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Relational happiness through recognition and redistribution: Emotion and inequality

Abstract

This paper develops a model of *relational* happiness that challenges popular individualised definitions and emphasises how it can enhance the sociological analysis of inequality. Many studies of happiness suggest that social inequalities are closely associated with distributions of happiness at the national level, but happiness research continues to favour individual-level analyses. Limited attention has been given to the intersubjective aspects of happiness and the correlations between it and higher social equality. Conversely, key theoretical debates about inequalities, such as Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser's exchanges, have only indirectly touched on happiness. A relational approach to happiness is not new, but what we offer is a new combination of a relational understanding of happiness as an intersubjectively, culturally experienced complex of emotions with discussions about recognition of marginalized groups and redistribution of material resources. This combined approach can further debates about understanding and remedying social inequalities. We argue that theories and measurements of happiness must consider how it is achieved collectively through working at mutual respect as well as greater material equality.

Keywords: happiness, inequality, redistribution, recognition, Honneth, Fraser

Introduction

There are discrepancies in cultural narratives about happiness as an individual pursuit in modernity, especially in the context of continuing inequalities. This complicates attempts to theorise and measure happiness, especially because many studies use inconsistent definitions of terms like 'happiness', 'wellbeing' or 'satisfaction' (Author B, 2016; Davies, 2015; Oishi et al., 2013; Wierzbicka, 2009). Yet happiness studies generally focus on these feelings as *individual* experiences. While experinces of happiness may occur within the individual, we are interested in how experiences of happiness and well-being are shaped by socio-cultural context in ways that are relational rather than purely personal (Ahmed, 2007; Ahuvia, *et al*., 2015; Bartram, 2012: 645; White, 2017). This approach to happiness draws upon relational sociology, which sees society not as the site 'where relations happen, *it is* relations' (Donati, 2011: xv). To slightly adjust Nick Crossley's (2010: 50) words, we aim to examine how the selfish pursuit of individual happiness can be less profitable to interdependent actors than a more cooperative strategy. In doing this we conceptualise happiness as a complex of emotions (Burkitt, 2014: 14-15), extending Burkitt's definition to mean not just complex as in complicated and

in made up of different experiences, but as a set of related emotions. With happiness these include wellbeing, satisfaction and contentment, but also enjoyment, fulfilment and other feelings of pleasure. Other emotions such as trust, envy and shame may also frame un/happiness. We define emotion as 'a relatively non-specific umbrella term' (Von Scheve, 2017: 41) covering feelings and affects that surge and are articulated, in both discursive, embodied and other material ways, between humans, non-humans and objects[1]. We propose that it is not always possible to entirely disentangle distinct emotions nor to locate them within individuals (Author, 2010). The impact of relations to others on individuals' emotions and actions is evident to many scholars (Crossley, 2010: 50; Von Scheve, 2017), but often neglected in studies of happiness. In our relational approach, happiness stands for a culturally-varying complex of emotions, oriented around taking pleasure in life (Veenhoven, 2010). These emotions are individually felt but also intersubjectively achieved.

A relational approach to happiness can explain findings that greater equality is a better predictor of self-reported happiness than greater wealth (Diener, Tay and Oishi, 2013; Easterlin and Angelescu, 2009; Oishi and Kesebir, 2015; White 2017). In doing this, it is necessary to acknowledge the significance of collectively authenticated selfhood, or feeling recognized by others, in the experience of happiness. Rather than categorical correlations with happiness (such as education, marital status, or employment), this paper will explore self-reported happiness data as powerfully influenced by recognition from others, or its lack, within the context of unequal distributions of material wealth. Thus we begin with a criticism of happiness studies' emphasis on conceptions of happiness as individually experienced and related to national wealth. This emphasis limits attention to how inequality impacts on more social forms of wellbeing that are achieved in interaction with others and include more sustained, if background emotions (Barbalet, 1998: 29, 59-61), accompanied by more fleeting feelings of happiness. To address these shortcomings we then turn to debates around redistribution or recognition as remedies for social inequalities. Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser's writings provide promising possibilities, but these theories only indirectly consider happiness. We argue that their accounts of inequalities can be usefully furthered by seeing happiness as a complex of interactively achieved emotions. In pursuing this relational approach we draw attention to the importance of recognition of marginalized groups in explaining the links between happiness and inequality. By promoting understandings of happiness that embed it within social relations and examine it as a complex cluster of emotions, we can improve the theorizing and measuring of it. We, therefore, argue that happiness is a relational achievement, contingent on efforts to respect others and to redistribute material and emotional goods.

