Reconsidering Happiness in the Context of Social Justice Education

First Author: Liz Jackson

Second Author: Charles Bingham

The educational promotion of emotional intelligence, emotional quotients, self-regulation and, in general, the ability to productively manage emotions, has echoed movements in occupational and economic discourse for over four decades (Boler 1999; Ecclestone, 2014). Suffering, anger, anxiety and other unhappy feelings are usually regarded within these approaches as obstructions to following ideal processes toward productive labor, or effective learning (Noddings 2003; Roberts 2016). Such self-monitoring discourses are paralleled by, and in many ways symbiotic with, the rise of positive psychology—the psychology of self-improvement and "lasting fulfilment" through cultivating positive emotions and affective dispositions (Ahmed 2010; Seligman 2002). Various popular forms of positive psychology have added to a renewed focus on optimizing affect through psychological practice and training, particularly in North America (Ehenreich 2009). That *happiness* leads to lack of harm and suffering, representing both a good and a means to good, is also promoted, for example, by educational philosophers such as Nel Noddings, who argues that religious traditions in the United States have overemphasized needless suffering in the past, and have led to overlooking the importance of happiness as an educational aim (2003).

But happiness should not be seen as an unproblematic goal, for education or otherwise. In a critical overview of discourses on happiness, Sara Ahmed (2010) identifies how happiness has historically served utilitarian justifications for colonialism and Empire. Under colonialism, indigenous peoples were often seen as *not* happy—not informed or civilized enough to perform happiness according to colonial expectations. As Ahmed writes, "demonstrating the unhappiness of un-British India was a way of defending the happiness of the colonial end" in such colonial justifications as James Mill's *The History of British India* (qtd. in Ahmed 2010, p. 125). Another case is Ahmed's analysis of the "melancholy migrant," whose unhappiness is tied to holding on to memories of the foreign past, and who must let go of melancholy and the turban (in the case of the British Indian Sikh) to be fully part of the imagined happy nation. An example not limited to colonial regime but linked rather to the domestic sphere is the state of women's happiness in the stereotypical case of the "happy housewife." These examples suggest, contrary to the typical assumptions of happiness's positive impact, that expectations of happiness circulate within unequal social relations, and that happiness can be seen as a tool to maintain such relations at the expense of those who are not naturally comfortable, content, and pleased with them (Ahmed 2010; Lynch, Baker, Cantillon and Walsh 2009).

In this article, we critically investigate the place of happiness in the educational context. More specifically, we emphasize the value and benefits of problematizing happiness as an emotional practice in social justice education. Here, we understand social justice education as education which aims to enable and empower students in an equitable fashion. Social justice education considers how society and schooling normally function in ways that maintain inequitable status quos. In relation, it questions how students are treated as different from or the same as one another, and critically responds to problematic power relations in educational contexts. Our analysis first enumerates two theoretical perspectives that endorse happiness in education. These are the educational philosophy of Noddings and the influential paradigm of positive psychology. After exploring how happiness is promoted theoretically and practically, we elaborate a critical perspective on happiness. We use the work of Ahmed, among others, to illustrate some ways in which calls for happiness can function to serve unjust relations in education. We thus explore happiness as an intersubjective affect, as opposed to being an intrasubjective feeling, thereby elucidating the implications of critical and relational theories of emotion and happiness into the educational realm. We conclude that educators who want to foster social justice in educational settings need to consider both potential positive and potential negative consequences of encouraging happiness in education. Fostering happiness can be progressive and empowering, but it can also be regressive and unjust.

Appeals to Happiness in Education: Noddings and Positive Psychology

Happiness as an educational aim has been influentially promoted by the educational philosopher Noddings (2003; 2008). According to Noddings, children and adults learn best when they are happy, when they do not in educational contexts encounter or tolerate needless struggling. Noddings goes further to claim "Happy individuals are rarely violent or intentionally cruel, either to other human beings or to nonhuman animals. Our basis orientation to moral education, then, should be a commitment to building a world… in which children are happy" (p. 2). Therefore, Noddings sees it as part of a moral reconstructivist orientation toward education to teach people in such a way that they can become happier and learn to find happiness in working against misery and suffering around them. Noddings' argument is based on the premise that the happy individual is something to be promoted. And schools are a place to do this promoting.

