Adolescents finding purpose: Comparing purpose and life satisfaction in the context of Singaporean and Israeli moral education

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ABSTRACT

Purpose is an intention over the long-term to have an effect on the world that is both meaningful to oneself and to others. What are schools doing to help students use the knowledge and skills they learn in school in their own lives and aspirations? This is the first study that compares adolescent purposes and life satisfaction in Singaporean and Israeli schools. Findings showed four purpose clusters for Singaporean adolescents: No Orientation, Self-focused, Other-focused, and both Self- and Other-focused. Israeli adolescents were in three purpose clusters: Self-focused, Other-focused, and Self- and Other-focused. The purpose groups differed on average life satisfaction in both countries: Self- and Other-focused were highest, followed by Self-focused and Other-focused. The No Orientation group in Singapore was lowest. Notably, beyond these differences between the groups, Israeli adolescents reported significantly higher life satisfaction in each purpose group. We discuss implications for schools and education policymakers.

When school reforms in many educational systems are driven by performance outcomes (Biesta, 2009), scholars argue we should ask more fundamental questions regarding what students make of school (Deng & Gopinathan, 2016). How do schools help students use their knowledge and skills in their own lives and aspirations (Noddings, 2006)?

This study explores the contextual differences in the relationship between purpose and life satisfaction among adolescents in Singapore and Israel: What are the comparative levels of youth purpose in Singapore and Israel? What is the relationship between youth purpose and life satisfaction among Singaporean and Israeli adolescents? This is the first study comparing Singapore and Israel as achieving education systems within different socio-cultural and socio-political contexts, with both small countries sharing common traits of self-reliance and determination to thrive despite prevailing vulnerabilities and global tensions (Freeman,

2015). This cross-national study helps educators understand how to prepare students for a future with uncertainties from polarization and instability exacerbating ethnic, political and rural–urban divides, which can have sobering implications for moral education (Dias & Menezes, 2014; Youniss, 2009).

Comparing the Singapore and Israeli contexts

In his visit to Israel in 2016, Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong noted that both Singapore and Israel are young nations that have integrated diverse groups to create a common sense of nationhood. Both were born in adverse circumstances that required determination to thrive. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu noted that 'both small nations … leave a very large imprint on the world scene' (Hussain, 2016). Israel has fought several wars to defend its right as a nation. Singapore has been largely at peace with its neighbors.

Demographics

Singapore has 5.5 million people, approximately 7648 people per square kilometer, comprising 76% Chinese, 15% Malay, 7% Indian, and 2% from other racial groups (Population & Population Structure, 2016). Prime Minister Lee wished Singapore to be 'blessed with a divine discontent. Always not quite satisfied with what we have, always driven to do better' and to 'have the wisdom to count our blessings, so that we know how precious Singapore is' (Lee, 2016). Individuals are focused on shared communitarian values of nation, family, community support, consensus, racial and religious harmony, and individuals are exhorted to rethink individual interests for the common good (Tan, 2012). Woo (2008) argues that youths' futures are geared towards credentialist and materialist goals.

Israel has 8.5 million people, 409 people per square kilometer, comprising nearly 75% Jewish Israelis, 20% Arab (mostly Muslim, with a Christian minority), and less than 5% non-Arab Christians or other religions or ethnic groups (e.g., Druzes) (Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, 2016). Israel's birth rate of 3.13 children per woman is the highest in the developed world (Bowers, 2014), so the Israeli population is relatively young with 28% of the population under age 14, compared to the OECD average of 18.5% and 13% in Singapore.

Educational achievements and reforms

Both Singapore and Israel regard education highly, and both have centralized Ministries of Education. Singaporean students are known as top achievers in international benchmark tests, whereas Israeli students' scores are relatively low, primarily attributed to relatively low GDP per capita and high proportion of school-age children (Feniger, Livneh, & Yogev, 2012). Yet, Israel is well known as a creative, innovative, 'start-up' nation with the 'highest number of scientists, technologists and engineers per capita in the world, and the third-highest number of patents per capita' (Hussain, 2016).

The Singaporean education system has undergone extensive reform to prepare students for success in the globalized economy, focusing on technical rationality that instills performativity and self-organization in response to targets, indicators, and evaluations (Ball, 2003; Tan, 2008). Israeli educational reforms address global shifts from teacher empowerment and school autonomy toward setting achievement standards to improve students'

performance on international benchmark tests in grades, 2, 5 and 8 (Feniger et al., 2012; Yogev, 2007, pp. 131–148).