Happiness Studies and the need for understanding happiness as complex

Happiness tends to be conceptualised in oversimplified and individualised ways as a distinct emotion that is contained within a person. Quantitative happiness studies generally rely on the Subjective Well-being Test (SWB) that asks respondents to rank their happiness on a scale from one to ten, without directly asserting what the researchers mean by happiness or well-being, nor articulating how it might relate to other emotions (Diener, 2000). Yet, Oishi *et al.* (2013) argue that the meaning of happiness has changed in the last 200 years from having a basis in good fortune and luck to describing the individual's pursuit of happiness against all odds. Popular happiness literature reaffirms this shift by offering highly individualised *solutions* to the *problem* of happiness. Books like *The 100 Simple Secrets of Happy People* (Niven, 2006) focus on personal happiness 'skills' like finding a hobby or thinking about the future and not dwelling on the past. Positive psychology also offers individual-focused strategies that tend to overlook the seriousness of structural inequalities and the complexity of cultural meanings. In Laura Hyman's interviews about what happiness means to people in the UK, a common response was that it is elusive and difficult to define, followed by somewhat individualised clichés from simply 'choosing to be happy' to forms of biological determinism (2014: 33). Ahuvia *et al.* (2015) propose a two-part model for categorising these competing dialogues by identifying 'change the world' and 'change your mind' approaches to being happy. While much of the discussion in happiness discourse focuses on the latter, we argue that evidence indicates the former is significantly more effective (Easterlin, 2003; Cieslik, 2015. Happiness consists of both fleeting feelings and more ongoing, sometimes shared, experiences of satisfaction, wellbeing or contentment (Cieslik, 2015: 427). Yet the separation between individual and relational happiness in lived experience may be noticably less clear to the subject, than it is to the researcher. Happiness describes foregrounded emotional experiences, but concepts like well-being and contentment are likely to involve background emotions that are 'assumed, taken for granted, and unacknowledged' (Barbalet, 1998: 59) – at least until an individual is asked to complete a happiness survey. Overall, individual narratives of happiness as a clear personal goal prevail in late modern Western cultures and happiness studies often fails to challenge them and ask to what extent they capture the complex range of emotions around feeling happy and feeling that all is well. This confuses analysis of the impact of forms of material inequality on happiness and limits our sociological understanding of the conditions necessary for flourishing.

The central problem is that the individualised view of happiness (including backgrounded feelings of wellbeing) is inadequate to the task of explaining how happiness and inequality are connected. Quantitative happiness research frequently shows that individual happiness is heavily influenced by differences in living conditions (specifically economic and social inequality), yet evidence suggests that increased individual wealth is unlikely to raise happiness once basic needs have been met (Barker and Martin, 2012). Easterlin famously argued that as a nation gets richer the percentage of individuals

considering themselves 'very happy' either declines or experiences no change (Easterlin, 2003; Lane, 2000). Yet attempts to raise happiness levels through improved living conditions have arguably aimed to lift national GDP as a whole rather than addressing growing economic inequalities within nations. This ignores findings showing that self-reported happiness is generally higher in countries with greater political, economic and social equality (Frey and Stutzer, 2000; Helliwell *et al.,* 2015, 2017; Lane, 2000). While empirical work that measures political and social inequalities is inherently challenging to produce, there is extensive material that contrasts ecnomic inequality – generally based on GDP – and well-being. Oishi and Kesebir (2015) provide an important alternative by reconfiguring Easterlin's study – which links economic growth with static self-reported happiness – and showing that the growth or decline of income *inequality*, rather than overall shifts in GDP, was consistently linked to the percentage of a society reporting to be 'very happy'. Economic growth tends to occur within specific market sectors and so periods of substantial growth among a minority of citizens have little bearing on the happiness of the society as a whole (Oishi and Kesebir, 2015: 1632). We cannot know exactly what the respondents meant by 'very happy', but the complex emotional meanings and experiences respondents attached to happiness seem more related to fairness, equality, relation to others and recognition, than to the individual or collective pursuit of wealth. The World Values Survey supports claims that the more equal a society the more equally distributed some feeling of happiness is amongst its citizens (Delhey and Kohler, 2012), albeit this may range from brief moments of individual or shared joy to ongoing interactive experience of wellbeing. This finding is especially clear when wellbeing and inequality are compared within a nation over a period of time (Schröder 2018), although findings are more varied in urban/rural (Cheung 2015) and developing/developed national comparisons (Kelley & Evans (2017). Motivations for change and change itself can arise from noting the societal as well as individual benefits of more equal distributions of wealth (Fiszbein *et al*., 2014; Thin, 2012; Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009). However, links to a variety of meanings and other emotions closely associated with happiness are only dimly seen.

Other emotions such as trust appear important in understanding the connections between happiness and inequality. Authors of the World Happiness Report 2015 (Helliwell *et al.,* 2015) argue that low levels of inequality are linked to high levels of trust, and the combination of these conditions is consistently found among the world's happiest nations: Denmark, Norway and Iceland. Meanwhile, the United States ranks only eighteenth in the world happiness rankings despite having the highest overall GDP (Helliwell, 2018). A decline in trust may impact on self-reported happiness (Lane, 2000). Trust seems to lessen in countries where inequalities are more pronounced but further analysis is needed to avoid emphasizing superficial links between national wealth and individual happiness. This may require a better understanding of how 'actors will only learn to trust in environments where

others practise trust and prove trustworthy' (Crossley, 2010: 67). Happiness does not occur in isolation from other emotions or other people, it is *primarily* a complex, and relational phenomenon.