Noddings argues that much schooling has tended not to cultivate happiness, and that schools have too often been known instead as unhappy places. Religious and non-religious western philosophers have seen suffering as providing meaning to life (e.g., Frankl), and fuel to power and strength (Nietzsche), for instance. In this context, Noddings suggests that modern Christianity, and specifically its belief in an afterlife, can be seen to justify

experiences of suffering; it is an influential factor that has led people to accept, and even to embrace, "earthly misery." Noddings notes there is a "glorification of suffering that pervades Christian doctrine…[together with] a habit of deferring happiness to some later date" (2003, p. 1). People thus historically accepted this status quo, regarding unhappiness and even suffering as normal and natural in society, rather than as something to work to ameliorate.

Educational aims related to productivity in the global economy, making money, and passing tests, which might be presumed indirect means toward ultimate worldly happiness at societal and personal levels, also contradict the aim of providing happiness and means for happiness, in both the short and long terms in personal and social life. Noddings points out it could easily be otherwise. Children could learn to appreciate poetry and math in daily life in awe, rather than be tested on narrow deconstructions of lyrics and calculus (2003; 2008). They can further be taught not to accept suffering as necessary in their lives or in those of others, thus relating the cultivation of happiness social justice. Noddings thus shows how an education for happiness would look quite different from the status quo of contemporary schooling in the west, as elsewhere, such as in East Asian societies that also focus on testing students, to measure their performance and for broader accountability objectives.

Noddings does not dwell on an ideal definition of happiness, acknowledging diverse conceptualizations of happiness (and well-being) in philosophy. However, she regards as an essential condition for its cultivation a lack of suffering, which requires that people's inferred and expressed needs are met. In schools, this implies that students' physical needs are looked after, as well as their expressed needs for pleasure, fun, and play. Noddings notes, "To be happy, human beings must have important needs satisfied and, in considering needs…fascinating questions arise [such as] How far should parents and teachers go in satisfying expressed needs (those that arise in the one who has them)" (2003, p.4)? As she observes, fulfilling these needs also enhances learning of subjects, as pleasure, fun, and play enable students' desire to sustain their attention, dwell and reflect on what they perceive, and gain intrinsic satisfaction from learning. On the other hand, prerequisites for students experiencing emotional well-being include a lack of fear, anxiety, shame, guilt, or embarrassment. Not calling on students who do not want to speak in class, and not mocking or using students as educational tools against their expressed interests, for example, are thus in line with such a pedagogy for happiness.

Apart from explicitly affirming happiness in education, Noddings' approach to happiness itself is indirect. Noddings points out that, "as educators, we believe that good character has something to do with happiness, and so we continually try to find effective methods of character education" (2003, p. 21). However, schools are not inoculated from factors that detract from happiness: "But social pressures also cause both temporary and permanent

unhappiness by inducing envy, guilt, self-denial, self-indulgence, greed, and a host of other ills. As a result of internal and external conflicts, many people are not sure what would make them happy or why they are unhappy" (2003, p. 21). As she acknowledges, happiness remains a nebulous goal, as we often experience it as just out of reach: In the moment you think you have grasped bliss, the sense is displaced. Noddings thus aims primarily to make space for happiness, identifying and arguing for the removal of barriers to happiness that she sees as needlessly entrenched in schools today. For Noddings, both the encouragement of, and the barriers to, happiness must be taken into account by educators.

A more direct approach to emotional education for happiness in schooling has emerged from more instrumentalist psychological theorizing for emotional intelligence and emotional literacy in the last few decades, most commonly associated today with positive psychology (Ahmed 2010; Seligman 2002). Boler (1999) notes that this educational trend stems from the conflict resolution movement in educational and industrial psychology at the turn of the twentieth century, and at another level from pastoral power and Foucauldian governmentality in modern western liberal society. Cigman (2012) similarly notes its roots in the mid-twentieth century "mental hygiene" movement for enhancing children's mental health. But only recently have (demonstrations of) emotional well-being and happiness (and related emotions) become explicit parts of curriculum in western societies.