Educational moral curricula

Singapore's national curriculum emphasizes teaching students to acquire particular competencies. In 2011, the Character and Citizenship Education framework launched initiatives in National Education, Co-curricular Activities and Civics and Moral Education. Moral education trains students in pragmatic values important for social cohesion and economic success, rather than for development of intrinsic commitment and habituation to moral practices, to support the centrality of social harmony (Tan & Chew, 2004; Tan & Wong, 2010). The misfit between moral philosophy and economic pragmatism may sacrifice intrinsic moral ideals (Tan & Chew, 2004). This education model promotes a passive citizenship, productive workforce, and loyal population rather than a critical and creative citizenry, political empowerment, or 'independent thought' (Han, 2009, p. 116).

The Israeli Ministry of Education also incorporates moral education into the core curriculum. The primary focus is on instilling in students the rules of proper behavior (e.g., reduce violence and increase tolerance), mental health (e.g., prevent substance abuse), and life skills. Programs like Mafteach Ha-lev ('The Key to the Heart'), Life Skills, and Israeli Tradition and Culture emphasize 'worthiness' through 'communitarian' ideals of adhering to the values of the social group, focusing on Jewish-Israeli tradition, values, and heritage (Sarid, 2012). The emphasis accords with moderate levels of individualism and strong family values (Schwarz et al., 2012), but differs from the 'moral judgment' approach based on a modernist Enlightenment view of the autonomous individual acting according to universal rational principles.

Thus, a comparison of Singapore and Israel provides an interesting comparison across two communitarian nations, but one emphasizes the individual as an economic agent contributing to national growth whereas the other emphasizes moderate individualism deemed worthy through community relations. Hence, there may be interesting implications stemming from the low levels of individualism in Singapore that produce a passive and conformist citizenry (Han, 2009), especially where Singapore desires to emulate Israel's entrepreneurial and technological acumen.

Youth purpose and life satisfaction

Damon's model of youth purpose

Damon (2008) argues that education is less about academic achievement and more about *why* students should care about what they learn. Noting student apathy and anxiety, he suggests that only when students find personal meaning do they apply their efforts with purpose and imagination. He proposes life purpose as a long-term, high-level and stable intention that is inclusive of one's search for meaning (Damon, 2008), which all young people are capable of discovering (Benson, 2008). But, it is imperative for students to engage the 'why' question of purpose in school because, for most students, the discovery of purpose may not happen on its own (Damon, 2008).

Importantly, Damon (2008) says, although a purpose is a personal pursuit, it aspires to contribute beyond self-benefit. Purpose could be considered a virtue that motivates and moderates a person's performances of other virtues (Han, 2015). US studies show youths with clear purpose are in the minority, with only about 25% stating their own life aim that motivates them toward contribution. Most youth show a precursor form of life aim in which meaning, future orientation, engagement, and/or a beyond-the-self orientation are missing (Damon, 2008; Moran, 2009). However, one study specifically focused on the beyond-the-self orientation dimension of purpose to cluster adolescents' long-term aims (Bronk & Finch, 2010). This study asked students to endorse life aims from a list, not to evaluate their own espoused life purpose. It found four clusters of students with no-orientation toward their life path (4.2%), only self-oriented like making money or personal success (22.2%), only other-oriented like helping others or improving the world (13.2%), or both self- and other-oriented (60.4%). Thus, US youth, at least in general, aim for life paths that will benefit both themselves and others.

Including benefits to others in one's life aim can be good for youths. Students with both self- and other-oriented long-term aims also had a clear academic purpose and clear ideas for what they wanted to do in life, and they reported the highest life satisfaction (Bronk & Finch, 2010). Other-oriented youths can integrate courage and sensitivity into human concerns, and they can develop their talents and make social contributions concurrently (Reilly, 2009). Other-oriented individuals integrate their more personal and specific social vision of the future and stronger sense of who they are to initiate activities helpful to others (Moran, 2009). Adolescents with a sense of purpose show higher levels of life satisfaction (Bronk, Hill, Lapsley, Talib, & Finch, 2009; Moran, 2009). Self-reported well-being has been studied in several countries (Diener & Diener, 1995; Diener, Suh, Smith, & Shao, 1995).