A sociological understanding of how emotions and inequalities are entangled is enhanced by seeing happiness as part of a complex of emotions, made up of complicated and various experiences (Burkitt, 2014: 14-15) and of interrelated, inter-relational emotions. Yet research aiming to provide useful strategies for maximising happiness typically underreports the social and cultural expectations and understandings that encourage or impede attempts at happiness. The salience of cultural meanings and the importance of others in determining happiness is noted by some scholars (Bartram, 2012: 649-50; Thin, 2012; White, 2017). German and South African participants in Pflug's (2009) study, for instance, mention community and social bonds before positive affect. And analysis of the tension between social and individual forms of happiness can be found (Ahuvia *et al.,* 2015; Author, 2016). However, appreciating happiness as a complex, interactional achievement requires exploring it as linked to historically and culturally varying emotional norms and practices (cf. Elias, 2001; Pflug, 2009). For example, North Americans appear typically more optimistic and individualistic in pursuing happiness (Oishi *et al.,* 2013; Pflug, 2009), while the French seem to be more pessimistic (Ostroot and Snyder, 1985). These norms reflect not only how people feel about their lives, but also how others might perceive them. Individuals are likely to appraise their life positively if others also judge it so (Veenhoven, 2008: 47) and satisfaction and happiness are thus adjudged by comparing oneself to others (Heath, 1976; Kahneman, 2003). However, this might lead us to assume that those with wealth will feel happy. While this is often the case within nations (e.g. the rich are almost always happier than the poor), empirical links between wealth and happiness at the national level are absent in both rich and poor nations (Easterlin, 2010). Furthermore, the pursuit of greater individual wealth, among those who are already financially well off, has a negligible impact on actual self-reported happiness (Barker and Martin, 2012). Social inequalities may mean, for example, that fear of crime or fear of revolutionary rebellion (Barbalet, 2001: 149-169) can mar even the wealthy's enjoyment of aspects of social life by limiting such things as freedom of movement[2] and freedom from fear. Further research is needed on how other emotions such as envy and anger amongst the poor (Patulny, 2015) might be experienced *in relation to* the rich[3]Some evidence indicates that Americans at least, are happier if their near neighbours are rich but the point is that richer neighbourhoods advantage everyone in them, while poorer neighbourhoods reduce happiness for all living there (Firebaugh and Schroeder, 2009). A more relational view of happiness can explain how the personal or collective happiness of the rich might be spoiled by other feelings experienced in relation to the poor such as guilt, shame and fear.

As we see, happiness occurs in relation to other emotions but also within the context of particular social relations (both structural and interpersonal). This includes relations with other agents such as non-humans, natural environments and objects. Such an analysis must consider how people script emotional scenarios within these relations, but also bring and alter emotional dispositions developed within their biography. Experiences are interactive, not individual, and relations with other agents are changing patterned figurations involving power (Elias, 2000[1939]). Thus, accounts of happiness and wellbeing need to understand them as historical and culturally specific sets of social meanings, feelings and practices, instead of as properties of individuals.

Thus, better articulation of the complexity and relationality of happiness is of significant value for a sociological understanding of inequalities in the twenty-first century. More explicit discussion of this improved articulation builds on theoretical debates around redistribution of resources versus recognition of persons, especially the debate between Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser. The aim is to more fully express the intersubjective and emotional character of recognition and how its lack underlies 'unhappiness', within contexts of maldistribution. This is significant in revealing that a relational approach to emotions can go beyond analyzing the micro level and provide explanatory power for making sense of structural inequalities.

Connecting Happiness, Equality and Recognition

Honneth's work on mutual recognition as intersubjective phenomena provides a platform for using a relational approach to happiness that furthers our understanding of inequalities. He challenges existing debates on inequality by considering the intersubjective and relational sources of inequality. By reimagining freedom as socially sourced rather than individually pursued or structurally guaranteed, debates about freedom and inequality are brought together in productive and original ways (Honneth, 2014a; 2014b). Building on Mead's (1962) intersubjective theory of selfhood and the notion of 'ethical life' from Hegel's Jena period, Honneth (1995) utilises the normative dimensions of critical theory to establish a socially grounded understanding of happiness and the good life achieved through democratic social freedoms. By treating interaction as a necessary condition for the self, Honneth adopts Hegelian interpretations of autonomy and happiness as requiring, rather than hindered by relationships. In Hegel's (1962: 123) *Philosophy of Right* autonomy and happiness are not found in escaping the responsibilities and duties of social relationships, rather they are made possible through specific kinds of relationships. In pursuing happiness, solutions cannot be found in a departure from social bonds through individualisation. Where happiness is absent from a set of social relationships this calls for new and different kinds of relationships rather than an abandonment of relational emotional experiences. For Honneth, recognition enables one's selfhood to develop in meaningful

