CHAPTER 10

SUCCESS AND FAILURE – ACHIEVEMENT-RELATED EMOTIONS

At its core, higher education is a place where achievement matters. People engage with higher education in order to advance important life goals. As an institution, marking, grading and attainment are often at centre-stage. Such high stakes also sparks high intensity emotions, including fear, shame, guilt, pride, joy, hope and frustration. This chapter is informed by the control-value theory of achievement emotions in education advanced by Reinhard Pekrun (2006) and updated by Pekrun and Perry (2014). In this model, emotional experiences are determined by a combination of how much a person values something, whether the focus is on the activity itself or on the outcome, and the extent to which they feel in control of the outcome. The previous three chapters assume a focus on the process of learning a subject, thus enjoyment of learning (or, its opposites, boredom or frustration) are well-represented there. However, this chapter addresses the emotions that are aroused when a person focuses on the outcome, including pride, hope, gratitude, relief, anxiety, shame and hopelessness.

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CHAPTER 10

RICHARD M. BERLIN

The Hotseat

> I swear by Apollo the physician, and Aesculapius, and Hygeia and Panacea, and all the gods and goddesses…to reckon him who taught me this Art equally dear to me as my parents…
>
> – from the Hippocratic Oath

O700 and thirty housestaff collapse
like shipwreck survivors.
After 24 sleepless hours
of children renounced by Hygeia,
our eyes are drowned in shadow.
A few nod before he enters
ruddy-faced and rested,
white coat starched and spotless:
Dr. Harry, Chief of the Mecca,
diagnostic wizard, the power
who can crush careers with a word.
He slaps a chest film on the light box
and hooks a bleary intern:
Tell me, doctor,
what is the shape of this child's ears?
Fifteen seconds, thirty, a minute of silence,
sweat weeps from the intern's forehead.
Harry scorches him with questions
and solves the riddle like Aesculapius,
even kneads the intern's shoulders
as if soothing a bruise.
We curse him all day, stay awake
all night to earn his love,
and when we descend to Radiology
with our own tame students, we slap
a film on the light box and raise
their first beads of sweat.

Previously published in *How JFK Killed My Father* (Pearl Editions, 2003)

RICHARD M. BERLIN

Good Fathers
for James Daniels, M.D. (1938–2001)

We were three men alone in a ward room
built for fifty, dust film on the floor,
Dr. Daniels and I, scrubbed and sterile,
gloved and gowned, standing behind the patient,
our only light drifting though the dirty
glass windows. I performed the prep –
betadine soaked into a sponge, painting
orange circles on the patient's back,
the room filled with the scent of young wine
poured too soon from the cask.
Week after week we practiced
on anonymous blue-collar vets,
everything ordered and routine until
that day Dr. Daniels pressed the needle deep
and failed to find the spot, four times, five,
finally giving up and passing it to me.
I can still see the angle of the shaft
when I pierced the patient's skin,
the sundial shadow it cast on his back,
gold droplets of spinal fluid dripping
into a sterile tube, the look Dr. Daniels
flashed me, just like my father's that day
he pulled over and handed me the keys.

Previously published in *Secret Wounds* (BkMk Press, 2011)

CHAPTER 10

JON WESICK

or Perish

Solving one integral stands between you and a satisfied life.
You'll be a professor in a cashmere sweater,
have an intelligent, capable woman on your arm,
and drive an antique sports car because genius
is a license to be eccentric. How wonderful
when the best minds pause to hear your thoughts
and wide-eyed students say you make science fascinating!

You open a thick book of integral tables,
search hundreds of pages, and find only the sinking feeling
that your future townhouse with its pre-Columbian artifacts,
season tickets to the theater, and vacations in the South of France
are getting more and more unlikely.

You change variables but each x transformed to u
becomes another low-paid, temporary post-doc.
You move to more desolate cities leaving friends behind
to work on increasingly mind-numbing, desperate projects.
Your lover abandons you. Aching for a human touch
you sleep alone in a noisy, one-bedroom apartment.