Youth purpose research in Singapore and Israel

There are no studies directly on youth purpose in Singapore, a gap that this study seeks to address. But there are some studies on positive youth development. Ang et al. (2009) show Singaporeans have significantly more academic stress arising from self-expectations and others' expectations than Canadians do. Lim, Chen, and Liang (2013) suggest that online activities may serve as social support against the pressures of high-stakes examinations, but online activities are also dictated by school assignments and homework.

In Israel, a study of Jewish and Arab adults investigating sources of meaning in life found relationships most important, and fewer differences across ethnic groups in young adults, due to modern globalization (Bar-Tur, Savaya, & Prager, 2001). Magen (1998) researched adolescents' happiness, commitment, purpose, and fulfillment and compared Israeli Jews, Israeli Arabs, and American Christians. She used a qualitative research paradigm, focusing on the types and degree of commitments to self and others, and intensity of experiences related to them. Magen's model attributes happiness primarily to commitment to one's own positive experiences, although prosocial commitment can also be a source of happiness.

The present study

As self-reported life satisfaction reflects societal and economic conditions (Oishi & Diener, 2014), we suggest that self-reported purpose and life satisfaction in school and life could

serve as fairly reliable indicators of the experiences of adolescents. Purpose aids life satisfaction as youths develop positive, motivating belief systems leading to higher self-efficacy and school achievement. However, happiness through hedonic pleasures differs from life satisfaction through meaningfulness, which includes using one's strengths to do something that benefits others (Magen, 1998). Thus, life satisfaction can support communitarian national goals. In Singapore and Israel, educational achievement is the more common metric in education research. However, self-reported life satisfaction can help educators and policymakers understand how well the curricula—including moral programs—are achieving policy aims as perceived and experienced by adolescents.

Method

Participants

Ethics approval was obtained from the respective universities. Public school students in mid-adolescence volunteered to participate in this study. Informed consent was obtained from participants and their parents, confidentiality was assured, and no incentives were offered.

These students were deemed sufficiently mature and reflective to provide a range of responses. In Singapore, 577 predominantly ethnic Chinese students aged 15 and 16 years old from two schools participated (46.6% female, 77.7% religious, 22.3% secular). In Israel, 190 predominantly ethnic Jewish students aged 14 to 18 years old participated (50% female; 73% secular, 27% religious). Sample ethnicity distribution is representative of mainstream education in each country.

Measures and procedures

Students completed the same two questionnaires used in Bronk and Finch (2010) so we could compare to US findings as well as between Singaporean and Israeli youth. Questionnaires were administered in one session in each school, not exceeding 20 minutes, with a researcher present to answer questions.

Life Goals Questionnaire

In response to the prompt, 'The purpose of my life is …' participants rated the same 17 items used by Bronk and Finch (2010) from Roberts and Robins (2000) on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). Items reflect serving one's own needs (e.g., make money, have fun, be successful) and prosocial interests (e.g., help others, serve God or a Higher Power, make the world a better place), plus some that do not indicate a clear orientation (e.g., do the right thing, fulfill my obligations).

Satisfaction with Life Scale

Five items, e.g., 'In most ways, my life is close to my ideal,' measure a global sense of life satisfaction on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree; α = .87) (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). Reliability in the present study was comparable (α = .868). Since this study focuses on students, we assessed the comprehensibility and validity of this measure through a content analysis of interviews with students and

teachers. This led to one item added to measure school satisfaction: 'I am satisfied with how I am doing in my school.' Adding single items relevant to a particular domain or situation is common with this measure (e.g., Cheung & Lucas, 2014). Including this item slightly increased reliability ($\alpha = .880$).

Data analyses

First, separately for each country, we conducted a two-step cluster analysis (SPSS, 2001) of the 17 life goals to identify possible groups of students using a hierarchical clustering approach that maximizes differences among clusters with model fit based on the lowest Bayesian Information Criterion statistic. We examined pattern of responses to label each cluster appropriately.

Second, we used chi-square tests to compare these clusters across countries.

Third, we used ANOVA to test these clusters for differences on life satisfaction. Where significant, we followed up with Fisher's Least Significant Difference (LSD) post hoc comparisons to test for group differences for the main effects.