ways through collective participation, which he terms mutual self-realisation (Honneth, 1995). Recognition is, therefore, the missing dimension of citizenship, participatory democracy and civil rights, as all of these priorities are hollow concepts without the simple practice of mutual respect and recognition. Honneth traces a lack of recognition to the growth in contemporary civil rights, and growing individualism but also points to modernity's impact on feelings like humiliation, and other emotional experiences such as respect or dignity (2004). Under these conditions, recognition is not simply a matter of happiness (as joy or pleasure), it necessarily involves feelings of legitimacy, of being worthy of rights and political representation *in the eyes of others*. Honneth captures this in Hegel's notion of being "with oneself in the other" and in doing so brings ideas of friendship, love and happiness into debates about equality and freedom (Honneth, 2014a: 44). This intersubjective approach notes that individuals need to *feel* that recognition is genuinely given by others, it cannot be guaranteed by the legal protection of rights. Legal findings against systematic racism or for same-sex marriage, will not guarantee a culture of respect or recognition. The focus in his analysis constantly shifts between the recognition of individuals and of marginalised social groups and the impact on feelings about the self. While Honneth's work on recognition is typically referenced in debates about justice, inequality and identity, our reading places this work as an important contribution to studies of happiness and the good life. The concept of happiness is rarely mentioned directly in recognition debates, however**,** Honneth's emphasis on feelings of self-worth sees him draw connections between individualised and social forms of happiness.

Honneth (2004) points to increasing pressure to find self-realisation individually rather than collaboratively and that this has led to a decline in meaningful forms of selfhood and therefore, happiness. In 'Organized Self-Realization' (2004) Honneth draws from Simmel in order to reconsider the place of two dominant themes in the last century of sociological thought; rationalisation (Weber) and individualisation (Durkheim). Simmel's emphasis on exchange between individuals allows room for a review of individualisation processes that show the contradictions involved in growing interdependency through diminishing social bonds. Inwardly focused forms of personal development leave little time for the recognition of others, and so a community of successful and unique individuals are left feeling incomplete without positive affirmation from others. More recently, Honneth's *Freedom's Right* (2014) clarifies his position on achieving social freedom through mutual self-realisation by using a Hegelian understanding of self and social institutions. It would be a mistake to equate freedom with happiness as is typical in traditional liberal ideologies, but Honneth's proposal allows for these terms to be associated in more relational and collective ways through the notion of ethical life. He brings together two decades' worth of work on recognition and social freedom into a more cohesive and definitive statement on the need for intersubjective Hegelian perspectives in debates on inequality. *Freedom's Right* continues to use the basis of 'ethical life' in place of the good

life where he highlights how both Hegel and Marx consider freedom to be possible when individual actions are 'confirmed by other subjects whose reciprocal action enables them to pursue their own aims' (2014a: 52).

Nancy Fraser's (2001) response to Honneth further aids a relational understanding of happiness and inequality because she considers the redistribution of material resources as inseperable from the goal of mutual recognition (2003). Pursuing the ideal of recognition risks addressing the cultural lack of respect, while leaving those who are seriously disadvantaged by socio-economic polarisation in shared misery. Meanwhile, the structural inequalities of economic disadvantage can serve to reinforce hierarchies that threaten recognition. Fraser does not reject the importance of recognition, rather she claims that too much attention is given to its ideals of social democracy without addressing tangible material inequalities. In the case of gender inequality, Fraser has argued that matters of economic and social injustice have been disconnected following the successes of second wave feminism (2013: 211). In an interview from 2004, Fraser explains that "Instead of arriving at a broader, richer paradigm that could encompass both redistribution and recognition, we seem to have traded one truncated paradigm for another—a truncated economism for a truncated culturalism." (2004: 112).

While Fraser is sometimes critiqued for disregarding 'identity politics' in favour of material inequalities, although this view is not supported by her writings (Fraser, 2008). The mislabeling of Fraser's views can arguably be traced back to her distinction between rights and ethics. In 'Recognition without Ethics?', Fraser (2001) argues that questions of justice have been separated from questions of the good – or in Honneth's terminology, the ethical – life as the former pertains primarily to what is right, while the latter addresses what is good or preferable. Is the denial of mutual recognition a matter of right and wrong, or simply a matter of better and worse? Or in other words, is the systematic denial of access to the good life through misrecognition an injustice or simply an unfortunate situation. For Fraser, this kind of misrecognition is an injustice of equal severity to legal or economic discrimination. This analysis of how 'good' and 'happy' relate can be unpacked by considering tensions between Kantian and Hegelian perspectives. In the Kantian tradition, the significance of happiness and the good life can be downplayed as ideals that are outside of moral principles of justice. However the denial of meaningful selfhood through misrecognition is more than an inconvenience. Therefore, normative critical theory needs to address questions of the good life as a matter of justice rather than simply a speculative ideal based on individual enjoyment. This position can be found both in Fraser's work on redistribution and Honneth's later work on freedom (2014a). Recognition is, therefore, a necessary human right if a democratic nation of autonomous citizens is to exist (Kompridis, 2013)[4], but it is difficult to enforce such a right if recognition is perceived in terms