Positive psychology developed in the late 1980s and 1990s as a focus on cultivating positive feelings, shifting away from psychology's historical focus on problematic affect and deviant states of being. Its premise is that to "feel better is to be better," and therefore, "to feel better is to *get better*" (Ahmed 2010, p. 8; Cigman 2012; Ehenreich 2009). In this field, based on self-reports, manifestations of, or dispositions toward good feelings such as happiness, well-being, fulfillment, optimism, gratitude, grit and so on correlate with one another and with morally good traits like altruism, compassion and tendencies toward pro-social, self-directed and productive behaviors. Thus, in positive psychology and the science of happiness, researchers and theorists examine what might cause people to exhibit happiness, holding such factors as potential keys toward developing a happier, better, more productive world. Typically accepting this view, as Boler reviews (1999), schools implement emotional intelligence and emotional literacy curricula, seeing these as keys toward safer, more manageable, and better achieving classrooms.

Emotional literacy curricula aim to help students recognize emotional affect and expressions in themselves and others as a prerequisite to working to control these to be more productive and self-disciplined and avoid conflict. Students in this context learn to see their feelings as part of their moral or civic responsibility to themselves and to others. They should learn to exhibit expressions recognizable as positive emotions and train themselves to do so. Take, for example, the School Speciality (2018) Premier Esteem curriculum "planner" for young children in North

America: The handbook for young children asks them to articulate what makes them happy and sad, with the statement, "Your feelings can change your actions. Know why you feel the way you do. This will help you make good choices" (p. ES-7). Understanding emotions is taken here as something one can do correctly or incorrectly, just as the following pages of the textbook focus on objective lessons in spelling, geography, and math (Cigman 2012; Lynch, Baker, Cantillon and Walsh 2009). As Boler (1999) notes, such curricula are generally cast as morally neutral, but pragmatically useful for learning and being productive. Such programs can also mask power relations, however, asking students to take responsibility and ownership in situations not of their choosing, possibly fulfilling teachers' demands which could be at odds with their own interests (1999; also Cigman 2012). More challenges involved with promoting happiness in schools are explored in the next section.

The Individualization of Happiness

At first glance, Noddings' project of educational happiness and the positive psychology influence on programs for enhancing emotional intelligence might seem to have little in common discursively—one deriving from a philosophical discourse and the other from psychology. However, it is possible to see in both a significant commonality. In both cases, a certain form of individual is posited (see also Cigman 2012; Roberts 2016). Happiness is taken to be individualized, internalized, and something a person can choose at the personal level within, and regardless of, the broader world. In both cases, the advocated educational aim is to increase the amount of happiness that each person, each student, has and experiences. We highlight these individualized, internalized educational constructions of happiness at this point because we want to argue that happiness must rather be construed in a relational manner in order to more fully understand the role of happiness in justice and injustice.

Happiness is posited by Noddings and in positive psychology as something that one person is in search of, or that one is developing, or has found. Happiness may be fleeting, or it may acquire longevity; it may be unobtainable, or it may be experienced much too infrequently. As an affect, however, happiness remains person-bound in the accounts, rather than an experience of an intersubjective process. While Noddings does have a social role for happiness, namely that happiness needs to flourish in families and among friends, the sociality of happiness in Noddings' work is extrinsic rather than intrinsic to the individualized way in which people seem to experience happiness in her account. In other words, for Noddings happiness does derive from and help enhance social situations, yet these social situations are framed as a stage for individual happiness. She writes that happy teachers provide for happy students, but does not query the relationship or connection of happiness (2003). The social situation inaugurates, but does not constitute, the happiness a person "has" as a result of being social, from this view.