Fourth, we performed correlations and two-step multiple regressions to explore the associations between purpose clusters and satisfaction with life in the two countries.

Findings

Clusters of purpose

Clusters were similar to Bronk and Finch's (2010) for both countries (see Figure 1). Four purpose clusters resulted for Singaporean adolescents. Self- and Other-focused had by far the highest prevalence, followed by Other-focused, then No Orientation, then Self-focused. Israeli adolescents produced only three purpose clusters. Self- and Other-focused also was by far the most prevalent with almost three out of five students in this group, followed by
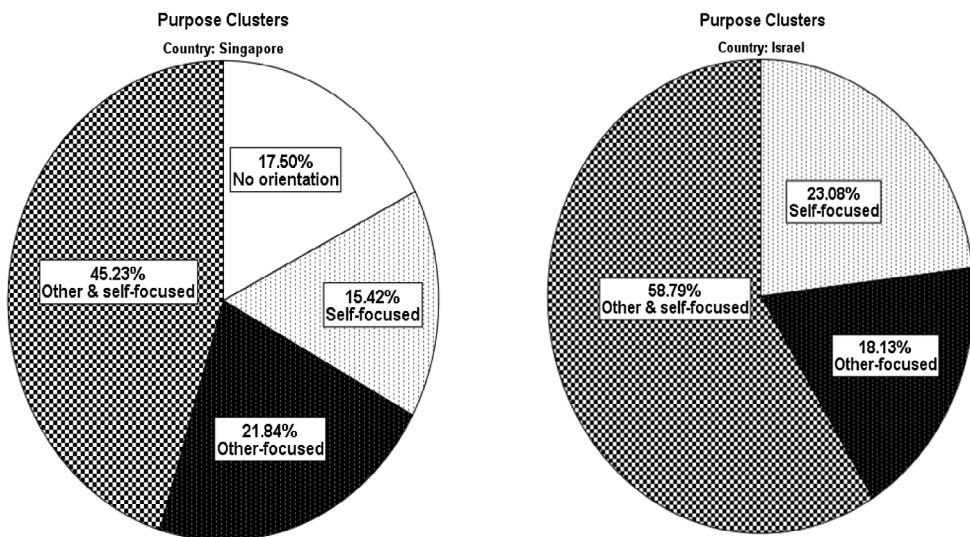

Figure 1. Purpose clusters by country. Singapore *N* = 577. Israel *N* = 187.

Self-focused, then Other-focused. The No Orientation cluster was excluded from further analyses because it included only three students.

Chi-square tests examined differences in relative group size on two dimensions, country (Israel and Singapore) and cluster membership, producing a significant interaction ($\chi^2_{(3)}$ = 42.89, $p < .0001$). Singapore included a No Orientation group, slightly larger Other-focused group, and notably smaller Self-focused and Self- and Other-focused groups than Israel. Comparing only across the Other-focused and Self-focused clusters, in particular, revealed a significant interaction effect with country ($\chi^2_{(1)}$ = 4.45, $p = .04$). Singapore had more Other-focused than Self-focused students (58% vs 42% respectively), and vice versa for Israeli students (44% vs 56% respectively). Singaporean students tend to focus on the others' needs, whereas Israeli students tend to focus on their own.

Life satisfaction based on clusters and country

A two-way univariate ANOVA on Satisfaction with Life scores with country and purpose cluster as factors revealed statistically significant main and interaction effects (see Figure 2). Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1. The main effect of country on life satisfaction, with country explaining about 13% of the variation, was that Israeli adolescents reported significantly higher life satisfaction than Singaporean adolescents ($F_{1, 689}$ = 102.39, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .13$).

