Feeling Schools, Affective Nation: The Emotional Geographies Of Education In Singapore, Slippages As Tactical Manoeuvres

Clara Ang and Elaine Lynn-Ee Ho[1]

Department of Geography, National University of Singapore

[1]Corresponding author: elaine.ho@nus.edu.sg

Introduction

Geographers studying learning environments have argued that education is enmeshed within political-economic processes that give rise to new modes of governing subjects (e.g. Brown, 2011; Way, 2013). Amongst them is Gagen (2015) who observes that education and schools cultivate a form of 'citizenly consciousness' (Gagen, 2015: 141) by disciplining bodies and reproducing strategic subjectivities that serve the state. Also central to such arguments is the role of the emotions in constituting governmentality and habitus (Pimlott-Wilson, 2011; Zembylas, 2011; Holt et al., 2013). In Singapore, the educational syllabus is designed to instil citizenly consciousness in students through the Character and Citizenship Education (CCE), a compulsory programme for students in Primary and Secondary Schools. The CCE programme emphasises Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), which Singapore's Ministry of Education (MOE) defines as 'an umbrella term that refers to students' acquisition of skills to recognise and manage emotions, develop care and concern for others' (MOE, 2014). Accordingly, SEL can 'help a person to be a good citizen, who contributes positively to civic life' (MOE, 2014). The observed shift from an education system which overtly favours cognitive development to a system that embraces emotional learning raises important questions on what is the role of the emotions in education policy?

This paper focuses on the everyday relations and negotiations found in a Singaporean school that we studied. We ask, first, why and how are the emotions used as tools for governance (henceforth emotional governance) in Singapore; second, how do students and teachers experience and negotiate emotional governance in school? Third, how does space matter in constituting the emotions in formal and informal learning spaces? Using findings from ethnography, semi-structured interviews and Instagram photos collected from students, this paper argues that both students and teachers mobilise the emotions as tactics to manoeuvre established rules and power. The paper argues for the importance of studying relational encounters and performances to analyse the links between emotions, social structures and space. It integrates Gagen's (2015) analysis of emotions and governmentality with Bourdieu's (1990) concept of habitus (also see Holt et al, 2013), and further draws on Butler's (1993) arguments on performativity and subversion to show how habitus might be disrupted in unconscious and unintentional ways, which she refers to as 'slippages' (Butler, 1993: 82). We posit that studying how the emotions are engaged in everyday events as slippages allows us to capture the intentional and unintentional fleeting moments in which students and teachers advance narratives that counter the dominant scripts of mainstream education.

Emotional governance and habitus in the context of education
Debates within the geographies of education have established that the social identities of young people are (re)produced through education (Holloway et al., 2010) and that education is a useful tool for analysing institutional transformations and spatial restructuring (Thiem, 2009). Researchers have also argued for studying 'the importance of spatiality in the production, consumption and implications of formal education systems… and of informal learning environments' (Holloway and Jones, 2012: 482). Kraftl (2013), for example, examined the

learning processes that take place in alternative/autonomous learning spaces such as farms, home schools and Montessori schools. Such geographers highlight that studying the links between educational institutions and communities (including the nation-state) can trouble assumptions that education spaces are neatly categorised and compartmentalised from society (Collins and Coleman, 2008; Robertson, in Taylor, 2009: 652).

In related vein, scholars of emotional geographies have made notable contributions to research on education. Such debates pertain to how the emotions function as a biopolitical tool in the neoliberal education landscape (Gagen, 2015; Brown, 2011; Way 2013); the relations between emotions and young people's lived experiences in schools (Zembylas, 2011; Watkins, 2011; Way, 2013); and emotions and embodiment in informal and alternative education (Kraftl, 2013; Wainwright et al., 2010). For Gagen (2015), the emotions have been reified as a type of intelligence to be marketed and consumed in schools so as to socialise students into becoming 'ideal citizens. Similarly, Brown's (2011) work signals how certain aspirations perpetuated in British social policies serve as 'strong emotional impulses' (Brown, 2011: 20) to motivate children to work towards anticipated futures. He demonstrates that aspiration is constituted by 'an assemblage of linked attributes' (Brown, 2011: 13) that is simultaneously produced by government policies, limited by social structures and enacted by emotions (such as hopefulness, fear and excitement). Both Brown's and Gagen's work show how using emotions as an optic allows us to disentangle different types of biopolitics, or the governance of mentality and life, in societies.