Positive psychology likewise situates happiness at the individualized, internalized level. As Ahmed notes (2010), positive psychology frames happiness as a disciplinary technique and individual responsibility to work on oneself, through responding appropriately to psychological knowledge in making personal decisions and developing personal dispositions. It is regarded as a personal choice to develop the rights traits, such as optimism and grit, or a path that one takes as an individual (2010, p. 9). Positive psychology assessments are individual rather than relational or communal (Cigman 2012). Thus, positive psychology regards it as a "thing" people have the capacity to possess as individuals: "We make ourselves happy, as an acquisition of capital that allows us to be or to do this or that" (Ahmed 2010, p. 10). Happiness is a descriptor for people as individuals, and while happiness tends to correlate in many contexts with relative privilege (Forbes and Lingard 2013), it is nonetheless regarded in these framings as a free-standing choice, as an affect one can develop regardless of the world around them, their social relations, etc.

Although this might make happiness seem easy to attain across diverse contexts, it can also be seen to divert attention from issues of structural injustice in society. As Barbara Ehrenreich observes (2009), positive psychology bolsters views of individual meritocracy in the United States context, which leads people to see their challenges in life—which might be reflective of changes in the economic system (mass layoffs, for instance)—as things they can change through sheer individual will-power, optimism and happiness. Thus, unhappiness is framed as an individual deficiency in the case that one does not have it, but the larger social context is ignored, normalized, or held as acceptable, natural, or not worthy of sustained focus and consideration. This state of affairs results in unhappy individuals being blamed, in a sense, for their challenges, as happiness is a capital that would presumably assist them if only they would strive toward it, with the help of positive psychology (Cigman 2012). Likewise, in education, one has a responsibility to be happy in order to be productive, despite the other challenges he or she may face in achieving or performing well (Forbes and Lingard 2013).

Is Happiness Always a Good Thing? A Relational Approach

We want to problematize these and related recent educational and psychological accounts of happiness as a singularized state of the individual. These accounts describe happiness as a positive thing for individuals to experience. Happiness is said to be a good result of living a good life, and lack of happiness is said to be a detriment and the result of living a life that is not as good. Such a view on happiness entails a good amount of common sense. It makes sense that it is better to be happy than not. Certainly, most of us would like to be happy, and practices like the industry of anti-depressant pharmacology and talk therapy show that many people are willing to go to great

lengths financially, bodily, and spiritually, to become happy (Ehenreich 2009). And with the expanding role of school in the twenty-first century, it makes sense for schools to fall in line with the happiness industry and promote happiness just as families and health care professionals often do. It is also possible, however, to pose the question of happiness from a direction contrary to common sense. Is it necessarily the case that happiness in education is always a good thing? To address this question, we find it necessary to look past the individualized understanding of emotion.

When one analyzes happiness in a personal way, as something that one person has, then it is easy to see how the common-sense view that happiness is a good, or even a virtue, prevails (Cigman 2012). How could one argue that individuals should not be happy? In contrast, a relational account of emotions, including happiness, lets one say something different from the common-sense statement that happiness must generally be a good thing. Ahmed, in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, notes that emotions shape "the surfaces of bodies in relation to objects. Emotions are relational: they involve (re)actions or relations of 'towardness' or 'awayness' in relation to such objects." She reconsiders the oft-used psychological example of fear when a child encounters a bear in the wild, in this case. As she notes, the child never has a "natural" fear of a bear. Such fear would not exist if the bear were in captivity. Nor is the bear naturally fearsome. The bear does not possess some fearsomeness out of captivity that it did not possess in captivity. Rather, the child's fear of the bear is a socially performed experience that works to create both the fearing and the fearfulness. It is not the bear that is feared, but a particular relation to the bear. This observation leads Ahmed to note that there are "affective economies where feelings do not reside in subjects or objects, but are produced as effects of circulation. The circulation of objects allows us to think of the 'sociality' of emotion" (2004, p. 8).

While Ahmed uses the bear example to demonstrate the relationality of affect, her larger project is to explore relationality of affect in cases where happiness and social justice are at stake. Here she analyzes the tropes of "happy housewife" and "feminist killjoy." Describing the so-called happy housewife, Ahmed notes that, despite being "a white bourgeois fantasy of the past, a nostalgia for a past that was never possible as a present for most women," the model remains with us today, as women are encouraged to find happiness in pleasing others as good wives and mothers. Ahmed's insights here are not only theoretical, but also relevant to education, as she discusses the training of the happy housewife with an example from a work of educational philosophy normally touted as central to progressive education, Rousseau's *Emile*. While the sexism of Rousseau's *Emile* is often ignored in favor of more generous allusions to *Emile* as a foundation for progressive education, this text can serve as a significant point of critique as we move from individual happiness toward a more relational, social justice-oriented account.