Your hand cramps after filling pages with letters, symbols,
and eraser smudges. When you try integrating by parts,
it becomes clear that after years of high-tech serfdom
you'll have only these useless pages. An Internet search
traps you in the quicksand of mathematical irrelevance.
You curse the teachers who encouraged you.
The tension in your shoulders could snap a steel cable.

Your future written in pencil –
a future of frayed sweatshirts, cheap shoes, bill collectors,
a subterranean credit score, and tasteless beer in rundown bars.

SU SMALLEN

The Students Who Come to Me with Writing Anxiety

How shall I love them, these students who need so much
To be right, they can't write? They are like Franz Wright's
Sparrows, *limping on their little bone crutches*
But not his sparrow, the one called Lorca who's figured it out
literature will lose, the sun will win, don't worry

They worry. They don't write. I tell them try writing about
What worries them – oh, they don't have time for that
Their twelve-page paper is due tomorrow, maybe Tuesday
If they can get an extension, can I get them an extension?
I ask them, what does it feel like in your body?

They just look at me. They don't want to feel
For sure not worse and they always suspect it'll be worse.
I give everything I've got 'but, but, but none of that works.'
I know. Most of the time it doesn't work for me either.
Sorrowful news:

The only cure for writing is writing.
Lately I've tried saying, look I know it sounds hooey
But have you tried being kind to yourself? Unconditionally
Kind? I'm trying to slide them over the frozen lake
Of my forties, their twenties. I've lost everyone so far.

Sorrowful news: the only cure for writing is writing.
You might as well be tender with yourself about it.
The truth is, I do not love these students.
I love the ones who write something, anything.
It makes my job so much easier.

Even a January lacking snow summons up some internal whatfor.
On the blank sky it scribbles generic branches, run-on
Cold, freewriting wind, five kinds of hardy birds, a page of

Passive ice, and a half-broken bone of a laugh,
Leaving no doubt the vague mess we're working with is winter.

Previously published in *Wild Hush* (Red Bird Chapbooks, 2014) and *You, This Close* (Red Dragonfly Press, 2016)

Commentary. I direct a writing help center at a small liberal arts college in the US. I work with students who, for a wide range of reasons, struggle to write. Most of them remind me of myself.

TERRY MARTIN

Thirty Years Later, I Defend my Dissertation all Night in a Dream and Wake up Exhausted

Midterm week on campus. Tightrope nerves, temperatures rising.
Tension, thick as fog. Students bump into things,
dazed and startled, red eyes open too wide,
night animals caught in unexpected headlights.

In the hallway, Sara June bursts into tears
when I offer her a piece of dark chocolate.
Don't be too nice to me right now, OK?

Ross comes by my office, sweat pebbling his pink forehead,
concerned about his tone in the midpoint course evaluation.
I hope I didn't sound harsh. I really <u>like</u> this class.

Marie, a teary freshman, stops in to tell me
she has applied for a hardship withdrawal.
Money problems at home, her grandma just died
and well, I had an abortion last week.
My mom was really supportive, because
the same thing happened to her when she was eighteen.
But my dad doesn't know.

Predictable, but unsettling, this time of the quarter stirs shadows.
Wishing we could all apply for hardship withdrawals –
from them, not due to them – I listen, and breathe.

Commentary. So much of what's interesting, and exhausting, about working in higher education happens outside the classroom. Though I've been teaching for over thirty years, the inevitable stress of midterms and finals still sneaks up on me and takes me by surprise. (You'd think I'd 'get it' by now, right?) This poem is my attempt to grapple with the predictable nature of these campus cycles, and the opportunities and challenges they present.

CHAPTER 10

NOEL SLOBODA

The Patron Saint of Plagiarists

Scuttles through dorm halls
during predawn hours

in search of that desperate glimmer
escaping from under a door—

the invitation for her
once more to brand

names of dead presidents
on an inner forearm

or tattoo an algorithm
across a lifeline.

Previously published in *Star*Line*

Commentary. Unfortunately most of us who teach confront academic dishonesty at some point. I have spent a great deal of time wondering what leads good students astray. In this poem, I shifted the blame toward a fictional figure, tempting students anxious about their grades (and their futures). As the poem hints, a little lapse can have enduring consequences.

