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Bullying affects: the affective violence and moral orders of school bullying

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ABSTRACT
Second paradigm school bullying scholars are challenging the reliance on psychological and behavioural paradigms both in Australia and globally. Approaching bullying as 'social violence' has enabled previously underexplored social and cultural dimensions to receive much-needed focus. Bourdieu's 'symbolic violence' offers an avenue to explore the moral and affective dimensions of school bullying as 'social violence', yet it contains a controversial complicity dynamic that must not be overlooked. This paper considers three narratives of teacher-to-student bullying gathered through interviews and focus groups with 11 young people 17–20 years of age enrolled in secondary education in South Australia. Through these narratives, we reimagine symbolic violence as 'affective violence' where complicity is attributed to the institutional and social dynamics. This approach focuses away from discourses of individual responsibility reinforced by the first paradigm of school bullying and identifies the institutional and social origins of harm.

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Introduction

In Australia, school bullying policy is dominated by psychological and behaviouralist paradigms (DE, 2019; EC, 2020; CESE, 2017), relying on Olweus (1993) definition emphasising intent, power and repetition. Australia is also home to internationally recognised anti-bullying programs, including PEACE Pack (Guarini et al., 2020) and Friendly Schools (Cross et al., 2019). There are problems with comparing international research on this complex issue (Volk et al., 2017; Zych et al., 2017), however, there have been concerns that international bullying policy has made questionable long-term reductions (Ellwood & Davies, 2014; UNESCO, 2019; Walton, 2011). While there is a decreasing trend in physical attacks globally, there is an increase in cyber-bullying (UNESCO, 2018). Furthermore, there have been reported increases in bullying in some jurisdictions in South Australia (Department for Education, 2019) and a recent finding of counterproductive results in anti-bullying programs (Cross et al., 2019).

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The 'second paradigm' (Schott & Søndergaard, 2014, p. 31; Yoneyama, 2015, p. 1) of school bullying considers the social, cultural and ethical dynamics, as well as the moral and affective hierarchies that contribute to bullying in schools. This perspective has been described as approaching bullying within a broad category of 'social violence' (Schott, 2014b, p. 27), including conceptualisations drawing on 'symbolic violence' (Brown & Munn, 2008, p. 227; Meyer, 2014, p. 226; Nilan et al., 2015, p. 4; Schott, 2014a, p. 226). Bourdieu's 'symbolic violence' offers a framework to explore the social dynamics of harm in bullying, however, symbolic violence contains a controversial idea that victims are complicit in their violation because they participate in the construction of their place in the social world (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 38). In this paper, we argue that symbolic violence offers an avenue to conceptualise harmful affective experiences in school bullying that are justified through relative moral hierarchies. Furthermore, we argue that exploring the affective dynamics of school bullying as 'affective violence' (Threadgold, 2020, p. 106) provides needed insights into the institutional and social origins of harm, within which the unconscionable individual conduct of teachers bullying students takes place. This structural and systemic critique does not absolve adults of responsibility and professional obligation to care for students, but rather provides insights into the additional harm connected to institutions.

Affect is theorised in numerous ways, with a veritable industry around how to define it. In this article we are taking a social-cultural understanding of affect influenced particularly by Sarah Ahmed's (2004: 117) 'affective economy' as a way of thinking about how 'emotions work to align some subjects with some others and against other others' (Ahmed, 2004, p. 117). Emotions in this sense are not 'owned' by individuals, they flow between bodies, things, meanings, histories and so on. This way of thinking counters traditional understandings where emotions are 'individual' or 'private' concerns, or that they originate 'inside' individuals and then flow away towards other bodies and things. In this sense, our contribution is itself a theorisation of the social contexts and institutionalised hierarchies that mediate the production and dissemination of affects.

Investigating the systemic origins of school bullying, in contrast to the dominant behaviouralist model, provides the opportunity to examine the issues of the individual complicity dynamic in symbolic violence. We focus on the experiences of *teacher-to-student bullying*, which reflects institutional relations similar to Bourdieu and Wacquant's (1992) description of the oppressor and oppressed arrangement in symbolic violence. However, we argue that the complicity of a student in this context is empirically and intuitively questionable as it positions the student as passively compliant. There are few possibilities for students to escape bullying from a teacher without seriously transgressing doxic norms that are likely to result in further censure, not to mention young people are legally required to attend school until 17 years of age in Australia (ACARA 2011).