Implicit to such research is also how the concept of habitus, as developed by Pierre Bourdieu, can be usefully applied to analysing the lives of young people. Habitus refers to 'a practical sense of what is to be done in a given situation… anticipating [thus] the future [as] inscribed

in the present state' (Bourdieu, 1998:25; cited in Holt et al, 2013). It comes into being through a complex mix of interactions between the internal (e.g. affective and psycho-social) and external social worlds (the socio-spatial context) that individuals inhabit, and the social scripts they embody and perform (Kelly and Luis, 2006; Pimlott-Wilson, 2011; Holt et al, 2013; Reay, 2015). Geographers have considered, for example, how habitus is developed from a young age, predisposes children to embody and perform certain behaviour and actions, and functions as a social environment through which they make sense of their future employment prospects (Pimlott-Wilson, 2011).

Conceptually, our paper considers how the emotions are mobilised to enact governmentality (henceforth emotional governance) (Gagen, 2015) and create a habitus (Bourdieu, 1990; Holt, 2008) in which young people are socialised into performing social values prescribed by the educational curriculum. We regard values as a set of motivational processes that guide human behaviour in context-specific ways in different cultures and societies. Simply put, values can be seen as a 'code of conduct'. Values are associated with moral connotations when those values 'convey a sense of attachment and obligation to other human beings' (Syed, 2008:190). Values are connected to emotions in the way that the latter reflect, influence and reinforce particular moral(ising) agendas.

Our paper pays attention to the embodied ways in which the emotions are mobilised and performed, as well as the intersubjective or relational manner through which students and teachers constitute one another's emotions and behaviour in both formal and informal learning spaces. This approach also leads us to draw out the way that unanticipated emotional responses and affective negotiations might destabilise habitus, which could otherwise be construed as static and predictable in the way it shapes human norms and behaviour. We consider how the

emotions materialise as slippages and are mobilised to subvert dominant scripts within the educational curriculum. Schools are spaces where emotional slippages can disrupt and recalibrate dominant power relations.

The next section explains the methods informing the research in this paper. Section 4 discusses how emotional governance is manifested in Singaporean schools, followed by Section 5 which considers how the students are socialised through forms of habitus within and outside of formal learning spaces. Section 6 analyses expressions of emotional slippages found in the school we studied. In the concluding section, we synthesise and reiterate the significance of our arguments for geographers.

Methodology
This research adopted a mixed-methods approach to explore how the emotions contribute to subjectification in formal and informal learning spaces. Such an approach acknowledges that there is no one single way of capturing emotions in the field. Rather, we can only look at certain aspects of how the emotions function and circulate in learning spaces. The research methods included, first, a content analysis of press releases, newspaper articles, websites and state-run social media sites concerning education policy in Singapore. Special attention was paid to materials that addressed moral values, citizenship and the emotions. Second, the first author carried out ethnography in a mainstream or state-run secondary school in Singapore for students aged 13 to 16 years old. She was given access to the classrooms, canteen, assembly hall and even the staff rooms. Third, semi-structured interviews were carried out with a total of 31 participants, of which 11 were schoolteachers and 20 were students. Teachers with a variety of teaching experiences and backgrounds were recruited through personal networks and further snowballing; recruitment of students was done through their teachers. Four students from each academic level (secondary school year one through year five; or aged 13 to 16 years

old) were selected with the help of their form teachers. Although the students were selected via their teachers, the interviews were done separately. Incorporating the Instagram activity described below during follow up interviews helped elicit spontaneous conversations and thicker descriptions of how the students perceived their schooling lives.

Fourth, the students were asked to use a social media application (app) called Instagram to capture and upload pictures that reflected their school lives and feelings associated with school. School-going teenagers in Singapore are active users of Instagram. This approach proved helpful in giving students the confidence to ask questions, provide suggestions and to be creative with their submissions. The students were also encouraged to add captions to the pictures to explain what they were thinking and feeling when they took the photographs. The first author explained that the pictures would be discussed during a follow-up interview to deepen insights into their social and emotional spaces of schooling. Although most of the participants were experienced Instagram users, it was the first time their photos would be used in a research setting. A brief guide on ways to start the project was given to them during the first meeting. The students were encouraged to be playful and creative with their photographs. At the end of the fieldwork period, 70 photographs had been submitted. The fieldwork period was from 2014-2015.

Researchers have argued that developing methods for engaging children and young people in the research process is important for dismantling unequal power-relations between the adult researcher and child participant (see Valentine, 1999; Matthews and Tucker, 2000; Young and Barrett, 2001; Skelton, 2007). Choosing Instagram as a method for visual analysis also draws out young people's emotions in different ways from verbal and written delivery. Not only are photographs 'feely', they are also 'touchy' and manifest in various material forms that capture

embodiment. The emotional and affectual qualities of photographs were evident in the students' submissions and verbalised through the follow-on interviews. Moreover, the photos gave the researchers a deeper and wider understanding of their geographies and social lives that we cannot access physically.