of moral preferences rather than strict rights (Terpe and Paierl, 2010). Unhappiness appears complexly related to economic polarisation *and* to the devaluing of others (Sayer 2005), giving force to Fraser's argument that maldistribution and malrecognition are not opposite, but entwined. Rather than reducing redistribution to a 'merely cultural' problem (Butler, 1997; Young, 1997), Fraser carefully claims that 'misrecognition constitutes a fundamental injustice, whether accompanied by maldistribution or not' (1997a: 281). She does not see the distinction between recognition and redistribution as clear-cut and insists that the antithesis between them is a myth (Fraser, 2003: 11, see also Fraser 2008). In doing so Fraser states that misrecognition is an issue because denying some individuals and groups status as partners in social interaction is a matter of justice and human rights (Fraser and Honneth, 2003: 29; Kompridis, 2013: 6) not simply because the distortion of relations to self is likely to impede human flourishing (Honneth, 1995).

Treating happiness as a complex of relationally achieved feelings - rather than as a purely personal and independent experience - can illuminate how experiences of misrecognition unjustly misshape selves in social interaction. Political and economic inequality is consistently associated with low levels of well-being and life satisfaction across society, not simply among those who are directly negatively affected (Lane, 2000; Oishi and Kesebir, 2015). While inequality may not result in disadvantaged individuals feeling unhappy, it harms interactions and relations with others in ways that are unlikely to promote short-term mutual enjoyment and likely to foster background emotions of shared discontent and dissatisfaction. Economic inequality disrupts the mutual self-realisation described by Honneth and promotes individualised solutions to complex relational problems. Hochschild's (1983) *The Managed Heart* contains vivid evidence of this in relation to the unequal relations of contemporary capitalism. The emotional demands of work that aim to increase profit, oestensibly erode opportunities for recognition, respect and kindness by limiting the authenticity of interactions with fellow workers, 'customers', clients, students or patients. Mutual unhappiness seems likely to result, but other feelings such as gratitude or anger (Hochschild, 1983) complicate matters, and feeling individually or mutually satisfied with life in an ongoing way remains highly dependent on the kinds of relations we can maintain with others (Finn, 2015).

Happiness as a relational achievement linked to equality

A relational approach to happiness builds on Honneth and Fraser's contributions to an analysis of social inequalities by adding insights from sociological accounts of the injuries of class, race and gender (see for example Barbalet, 2001; Lamont, 2002; Lamont *et al*., 2016; Sennett and Cobb, 1971;

Skeggs, 1997; 2004). The first insight is that recognition is denied to socially/economically disadvantaged groups because of their disadvantaged position and this undermines their ability to enjoy happiness. Skeggs (1997; 2004) explains this in her work on the 'emotional politics' of class as a misrecognition of self as well as others via a disindentification of one's own working class habitus and constant watchfulness of one's embodiment lest it give away a devalued class location. However, this can underestimate the social knowledge of working class actors in the same ways as overly cognitive accounts of false consciousness (Barbalet, 2001: 64). How people understand and *feel* their social position in relation to others is key and this leads to the second insight: that inequality structures injure recognition of those in similar social positions, including significant others. Skeggs's identifies injuries as inflicted within relations to the self, not only by misrecognition from those of higher status. Lamont (2002) meanwhile attends to relations with other disadvantaged groups in the form of moral evaluations of the worth of self and one's community in regard to others (see also Sayer, 2005). Her collaborative comparative research is novel in examining everyday experiences of stigmatization or 'assault[s] on worth', and in emphasizing how different cultural repertoires and contexts can inform resilience as a group, not individual, property. However, more attention to the emotional aspects of these experiences is needed (Lamont *et al*., 2016). Such attention is implicit in Sennett and Cobb's (1971) account of workers sacrificing wider recognition of their worth in the often misplaced expectation that their family members will feel grateful and respect them.. These accounts hint at a range of emotions from anxiety, to gratitude, to disgust, but the emotions tend not to be an explicit or substantial part of the analysis. Barbalet (2001) argues that class misrecognition and maldistribution (though he uses different terms) entail, not unhappiness, but the oppressed feeling resentful and the elites feeling fearful. Importantly he notes that class resentment is more about structural inequalities and that elite fear results more from feeling a relative loss of one's social power (Barbalet, 2001: 5-6). This distinction acknowledges that inequality and power are not the same thing, but they both speak to how relations to others are at once macro and micro in ways that complicate happiness as a social relational achievement.