We begin by introducing school bullying as 'social violence' (Schott, 2014b, p. 37), and the scholarship that attempts to move beyond 'counter-productive discourses of responsibility and blame' (Herne, 2016, p. 254). This literature explores how schools are infused with affective experiences often justified by relative moral orders and institutionally produced hierarchies, including the teacher-student hierarchy. In this paper, we employ 'moral' orders and hierarchies not to pronounce judgement on what is right and wrong, but rather to describe the contextual rationales produced through the contest over how bullying is justified.

Before analysing three narratives of teacher-student bullying, we outline the project methods and analytical approach. We borrow from Bourdieu's symbolic violence to conceptualise the experience of bullying as 'affective violence' as it leaves 'emotional cuts and bruises' (Threadgold, 2020, p. 24) on young people. We argue individual complicity, or even passive compliance, is an inappropriate positioning of the young people's agentic potential in these situations. Instead, we argue for understanding the institutional context and systemic origins of bullying. Our analysis of school bullying in this paper contributes to the challenges offered by the second paradigm to the overemphasis on individual agency (victim, perpetrator or bystander) in the 'first paradigm' (Schott & Søndergaard, 2014, p. 31; Yoneyama, 2015, p. 2). The paper also contributes to the theorisation of young people's complicity in violence as reimagined through affective violence.

School bullying as social violence

Olweus (1993) definition of school bullying has been instrumental in characterising and constraining it to a behavioural and psychological issue, just as psychology is the hegemonic paradigm in most pedagogical practices (Robinson & Davies, 2008). The volumes of bullying literature published since – some 5000 articles published in six years prior to 2017 (Volk et al., 2017) - offer various critiques and clarifications to Olweus' emphasis on intention to harm (Sercombe & Donnelly, 2013), power imbalance (Horton, 2020; Jacobson, 2007) and repetition (Ey et al., 2019; Maunder & Crafter, 2018; Naylor et al., 2006), including claims that it lacks a sufficient evidence base (Volk et al., 2014). Olweus' emphasis on dyadic-triadic (victim-perpetrator-bystander) (Horton, 2020; Jacobson, 2007) conceptualisations of bullying constrain the phenomenon's scope to the actions and characteristics of individuals *in situ*, thereby excluding consideration of the social and moral systems in which bullying takes place. Psychological approaches to school bullying tend to emphasise risk and resilience profiles (Brighi et al., 2019; Payne & Hutzell, 2017) and pathologise bullying behaviour (Bansel et al., 2009; Davies, 2011). The more recent 'second paradigm' (Schott & Søndergaard, 2014; Thornberg, 2018; Yoneyama, 2015) literature on the social and cultural dynamics of school bullying reveals the complex interplay of multiple hierarchies that are integral features of contemporary schools.

In the second paradigm, the scope of the investigation is significantly expanded to include 'individual aggression, social violence or dysfunctional groups' (Schott, 2014b, p. 37) with scholars from across education, philosophy and sociology (Yoneyama, 2015). The breadth of the paradigm includes examining social exclusion, moral orders, belonging and school cultures in school bullying (Horton, 2020; Schott, 2014a). Critically important among these previously unexamined elements of bullying include exposing the implicit moral language.

> To say that someone has been bullying is to name them as guilty of wrongdoing. It is to name them as a certain kind of morally reprehensible person, 'a bully'
>
> *(Sercombe & Donnelly, 2013, p. 492).*

In contemporary popular discourses, bullies are stereotyped as moral and social outcasts. They are students who cannot navigate a peer group's social and moral nuances and revert to deviant behaviour to assert personal agency. Examining the contextual relativity

of the moral orders in schools, Yoneyama and Naito (2003, p. 326) argue that 'bullying can also be a "normal" behaviour of "non-problem" students'. Like asylums, prisons and the military, schools are social institutions with clear roles and hierarchical authoritarian relations central to how they operate (Yoneyama & Naito, 2003). As such, there are forms of bullying, or 'institutionalized violence' (Yoneyama, 2015, p. 129), in schools that are socially or morally endorsed.

There is a small, but growing, body of literature on teachers bullying students. In a scoping review, Gusfre et al. (2022) found that from 20 identified studies '0.6 to almost 90%' (p. 3) of students reported being bullied by a teacher. In another study, 45% of participating teachers admitted bullying students (Twemlow et al., 2006). This literature offers important descriptions of the types of teachers who bully – the 'sadistic bully' and the 'bully victim' (Twemlow et al., 2006) - and how they can unintentionally bully (Fromuth et al., 2015; Sylvester, 2011), as well as the personal influences on teachers' classroom management techniques (Allen, 2010), and the intensified impact of teachers bullying on students (Datta et al., 2017; Twemlow et al., 2006). However, this literature predominantly focuses on the individuals (teacher and student), and in contrast, this paper focuses on the institutional and social dynamics of bullying without devolving the individual of responsibility.