There was also a main effect of purpose, with cluster membership explaining about 7% of variation in life purpose ($F_{3, 689}$ = 16.46, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .07$). For both countries, the Self- and Other-focused group had the highest level of life satisfaction followed by the Self-focused group and Other-focused group. The No Orientation group in Singapore had the lowest mean scores (see Figure 2). In Singapore, the Self- and Other-focused group scored 2.7 points higher than the Self-focused group ($p = .004$), 4.2 points higher than
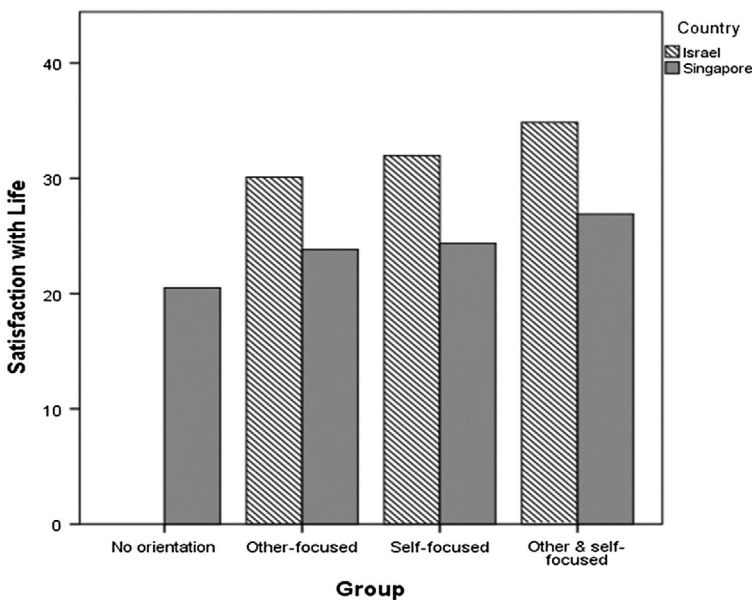

Figure 2. Students' life satisfaction by country and purpose group.

the Other-focused group ($p < .001$), and 7.2 points higher than the No Orientation group ($p < .001$). In Israel, the Self- and Other-focused group was 5.5 points higher than the Self-focused group and 7.3 points higher than the Other-focused group (both $p < .001$). However, in both countries, no statistically significant mean difference obtained between the Self-focused group and the Other-focused group: 1.47 in Singapore ($p = .17$) and 1.77 in Israel ($p = .35$).

No interaction effect resulted for cluster by country ($F_{3, 689} = .54, p = .58$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$). Singaporean students had consistently lower life satisfaction than Israeli students regardless of purpose orientation. Self-focused Singaporean students were 7.7 points lower than Israeli

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for life satisfaction by purpose cluster and country.

Cluster Group	Singapore ($N = 577$)				Israel ($N = 187$)			
	M	SD	Min	Max	M	SD	Min	Max
Overall	22.47	6.00	5	35	23.93	6.59	7	35
No Orientation	19.76	6.80	5	35				
Other- and Self-focused	24.31	5.60	5	35	25.55	6.24	8	35
Other-focused	21.30	5.26	6	32	21.97	7.02	7	35
Self-focused	21.84	5.50	9	35	21.33	5.95	8	35

Table 2. Bivariate correlations among study variables by country.

Variable	A	B	C	D
Singapore				
A. Other-focused purpose				
B. Self-focused purpose	−.23***			
C. Other- and Self-focused purpose	−.48***	−.39***		
D. Satisfaction with life	−.06	−.02	.25***	
Israel				
A. Other-focused purpose				
B. Self-focused purpose	−.26***			
C. Other- and Self-focused purpose	−.56***	−.65***		
D. Satisfaction with life	−.26***	−.13	.32***	

Note: Satisfaction with life is a continuous variable. Cluster variables are dichotomously coded: 1 if student is in the cluster, 0 otherwise.
***$p < .001$.

Table 3. Regression analysis results for life satisfaction predicted by purpose cluster and country.

Predictor	Unstandardized		Standardized
	B	s.e.	β
Model 1			
Intercept	20.50***	0.77	
Cluster: Other-focused	4.61***	0.98	0.23
Cluster: Self-focused	6.32***	1.023	0.29
Cluster: Other- and Self-focused	8.70***	0.87	0.53
Model 2			
Intercept	20.50***	0.70	
Cluster: Other-focused	3.05**	0.91	0.15
Cluster: Self-focused	3.88***	0.96	0.18
Cluster: Other- and Self-focused	6.52***	0.82	0.40
Country: Israel	7.53***	0.62	0.39

Note: Country: Israel is a dichotomous variable with value 1 for Israeli students and value 0 for Singaporean students.
**$p < .01$;
***$p < .001$.

students ($p < .001$). Other-focused were 6.3 points lower ($p < .001$), and Self-and-Other-focused were 7.9 points lower ($p < .001$).