The triangulation of methods informing this study provided a multi-dimensional set of findings to draw on. We found it helpful to use the content analysis of state discourses towards education and its curriculum framing to develop an understanding of the wider context in which we could situate the 'grounded' findings from the ethnography, interviews and Instagram photo elicitations. The themes from the ethnographic notes (i.e. researcher's observations) were contextualised and compared with the interviews and Instagram photos (i.e. participant-led depictions) to critically analyse the information derived. We show next how the mixed methods deployed in this research inform our interpretation of the way the emotions are engaged in Singaporean schools through the perspectives of the state, teachers and students.

Emotional governance in Singaporean schools

Singaporean children and youths are required to attend school for a minimum of at least six years. Within the mainstream schools where compulsory education is mandated for all citizens, children and youths spend most of their waking hours attending classes, as well as co-curricular activities outside of formal classroom learning. Singapore's experience is not unusual in East Asia. The birth of the four 'Asian Tigers' (Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan) is synonymous with the creation of developmental states, where centralised states and government wield power by legitimising their governance through high rates of economic growth (Abe, 2006). Primary, technical, vocational and tertiary education are used by East Asian developmental states to nurture human resources and 'foster a strong sense of social

7

cohesion and political identity' (Morris, 1996:107). Such developmental tactics continued even as the East Asian states, including Singapore, shifted their focus from the industrial to the service and finance sectors under conditions of neoliberal marketisation.

Believing that the neoliberal market is characterised by a knowledge-based economy which relies on workers who are innovative, creative and entrepreneurial, the Singaporean state launched a landmark educational reform in 1997, dubbed the 'Thinking School Learning Nation' (TSLN). There are four major thrusts of the TSLN: (1) emphasis on critical and creative thinking; (2) the use of IT in education; (3) national/ citizenship education; and (4) administrative excellence (Gopinathan, 2007). The educational reforms were meant to ensure that Singapore is prepared for a global future characterised by aggressive competition between cities and regions, as well as volatile situations. The TSLN framework serves as a vehicle for the state to produce and legitimise neoliberal discourses of creativity, flexibility and entrepreneurialism that would better prepare Singapore for such a future.

In comparison, the Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) programme introduced by the Ministry of Education around 2011 seemed to depart from the overtly cognitive-driven skills emphasised under the TSLN, placing stronger emphasis on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) instead. However, upon closer inspection, the CCE and SEL programmes are meant to complement the TSLN. A framework for the CCE, dubbed the '21st Century Competencies', was implemented in 2014 (MOE, 2014); at the heart of the framework lies (unspecified) 'core values' (the innermost first ring) that are supported by a middle second ring of soft skills, specifically (1) responsible decision making, (2) self-awareness, (3) self-management, (4) social awareness; and (5) relationship management. The middle ring of soft skills is meant to augment development of an outer third ring to do with (1) critical and inventive thinking skills;

(2) civic literacy, global awareness and cross-cultural skills; and (3) communication, collaboration and information skills. In other words, the social and emotional skills described above are not only guided by the TSLN's discourses of competition, creativity and entrepreneurialism, but also meant to augment 'values' and character building that are considered integral to citizenship in Singapore.

The above educational trends in Singapore seem to mirror the Social and Emotional Learning (SEAL) programme in England and Wales, which were the focus of Gagen's (2015) work on emotions and governmentality in the educational curriculum. She argues that SEAL advances a new form of governmentality wherein citizenship is crafted using 'close management of neurologically defined emotional behaviour' (Gagen, 2015: 141). Nonetheless, there are subtle differences in how the emotions are mobilised in and through Singapore's CCE programme. Our fieldwork suggests that the CCE programme and SEL learning place a distinct emphasis on what the teachers and students call 'values education' in Singapore.

For instance, in a lesson on the topic of 'Building Bonds: Building a Strong Family', the teacher placed focus on the 'values and attitudes' for building familial bond instead of how to have loving relationships (or questioning what constitutes those loving relationships). The discussion centred on the importance of familial values for Singapore as a nation vis-à-vis globalisation (wherein globalisation is framed as a threat to national identity and community). After screening a video entitled 'Family Values', the students were asked what they thought those 'values' would be; the class was quick to list values such as 'responsibility', 'understanding', 'honesty' and 'respect'. The notion of 'values' is at the heart of the lessons and issues surrounding emotions were strikingly absent, or at most only glossed over.