In *Emile,* the girl Sophie's future role is framed by Rousseau as that of a happy partner who continually charms and wins over her husband through having a happiness she can give to him (Ahmed 2010; Spear 2008). In this framing of girls and women, a good girl is one who is happy, in order to make her parents and then her husband and children happy. As her parents are quoted, "We want you to be happy, for our sake as well as yours, for our happiness depends on yours. A good girl finds her happiness in the happiness of a good man" (qtd. in Ahmed, 2010, p. 58). Sophie's happiness thus becomes a shared object, while on the other hand, her lack of happiness as a prerequisite for that of the family precludes the happiness of all. In this sense, concealment of unhappiness might occur, while a good girl or woman works to do what others would like her to do, all in order to maintain others' happiness, seen in turn as essential to her own (also Hochschild 1979; Jackson 2017).

Reading *Emile*, Ahmed identifies the contortions of normative happiness, as Sophie's father offers her a "happiness commandment: it is for the sake of her happiness and the happiness of her parents that she *must* find happiness in the right place which is in the happiness of a good man" (2010, p. 58). While it might be tempting to construe such a commandment as the remnant of a more sexist era, the point here is not to claim that *Emile* offers some historical cue that happiness in education is historically tainted. It is rather to note that happiness has the ability to circulate, relationally, in ways that are oppressive rather than ameliorative. And to note, as well, that educational experience is certainly not immune from sexist discourses like the "happy housewife," which continue to circulate today long after the writing of Rousseau has been ostensibly washed of its sexism in favor of its more palatable progressivism (Jackson, 2017). Or, as many men still say in Anglophone countries long after Rousseau, "Happy wife, happy life."

Just as Sophie must be redirected in *Emile* from too much reading and thinking, toward a simpler sense of contentment and happiness, feminist troublemakers today are seen as the cause of their own unhappiness and that of others around them, in their identification of social problems and interrelated failure to be content with traditional gender roles in families and in society. As happiness is increasingly regarded as a social responsibility to a greater good, such women are encouraged to appreciate having their basic needs met and to develop their capacity to find happiness within them—to "just smile"—rather than to experience and express sourness, dissatisfaction and negativity. When everyone is seen to benefit, and enjoy the gender status quo apart from the feminist, feminists then become seen as the source of bad feelings in social spaces, as kill joys who refuse to be happy with the status quo and who thus make the status quo worse for everyone, ruining its presumably "naturally happy" context. As Ahmed (2010, p. 65) elaborates:

In the sociality of everyday spaces, feminists are thus attributed as the origin of bad feelings, as the ones

who ruin the atmosphere…

Say we are seated at the dinner table. Around this table, the family gathers, having polite conversations,

where only certain things can be brought up. Someone says something you consider problematic. You

respond, carefully, perhaps. You might be speaking quietly; or you might be getting "wound up"… The

violence of what was said or the violence of the provocation goes unnoticed. However she speaks, the

feminist is usually the one who is viewed as "causing the argument," who is disturbing the fragility of

peace.

The happy housewife is asked to be happy with what she has, for the happiness of all (her parents and her

husband), trusting in the view that her ultimate happiness can stem from that enlarged community happiness. The

so-called happy housewife and feminist killjoy are, for Ahmed, examples of the importance of treating affect

relationally if we are to tend to social justice. In the case of the happy housewife, one can note the discrepancy

between an individualized perspective and a relational view. In the former case, it might be argued that having

happiness is good for individuals. It thus becomes very difficult to describe the unjust relations *supporting* such

purported happiness when happiness can hardly be said to be a *bad* thing for the individual who is supposed to be

happy. In contrast, when one looks at the relationality of affect, one pays attention not to who *has* happiness but

rather to the way that happiness circulations between subjects and objects. On this latter view, one must look

primarily at the discourses engendering the fact that housewives are supposed to be happy. In this case, being happy

circulates within a sexist, patriarchal discourse. Being happy in this sense can be questioned only when happiness is

construed as relational. The happy housewife's happiness is far from a personal state, being the result rather of

sedimented sexist discourse. It is also far from beneficial, far from educative, and difficult to fit under the heading of

"happiness as an aim of life and education" (Noddings, 2003, p. 7).

