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The possibilities of happiness: Australian mothers' aspirations for their children in neoliberal times

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Abstract

Positioned within the context of neoliberal times, mothers are often reported to be playing ever-increasingly controlling roles in their children's lives. Yet, the extent to which neoliberalism can explain mothers' aspirations for their children's happiness and wellbeing remain unclear. This article explores the ways in which a selection of Australian mothers spoke about happiness in regards to their aspirations for their children. Of the 26 mothers interviewed, half (13) had a preteen child with an eating disorder. The differences between these two groups of mothers highlight the different and sometimes contradictory ways happiness could be understood and enacted. Taking this ambiguity and pliability into account, our argument in this paper is twofold. Firstly, we argue that the mothers in our study resist materialistic aspirations for their children by privileging their child's happiness, defined as a selection of inner qualities that their children can possess. This was particularly true for mothers who had a child with an eating disorder, whereby a greater emphasis on the inner qualities of happiness was seen as a way of protecting children in the future. While the mothers were quite aspirational about their children's future happiness, happiness to the mothers experiencing their child's disorder was much more moderate and pragmatic. Secondly, we argue that in privileging these inner qualities of happiness, responsibility for happiness is transferred from material achievements to the wellbeing of the inner self, which brings its own limitations. Through such an analysis, the paper highlights the changing, contextual and value-laden nature of happiness. We argue a more nuanced understanding of mothers' and children's circumstances and aspirations is needed if we are to avoid homogenising or oversimplifying the choices families make in regards to happiness within the context of neoliberalism.

Keywords: happiness, mothering, neoliberalism, eating disorders

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Introduction

Mothers' approaches to child-rearing have become a hot topic for social science researchers and the popular media in the twenty-first century. A major concern within this literature is that mothers are adopting a 'helicopter' or 'hyper' parenting approach to raising their children, whereby children's time is increasingly overscheduled with structured activities (see, for example, Levine, 2008; Elkind, 2006; Rosenfeld and Wise, 2001; Blttman and Brown, 2000). This approach to child-rearing is often associated with neoliberalism. The neoliberal project, as Cradock (2007: 162) notes, "is not so much a project to 'responsibilize' citizens for their own conditions, but a project to 'irresponsibilize' institutions created by the collective vision of the welfare state". A neoliberal approach to parenting, therefore, may be viewed as a way for mothers to ensure their children are successful, high-achieving and self-responsible citizens (e.g., Levine, 2012; Vincent and Ball, 2007; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Cline and Fay, 1990). Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995: 117) describe this "parenting mania" as particularly common among "middle-class women who are well educated city-dwellers, expecting their first child at a fairly advanced age". More recently, the middle-class mother has been analysed in the studies of Lareau (2011) and Reay (2004). Drawing on ethnographic observations of middle-class and working-class families in the US, Lareau describes middle-class parents as seeing their children as projects that could be developed through a range of interventions, including organised activities like sport, intensive language and reasoning development and parental involvement in schooling. Similarly, Reay, drawing on interviews with middle-class and working-class mothers in the UK, described middle-class mothers as willing to defer their children's present happiness in order to ensure their future academic and career success.

While the above literature is significant, it remains unclear the extent to which neoliberalism can explain mothers' aspirations for their children's happiness and wellbeing. Indeed, these views are unlikely to be confirmed in relation to the mothers in our study. Our study involved interviews with 13 mothers with children (5-13 years) diagnosed with eating disorders and 13 mothers with a similar socio-demographic profile and with similar aged children without diagnosed eating disorders. When we asked about aspirations and hopes for their children, the mothers most often made comments about 'happiness' or 'being happy'. Notions of happiness saturate the popular media and health and psychology literature and are often linked to positive psychology, individualism and the search for 'something more'. Consequently, we were prompted to undertake a closer examination of the relationship between the mothers' comments and the literature. In doing so, we position our discussion within a selection of theoretical work concerned with happiness and the perceived role of mothers and children in relation to happiness, as detailed in the next section.