ROBYN LANCE

exam room blues

in uniform rows eyes read black print
on pink test papers under white lights at night

unseeing, students study brick walls
brains strain for recall to know it all

pencil shavings curl question marks

shoulders shrug, necks stretch
wrists flick, jackboots kick desks

the taut thread of tension slackens
as a voice, devoid of colour, declares

time's up. pens down.

Commentary. As an academic skills adviser for an Australian university contracted to provide academic training at a Police Academy, I occasionally supervised exams. Many students are in a tertiary institution for the first time, are the first family member at university and are only there because of the strength of their desire to be 'coppers' and do their bit to help. Though eager to chase crooks and drive fast cars, the world of lectures, tutorials, essays and exams is daunting. It is an intense period of learning, under constant scrutiny, with strict deadlines and constant pressure to pass.

CHAPTER 10

SANDRA S. McRAE

Answers May Vary

You have three hours to complete the exam. Use as many pages as necessary and write neatly. Double space your work where appropriate. The use of electronic devices is not allowed. Silence all cell phones now. After turning in your exam, please help yourself to a cupcake and have a wonderful winter break.

1. If every year hippos kill more humans than sharks do, why hasn't anyone decided to eat them? Develop a recipe for a four-serving entrée using 2 cups of cubed hippo meat and a variety of Botswana herbs.
2. If the square root of pain is being wrong, what is the cosine of being annoying?
3. What was in that bite of sandwich you spit out at the picnic last summer? Use sensory details and describe the contents in the style of (a) Octavio Paz, (b) Christina Rossetti, and (c) Andre Codrescu. Punctuation optional.
4. Using inference, determine which is a more appropriate form of group expression at a Polish-Afghani wedding in Brooklyn: the hokey pokey, the chicken dance, the YMCA, or the Hora. Show your work.
5. Describe, in linear detail, the contents of your backpack, beginning with the crumbs at the bottom of the main compartment. Do not include candy wrappers.
6. Justify your life.
7. Using echolocation, identify a bountiful supply of miller moths above the river in the park in December. If you cannot complete this assignment successfully, hibernate.
8. On the provided 8½" × 11" piece of blue paper, draw a Venn diagram illustrating all the ways that we humans are different, all the ways that we are the same, and all the justifications we use to kill each other. Use no more than 3 circles and write in blood.

Good luck and watch the clock!

Previously published in *Pure Francis*

Commentary. I work in the Colorado Community College system, where students can earn associate (two-year) degrees in the arts and sciences, as well as certificates in various vocations. I think it's important to make learning fun. It was the week before finals when I put this on the projector screen. My students blanched. They were so relieved when I told them, 'today we're going to talk about parody.'

APRIL SELLEY

Professor's Anxiety Dreams

Here is one:
I am teaching a course that an American Literature professor can't fake.
This time, it is Calculus.
I am supposed to be giving a midterm.
Of course, I left the copies of the exam, which I inexplicably composed,
at home, along with the textbook and syllabus.
But, in this dream, I persevere.
'Even mathematicians need good oral communication skills,' I say.
'So you'll each present an oral report on what you've studied.'

Usually, there is no such triumph.
Before each new semester, I dream myself back in elementary or high school,
or college, where I haven't attended a required course.
It is always the last day.
The final paper is due or there's a final exam. Maybe both.

Or I'm back in graduate school, a week before Commencement,
and I haven't begun my dissertation.

But the most common are the dreams about the first day of a class I'm teaching.
I am not showered or dressed, still in bed.
I'm at my home,
at my parents' house two hundred miles away, or
in another country.
I don't have a car.
It is seventeen minutes past the time when the class
was supposed to have started.
The students have come and gone.

Or I'm on a strange campus.
I don't know which building and classroom are mine.
Then I am attacked by an alligator, or a vicious hybrid dog-snake,
or a possessed car, right out of Stephen King.
It's painful.

Or I do make it to class on time.
I have no syllabi, no handouts, no books, no notes,
no idea which course this is.
Or I do know which course,

but I can't see, or speak, or hear,
or even stay awake (even though this is a dream).

Or I can't read my notes.
I can't read English.
I've forgotten how to write words on the board.