The absence of discussions concerning emotions was apparent during the interviews conducted with the students too. When asked whether they learnt anything about emotions or emotional skills in class, some students replied with a resounding 'no'. Most of the students also associated CCE classes with values and character education. Zoey (secondary school year one student) shared that for her, CCE is to help them have a 'better character (and) to become a better person' (personal interview, 2014). Zoey also said that CCE taught her 'school values, like respect (and) integrity'. Both the teachers and students interviewed tend to conflate learning about the emotions with values education. The coordinator of the school's CCE programme expressed confusion about the difference or overlaps between values and emotions when asked about possible ways of teaching and conveying emotions in CCE classes:

Let's talk about computer addiction, it's about self-awareness, the emotion…. This is when SEL comes in. One thing […] I wanted to [raise] was [the issue of] respect, but respect is [a] value [pause]. That's the thing – sometimes you find it difficult to differentiate between emotion and value (personal interview, 2014)

As the interviews illustrate, for both Singaporean students and teachers, citizenry consciousness was crafted by social values rather than the emotional conduct that Gagen (2015) highlighted in her study of students in England and Wales. We observe that Singaporean students are conditioned through the formal curriculum and the school environment, what Isin (2004: 228) terms a 'plethora of signs: images, sounds, sights, idols and smells') to (re)calibrate their emotions and habits towards embodying the social values endorsed by the state. For example, our fieldwork findings suggest that the students expressed emotions such as anxiety—associated with the condition of stress—when discussing their schooling lives, both during the interviews and through their Instagram reflections. Indeed, the Instagram reflections (see Figure 1) signal that many students struggle with their heavy academic load and the stress

they experience persists even after schooling hours and outside the formal space of the school. During follow-on interviews, Katherine (secondary school year two student) expressed that her homework is 'driving (her) insane', while Natasha (secondary school year four student) pushed herself to work hard because of her poor Chinese language test results.

Figure 1. Instagram photos submitted by students reflecting on their schooling lives

Here, it is useful to read Gagen's work on emotions and governmentality in relation to Isin's (2004) notion of the 'neurotic citizen'. Isin coined the term 'neurotic citizen' to describe those that are 'incited to make social and cultural investments… by calibrating [their] conduct on the basis of its anxieties and insecurities rather than rationalities' (Isin, 2004: 223). Linking this concept to the realm of emotions means the neurotic subject is one who is made to feel inadequate by his/her own emotions (specifically by feeling anxious and insecure). This emotional state compels the subject to conduct him/herself in ways that they think the neoliberal society expects them to be. The stress that students face not only comes from their struggle with studies. Many students found it tough to juggle the demands of academic work and their co-curricular activities. The feelings of stress and pressure experienced by students are produced in part by the Singaporean state and society's emphasis on the importance of education and human capital for both individual citizens and the nation to succeed.

Underpinning recent educational reform in Singapore is the notion of 'holistic education' where schools are required to provide 'a rich diversity of learning experiences that cater not only to the cognitive aspects, but also the physical, aesthetic, moral and socio-emotional domains' (MOE, 2012). The concept of 'holistic education' can be likened to what Isin (2004: 232) calls 'the impossible' ideal, which students are socialised to work towards. Faced with

family and societal expectations for them to be competent in both their studies and in CCAs, students function under a climate of persistent stress (leading to emotions such as anxiety). We discuss next how such emotions are normalised and serve as a form of habitus to regulate the daily behaviour of both students and teachers.

Emotions and habitus inside and outside of schools

This section considers how emotional governance serves as an 'invisible hand' to create forms of habitus that normalise the social values prescribed by the curriculum, which are in turn embodied and performed by the teachers and students relationally in both formal and informal learning spaces. The climate of stress and feelings of anxiety opined by the students and captured in their Instagram reflections is not solely produced by the state (by means of crafting manifestos and curriculum), nor only experienced by students. Emotions are relational and 'they involve (re)actions or relations' (Ahmed, 2014). Teachers are part of this emotional economy of circulation that maintains a climate of stress. The teachers interviewed revealed that to deliver 'holistic learning', they adopt additional duties such as planning for overseas fieldtrips, overseeing the CCAs, maintaining discipline, and for some teachers, contributing to 'staff development' programmes. The stress experienced by the teachers comes from knowing that 'holistic education' is an ideal that is impossible to achieve; yet, it is seen as a necessity to fulfil the demands of the economy and society. For example, Jason, a geography teacher expressed:

> I think […] our society it is very pragmatic … the government feels that this is the best way to educate the younger generation… through their own merit […] they can fit into [certain] roles better […] be it a worker, or someone who has a bigger role to play in the society. [But] there are a lot of conflicting things that are […] promoted… things like 'every school is a good school'… [MOE] push[es] forward things like innovation, creativity, holistic education, but maybe at the

ground level, we are still doing a lot of drilling, because the basic examination system has not changed.