Bivariate correlations (see Table 2) and two-step multiple regression (see Table 3) using continuous life satisfaction and dichotomous cluster membership correspond to the ANOVA findings when unstandardized regression coefficients are used. Purpose orientation on its own explained 12.8% of variance in satisfaction with life, with the standardized effect size of the Self- and Other-focused purposes nearly double that of the other categories. Then adding country improved the proportion of variance explained to 14.4% and showed a positive effect for Israeli students (standardized $\beta = .39$, $p < .001$).

Discussion

Prevalence of life purpose orientations

Our findings with Singaporean and Israeli adolescents are similar to studies in the US using the same life goals list measure and clustering procedure (Bronk et al., 2009): Self- and Other-focused youth are the most prevalent, and youths with no clear purpose are in the minority. However, our findings diverge from US studies on clusters based on qualitative coding of youths' own espoused life purposes (Damon, 2008; Moran, 2009), where youth without purpose are more prevalent.

Similar to Bronk and Finch's (2010) 4.2% of youth with no orientation for their future goals, only 1.57% of Israeli youth did not show clear purpose. However, there is concern that 18% of Singaporean students showed no clear purpose. Bronk and Finch (2010) argue that present purposelessness may only mean purpose has yet to be found and may not be inevitable.

However, some explanation of purposelessness may lie in how Singapore's pragmatic socialization of adolescents neglects personal moral development (Tan & Wong, 2010). Perhaps where adolescents are expected to align their interests towards a pragmatic economic focus, passivity may correspond to lack of agentic purpose. This pragmatic focus 'is a great deal to have to take on, and a huge amount of responsibility and expectations to place on young shoulders' (Han, 2009, p. 117). Perhaps crumbling under this weight, some Singaporean adolescents give up personal long-term aims.

While Singaporean education earns high rankings in international education indicators, educational scholars note social, cultural, and institutional contexts are often missing from the discussion (Deng & Gopinathan, 2016). Means-end models of education driven by measurement and high-stakes examinations scores often engender cynicism among students, and more can be done for students to engage in deeper questions concerning relevance and purpose of their school and life experiences (Eisner, 2005). Schools can help students search for purpose.

In addition, this study revealed a lower percentage of self-focused than other-focused students in Singapore and vice versa in Israel. One possible explanation may lie in how communitarianism is conceived in the two countries. The low individualism focus of Singapore's communitarianism contrasts with the high community and moderate individualism focus of Israel's *worthiness* communitarianism. Singapore's socialization inculcates a personal competitive ethos, valorizing self-reliance even while emphasizing the need to care for others. These contradictory self-preservation and care-for-others discourses may produce

moral and cognitive dissonances, and the mentality of *kiasu* (Singaporean Chinese term meaning 'scared to lose') becomes a negative consequence. *Kiasu* leads to 'the stranglehold that the ideology of achievement features in the lives of youth in Singapore,' where 'scoring well in tests and assuming the identity of a model student seemed to be all-consuming' (Lee, 2009, p. 23).

Life satisfaction

Life satisfaction has important implications for the pursuit of the 'good life' (Magen, 1998). It relates to character strengths and virtues like hope, love, gratitude, and zest, and it can mediate the negative effects of stress and the development of psychological disorders (Proctor, Linley, & Maltby, 2009).

The prevailing academic achievement narrative for Singaporean adolescents corresponds with lower school and life satisfaction scores in all purpose groups. The relatively low-stakes mandatory state tests introduced in Israel in 2002 have unintended negative impact on schools similar to those reported in Singapore and other countries with more high-stakes tests (Feniger, Israeli, & Yehuda, 2016). However, the country differences in life satisfaction suggest some consequences might be less negative in Israel than in Singapore. Future studies might further explore this explanation.

Higher life satisfaction of Israeli adolescents may be attributed to the wider options for academic and professional success in Israel, which is not entirely determined by exam scores. Before the two to three years of military service obligatory for both genders, Israeli students take comprehensive aptitude tests to match military responsibilities and training to their ability and potential. Plus, Israeli students can take achievement tests in their twenties, after completing military service. Israeli national service provides high-quality, well-fitted training and competencies that open opportunities for future success, including those without a higher education qualification.