Happiness and motherhood in neoliberal times

The increasing interest in ideas about happiness and wellbeing has been described by Ahmed (2010) as the ‘happiness turn’ and is evidenced by publications across a variety of quite different fields, from psychology, sociology, philosophy and religion, to neuroscience, economics, health and politics¹. Within the social sciences, happiness tends to be spoken about and researched in two distinct and contrasted ways. For example, in the field of psychology, especially positive psychology, happiness is often understood as not only the optimum state of being but something that we are all in a position to achieve (Seligman, 2003; Ryan and Deci, 2001). Based on this understanding, the ultimate goal for community members, from psychologists to parents, is to equip individuals with particular interpersonal and intrapersonal skills that may help them to free themselves of obstacles preventing their ultimate happiness. These skills include self-esteem, a positive attitude, optimism, gratefulness, passion, balance, as well as the formation of positive relationships and the ability to give to others.

By contrast, in sociology, happiness is often portrayed more negatively as a discursive tool that has the potential to regulate, govern and produce subjects by setting unrealistic goals that set people up for failure (Bruckner, 2001; Zevnik, 2010; Ahmed, 2010). This is what Bruckner (2001: 16) refers to as ‘compulsory happiness’ or ‘perpetual euphoria’:

I understand compulsory happiness as a ideology of the second half of the 20th century, which judges everything only according to the pleasure or displeasure it brings to our experience, as a command that we have to be euphoric. Anyone who doesn’t subject to it has to be ashamed and forced into a feeling of discomfort.

As sociologists, our interest and concern is with how this view of happiness translates in regards to mothers and child-rearing. The implications of contemporary understandings of happiness can be found in the work of feminist writers concerned with the oppression and regulation of women and mothers. Indeed, by interrogating the different ways in which happiness is understood by mothers in the Australian context, this article seeks to contribute to the work of a long line of feminist scholars who have explored and challenged the concept of happiness (Friedan, 1965; Johnson and Lloyd, 2004; Shine, 2005; Ahmed, 2010)².

Critique of the instrumental nature of happiness also extends to the happiness of children. Ahmed (2010: 59) argues that happiness creates “scripts” for how to live well which reorientate individual desire, including that of children, toward a common ‘good’. The child, according to this “happiness script” has what Ahmed calls a “happiness duty” which may operate as a debt that children ‘owe’ their parents. Such a duty implies the relationship between parent and child is one of ‘investments’ and

‘returns’, like a transaction based on positive emotional investments. Describing this transactional relationship between parent and child, Ahmed (2010: 59) writes:

the parents defer their hope for happiness to the next generation in order to avoid giving up on the idea of happiness as a response to disappointment (you can keep your belief in happiness while being disappointed as long as you can place your hopes for happiness in another). The obligations of the child to be happy is a repaying of what the child owes, of what is due to the parents given what they have given up.

In other words, happiness is conditional upon the child behaving in a certain way. Consequently, rather than freeing the individual, happiness can operate as a way of *responsibilising* children. Other sociologists and feminist writers have extended these critiques of happiness and modern family life to include issues of race and class (Lareau, 2011; Reay, 2004; hooks, 2000; Rowbotham, 1989), whereby the attainability and effects of happiness work to reinforce particular inequalities between families. These analyses, based on studies of mothers and children in the United Kingdom and North America, illustrate that the concept of happiness is not fixed and universal but varies between socio-economic and cultural contexts and in turn will also affect classes and races differently. With this in mind, this paper takes as its focus the varying ways in which Australian mothers spoke about happiness in relation to their young children.

The study

This paper draws on empirical qualitative data from interviews conducted in 2012 with 26 Australian mothers of children between the ages of five and thirteen. Based on their suburb of residence, these mothers could be seen to belong to what could be broadly classified as the ‘middle-class’. The geographic location of home address is a proxy for socio-economic status. We used the most current Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) (2006) provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)³. SEIFA is based on the five-yearly Census of Population and Housing. However, this quantitative measure of socio-economic status and class has significant limitations and can be misleading. For the mothers in our study, very few perfectly matched the SEIFA ranking for their neighbourhood. For example, some mothers lived in suburbs of disadvantage according to SEIFA, but other indicators (such as their level of education, employment, consumption of technology, extra curricular activities and choice of schools) suggested a higher socio-economic status. Consequently, for a study such as ours, SEIFA rankings made up only part of the picture. Of the 26 women involved, 17 had at least one university qualification, 20 lived within a 30 minute drive of the Melbourne or Sydney CBD, 17 were over thirty when they had children and 14 had children enrolled at private schools. So while the families may be broadly classified as in the ‘middle-class’, there was significant socio-economic range

within this broad classification. All families had at least one adult in full-time paid work and none lived in suburbs where intergenerational poverty and welfare was the norm.

