

Nettle does not have polemical aims. In *Happiness: The Science Behind Your Smile*, he surveys the findings of empirical work on happiness, and then comments on them. These findings tell us that most people, even those in poor countries, regard themselves as more happy than not, but very few say they are completely happy. When it comes to satisfaction with income and material possessions, what matters to most people is how they compare with those around them. Both positive and negative changes in people's lives change their degree of happiness, as one would expect—but then they revert to former levels of happiness after a time.

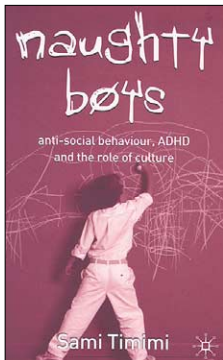
To these scientific confirmations of common-sense observation, Nettle adds some slightly less familiar ones: that on the whole people are rather poor judges about what will make them happy, and how to get it; and they may need training to enable them to do the things that will bring them satisfaction. He also points out—quoting Shaw's *Man and Superman*—that, in fact, no one would really like to be unrelievedly happy for a whole lifetime; that is the message of Huxley's *Brave New World* too. For happiness on those terms would deprive one of other worthwhile things: effort, challenge, striving, achievement—most of all, of “flow”, the state where one meets high

challenges with “skills sufficient to match them”—a state that consists in fulfilling and absorbing experiences.

“Since total happiness is a mirage”, Nettle observes, “we may as well attempt to broaden our holding in the other stocks that make up good human life, such as purpose, community, solidarity, truth, justice, beauty”. This, surely, is right; and although it is not so far distant from what Layard has in mind, it does not confuse happiness with things it is not, but which might—and often does—nevertheless bring it in their wakes.

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Naughty Boys: Anti-Social Behaviour, ADHD and the Role of Culture

Sami Timimi. Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. Pp 272. £17.99. ISBN 1-4039-4511-X.



Moolaadé

A film by Ousmane Sembene. Senegal, 2004. On release in the UK from June 3, 2005, at the Renoir, the National Film Theatre, and the Ritzy, London, and then selected cinemas in the UK. An Artificial Eye Release.

In brief

Book The drugs don't work?

What do you do when your child misbehaves? These days such behaviour often seems to be met with the swift application of a label: special educational needs, autistic spectrum disorder, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) are diagnoses growing in popularity and infamy. And if you don't think that ADHD is controversial, you need to get hold of *Naughty Boys* with a Ritalin-endowed urgency.

“This is not an anti-psychiatry book, but it is critical”, is a glorious understatement. Free-market economies, drug companies, and the medical establishment come under fire for allowing a situation where so many children are prescribed stimulant drugs. But this is no skewed tabloid journalism, the balance and logic of the case presented is impeccable. Given the weight of the argument Timimi so effortlessly wields, I was left wondering why he claims to be in a minority of doctors questioning the treatment and legitimacy of ADHD.

However, this book is not solely about ADHD and Timimi offers a

fascinating skip through the history of parenting and childhood. Astute comparisons of contemporary western ideas to Middle-Eastern, Asian, African, and aboriginal practices suggest that just because the west is richer doesn't mean it knows more about effective parenting. Hence the raison d'être of *Naughty Boys* is to force us to question whether by playing the powerful expert, doctors are stripping parents of their innate abilities and blaming children for not living up to impossible cultural expectations.

Timimi bravely presents the alternative ways in which he deals with families with “ADHD children”. Such refreshing transparency is rare and admirable, but entirely necessary. All health-care professionals would do well to examine not only their patients, but their own practice—our actions extend from internal agendas and values, and these are often as much in need of a thorough audit as the treatment protocol for ADHD.

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Film FGM in the frame

African film makers have tended to avoid the issue of female circumcision, skittish of a subject so controversial. The award-winning *Moolaadé* puts an end to this trend and argues forcefully against what director Ousmane Sembene terms “a violation of the woman's dignity and integrity”.

Proponents of this practice contend that it is of inviolable cultural significance. *Moolaadé's* heroine, Collé, challenges these values. She offers protection to four girls fleeing the “purification” ceremony. The tradition of protection (*Moolaadé*) is entrenched in the unnamed African village, and Collé maintains it even when tribal elders burn all the women's radios and her husband flogs her in public. The film's position is unambiguous: female circumcision demeans and endangers; it is time for Africa to jettison this particular tradition. Sembene keeps the crucial distinction between soapbox and cinema firmly in mind; *Moolaadé* works—an energetic and warm film.

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