Social violence (Schott, 2014b) is an 'umbrella term' (Joelsson & Bruno, 2020, p. 3; Lunneblad et al., 2019, p. 65) employed to capture previously siloed harmful experiences in schools such as relationship violence, bullying and coercive control (Joelsson & Bruno, 2020; Milnes et al., 2021). 'Bullying' and 'violence' are often used interchangeably in school research, causing theoretical and international comparative issues (Benbenishty & Astor, 2012). In Nordic countries, violence and conflict in school tend to be conceptualised as bullying (Lunneblad et al., 2019). In North America, bullying has been associated with sexual and domestic violence, while in South America, there is no clear distinction between bullying and 'war, political repression and underdevelopment' (Schott, 2014b, p. 33). In France, bullying is defined by the Penal Code as 'acts of violence' (p. 31), while in Germany, bullying is associated with youth violence and crime.

There have been calls for greater clarity and distinction between bullying and violence (Benbenishty & Astor, 2012). Conversely, others advocate for reconceptualising the 'complex reality' (Schott, 2014b, p. 37) of the association between bullying and violence to 'foster new perspectives on bullying' (p. 38). In this paper, we approach bullying not as a separate or quantifiably different social issue but as part of a set of harmful practices (Joelsson & Bruno, 2020; Rawlings, 2019; Sercombe & Donnelly, 2013). The approach has been adopted to challenge the Australian educational policy context in which bullying is narrowly and predominantly pursued through Olweus' individualising and pathologizing lens (Rawlings, 2019). Nevertheless, within the second paradigm of school bullying, 'violence' remains poorly defined from a sociological perspective. Furthermore, within the broader literature on 'school violence' (Brown & Munn, 2008, p. 226), two diverging approaches emphasise narrow and broad definitions of violence.

The sociology of violence offers various frameworks including examining micro-social dynamics (Collins, 2008), subjective positions of the perpetrators (Wieviorka, 2005), as well as the structural (Galtung, 1969) and systemic (Zizek, 2008) origins. As in the school violence literature, the scope of violence is debated, with some advocating a narrow focus on physical force (Collins, 2008; Walby et al., 2014) and others arguing for prioritising

experiences of violation (Berdayes & Murphy, 2016; Galtung, 1969, 1990). Likewise, there is disagreement over Bourdieu's employment of violence, with some arguing that his symbolic violence 'is not violence at all but a form of hegemonic socialisation' (Malešević, 2010, p. 242), while Bourdieu insists it is not 'purely "spiritual"', but 'real, actual' violence (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 34). We adopt the broad approach that violence is an experience of violation and acknowledge that this leaves many further issues around who and what is violated or does the violating (Lohmeyer, 2020).

Bullying affects

Buried in the 'obscurities of the schemata of habitus', Bourdieu argues symbolic violence is a product of 'mis-cognition that lies beyond-or beneath-the controls of consciousness' (Threadgold, 2020, p. 172), resulting in the dominated accepting their subordinate place in the social world (Bourdieu, 2001). In this sense, Bourdieu describes the victim as 'complicit' in their violation (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 167). Victim complicity to violence is controversial (for a debate on the issue, see Lohmeyer, 2021), and as such, has been rejected by some scholars (Walby et al., 2014). Yet the misrecognition of violence within teacher-student bullying (Rawlings, 2021) suggests a relational dynamic similar to Bourdieu's complicity in symbolic violence. The emotional responses the students feel in their narratives below – fleeing a room, feeling like they should have called the cops, being embarrassed and the like – leave marks that affect future practice. Those who experience symbolic violence, especially repeated experiences, can be left avoiding specific social circumstances and 'refuse what one is refused' because 'that's not for the likes of us' (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471).

The 'doxic' norms or 'what goes without saying' (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 170) within schools construct moral hierarchies that operate as the affective background (Threadgold, 2020). This is important for how we are treating 'morals' in this paper. We are not making claims of right and wrong – although we are pointing out the denigrating consequences of bullying – as morals are always relational. Actors in the same situations may have different morals or values, but those with the most symbolic power in any situation get to 'make' the morals. In the narratives we provide below, morals are essentially being struggled over through the judgments being made and the censures being given. Judgements of worth, value and legitimacy occur in a moral economy (see Ahmed, 2010, pp. 33–34; Sayer, 2005). These affective relations of everyday life are the moments when class relations are inhabited. These moments are not simply instances of economic struggle but are a contest 'against unjustifiable judgment and authority and for dignified relationality ... struggle [is] at the very core of ontology, demonstrating how the denigrated defend and make their lives liveable' (Skeggs & Loveday, 2012, p. 472).