There are walls and columns in the classroom
that keep moving, blocking my view of the students,
and blocking their view of a screen where I'm trying to show a DVD.
It is the wrong DVD, or it skips,
or I can't ultimately use it because the player has broken.

The students are resentful. They will not participate in
the Socratic method. They are silent.
Or they are hissing among themselves about my incompetence
and their disgust and hatred. I have lost all control of the classroom.

I wake up, and instead of being relieved, it occurs to me
that someday I will probably plunge into dementia.
Every waking and dreaming hour will be devoted to
the anxious seeking of books, notes, classrooms, lucidity, academic success—
all lost forever.

And then I'll die.

But only after one last dream.

I'm in front of a classroom. Again.
No books. No notes. And I can hardly speak.

But, this time, I have a perfect memory of everything I have ever read,
ever known. Every syllable of mine buoys my students into unbridled brilliance.
They are vibrating out of their seats with original ideas.
We do not notice the students from the next class,
massing and mumbling outside the door,
or hear the steady pounding of their professor,
who finally enters with an angry, 'Would you please leave?'

I lead my scholars into the bright campus air.
The grounds crew has gone softly away, taking their lawnmowers.
There are no airplanes overhead, no cars parking,
no mosquitos, no bees. The birds are listening.

Like Whitman, the students and I recline on the grass with our souls.
We are Emersonian transparent eyeballs,
attuned to, transfixed by, beautiful ideas.
We do not register time.

Then we are transformed
into stars, into constellations, into literature, into myth,
transposed into a perfect dream –
into every professor's
desired,
deserved,
divine
dream.

Commentary. Between terms is always the time when I am tortured by anxiety dreams. Just when I think that I have experienced every possible permutation of these dreams, I am amazed by my brain's endless creativity, especially when it comes to tormenting me. This poem has given me a chance to make something good out of something I dread.

CHAPTER 10

MARION DEUTSCHE COHEN

Triple Forte

She's teaching different equations again, or supposed to be. Smiling straight ahead, she reaches for her lecture notes. But she's brought the wrong book. Hard-covered, too wide, too thick, and instead of dense equations there are dense scales, arpeggios, chords. It's Beethoven piano sonatas she's brought. Book Two.

There is no piano in the room. If there were, she would not play. If she did, the students would not listen. One by one, they would tiptoe out, or maybe around.

Next class she'll bring the correct notebook. But at the end of the term the evaluations will read 'Not only can't she teach math, she can't play Beethoven.'

Or 'she doesn't want to teach math, all she wants is to show off how well she plays Beethoven.'

Or 'that wasn't a triple integral, there was triple-forte.'

And ultimately 'she lets the class dance all over her

'as she flips through these large pages'

'dark as a blackboard'

'in the key of tiny superfluous exponential e.'

Previously published in *Lights I Have Loved* (Red Dashboard Press, 2014)

Commentary. This poem comes from a dream I had, perhaps not so surprisingly a dream coming from a mathprof who also plays classical piano – moreover, a math prof who is sensitive about student evaluations.

MARION DEUTSCHE COHEN

Teaching Observation

'You spent twenty minutes telling them how wonderful it all is.'

I'm sorry.
It *is* wonderful how we can get around both the vertical line rule and the horizontal line rule
how the curve can flower, spiral, and cross itself again and again
how we can now make any pretty picture we want.
Yes, it is all very wonderful but okay, I promise, I won't ever again waste twenty minutes.
And thank you for letting me in on the big secret, how to get through the syllabus: by not telling them how wonderful it all is.

Previously published in *The American Mathematical Monthly* and in *Lights I Have Loved* (Red Dashboard Press, 2014)

Commentary. Teaching at a new university, I was observed by the department chair. When I spoke with him later that afternoon, his main criticism was 'You spent twenty minutes telling them how wonderful it all is.' He wanted me to be more time-efficient, something I'm usually quite good at but not that particular session. The course was first-semester calculus (at an institution where first-semester calculus included, in actuality, at least three semesters and then some – and where I felt that the students, despite being very bright in general, needed to be coddled math-wise – and told how wonderful it all is).