Both teachers and students experienced stress because they are caught in the state's project of producing the ideal citizen-worker. Students are expected to embody the ideal notion of a well-rounded or holistic individual, whilst the teachers are expected to be custodians who ensure the students achieve these goals. This maintenance and constant production of anxiety is what underpins the behaviour of the neurotic citizen and the regulation of the educational system as habitus overall.

The creation of such a habitus takes place in a myriad of spaces both within and outside schools. One of the ways in which social values are inculcated in schools is through a programme called 'Values in Action' (VIA). VIA activities involve camps, overseas trips and community involvement projects. As described by the Ministry of Education:

> [VIA] are *learning experiences* that support students' development as socially responsible citizens who contribute meaningfully to the community, through the learning and *application of values*, knowledge and skills. VIA fosters student ownership over how they contribute to the community. As part of VIA, students reflect on their experience, the values they have put into practice, and how they can continue to contribute meaningfully' (MOE, 2014, our emphasis).

Many VIA trips are held outside the school. Although the most common venues are local campsites, it is also increasingly common for students to undergo service learning or cultural immersion trips outside of Singapore so as to enhance their global exposure. The state's goal of producing globally minded workers who can contribute to the country's economic competitiveness has redefined 'learning spaces'. The diverse learning spaces in which VIA trips are conducted play important roles in shaping the subjectivities of students by

conditioning them to adopt certain bodily habits as part of their habitus. VIA can be seen as a form of governmentality that shapes the students' habitus through creating learning experiences for the students so that they can embody and perform various social values, instead of just knowing what the values means.

For instance, the Instagram reflection by Alicia (secondary school year three student) highlights how various values such as 'patience' and 'teamwork' are 'taught' during a VIA trip held in Malaysia. In a follow-on interview, she shared that initially she did not like one of her group members but:

> The campfire was really amazing [and] when we [did] our performance […] our instructor went 'they are the best performers, you guys are going to be so amazed by it'… we felt really encouraged […] because it's […] team spirit (personal interview, 2014)

Alicia's reflections show that values education functions as an 'unconscious framework' (Holt, 2008: 235) that works through the students' emotions, habitus, encounters and experiences forged during the VIA trip. Yet the identities of the students are always maintained in a state of inadequacy (because they can never be the perfect 'holistic' individual). The VIA programme capitalises on such emotions to exhort students to work towards being a better individual by learning (or obtaining and embodying) those values. The camp provided an opportunity for Alicia to learn about values through feeling the need to be a better person.

Although the VIA programme provides an important insight into how bodies are governed, it is not the only form of governmentality that crafts students into the ideal citizen-worker. For example, the school created a 'catch me doing right' award for the students. The goal is to motivate students to embody and perform the values taught in the curriculum in their day-to-day lives in school. The weekly awards are given during assembly, creating positive affects of

pride and personal happiness in a shared event. Through this spectacle, the recipient is encouraged to continually embody and perform the 'right values' (aligning with an ideal of citizenship), while the other students watching the award ceremony are also motivated to do the same. However, multiple modes of governmentality operate simultaneously in schools, including disciplinary action. Students are given a guidebook spelling out rules to do with attendance, appearance and conduct within and outside school premises. It also stated that the school can take corrective action ranging from counselling or warning, to detention and school suspension, or in rare cases, even public caning and police involvement. This disciplinary regime instils fear as subjectification. Although the majority of the students would not face such punishment, it is fear of the possibility of being punished that steers them away from wrong-doing and conditions them to embody the values prescribed in the educational curriculum.

Emotional slippages and subversion to habitus

The earlier sections suggested that 'emotional learning' targets the inadequacies of students and teachers in Singapore, creating a habitus that conditions them to work towards the ideal of being an 'holistic' individual. Such an approach treats young people as 'useful' citizens only if they achieve the goals set out for them in the future. By only analysing how young Singaporeans are shaped into the ideal citizen-worker of the future, we foreclose studying how young people can be agentic actors capable of negotiating hegemonic rules. The malleable and fluid characteristics of the emotions serve as an entry point for us to look at the ways in which teachers and students are agentic actors even as they embody and perform certain aspects of habitus.