Half (13) of the mothers interviewed had a young child who had been diagnosed with an eating disorder or eating problem. We recruited these families through adolescent eating disorder units at two hospitals. All of the participating children had been seeing the doctors as outpatients for several months prior to being interviewed. Most interventions involved family therapy, regular weigh-ins and medication. Many of the mothers had taken significant time off work to dedicate time to their child's 're-feeding', which was monitored by the hospital.

Acting as a comparison group to these families, the other half of the mothers in our study did not have children with serious eating problems, although roughly a quarter of these mothers spoke about their own therapy to deal with issues related to anxiety and depression. These families were recruited by a variety of means, including advertisements in newsletters, magazines and snowballing. Families were selected based on having at least one child between the ages of 5 and 13. To make discussion of these two groups of mothers easier, we will refer to the mothers with children with eating disorders as 'ED mothers' and the comparison group of mothers as 'non-ED mothers'. Contact with all mothers was made via phone and email prior to the interview. Each mother was interviewed once during the year 2012 and the interviews lasted anywhere between 45 minutes and 1.5 hours. All interviews were conducted in the mothers' homes, with the exception of two interviews that were conducted at the hospital following a pre-existing appointment with the doctor. The general focus for the interviews was around health and the social influences on mothers' understandings of health and the body including the media, and mothers were asked about a range of topics, from their relationships, priorities and aspirations through to their daily routines, consumption of media and understandings of health. The interviews were conducted as part of an Australian Research Council funded study⁴. Research ethics approval was gained through the two hospitals involved and Deakin University. Interview transcripts were thematically coded using NVivo 10.

While the primary purpose of conducting these interviews was to identify some of the socio-cultural factors influencing preteens with eating disorders as compared to those without an eating disorder, the term happiness came up so frequently in the mothers' interviews that it prompted the authors to take a closer look at what meanings were being attributed to the term.

Resisting the neoliberal ideal... or not?

Happiness as resistance

Very few of the 26 mothers in this study suggested the characteristics of the neoliberal parent as described by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995: 117), including the ten mothers in the study who could be classified as “well-educated city-dwellers” of an “advanced age”. In answering the question, ‘what aspirations do you have for your children?’, almost all ED and non-ED mothers expressed a concern with not putting pressure on their children to achieve certain academic, material or professional goals. In fact, many mothers explicitly resisted these goals. They justified their resistance by privileging their children’s happiness rather than focusing on future achievements and goals. For example, Olivia, a non-ED mother of a six year old girl said:

I know the general ideal is that kids finish school and they have really good academic results and then they go to this fantastic university and then they have this great job that pays a lot of money and then they can buy a big house, but that’s not – I don’t find that that necessarily makes happiness, or they’re not necessarily comfortable with themselves.

As this interview excerpt indicates, Olivia was well aware of the popular expectations parents and society place on children to achieve the neoliberal ideals of material and career success. In contrast, Olivia used happiness as a linguistic tool and goal to justify why she considered these popular expectations less than ideal. Here happiness is associated with her children feeling comfortable with *themselves*, and constituted in opposition to material factors external to their identity, such as academic results and career.

Among the ED mothers’ interviews there was also evidence of some resistance to neoliberal aspirations, which often seemed to have been prompted by the diagnosis. However, this resistance tended to be more implicit than the non-ED mothers. ED mothers communicated a desire to protect their children from future disappointments by scaling back on their children’s aspirations, having seen them already experience psychologically and physically debilitating health problems. This was demonstrated in the interview with Annabel, a mother of three daughters. April was her middle daughter and had developed an eating disorder at the age of 11. Reflecting on April’s experience of her eating disorder Annabel was adamant she no longer wanted academically or intellectually successful children instead preferring that they be “average” and “happy”:

It’s funny, before she got sick, you wanted to have clever kids, you wanted to have intelligent kids, bright kids. Whereas now, give me three average kids that are happy any day of the week over three clever kids.

Where non-ED mothers might have been inclined to talk about happiness in their children’s future in terms of ambitious aspirations and achievements, Annabel defined happiness in terms of achieving a sense of normality and contentment. In defining what the average, happy child might look like, Annabel said: “a happy child is just one that’s content, I think, in themselves; they’re content with

what they can achieve.” Implicit in this statement is Annabel’s desire that her daughter reduce her expectations for the future in order to escape further struggle or disappointment. This was explicit in an exchange between mother and daughter when Annabel responded to her daughter’s expressed desire to be a vet by suggesting that it was ‘okay’ to just be a veterinary nurse.