The role of moral and purpose-focused education: Ideas for further research

Educational reform and innovation in Singapore and Israel share a focus on the holistic development of students beyond academics to prepare students for the uncertainties of future challenges. However, our study suggests that these educational systems need to help students become aware of other-oriented goals in addition to self-oriented goals. An important start, as this study shows, is to understand what students make of their present school experiences. We recommend further qualitative investigations that can provide rich insights into students' subjective perspectives.

Singapore's Civics and Moral Education curriculum is based on acquiring knowledge rather than on participation (Sfard, 1998). Instilling moral values and citizenship competencies and skills may create 'good citizens' without democratic empowerment, which may also be detrimental to the development of the critical and creative professional in the future workplace (Han, 2009). Reproduction of 'correct' values and attitudes may not equip students with moral and intellectual autonomy and judgment to make decisions and negotiate the complexities of globalization. Thus, Singapore's Character and Citizenship Education framework may not accommodate the goals to optimize life satisfaction (Han, 2009).

Contrasting Singapore's civic republican communitarianism aimed toward nation building through economic growth, a Kantian notion of cosmopolitan communitarianism suggests that cultural differences plus commonalities of values (Olssen, 2010) may contribute to 'global belonging, involvement and responsibility' that integrates global and communitarian concerns 'into everyday life practices' (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 184). This broader conception of communitarianism shares more with Israel's 'worthiness' communitarianism (Sarid, 2012).

Furthermore, school-based programs such as the Community Involvement Programme in Singapore are based on rigorous service hours, service points, and documented evidence of learning through reflection worksheets. Although accountability measures are well-intentioned, individuals subjected to regimes of stress and pressure to excel (Ball, 2003) may find the standards insurmountable and give up (Solomon & Lewin, 2016). Singapore's materialist and credentialist focus and culture of performativity come at the cost of a life constantly busy and stressful (Woo, 2008). A careful re-examination of school-based community service projects for the learning of values is called for so that such projects can help instill other-orientation, empowerment, and meaningfulness to develop moral and ethical values.

Educational implications

This study highlights the need for teachers, schools, and educational decision-makers to think deeply about curricula that are important, meaningful, and personally relevant to students. We offer the following considerations.

First, Bildung (education/formation) in the German Didaktik tradition emphasizes self-formation, encompassing the development of intellectual and moral powers as well as the cultivation of sensibility, self-awareness, liberty and freedom, responsibility and dignity (Hopmann, 2007). The teacher's task is to 'interpret content in a context-specific way that gives each student the opportunity to experience meaning, by revealing the object and subjective sides of educational content' (Willbergh, 2015, p. 346). Bildung combines beyond-the-self aims with self-determination to engender a sense of student purpose (Klafki, 2000).

Second, purpose is a form of morality, although not all purposes produce virtuous acts in every situation (Han, 2015). Recent political and economic uncertainties and their ramifications call for schools to help students make sense of what is right or wrong as they think about their relationship with the larger community. For example, teachers and parents could talk to students about the values of unity and respect for people's differences, and help students develop skills in speaking openly but respectfully about issues of injustice.

Third, there is a need to understand young people's hopes and fears for the future. Consistent with our findings, Hutchinson (1998) argues that social imagination about the future is characterized by fatalism and short-sightedness. A cross-disciplinary futures curriculum could help students deal with complex issues, develop critical social thinking, and challenge youth to seek opportunities for the future (Hutchinson, 1998). There is not only the need to engender adolescents with a sense of purpose, but more importantly to help students consider purpose in relation to larger social issues such as structural unemployment, widening income gap, and the perception that globalization only benefits the elite (Amaldas, 2009).

Purpose research needs to explore how adolescents' search for purpose affects their values and dispositions. Adolescents' purposes not only concern individuals but also groups

sharing similar values. This study contributes to understanding how adolescents perceive purpose in relation to the contexts of their lives. Beyond the rhetoric of moral education and twenty-first century skills, schooling should be an experience that 'isn't something you consume. Education is about an experience at school that speaks to students as human beings to guide them in addressing the important questions of life' (Deresiewicz, 2014, p. 69). Conceived in moral terms, the purpose of life is ultimately the life of purpose—one that education should aim to help individuals find and pursue.

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Notes on contributors

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