

Holding the Family Photo: Queer Tensions and Happy Objects on Teaching Practicum

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This presentation explores queer student teachers' experiences on professional practice placements through Sara Ahmed's (2010) concept of happy objects in *The Promise of Happiness*. Ahmed suggests that happiness is not only an emotion but a regulatory force that directs us toward socially sanctioned objects and ways of being. Within schooling, happiness is often tied to heteronormative ideals of family, love, and belonging, which are ideals that shape expectations of what a "good" teacher looks like.

Drawing on narrative accounts from our research, we focus on one participant's story about a family photo. Commonly seen as a "happy object," the photo becomes a site of tension: should it be displayed in the classroom, mentioned, or concealed? This moment reveals how the very objects that promise belonging can also expose queer vulnerability and risk.

By tracing how happiness operates as a form of regulation in practicum contexts, we consider how queer affect offers insight into the emotional and institutional boundaries of teaching. We conclude by suggesting that attending to these un/happy moments can help teacher education become more responsive to the complexity of queer lives and feelings within professional spaces.

Keywords: Queer student teachers | Happy objects | Heteronormativity | Queer affect | Teacher education