Happiness as a neoliberal ideal: an end in itself

Much of the mothers’ talk of children’s happiness echoes a push from psychology to promote happiness and wellbeing as important psychological dimensions of a child’s development. For example, in an article in ‘Psychology Today’, Taylor (2009: 1) argues that happiness “is one of the most neglected family values in twenty-first-century America” and that “few parents grasp the essential meaning of happiness for their children and fewer still understand how they can help their children to find it”. Such an argument is underpinned by two assumptions: first, that people need to develop particular “skills” and “values” in order to be happy; and second, that parents are responsible for developing these skills and values in their children. These assumptions are problematic because they work to *essentialise* children and play down the role of context in shaping children, while also *responsibilising* parents to operate within predetermined ways conducive with what is deemed desirable and productive. If we take Cradock’s definition of the neoliberal project as a way of responsibilising citizens by irresponsibilising institutions, such a happiness agenda may be more likely to reproduce the neoliberal project rather than resist it.

In describing their aspirations for happiness, the mothers represented children as capable of separating themselves from the world, namely through resisting, disregarding or disengaging from the pressures of the everyday, including pressures to achieve success through studies, careers and relationships. The insinuation, particularly among the non-ED mothers, was that happiness was hard to find by engaging in the world but that freedom from the rest of the world and its pressures would enable happiness.

Rather than focusing on their child’s academic achievement and *material* successes, such as awards and sporting accomplishments, both ED and non-ED mothers spoke about their children’s happiness as a *personal* quality and state of being of their child based on their , relationships with others and their sense of self. Among the non-ED mothers, these qualities tended to primarily relate to wanting the child to find happiness *within* themselves. For some these were derived in part from their ‘good’ relationships with others, for other mothers it was very much about self-reliance and self-confidence. For example, in response to the question of whether she had any aspirations for her daughter, Belinda, a mother of a 5 year old girl, responded, “Not overly, I guess just that she is living in a way that, that

she's happy within herself, that she's treating other people with respect." Instead of expecting her daughter to achieve particular material aspirations in life, Belinda was concerned about her daughter's religious faith and sense of self, stating, "for me faith is important so I would hope that she has a faith, but I don't have a particular thing that she should be doing or should be looking like or being". For Kelly, a mother of two young daughters, this concern with fostering particular inner qualities in her children was more about finding contentment separate from external relationships:

I think you've got to find happiness in yourself and I'm trying to give the girls those skills. ... We do spend a lot of time talking about not relying on others for your sense of happiness and contentment, that you do have to be self-contained.

For Kelly such inner happiness is achieved through the attainment of particular skills for succeeding emotionally, rather than by succeeding academically. This quote suggests that happiness is an achievement in and of itself—an inner quality to aspire to. Natalie also talked about her daughter's happiness as her primary goal as a mother. At the time of interview, Natalie was home-schooling her daughter and keeping her on a vegan diet. When asked what she meant by her daughter being happy she said she hoped for her "to like herself, for her to be pleased with her decisions that she makes" and for her to "not be inhibited".

The idea that happiness could be 'developed' was most explicit in Elaine's talk about her children's futures. Elaine had moved her family to Australia from Colombia several years earlier for reasons primarily related to her children's safety. While she said that happiness "could mean anything" as long as her children felt happy in the future, "happy about themselves and comfortable by themselves", she talked about her responsibility as a parent in developing her children's minds so that they would find happiness in the future. In order to do this she drew explicitly on the work of positive psychologists, sourced online and through attending seminars.

We have a big responsibility in the future. If our kids will be happy or not happy, will be for us, and I don't mean because sometimes you can pass [on] a lot of money, but I'm not talking about the money, I'm talking about [how] do you develop the kid's mind?

In dismissing material aspirations in favour of a happiness derived from inner qualities, Elaine was primarily concerned with shaping the minds of her children and believed this would then enable them to find happiness in the future. Further, she saw herself and her husband as responsible for ensuring that her children attained the necessary inner qualities. In order to ensure that her children acquired these psychological techniques, she would ask her daughter to read aloud from a book of positive affirmations each morning on the drive to school.