While Butler's (1993) account of performativity augments Bourdieu's (1990) notion of habitus

in that it places emphasis on the enactment of prescribed and dominant social values, her theory also presents opportunities for us to look at how habitus might be disrupted. More specifically, she draws attention to a type of subversion which she refers to as 'slippages' (Butler, 1993: 82), which we interpret as the unconscious and unintentional disruptions to normative identities. We show how emotions can be operationalised as slippages (henceforth emotional slippages) to enact three forms of subversions in learning spaces: first, through the bodies of teachers as sites of empowerment; second, through students deploying emotional tactics and performing certain roles to manipulate the feelings of their friends and teachers; and third, through spontaneous emotions that create the possibility of relating differently to others inhabiting learning spaces. We conceptualise emotional slippages as the social moments that transpire when individuals deliberately mobilise the emotions to disrupt dominant social scripts, or when they experience spontaneous emotions that are unaligned with those scripts.

Teaching is a highly interactive job where embodied work is central to the service exchange between teachers and students, and the school is a dynamic site shaped by bodily practices. Teachers also inhabit a habitus, not only embodying and performing their identities, but also suppressing or enhancing certain emotions in order to gain authority, respect, or even seek empathy amongst the students. But they may exercise agency to reconfigure how the curriculum is delivered and for what purposes. A more nuanced theorisation of habitus would treat classrooms as affectively charged sites where both the teachers' and students' subjectivities undergo ongoing configurations (Watkins, 2011). For example, some CCE teachers interviewed said that they improvise the formal lesson plans according to the needs of the class, such as depicted in Vidya's account below:

Although [the] lesson plans given to us by MOE is quite detailed and standard […], I will […] tweak it […] if the prompting questions are […] sensitive. [For example] 'how do you spend time with your family?' […] may be a general question, [but] I have students who [are from]

single parent [families], [with] no siblings, nobody else… so these are things that we can do to make sure we don't ostracise someone… (personal interview, 2014)

By tweaking the lesson plan, Vidya acknowledged that the curriculum, imparts a hegemonic ideal that does not reflect societal realities and she sought to prevent students from feeling left out in school (and in the society) by adapting the teaching content. It is important to note that Vidya's improvisations are prompted by her feelings of care towards the students, providing a lens to show us the dynamic ways in which emotions are anticipated, negotiated and enacted in a teacher's life.

Second, we consider how students negotiate authority by performing certain emotions in relation to the values prescribed by the curriculum. The previous section had argued that the Values in Action (VIA) programmes in school socialise students into certain forms of habitus by mobilising the emotions and through embodying prescribed values in formal and informal learning spaces. Yet spaces come into being when certain social actors perform specific social roles, whether it is the iteration of dominant social scripts, or subversions of those scripts. We share a vignette from a classroom observation recorded by the first author.

> On my way to class I came across Zakir as he was eating a sandwich. He looked at me with a serious gaze and put a finger on his lips, gesturing to me not to comment on his behaviour. Students are not supposed to consume food outside the canteen, but it is an open secret that students do so all the time behind the teacher's back. When I reached the classroom, I noticed an uneasy atmosphere. During the previous class, a trainee teacher had failed to turn up. Some boys had taken the liberty to go to the canteen but were caught by a subject teacher. What was meant to be a CCE lesson became a disciplinary session where the form teacher reprimanded not only the students who went out, but also the class chairman and prefects who did not stop their friends from leaving. Since none of the students took responsibility for the incident, the teacher declared

that the entire class would be penalised. A few students challenged the teacher's decision. Amongst them was Zakir who had left the class but was not caught in the act. Usually the resident joker in class, Zakir's tone was markedly different from his usual taunts. He apologised on behalf of the class and suggested that only those caught leaving class be given demerit points. He reasoned that the incident was an isolated case and promised on behalf of the class that it will not happen again. The class collectively supported Zakir's argument and the teacher relented…

In the vignette above, Zakir had helped his classmates to escape punishment by expressing remorse on behalf of the class. By pleading with the teacher, all the students displayed some measure of guilt and fear. However, when I spoke to a few of them it was clear that their guilt was performative. When I interviewed Zakir later, he revealed that it was not the first time he had gone to the canteen to get food during lesson time but he noted that although his reputation at school is a 'bit naughty', he knew how to appear sorry so that the teacher would not punish him.

Through the CCE programme and the school's disciplinary programmes, the students are able to gauge the behaviour expected of them through the emotional governance of their habitus. They performed the emotional responses and social scripts expected of them in ways that subvert that same habitus to advance their own goals. Zakir adopted bodily gestures and facial expressions to convey remorse and personal innocence. He made use of the emotions in his performance to elicit understanding from the teacher. It is thus between the invisible operation of emotions and the conscious knowing and performance of social scripts that students like Zakir are able to manipulate the emotional affects in schools. This example highlights the performative qualities of the classroom/school spaces, lending to but also potentially subverting habitus. The space of the school is not just an inert site shaped by the power apparatus of the state. Instead, it exists as a dynamic space that is constantly disrupted through

the embodied agency, performative aspects and emotional slippages expressed by both teachers and students.

