the study, I must contact the researcher within 4 weeks.	
I give consent to take part in this research and for my anonymised data (i.e., transcripts and images) to be stored and used in the analysis of this research and future research.	
Some photographs from the project will be used in the final report, published, presented, and disseminated but I know that I can say at the interview if there are any photos that I do not want to be used in this way.	
I understand that any quotes and/or images used in dissemination activities will be anonymised (e.g., by use of blurring, truncation, cropping).	
I give consent to anonymised quotes and images being used within reporting.	
I understand that what I say may not be anonymous if presented with images, especially if the images have information that easily identifies me, but my actual name will not be used, and obviously identifiable information (e.g., clearly depicted faces) will be blurred in images. I know that I can say at the interview if there are any photos I do not want to be used in this way.	
I agree to the interview with me being audio recorded so that what I say can be accurately typed up.	

I understand that my responses will be kept confidential unless the researcher feels there is a significant risk to myself or other, which has been discussed with me prior to conducting the interview.	
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If you understand the information provided and consent to taking part in this stage of the study, please confirm your consent by initialling each statement and then providing your details and signature below.

To be completed by the participant

Name:

Emails address (please use the email address to which this invitation was sent):

Phone (optional):

Alternative mode of contact (optional):

Signature:

Date:

To be completed by the researcher

Name:

Emails address:

Phone:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix C: Photo task sheet from the pedagogical wellbeing study

Wellbeing and the university experience

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research. When we meet up we will talk about what you have taken photos of. This will help us to understand your experience of student wellbeing and the university experience. We want to understand more about your experience of being at university to help us develop new ways of helping to

What do I take photos of?

You can take photos of anything you like. You could also take screenshots or download pictures. We would like you to record anything that will help us to talk about and understand your experiences and opinions.

Look at the word cloud, which words are relevant to your experience of being at university? We are asking you to take photos that will help us to talk about and understand these experiences. Try to collect images of things that you will be able to talk a little bit about when we meet up.



What can't I take photos of?

Try not to take photos of anybody who doesn't want their photo taken. Be aware of who is in the background. Do not take photos of anything that could offend anybody.

How many photos should I take?

There is no set number of photos or images you need to take. You can take as many images as you like and then decide later which you would like to discuss when we meet. You will need enough images to talk for about one hour. People usually bring between 3 and 15 images.

What do I do with the images once I've taken them?

You will need to decide which images you might want to talk about when we meet and send them to me. This should be at least 48 hours before we meet. The best way to do this would be through your university email address as this is secure. My email address is b.m.bewick@leeds.ac.uk. If you want to share your images with me another way, we can think about this together.

What happens to the photos after the project?

When the project is over the photos you have taken will be kept safely by the research team. At the end of the interview, we will talk about whether you are happy for us to use any of your photos in our dissemination activity.

If you have any questions about this task, or aren't sure what to do, please contact me.

Appendix D: Interview topic guide from the pedagogical wellbeing study

Interviews will be informed by the following topic guide; semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility. Not all questions will necessarily be asked nor in this order.

Procedure

- Check information sheet has been received and read. Provide a paper copy of the PIS. Answer any questions and collect informed consent. Once consent has been provided start recording.
- Explain that they can take a break if anything we discuss makes them feel uncomfortable.
- Explain the outline of the interview – looking at photographs they have bought and asking questions about their opinions and experiences which will take around 60 to 90 minutes.
- After the interview thank them for taking part, acknowledge it can be difficult talking about and sharing experiences, remind them of the support services listed on the PIS.
- Provide incentive, asking participants to sign that they have received this.
- Ask for consent regarding future contact for any follow-up interviews should these be necessary to aid interpretation/understanding.
- Follow up any risk issues should they arise, connect participant with support if appropriate.
- Allow time for further questions before ending.

Topic guide (have a copy of the word cloud on the table/nearby)

First of all, I would like you to put the photographs in order. The order can be anything you want.

1. Tell me about the first/second.../last photograph.
 - What do you want me to understand from this photograph?
 - What does this tell me about you?
 - How come you took this picture?
 - What does it mean to you that ... [enter as relevant]
 - Does this matter? Why?
2. Which photograph is most important to you?
 - Why?
3. Which photo is least important to you?
 - Why?
 - How come you still chose to photograph it?
4. How does it feel looking at these photographs?
 - What was it like taking the photographs?
 - How does it feel talking about this/these photo(s)?
5. Consider this piece of paper as the entire university experience. There's lots of different parts to that experience. If we think of your programme of study placed in

the middle of these circles and radiating out to things like your department, your faculty, the wider university and then beyond. How should we label up these circles?

- Now where would you place each of the photos on the paper?
 - [explore further]
6. Standing back and looking at the photographs. Was there anything that you couldn't/didn't photograph? Anything missing?
 - Tell me more about that.
 - How come you couldn't photograph that?
 - What would the photograph have represented that hasn't been represented already?
 7. In the event that people are in the photographs
 - Who is in this photograph?
 - How do they fit in with your experience of being at university?
 - How did X [enter relevant person] respond to having their person taken?

If participants have not taken any images with them or have failed to bring images to the interview begin by getting them to explore the images they did/might have taken. Then work with the 'circles' and the 'word cloud' to explore the participants experiences.

Appendix E: Thank you sheet after survey from the pedagogical wellbeing study

p. 18 Thank you

Add item



Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your participation will help us to better understand how we might best support students at the University of Leeds.

If you have any further questions/comments about this survey please contact b.m.bewick@leeds.ac.uk.

If you have volunteered to be interviewed and are selected to take part you will receive an email shortly.

If you are one of the lucky winners of the Amazon voucher prizes, you will be contacted in due course.

If you have been affected by any of the questions in this survey, and/ or wish to seek support please visit your GP or consider one of the following services:

- *Leeds University Student Counselling and Well-being service*: Complete an online referral form at: <https://leeds.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/student-counselling-well-being-service-self-referral-form-2018-19>
- *Leeds University Nightline*: 0113 3801285 (available 8pm- 8am every night of term including weekends).
- *Samaritans*: 116 123 (available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year).
- *Leeds Improving Access to Psychological Therapies*: email: leedsiapt@nhs.net, phone: 0113 843 4388.

If you feel you are in crisis and are concerned for the immediate safety of you or those around you, please call 999.

Appendix F: Visual mapping of constructions and discourses