A focus on inner qualities also featured frequently among the ED mothers' aspirations for their children's happiness. However, given their unique and difficult experiences in dealing with a child with

an eating disorder, many of the mothers' descriptions were more concerned with how these inner qualities might protect their children in the future. Their child's diagnosis and consequent counselling prompted many of the mothers to reflect on and re-evaluate their approaches to mothering. Among the ED mothers, the emphasis was often on raising *content, confident, self-fulfilled* and *stress-free* children who had the emotional capacity to cope with future adversity.

Nostalgia and moderate aspirations

For many ED mothers, happiness was not just a hope for their child's future but something talked about with a great deal of nostalgia. The happiness of the past was contrasted with their children's unhappy present and uncertain future. For example, Mariela, whose daughter Maddy had developed an eating disorder a couple of years prior to the interview, reminisced about her child's past enjoyment of dance, "Maddy loved gymnastics, she found a great group of friends she was fond of, all sorts of girls, very – she was happy, really happy". Eileen, whose daughter started exhibiting disordered eating in late primary school, looks back to a time when:

Oh the kids were so much happier, so much easier to do things, they wanted to do things, they wanted to be out and doing activities, they were just totally different kids, yeah, totally different. There wasn't pressure on us all the time.

The experience of diagnosis prompted many ED mothers to re-evaluate their aspirations for their children as well as their past. For example, describing a time in the past when her daughter seemed happy, Annabel said:

I always thought April was confident until she got sick; she used to be the one that was the most bubbly and outgoing and just full of life. But then when she got—now I just think that was an act— not an act, it was a cover for her insecurities.

ED mothers often expressed uncertainty about the future in contrast with their nostalgic certainty regarding the past. For example, Eileen stated, "I just want them to do something that they're happy with, I want them to be happy." Eileen's use of the word 'just', as a 'modality' (Wright, 1997), provides the grammatical means to express uncertainty and moderation. It can help to 'soften' what is being said and function metaphorically to circumvent being definite, it signals a wistful hope rather than precise idea of the future. Heather, for example, whose 12 year old daughter had developed an eating disorder at the age of 11, said:

I want her to be healthy and *just* not have any worries and *just* be a confident and happy girl, like don't worry about anything. You're a child, experience things, get out there and smell the flowers, get out there and breathe the fresh air. Those are the things that count.

In expressing this happiness ideal, Heather drew on a particular image of the child, one in which a child's main purpose is to explore rather than achieve and to live in the here and now, particularly in regards to the natural world. The popular notion of "smelling the flowers" is a metaphor for slowing down and paying attention to the things around you. For other ED mothers, ensuring their children live in the here and now meant modifying their aspirations by being very pragmatic about what was possible. For Ilona, a mother with two sons, one of whom had displayed disordered eating from a very young age, living in the 'here and now' meant looking to specific therapeutic techniques.

Ilona had experienced her fair share of these inevitable "ups and downs" as a result of her son's eating disorder. Hence, she was primarily concerned with teaching her children the sort of techniques that she believed would ensure they stayed safe and protect them in the future. In this particular case, Ilona drew on her reading about and knowledge of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). This approach to dealing with the problem of her child's eating disorder was based on a very different understanding of happiness, one that recognised that happiness is temporary. Having gone through very difficult experiences with their child, happiness took on a temporal element for these mothers. For example, in describing her son's current challenges Ilona said:

So all the things that I want to do now, like with CBT and stuff, is give him those techniques so that he can handle those ups and downs, and that's why I say like, they can't be happy all the time, they've got to know life changes and change is hard, but you can get through it. Because my worry is he's going to be suicidal and kill himself.

As this quote suggests, the challenges of her son's diagnosis left Ilona with a significant and understandable fear for the future, one which was a lot more pragmatic and critical of the possibilities of happiness. Noting that happiness is not possible "all the time", the happiness Ilona describes here is relational, uncontrollable and temporal. While Ilona's experience and reflections are perhaps an extreme case, and many ED mothers described feeling quite hopeful about their child's future, their understandings of what happiness could provide for their children were nonetheless strongly influenced by their experiences of their child's eating disorder. Where happiness for non-ED mothers was aspirational, a quality that they expect for their children, ED mothers had to think about their children's emotions and expectations in very concrete and pragmatic ways.