In examining happiness as a relational achievement we draw attention to how material disadvantage and lack of recognition combine in disrupting the ability of the disadvantaged to experience happiness. Examining complex 'happy' or 'unhappy' *social relations*, adds an assessment of emotional injuries to Fraser's context-specific appreciation of the status and material injuries resulting from misrecognition and maldistribution. For Fraser, the pursuit of happiness represents another form of identity politics overlooking the practical struggles of the less privileged. Certain people are more likely to have their relation to self and others distorted by 'repeated encounters with the stigmatizing gaze of a culturally dominant other' (Fraser, 2000: 109). Misrecognition is 'a status injury' and also an 'institutionalized social relation', but the related injustices are conceived as material – including

some attention to them being instantiated in embodied habitus (Fraser, 1998: 143-4). The emotional injuries of misrecognition are not foregrounded. Fraser (1998: 3) says misrecognition:

> is not simply to be thought ill of, looked down on, or devalued in others' conscious attitudes or mental beliefs. It is rather to be denied the status of a full partner in social interaction and prevented from participating as a peer in social life as a consequence of *institutionalized* patterns of cultural value that constitute one as comparatively unworthy of respect or esteem.

An interactive account of the how misrecognition feels is lacking. The embodied and emotional 'damage' done by misrecognition is alluded to by Iris Young (1991), but in terms of the 'unconscious fears and aversions' via which some types of bodies are despised as ugly and thus groups misrecognized. This implies that oppression is largely enacted through 'negative' feelings and reactions to marginalized social groups (Young, 1991: 124). Feelings remain the property of individuals rather than seeing emotions as produced through (unequal) social relations. They are felt by individuals, but also circulated and experienced in relation to others in ways involving complexes of emotions (Burkitt, 2014). Thus, the socio-emotional context is important. The false opposition of recognition and redistribution only exists from a strictly macro perspective.

Missrecognition and maldistribution combine, *in interaction*, to disrupt the experiencing of happiness, not simply for disadvantaged individuals but for particular social groups. Young (1991) theorizes injustice in terms of social groups and appreciates that identity is based on both political economy and culture. However, as Fraser (1997b) notes, Young's conception of the social group is better suited to ethnic than class groups and thus less suited to explaining other socio-economic-emotional relations. Fraser writes that,

> some proponents of recognition, such as Iris Marion Young, insist that a difference-blind politics of redistribution can reinforce injustice by falsely universalising dominant group norms, requiring subordinate groups to assimilate to them, and misrecognizing the latter's distinctiveness. (2003: 15)

Fraser argues that redistribution ought to be the priority for dealing with inequalities experienced by exploited classes. Meanwhile, recognition is key to meeting the needs of disrespected genders and sexualities and both are needed to address the structural inequalities of gender and race. However, transformative approaches are necessary because redistribution seeks to overcome group differences, while recognition effectively promotes and even celebrates them. Such transformative approaches might require that the focus shifts to relations between groups and the imbrication of redistribution and recognition in making them 'happier'.

However, some caution is required in assuming that redistribution and recognition will result in more happiness for marginalised social groups. Equality is not a simple happy ending for all, it can produce a range of emotional consequences. Cas Wouters (2007) suggests that lessening status differences produce informalisation around emotion rules, requiring greater reflexivity. Such reflexivity can be anxiety inducing rather than joyful because of lack of clarity about what is supposed to make one happy. Yet Sara Ahmed (2010) argues that dominant cultural narratives of happiness do still dictate what should make people happy. For Ahmed, cultural narratives of the good life play a role in (re)creating social inequalities. Happiness and the good life are not apolitical or unproblematic categories, but actively exclude the experiences, hopes and desires of minorities by normatively reinforcing ideal life narratives that are white, heterosexual and masculine. Consequently, collective knowledge of happiness is loaded with traditional demands, roles and expectations. Amongst many examples, Ahmed argues that seemingly harmless claims that the family is a continuous source of happiness, are loaded with assertions about gender, power and labour. She writes that we 'are affirmed by happiness: we go along and get along by doing what we do, and doing it well. Happiness means here living a certain kind of life, one that reaches certain points, and which, in reaching these points, creates happiness for others' (2010: 48). For example, in dominant narratives around happiness and femininity '[t]he happy housewife is a fantasy figure that erases the signs of labour under the sign of happiness' (2010: 50), while the stereotype of the feminist killjoy discourages women from rejecting sexism. In exploring how living certain kinds of life 'creates happiness for others' Ahmed helps acknowledge that emotions not only result from lack of equality; dominant emotionologies imply certain kinds of relations and can reproduce inequalities. Notions of happiness and the good life are not detached from political questions of inequality, power and oppression, and by considering the specifically emotional aspects of socially experienced relations to others we can uncover often overlooked aspects of inequality and consider how to remedy them.

If we consider happiness as a relational achievement we need to navigate between the idea that it is structurally determined by feeling rules that privilege dominant groups and the idea that it is open to emotional reflexivity. Happiness is not simply a matter of managing individual feelings in relation to cultural norms, it has to be worked at in the context of both interpersonal and structural relations between individuals and groups. In such considerations it is not enough to think about how power relations produce unhappiness.