Lastly, we consider the potential for emotional slippages to promote positive change in the educational landscape spontaneously. As an example, during a special CCE lesson on racial harmony and cultural understanding, the teacher went through a powerpoint presentation prepared by one of the CCE coordinators for the entire school. The lesson focused on a celebration called Hari Raya Puasa/Aidilfitri, a festival celebrated by the Muslim community after a month of fasting. The teacher asked a Muslim student in the class to share what he/she did during Hari Raya. A student stood up, but what transpired surprised the teacher and his classmates. Instead of following the teacher's prompt, the student delivered a touching speech to his classmates, seeking forgiveness for any wrongdoings which might have offended his classmates. The student gave the speech because Hari Raya Aidilfitri is a time for forgiveness and for strengthening the bonds between friends and families. After he delivered his speech, the entire class remained still for a few second, before breaking into spontaneous applause. The teacher was obviously shocked and one of the students sitting in the front row commented privately to the first author that the teacher's eyes were red.

In her book, Ahmed (2014: 210) discusses the 'messiness' of emotions. She highlights how 'feelings are messy such that… they often come at us, surprise us, leaving us cautious and bewildered'. The student's speech not only surprised and touched the class, but as a form of emotional slippage, it disrupted the usual rhythm of CCE classes. As mentioned in the previous chapter, issues surrounding emotions and emotional skills are usually glossed over or even absent in a typical CCE class. However, the student's speech generated an affectively charged atmosphere within the class, which in turn allowed the other students and the teacher to connect

with the spirit of Hari Raya in a way that the powerpoint slides could never deliver.

Here, the notion of slippages gives us a glimpse of the other possibilities of educational goals even if these are not the ones prescribed by the state. Such possible encounters allow for a more organic approach towards education that is actualised by the students themselves. As slippages are accidental and emotions are intangible, they are often easy to overlook when we study the educational landscape. However, this section has demonstrated that attention to everyday, emotional events enables us to glean insights into the taken-for-granted aspects of education. Slippages, although ephemeral and elusive, can be made more apparent when we take emotions and feelings into account.

Conclusion

Our account of the CCE programme in Singapore contributes to the scholarship on the geographies of education and emotional geographies by foregrounding the role of the emotions in creating a habitus that governs the ways students and teachers embody and perform the dominant values desired by state. We found that the feeling of anxiety (related to the condition of stress) is a key means through which students (and teachers as their custodians) are constantly urged to aspire toward becoming 'well-rounded' individuals who can contribute positively to the nation-state in the future. Yet, as we have argued, this ideal is an elusive goal and it is the persistent production of stress that underpins the figure of the neurotic citizen (Isin, 2004).

Crucially, it is also the malleability and fluidity of emotions that allow for cracks in regulation systems as students and teachers both express agency to negotiate and even subvert hegemonic rules. We examined three forms of emotional subversions. First, the emotional agency enacted

by teachers leads them to adapt the curriculum to enact care for their students, rather than simply reproduce the mainstream educational curriculum contributing to the habitus (including but not limited to the values) desired by the state. Second, we showed how students strategically perform the roles and values expected of them in order to escape trouble, subverting the habitus established by authority. Lastly, we highlighted the emotional slippages that transpire in learning spaces, producing unintentional and fleeting emotions and social moments that enable students and teachers to advance their own interpretation of the goals of education. The paper thus signals new directions for studying, not only how governmentality operates through the emotions, but also the way that analysing the emotions can serve as a window into capturing the intentional or unintentional fleeting moments in which young people and teachers undermine or spontaneously reconfigure the dominant values prescribed in formal and informal learning spaces.

The paper has also contributed to spatial conceptualisation of how habitus takes shape in formal and informal learning spaces, and the emotions facilitating the creation of such habitus. Asking how space matters in constituting the emotions led us to analyse the way that formal and informal learning spaces are mobilised as part of the educational curriculum to trigger various emotions that would regulate the behaviour of students and teachers. This analysis also signals the scalar ways in which the emotions embodied (and performed) by students and teachers are not only expressed, but also regulated in learning spaces at the collective level (constituting habitus), and further put to the service of nation-building goals. Nonetheless, our analysis also advances the view that relational or intersubjective interactions between teachers and students in learning spaces allow for emotional slippages that can spontaneously disrupt the habitus represented in the mainstream educational system, thus creating new emotional possibilities for how both the students and teachers relate to the curriculum and learning spaces.