Discussion

We began this article by introducing some key theoretical perspectives on happiness and contemporary motherhood within the context of neoliberalism. Given what our analysis has indicated regarding the nuances of Australian mothers' aspirations for their children's happiness, especially

those dealing with a child with an eating disorder, it is worth returning to this literature now to explore the extent to which these perspectives reflect or do not reflect the theoretical perspectives.

Taken together, the overall picture of mothers described by the literature in the introduction is a fairly homogeneous and negative one. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995), among others, describe a parenting ‘mania’ where middle-class mothers, operating in line with the neoliberal project, are increasingly over-involved in every aspect of their children’s everyday lives. This contention is reflected in other qualitative studies from the last ten years (e.g., Lareau, 2011; Reay, 2004; Bittman and Brown, 2000).

Very few of the mothers in our study conformed with the neoliberal image painted by the above literature. When it came to identifying their aspirations for their children, these mothers were not so much concerned about their children’s academic or material achievements as they were their wellbeing and/or happiness. Resisting the neoliberal ideal and emphasising their children’s happiness was both explicit and implicit in the interviews. The mothers’ particular circumstances played a significant role in their resisting this ideal. We found that the mothers of children with eating disorders tended to reprioritise and moderate their aspirations for their children post-diagnosis. However, to leave the analysis there would be to oversimplify the effects of what the mothers were saying. As well as resisting neoliberal ideals, the mothers’ uptake of notions of happiness could also be seen to be reproducing neoliberal ideals in other ways.

Understanding this paradox of resistance and reproduction was framed by a selection of literature on happiness. Much of this literature, particularly within the field of psychology, is concerned with discovering that the ‘secret’ to achieving happiness has become the obsession of many fields. Sociological and feminist literature highlights the instrumental nature of happiness and how the term may be used to reorientate individual desire toward neoliberal goals. More specifically, happiness is conditional upon the individual behaving in a socially responsible way. In relation to mothers, some feminist writers have highlighted how happiness may work to regulate and oppress mothers by presenting an unfair and ultimately unachievable ideal of what it means to be a ‘happy mother’. A similar critique is shown in relation to children, where happiness may work to responsabilise children by operating as a ‘debt’ which children ‘owe’ their parents (Ahmed, 2010).

The mothers in this study defined happiness as something largely related to inner qualities that their child may possess, such as contentment and self-direction. Similarly the ED mothers, in light of their recent and very difficult experiences, offered a different view. They viewed happiness as potentially offering protection but as something that was not possible all the time. While the non-ED mothers

were had aspirations for their children's future happiness, happiness to the ED mothers was more moderate and pragmatic based on their awareness of the limitations their child had faced as a result of the illness. This suggests a much more complex view of happiness than has been described in the happiness literature.

In analysing the ways in which mothers talk about their children's happiness, our argument in this study has been twofold. First, that rather than reflecting the hyper controlling parents described by Beck and others, the Australian mothers in our study explicitly resist materialistic aspirations for their children by privileging understandings of happiness as a selection of inner qualities that their children can possess. Second, in privileging these inner qualities of happiness, responsibility is transferred from material aspirations to qualities of the inner self that brings with it its own limitations.

Conclusion

The literature on mothers and happiness does not do justice to the unique situations of the Australian mothers in our study, especially the mothers who had a child with an eating disorder. For these mothers, happiness was not a fixed and value-free notion, but operated as a way for mothers to resist neoliberal ideas of child-rearing as well as operating as an 'achievement' in itself. Notions of happiness were complicated even further for those mothers who were dealing with a child with an eating disorder who were consequently likely to take a more pragmatic view of their child's future. Such a finding suggests the need for a more nuanced reconceptualisation of both mothers and the possibilities of happiness if we are to account for such differences. Notions of the neoliberal parent in the twenty-first century need revision in order to avoid homogenising mothers and to reflect the nuanced ways in which they resist and appropriate particular discourses when it comes to their children.

Notes:

¹ For connections between happiness and psychology see Argyle (1987), Csikszentmihalyi (1992), Myers and Diener (1995); Hallowell (2002) and Seligman (2003); for connections between happiness and science see Layard (2005); for connections between happiness and economics see Frey and Stutzer (2002).

² Other relevant feminist writing includes the work of de Beauvoir (1949), Colebrook (2003, 2008) and Helsloot (2004).

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics Socio-economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) 2006.

⁴ Halse, C. and Wright, J. 'A socio-cultural analysis of eating disorders among pre-teen boys and girls' (2011-2013).

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