Happiness and other emotions can influence (Barbalet, 2001: 23), not just result from, changing group power and status relations. Theodore Kemper (1978) argues that emotions are a product of power relations, with 'negative emotions' such as shame resulting from lacking power or status.

Nevertheless, Kemper's Weberian vision of power as individual power over others neglects how power produces certain kinds of people and things (Foucault 1990). He does not envision how emotions may contribute to discursive and material power processes that make embodied, feeling human beings in relation to others. Elias (1939/2001) has written convincingly of how historical shifts in power produced greater emotional regulation amongst groups trying to maintain their social position. He provides numerous examples of how this creates particular ways of being and feeling and sets of rules for relating to others of higher or lower status. Power relations may not simply produce emotions but be realised partly through the interactional doing of emotions, in ways that impact individuals, dyads and groups. In simple terms, as people do emotions they do power. If this is so, what kind of power relations does happiness do?

In the relational doing of happiness, working towards more equality can be encouraged, although it does not inevitably emerge. Happy social actors often work at feeling good about and trusting significant and generalised others. They may not always do so, as unequal relations may be enjoyed. However, more consideration is needed of when and how the relational doing of happiness can produce more recognition and more material equality. Trusting and feeling good about others appears to require some recognition of those others as deserving of a share of the good life, as the evidence on happiness in more equal countries suggests.

Narratives promoting the pursuit of happiness as an individual goal, need to be challenged by those advancing the pursuit of greater equality as a relational and emotional good. In examining happiness as relational we see it as part of a bundle of emotions, experienced in interaction and subject to misinterpretation. Thus, bringing recognition theory into conversation with an interactional and relational sociology of happiness can help examine the emotional causes and consequences of inequalities underexplored in Honneth and Fraser's work. Emotions take place in relations to others; they may be felt by selves but are not solely interior, essential properties of individuals. Emotions happen in spaces between individuals and other agents – in interaction (Burkitt, 2012; 2014) – they are intersubjective but can be misinterpreted and thus produce decentered forms of intersubjectivity (Author, 2015)[5]. Sociologists should be aware of inaccuracies of self-reporting but focus more on theorizing how people's (often inaccurate) perceptions of what they and others feel informs their self and social understanding.

To see happiness as relational, complex, as an interactional achievement, increases our ability to explain how equality is linked to happiness, and to a range of other emotions. This furthers Honneth

and Fraser's debates about recognition and redistribution as solutions to inequality. We eschew Utopian and other forms of thinking that view happiness in terms of emotional 'resources' or 'capital' (see for example Reay, 2004[6]) that can or should be redistributed like material resources (Bauman, 1976; More, 1869[1556]; Wright, 2010). The good of the many might involve some self-sacrifice, but happiness does not necessarily need to be deducted from the individual in order to add to group well-being. Happiness is not a finite resource and emotions are not on a balance sheet that must tally. Economic inequality is not simply about some individuals having more than others, but about the shared social and emotional consequences of uneven distribution of material resources. Poverty produces bad outcomes for the poor and for society as a whole. Poorer individuals have poorer health and die earlier. Societies with high rates of poverty also have high rates of violence and crime, more people in prison and lower levels of educational performance. Countries with more even distributions of wealth tend to have fewer of these kinds of social problems (Kumanyika, 2012; Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009). Some sociologists document the 'unhappy' impacts of bad health, poor education, premature death of loved ones, being the victim of crime or of programmes of mass incarceration (see for example Bandes, 2009; Bendelow, 1993; Goffman, 2014; Gould, 2009; Reay, 2000; Skeggs, 1997; Zembylas and Chubbuck, 2009). Yet misery and happiness arise from, *and* have the potential to damage or improve, collective as well as individual life (Bartram, 2012: 649-50). This does not mean that we can be deterministic about emotions as a consequence of material conditions because the agency of individuals is important. The conditions providing or diminishing individual agency are made clear by the recognition and redistribution debates. Moving from an individual to a relational view of happiness and associated emotions, means considering people's everyday institutional interactions (Thin, 2012). Relational accounts of the complexity of happiness in social interactions can better help us understand how social inequalities undermine social wellbeing. What is less clear is how happiness might induce greater equality. Much of the happiness literature discussed suggests that being happy is linked to tolerance of others and dislike of inequality. If happiness is thought of as a relational achievement, it appears to require some recognition and resourcing of others in order for that achievement to suceed. Relational happiness requires interactively working at the pursuit of equality.

Conclusion

A relational approach to happiness reminds us that it is enjoyed intersubjectively. This is not a new insight, as Adam Smith (2006/1759: 3), for instance, describes how our happiness may depend on others:

> How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it, except the pleasure of seeing it.