Similarly, one can note problems with an individualist view of the feminist killjoy. From an individualist

view, the feminist killjoy is *wrong* to detract from the happiness of the group because people are supposed to have

access to more happiness, rather than less. But taking affect as relational, one must look at the social circumstances

that *mark* the so-called trouble maker. In a relational sense, the happiness of the group circulates within a milieu of

oppressive statements. Our argument here is that within various axes of repression, sexism being only one such axis,

happiness becomes a precipitant affect that should not be supported unproblematically.

Ahmed's analysis of relational happiness is not without limitations. As critics of her work point out, her text

tends to invoke a binary of happiness and unhappiness, without addressing how unhappiness can also be framed in

more and less problematic ways (Lloyd, 2013). Nor does Ahmed extend her analysis to deeply consider the affective states of relatively privileged members of society (Turner 2016). Nonetheless, the relational account of happiness enables one to recognize some significant pitfalls and risks of expecting the same affective performances from all people, across social contexts and in the midst of problematic power relations, thereby encouraging a more critical and broader view of common-sense social expectations and practices when it comes to emotional experience and performance. In the next section, we examine the implications of the critical, relational view of happiness in education and extend the analysis to consider what such a view means for students and teachers.

Happiness and Education Revisited

Implications of seeing happiness as relational rather than individual can be seen for the way both teachers and students are treated in education. Regarding educators, related gendered emotional expectations are also implicit in traditionally feminine occupations, or "women's work." As Arlie Hochschild noted in *The Managed Heart* (1979), service professions that involve extensive interpersonal relations and rely on some kind of customer satisfaction typically come with expectations that particularly impact women employees to express happiness in order to enable that of others. In higher education today, women may be asked to do more service work and teaching than men counterparts, while students will evaluate their effectiveness more in terms of their performing or not performing positive affective dispositions such as caring, kindness and niceness, and friendliness, traits associated with the expectations that women play a nurturing role across social domains (Jackson, 2017). Ahmed's consideration of the happy housewife—explicitly stemming from Hochschild's foundational views—is thus germane to any classroom investigation into the social role of happiness, insofar as all teachers of children are, in part, required to act as caregivers, with all the genealogical complexity of those who have historically been associated with unpaid or underpaid care work. Educators' happiness is thus expected as part of pastoral care giving, with the assumption that one cannot cultivate students unless they perform and possess positive affect.

Furthermore, under educational frameworks focused on the promotion of happiness and related positive emotions, teachers are expected to perform happy affect as moral or civic models for students and within social contexts where aspiring toward happiness is seen as a personal, even moral, responsibility of students. Lessons that can be emotionally upsetting may be avoided in this case, as they present challenges to the conventional classroom as a kind of happy imagined community (Mayo, 2016). (We use 'imagined' here to signal how *a priori* homogeneous affect within a community is often presumed.) In this context, social justice education which focuses on issues of injustice in society or in the world can be framed as providing emotionally "deviant" classroom

experiences: Unhappiness may be a reasonable outcome of learning about bad things in life—racial oppression, war, gender violence—however, students may experience this as a bad thing, if happiness is at the same time framed as an ultimate educational goal. Thus, it may be difficult for a teacher concerned with social justice education or identifying social problems such as oppression, to teach strictly with an orientation toward enhancing happiness, as affective performances of anger, resentment, despair and the like are thus seen as inappropriate and exclusive to productive emotional engagements which are calm, focused, and at least moderately cheery. Such a teacher may be regarded as not appropriately or effectively engaged in his or her ultimate duty. As Peter Roberts notes (2016),