References

Abe, Masaki. 2006. The developmental state and educational advance in East Asia. *Educate* 6 (1), 6–12,

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1990. *The Logic of Practice. Stanford University Press*, Stanford, CA.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1998. *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA.

Brown, Gavin. 2011. Emotional geographies of young people's aspirations for adult life. *Children's Geographies* 9 (1), 7–22.

Butler, Judith. 1993. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. Routledge, London and New York.

Collins, Damian, Coleman, Tara. 2008. Social geographies of education: Looking within, and beyond school boundaries. *Geography Compass* 2 (1), 281–299.

Gagen, Elizabeth. 2015. Governing emotions: Citizenship, neuroscience and the education of youth. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 40 (1), 140–152.

Gopinathan, Saravanan. 2007. Globalisation, the Singapore developmental state and education policy: A thesis revisited. *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 5 (1), 53–70.

Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 1983. Th*e Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. University of California Press, Berkeley, CA.

Holloway, Sarah, Hubbard, Phil, Jöns, Heike, Pimlott-Wilson, Helena. 2010. Geographies of education and the significance of children, youth and families. *Progress in Human Geography* 34 (5), 583–600.

Holloway, Sarah, Jöns, Heike. 2012. Geographies of education and learning. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 37 (4), 482–488.

Holt, Louise. 2008. Embodied social capital and geographic perspectives: Performing the habitus. *Progress in Human Geography* 32 (2), 227–246.

Holt, Louise, Bowlby, Sophie, Lea, Jennifer. 2013. Emotions and the habitus: Young people with socio-emotional differences (re)producing social, emotional and cultural capital in family and leisure space-times. *Emotion, Space and Society* 9, 33–41.

Isin, Engin. 2004. The neurotic citizen. *Citizenship Studies* 8 (3), 217–235.

Bourdieu, Pierre, 1998. *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*. Stanford University Press.

Kelly, Philip and Lusis, Tom. 2006. Migration and the transnational habitus: Evidence from Canada and the Philippines. *Environment and Planning A* 38, 831-847.

Kraftl, Peter. 2013. Beyond 'voice', beyond 'agency', beyond 'politics'? Hybrid childhoods and some critical reflections on children's emotional geographies. *Emotion, Space and Society* 9, 13–23.

Matthews, Hugh, Tucker, Faith. 2000. Consulting children. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* 24 (2), 299–310.

Ministry of Education. 2012. New Syllabus and Textbook Titles for Character and Citizenship Education. http://www.moe.gov.sg/media/press/2012/11/new-syllabus-and-textbook-titl.php [Last accessed on 25th July 2015]

Ministry of Education. 2014. Values in Action (VIA). http://www.moe.gov.sg/education/secondary/via/ [Last accessed on 25th July 2015]

Morris, Paul. 1996. Asia's four little tigers: A comparison of the role of education in their development. *Comparative Education* 32 (1), 95–110.

Pimlott-Wilson, Helena. 2011. The role of familial habitus in shaping children's views of their future employment. *Children's Geographies* 9 (1), 111–118.

Reay, Diane. 2015. Habitus and the psychosocial: Bourdieu with feelings. *Cambridge Journal of Education* 45, 9–23.

Skelton, Tracey. 2007. Children, young people, UNICEF and participation. *Children's Geographies* 5 (1–2), 165–181.

Syed, J., 2008. From transgression to suppression: Implications of moral values and societal norms on emotional labour. *Gender, Work & Organization* 15, 182–201.

Thiem, Claudia Hanson. 2009. Thinking through education: The geographies of contemporary educational restructuring. *Progress in Human Geography* 33 (2), 154–173.

Valentine, Gill. 1999. Being seen and heard? The ethical complexities of working with children and young people at home and at school. *Ethics, Place and Environment* 2 (2) 141–155.

Wainwright, Emma, Marandet, Elodie, Smith, Fiona, Rizvi, Sadaf. 2010. The microgeographies of learning bodies and emotions in the 'classroom-salon'. *Emotion, Space and Society* 3 (2), 80–89.

Watkins, Megan. 2011. Teachers' tears and the affective geography of the classroom. *Emotion, Space and Society* 4 (3), 137–143.

Way, Amy. 2013. There's no 'I' in team: Adolescent emotions as a space for organizing feminine identity. *Emotion, Space and Society* 7, 26–34.

Young, Lorraine, Barrett, Hazel. 2001. Adapting visual methods: Action research with kampala street children. *Area* 33 (2), 141–152.

Zembylas, Michalinos. 2011. Investigating the emotional geographies of exclusion at a multicultural school. *Emotion, Space and Society* 4 (3), 151–159.