CHAPTER 10

REINHARD PEKRUN

Expert Commentary

The poems collected in this chapter highlight the stress-related, negative emotions that are typical for many achievement situations in higher education. Most of the poems directly target emotions such as anxiety, anger, despair, and resignation; S. McRae ('Answers May Vary') uses parody to tell a story about anxiety; and M. D. Cohen ('Teaching Observation') illustrates rules not to express positive emotions in classroom instruction. In contrast to scientific accounts of stress and emotions, which seek to analytically decompose emotions and to abstract from individual cases by constructing general principles, these poems provide rich, holistic descriptions of the individual phenomenology of emotional states. They bring to mind one's own memories of stress in taking exams or speaking in public, remind us of the diversity of individual emotional experience in these situations, and help us to understand the feelings of the protagonists even if we would not share them in the situation described. My comments relate to the commonalities among these poems; to the phenomenology of the emotions depicted in the poems; to their origins and effects; to emotions and socio-historical contexts that are not addressed in these poems; and to implications for higher education policy and practice.

Commonalities across Poems – Stress, Anxiety, and Despair

The majority of the poems focus on anxiety and other stress-related emotions. Common topics are students' fear of exams and professors' anxiety during teaching. Fear and anxiety are depicted most often, but a broad range of other negative emotions are addressed as well, such as hopelessness and disappointment when anticipating a failed career (J. Wesick), despair triggering unethical exam behaviors (N. Sloboda), or anger about the demands of a test (R. Lance). Relief is the only positive emotion that is described in several of the poems, such as relief when an exam is finished in the poems by R. Lance and S. McRae. Relief is an emotion that also is related to stress – relief is a tension-reducing emotion that is triggered when an aversive, stressful state ends or when an expected negative event does not occur (Sweeny & Vohs, 2012). University students' relief in achievement settings is closely associated with their negative stress-related emotions, including fear and anxiety (Pekrun, Goetz, Frenzel, Barchfeld, & Perry, 2011).

The poems' focus on anxiety and related emotions is in line with research findings documenting the frequency of negative achievement emotions in higher education. For example, in our exploratory studies with university students, we found that anxiety was the one emotion reported most often. Anxiety was reported not only in relation to taking tests and exams, but also with reference to attending class or studying at home (Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002). The convergence of evidence from these different sources – poems and scientific studies – reflects the

high-stakes nature of many settings at university and corroborates that it is important to investigate and alleviate students' anxiety.

Accordingly, since the inception of test anxiety research (Brown, 1938; Mandler & Sarason, 1952), researchers have focused on analyzing students' anxiety. More than 1,000 independent empirical studies on achievement anxiety have been published. These studies have generated cumulative empirical evidence on the development, origins, and effects of this devastating emotion in diverse student populations around the world. Perhaps most importantly, the evidence also shows that anxiety can be treated successfully. Cognitive-behavioral therapy has proven especially successful, because it targets both the cognitive and the affective components of anxiety. Overall, therapy for test anxiety is among the most successful therapies available today, with effect sizes in treatment intervention studies often being $d > 1$ (see Zeidner, 1998, 2014). As such, there may be more reason for educational optimism than suggested in the poem by S. Smallen, which depicts a teacher's failure to treat her students' writing anxiety.

Phenomenology of Emotions: Multiple Component Processes

Emotion researchers agree that emotions are complex phenomena that comprise multiple, interrelated component processes, including affective feelings, physiological activation or deactivation, emotional thoughts, and expressive behavior (Shuman & Scherer, 2014). The twelve poems render rich descriptions of all of these components. Emotional feelings are depicted using terms directly denoting feelings, such as anxiety, worry, and desperation. An example is the description of a professor's anxiety dreams as 'painful' in the poem by A. Selley. In addition, the authors use metaphorical language to capture feelings, which draws the reader into re-experiencing the situation described – an instance of emotional contagion (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994) by means of poetic language. For example, reading S. Smallen's description of writing anxiety as Winter lets readers freeze, thus allowing them to relive the deep despair caused by writing anxiety.