> The goal is to keep students or viewers happy; discomfort should be avoided wherever possible. And where this breaks down, and students or viewers become bored, or restless, or angry, those who provide the teaching or the programming are punished with lower ratings and, where necessary appropriate disciplinary action (pp. 104-105)

Therefore, a teacher can lose authority for not successfully managing her affect or that of others toward positive emotions. More broadly, as Hochschild notes, in such situations professionals can become alienated from their labor, when being professional or authoritative is tied into happy affect despite challenges of personal life, a vocation, or tragedy in the world generally. Teachers may not feel allowed or empowered to ever have bad days or experience uncertainty or despair. Under a positive psychology view, teachers should role model to students endless optimism and positive attitudes, rather than focusing on personal or community challenges and downsides (Ehenreich 2009; Roberts 2016).

Students also face challenges in seeking effective and meaningful educational experiences while being expected to perform happiness before their peers and teachers. Students are asked to trust in their educators as authorities, trusting that their ultimate happiness can stem from educational outcomes not yet seen (within a broader context wherein education is linked to development and progress at individual and societal levels). Be happy that your teacher wants you to grow; do not despair over discomforts, uncertainties, challenges of questionable value. Students are asked to manage their feelings and perform the right ones with each other and with educators to have the "right attitude" (Jackson and Bingham 2018). Their happiness is not just a feeling but a kind of moral duty in their role, within the educational relationship. Students should come to class with the right materials, including pen and paper, and the right affective disposition. Anger and tears and related engagements are not normally seen as helpful.

Yet an exclusive focus on happiness to the exclusion of tolerating or even exploring in an open-minded way the value of negative emotions risks obscuring rather than facing real challenges people in the world. If one must be

happy, then how can one identify problems and work to resolve them? As Cigman (2012) points out, why should happiness always be a primary concern, in the context of bullying and other challenges children may face? Here, moral arguments can easily be split from instrumental arguments, as what may be instrumentally helpful from a general psychological or philosophical view may be in a particular context immoral, if it can lead to educators supporting unjust practices in order to hold happiness and other positive emotions as primary above all else. Alternatively, an attitude that is more tolerant toward expressions of unhappiness may be vital to improving the world, rather than maintaining status quo which are often problematic from a social justice view (Ahmed 2010). As Roberts also concludes (2016, pp. 117-118), "Happiness, for most of us, is a vital component of a good life—but it need not be *the* goal to which we should always aspire…Happiness in its commodified form, as a kind of drug to be marketed and administered in regular doses, takes us not closer to our humanity but further away from it." There can also be an important place for despair and uncertainty as education. Uncertainty and discomfort can accompany being open minded to having one's basic perceptions and assumptions challenged, for instance, while despair may be a constructive response to considering the plight of disadvantaged others with empathy and compassion (Meyer and Land 2003). Thus, teachers and students can benefit from individualized views of happiness in some ways, but face risks in others, steering away from an individualized focus on happiness toward a more relation and justice-oriented account.

Conclusion

Today the concept of happiness as an emotion in education is individualized, internalized, and interconnected with broader individualistic views of the world. Although positive psychology views suggest that simply stating "I am happy" is a performative action toward happiness, there are many problems with endorsing and promoting happiness to the exclusion of unhappy feelings in education. It suggests, in its most extreme variant, that things that make people unhappy should not be addressed, or that nothing should be seen as a cause for unhappiness in the world. It enables the perpetuation of a view of unhappy feelings as unproductive, and of victims of injustice (or bullied students) as people with "bad attitudes," when feelings like hurt, stress, indignation, or anger can arguably be recognized for good in cases of injustice and undue suffering and harm (Mayo 2016). An overemphasis on happiness overlooks the situation of those whose realities, experiences, and identities can also become symbols of unhappiness, regardless of their own desires and interests. And it leaves little space for students to question their educational experiences, to voice concerns, fears or sources of uneasy confusion as they read, study, listen, interact with each other, etc. (Cigman 2012).