However, it may be that other things are derived from, and contribute to, happiness. Greater social equality appears to increase happiness', but measurement may encompass other emotions such as wellbeing, satisfaction, trust, envy, or shame. We contend that there is a complex of associated emotions around happiness, produced by the conditions of modernity but varying as power relations vary within contexts. Clarification is needed of how satisfaction and well-being relate to this complex and to currently configured social inequalities. Happiness' has material and symbolic elements linking a variety of emotional experiences of interdependent persons to broader socio-emotional conditions. Social relations, not individual characteristics, are key to making sense of complex happiness and trust is but one important related emotion. Yet social relations change over time and cultures, altering how happiness and associated emotions are understood and practiced in line with social norms. Emotional states associated with happiness shape a sense of self, justice and social connectedness, as well as being shaped by them. The sociology of emotion has attended to the importance of trust, confidence, envy and shame in social life and social relations (Barbalet, 1996; Kemper, 1978; Patulny, 2015; Scheff, 2000), but without linking these to happiness and to misrecognition as reproducing inequalities. A relational approach to happiness as complex can contribute to re-theorising inequality as both material and as reproduced through feelings about self and others.

Selves are shaped in interaction and the intersubjective experience of happiness, wellbeing satisfaction, contentment and more is likely to be heavily determined by recognition, or lack of recognition of people's worth in relation to others. Lacking material resources does not inevitably make people unhappy, but is more likely to do so under current conditions of capitalism that can undermine the enjoyment of relations with others. By examining the emotional complex of happiness we can thus extend Fraser's account of the connections between recognition and redistribution and consider emotional relations between embodied individuals and other agents as entangled within wider power relations (Burkitt, 2014). This demands further research on the complex individual and social experiencing of emotions akin to happiness. It also requires further consideration of the relationship between recognition/redistribution and happiness, that could draw further on existing sociological accounts of the injuries of class and other inequalities (Barbalet, 2001; Lamont, 2002; Sennett and Cobb, 1971; Skeggs, 1997, 2004). Analysis of happiness may benefit from exploration of other theoretical perspectives such as feminist intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989; Yuval-Davis, 2006). These are directions for the future but what we offer here is also significant.

If redistribution and recognition are intertwined, as Fraser argues, we can see happiness as a complex relational achievement making and made by inequalities. Redistribution/recognition might mean a different assignment of material 'goods' and a remaking of relations to others. Happiness and other

emotions influence (Barbalet, 2001: 23), and not just result from, shifting status and power relations (Elias, 2000; Kemper, 1978). The emotional influences and outcomes of greater equality may not be individual happiness, but happiness studies suggest that greater shared wellbeing and ongoing contentment may result. In speaking to both recognition theory and a sociology of happiness, we add new dimensions to sociological understandings of inequality. We reveal the 'unhappy' consequences for all of society, of conditions favouring maldistribution and misrecognition. Relations make us feel and feelings can remake relations. To see happiness as complex takes Honneth and Fraser's debates about recognition and redistribution into new territory where we can recognize that a happy, content, good, satisfying life is an interactional achievement.

Endnotes

[1] This definition draws on Barnwell's (2017) article on 'Durkheim as Affect Theorist', which derives from him a more sociological view of affect, making less of the distinction from emotion and not seeing affect as pre or asocial. Instead, Durkheim helps us reads affect as collective and social and yet as encompassing thinking, feeling humans as well as non-human agents.

[2] The sequestering of the rich in gated communities is one instance of social inequalities limiting freedom of movement of the rich (Turner 2007).

[3] This relation may occur through interaction with particular 'rich' others in shared physical or virtual space, or be an imagined relation to a generalised rich other.

[4] However, Fraser argues that recognition remains under the banner of ethics in Honneth and Taylor's work, even when misrecognition forms the basis of a denial of selfhood. She maintains that 'both these theorists construe misrecognition in terms of impaired subjectivity and damaged self-identity. And both understand the injury in ethical terms, as stunting the subject's capacity for achieving a good life. For Taylor and Honneth, therefore, recognition is an issue of ethics. Unlike Taylor and Honneth, I propose to conceive recognition as an issue of justice' (Fraser 2001: 26).

[5] Some readings of Symbolic Interactionism (SI) suggest that people have accurate knowledge of emotions they are experiencing (Author, 2015), but we use SI approaches that see emotional experience as not transparent, as unpredictably produced and reproduced in interaction (hence the need for reflexivity) (Archer, 2000; Burkitt, 2012; Author, 2010). Hochschild has much to offer but her emphasis on 'a self we define as real' (1983: 183), which has authentic emotions, sits awkwardly with Meadian insistence on multiple selves (Mead, 1962: 142). Symbolic Interactionists do not necessarily care whether individuals authentically, accurately understand or report their emotions, if those understandings are real in their consequences (Holdsworth and Morgan, 2007; Author, 2010).

[6] The term 'emotional capital' has value in describing how emotional resources are inherited and can be exchanged for other forms of capital, but this tends to see emotional resources as belonging to individuals, whereas we theorise emotions as occurring in the relations between individuals and thus as more of a collective achievement.

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