Other component processes of emotion are reflected as well. The poems provide descriptions of emotional thoughts involved in anxiety and despair, such as worries about lack of preparation, being too late, being on the wrong campus, not knowing the class to be taught, or not being able to speak or hear in a professor's dreams of teaching (A. Selley). Symptoms of physiological activation and deactivation are also described using direct as well as metaphoric language, such as the beads of sweat weeping from medical students' forehead (R. M. Berlin), the sinking feeling accompanying a student's anticipation of failure (J. Wesick), or the bodily tension during exams described in several of the poems. Finally, in S. McRae's commentary to her poem, she depicts how students blanched when reading supposed-to-be exam questions, which is an example of expressive behavior that signals sudden shock at receiving frightening information.

Origins and Effects of Emotions

The poems reflect the mechanisms triggering achievement emotions and shaping their effects on behavior and performance. Specifically, several of the poems render detailed descriptions of how failure, lack of control over performance, and perceived powerlessness can induce anxiety, despair, and resignation. In R. M. Berlin's poem 'The Hotseat,' students suffer from the powerlessness they experience when being challenged by their professor, who can 'crush careers with a word.' His poem 'Good Fathers' features the resignation that is triggered by recognizing having lost one's capabilities to skillfully perform medical procedures, and A. Selley's poem 'Professor's Anxiety Dreams' illustrates the devastating feelings of a professor who has 'lost all control of the classroom.' These accounts are consistent with scientific theories about the origins of emotions, such as the control-value theory of achievement emotions (Pekrun, 2006).

The control-value theory posits that achievement emotions are triggered when an individual feels in control over, or out of control of, achievement activities and outcomes that are subjectively important. For example, fear of failure is supposed to be aroused when a student anticipates lacking control over performance on an important exam, thus perceiving failure on the exam to be likely and harmful. If performance is under control and failure can be avoided, or if the student doesn't care about the exam, there is no need to be anxious. As such, the theory implies that two appraisals are essential for achievement emotions to be triggered – appraisals of control over success and failure, and appraisals of the value (importance) of success and failure. Throughout the poems, the authors provide vivid illustrations of appraisals of lack of control. Appraisals of value and importance are depicted as well, although in less direct ways. An example is a student's dreams of the valuable outcomes of a successful career, and the devastating consequences of a failed career, in J. Wesick's poem 'or Perish.'

Moreover, the poems provide accounts of the effects of achievement emotions on motivation and cognitive performance. Anxiety is described as generating strong motivation to achieve, to the extent that students 'stay awake all night to earn his [i.e., the professor's] love' (R. M. Berlin). However, anxiety is also depicted as triggering cognitive blockages and lack of concentration, as when students 'bump into things, dazed and startled' during the midterm week (T. Martin), or when 'brains strain for recall' that they seemingly cannot provide (R. Lance). Again, these accounts are in line with current research on achievement emotions. As described in the control-value theory (Pekrun, 2006), anxiety consumes working memory resources, thus reducing task-related concentration. At the same time, anxiety can trigger strong motivation to avoid failure by investing effort and can facilitate the use of rigid learning strategies such as simple rehearsal. Despite these variable effects on motivation and cognition, however, the overall effects of negative achievement emotions such as anxiety on students' performance, educational careers, and health are negative in most students

(Zeidner, 1998, 2014). Teachers' anxiety is likely to have similarly negative effects (Frenzel, 2014), although firm evidence on teacher anxiety in higher education is still lacking.

What is Left Out by These Poems?

The majority of the poems focus on negative emotions. There is a conspicuous lack of accounts of positive emotions throughout these poems, with few exceptions. As noted, the descriptions of negative emotions are consistent with the findings of research studies on university students' emotions in achievement settings. However, these studies have also shown that students experience not only negative achievement emotions but a broad range of positive emotions as well. Overall, in our exploratory research (Pekrun et al., 2002), positive emotions were reported no less frequently than negative emotions. Academic settings provide not only instances of failure but also of success. There is a wide range of positive emotions triggered by successful achievement activities, such as enjoyment of acquiring competencies during learning, hope for good grades, pride of having mastered an exam, or excitement about the prospects of a successful future career. These emotions are not represented well in the poems in this chapter.