That educators should strive to cultivate classrooms that are not spaces that encourage or promote needless suffering, as Noddings has argued, makes good sense, and we do not wish to suggest that suffering should be a primary goal of education in place of happiness. Similarly, that happiness is beneficial to people instrumentally and therefore is worth promoting in education from a moral viewpoint is not in every case problematic, and thus there may be a reasonable space for promoting happiness in education. Yet allowing space for unhappiness is also merited when considering education as functioning for social justice. That happiness can be used in communities as a tool to maintain a status quo that does not intrinsically aid the cultivation of all members' happiness equally should give educators pause before possibly tracking students' feelings, as if they are individual and unrelated to the larger contexts of the classroom, home, and society. Furthermore, social justice education that aims to enhance equity and inclusion in society must face social challenges. That bad feelings may come up should not be a hurdle to teaching such curricula; as bad feelings accompany witnessing social problems and motivate good moral behaviours, happiness cannot be sought in a vacuum apart from other, more mixed emotions, as part of character education. Happiness must not be demanded or educated full stop—but alongside unhappiness and other experiences, to promote greater social justice through education.

Acknowledgements

References

Ahmed, S. (2010). *The promise of happiness*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Ahmed, S. (2004). *The cultural politics of education*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Boler, M. (1999). *Feeling power: Emotions and education*. London: Routledge.

Cigman, R. (2012). We need to talk about well-being. *Research Papers in Education,* 27(4), 449-462.

Ecclestone, K. (2014). *Emotional well-being in educational policy and practice: Interdisciplinary perspectives.* London: Routledge.

Ehenreich, B. (2009). *Bright-sided: How positive thinking is undermining America.* New York: Holt & Company.

Hochschild, A. (1979). *The managed heart: Commercialisation of human feeling.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Forbes, J., & Lingard, B. (2013). Elite school capitals and girls' schooling: Understanding the (re)production of privilege through a habitus of 'assuredness.' In C. Maxwell & P. Aggleton (Eds.), *Privilege, agency and affect.* New York Palgrave MacMillan.

Jackson, L., & Bingham, C. (2018). Precarious meritocracy: On the affective structure of merit in education. In A. Chinnery (Ed.), *Philosophy of education 2017.* Urbana: Philosophy of Education Society.

Jackson, L. (2017). The smiling philosopher: Emotional labor, gender, and harassment in conference spaces. *Educational Philosophy and Theory* (online first).

Lloyd, M. S. (2013). Book review of Sara Ahmed, *The promise of happiness. Redescriptions: Political Thought, Conceptual History and Feminist Theory*, 16, 200-207.

Lynch, K., Baker, J., Cantillon, S., & Walsh, J. (2009). Which equalities matter? The place of affective equality in egalitarian thinking. In: K. Lynch, J. Baker & M. Lyons (Eds.), *Affective equality: Love, care and justice* (pp. 12-34). New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Mayo, C. (2016). Anger and pedagogy. *Philosophical Inquiry into Education*, 24(1), 86-90.

Meyer, J. H. F., & Land, R. (2003). Threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge: Linkages to ways of thinking and pracisting within the disciplines. In: C. Rust (ed.), *Improving student learning—ten years on*. Oxford: OCSLD.

Noddings, N. (2008). The aims of education. In: D. J. Flinders & S. J. Thornton (eds.), *The curriculum studies reader.* London: Routledge.

Noddings, N. (2003). *Happiness and education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Roberts, P. (2016). *Happiness, hope, and despair: Rethinking the role of education.* New York: Peter Lang.

School Speciality. (2018). *Premier esteem primary planner*. Greenville: School Speciality.

Seligman, M. E. P. (2002). *Authentic happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfilment.* Sydney: Random House.

Spear, L. (2008). Citizenship and domination: The relationship between Sophie and Emile. In R. Glass (Ed.), *philosophy of Education 2008* (pp. 358-364). Urbana: Philosophy of Education Society.

Turner, K. A. (2016). Review: *The promise of happiness. Affectsphere: Keywords and Reviews in Affect Theory*. https://affectsphere.wordpress.com/2016/05/12/the-promise-of-happiness/. Accessed 17 January 2018.