To the extent that these poems are representative of poetic writings about higher education, the question arises how this discrepancy could be explained. One possibility is that authors prefer to focus on negative emotions because this promises more spectacular narratives, including dramatic outcomes such as poverty (J. Wesick) and death (A. Selley). However, there also may be more subtle reasons amenable to a psychological explanation. Specifically, psychological research has shown that 'bad is stronger than good' (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001), implying that negative events have more power over human functioning than positive events. To some extent, this also seems true for memory processes – negative events can trigger more elaborate thinking (Weiner, 1985) and may therefore be remembered better. From an evolutionary perspective, remembering negative events and how to cope with them may be especially adaptive for survival. As such, asymmetrical accounts of negative versus positive emotions may be due to evolutionary-based biases of human memory. These biases may also be operating on the memory of authors writing poems.

Another limitation is that the poems focus on achievement emotions triggered in situations that are considered important by the individual. Anxiety, panic, and despair about failures that are of existential importance to the individual are depicted in these poems. However, there is one negative achievement emotion that behaves differently – boredom. This is an inconspicuous emotion triggered in situations that lack meaning and value. Inconspicuousness may be the reason why boredom is not considered in these poems and has similarly been neglected by educational research (Goetz & Hall, 2014). Boredom may be as frequent in higher education as

anxiety, and the consequences of boredom for students' academic attainment may be even more dire (Pekrun, Goetz, Daniels, Stupnisky, & Perry, 2010; Pekrun, Goetz, Hall, & Perry, 2014; Tze, Daniels, & Klassen, 2016).

Furthermore, the poems describe individually referenced achievement emotions but do not address social achievement emotions. Social emotions such as admiration, compassion, gratitude, contempt, envy, or 'Schadenfreude'[1] in classroom interaction are likely to be important as well (for a broader discussion of different categories of academic emotions, including achievement, epistemic, topic, and social emotions, see Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012). Worldwide, higher education institutions provide incentive structures that promote competition between students as well as among faculty. By implication, universities and colleges are likely to be charged with competition-related achievement emotions that depend on one's position in achievement-contingent status hierarchies. These emotions can profoundly impact performance, career trajectories, and identity development.

Finally, the poems focus on the individual phenomenology of achievement emotions and their immediate causes and effects. As such, they do not reflect upon the broader socio-cultural and institutional context which shapes academic settings in ways that promote some achievement emotions and prevent others. A notable exception is the poem by M. D. Cohen, which depicts the frustration experienced by a professor in mathematics who was told by her department chair not to waste time by talking about the excitement stirred by topics in mathematics, thus attesting to institutional rules that undermine emotionally sound classroom instruction.

Implications for Higher Education Policy and Practice

The main message to policy-makers and practitioners in higher education conveyed by these poems, and corroborated by research, is simple: Make concerted efforts to shape institutional structures and classroom instruction such that negative achievement emotions are prevented and positive emotions are promoted (for exceptions to this rule, see Pekrun, 2014). Whereas emotions such as anxiety can facilitate some students' academic motivation and investment of effort, these potential benefits do not outweigh the disastrous consequences for the vast majority of students. Typically, these negative emotions entail reduced performance, high drop-out rates, truncated careers, and impaired health, which in turn incurs high costs for national economies and health systems alike.

There are multiple ways in which higher education institutions could contribute to reducing negative achievement emotions and promoting positive emotions. These include increasing the cognitive and motivational quality of teaching; considering failures as opportunities to learn rather than as indicators of inability; reducing competitive goal structures in favor of mastery-oriented and cooperative structures; and avoiding high-stakes testing wherever possible (Pekrun, 2014; Pekrun & Stephens, 2010; Zeidner, 1998). Shaping institutional structures and classroom instruction in these ways could contribute to breaking the vicious cycles

that transmit negative emotions from one academic generation to the next, as when medical residents suffering from the achievement pressure exerted by their professor start exerting the same pressure on their own students once they are allowed to teach (R. M. Berlin, 'The Hotseat'). In this way, institutional reform could help to promote an emotionally sound climate in universities and colleges, benefit performance, and facilitate healthy individual development in students and faculty alike.

NOTE

[1] Joy about another person's misfortune.

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