Yoneyama (2015) argues, within a Japanese context, that the affects of bullying are not simply individual harm, but there can be a 'collective feeling of exaltation' (p. 140) among a group of students during a moment of bullying. The 'collective emotional high' is called 'nori' and is the basis for moral order in the group. The cultural distinctions between Japanese and Australian schools are apparent, and we do not intend to draw simplistic parallels across these cultural boundaries. Yoneyama (2001) described 'ijime' (bullying) as a product of 'over-conformity'

(p. 166) in Japanese schools, where compliance and control are deeply embedded in a hierarchical schooling culture that is not the same in Australia. Yet, similar dynamics can be witnessed across these contexts (Benbenishty & Astor, 2012) and are visible in the participant narratives in this paper. Among these relevant dynamics is Yoneyama's (2015) description of students and teachers who can instigate, sustain and increase nori. The group celebrates these individuals, and bullying can become a relative moral action if it contributes to a group's emotional high. In contrast, anyone who opposes the production of the emotional high, even through reference to more generally held moral virtues, such as human rights or individual dignity, is 'hated' (p. 19) by the group and is deemed 'immoral' (p. 18). These techniques for manipulating the emotional high, employing moral justifications and entertaining the group are also learnt, adopted, and co-opted within the student-teacher hierarchy.

Complicity and affective violence

Complicity or 'collaboration' (von Holdt, 2013, p. 115) is a core component of Bourdieu's articulation of symbolic violence: 'symbolic power cannot be exercised without the contribution of those who undergo it and who only undergo it because they construct it as such' (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 40). Bourdieu (2000) describes a collusio where those practicing in a field work towards its rewards even if they struggle against each other. Overall, this works well in terms of understanding how struggles over capitals and orientation towards illusio confer to mediate practice and produce hierarchies in any given field. Nevertheless, in terms of more specific everyday situations, especially where some actors have no agency as to whether they want to be there or not, we argue that 'complicity' in Bourdieu's schema overemphasises the victim's autonomy in the situations where they experience denigration. For instance, while students may be investing in the illusio of the education system at various levels of intensity and success, it is against the law for them to completely opt out until 17 years of age (ACARA 2011). By calling someone complicit, the implied collusion suggests an avenue to opt out.

In the cases we examine below, teachers are bullying students. While the victims in the narratives below are involved and even participate in the situations in which they experience violence, complicity is an ill-fit for someone who cannot escape without encountering other significant censures. Instead, we argue, in line with Saltmarsh (2008), that '*[i]nstitutional and social discourses* that normalise and reproduce hierarchies of status and worth are *complicit* in the symbolic and material production of violence' (p.113) (emphasis added). We reimagine symbolic violence as affective violence where complicity is attributed to the institutional and social dynamics.

Perhaps the problem of complicity lies in attempting to attribute cause and effect when employing a scholarly tradition that conceptualises social objects as relational and meant to be 'just a conceptual device' (Bessant et al., 2019, p. 7). However, Bourdieu (2001) asserts that symbolic violence is 'real, actual' (p.34) violence. To address the ethical issue of victim blaming, we argue that affective violence can draw focus away from individual agency and towards the systemic, structural and institutional origins of violence. Affective violence, employed without individual complicity, describes the

emotional harm victims of bullying experience because of the doxic affective orders in schools.

Extended listening to bullying narratives

This paper explores three narratives from young people bullied by a teacher. These stories were from a pilot project on school bullying in Secondary Schools in 2020 in Adelaide, South Australia. Students in the study were asked broadly about their understanding of bullying and violence in school. The project did not ask students about experiences of teacher-student bullying, instead, these stories were recounted by participants through semi-structured interviews about the topic of school bullying generally. The study itself was exploratory and set out to interrogate the relevance of dominant paradigms of school bullying to young people. These stories were unanticipated, and yet, together represent an important theme within the project sample.

The project adopted the description of 'bottom-up' (Volk et al., 2017, p. 37) school bullying research that sought to understand the recorded disconnect between young people's and adults' understanding (Connell et al., 2019; Ey et al., 2019; Maunder & Crafter, 2018; Naylor et al., 2006) by beginning with the experiences of those most affected; i.e. young people. A series of five workshops (up to an hour) with young people in secondary school was planned with one-to-one interviews (up to an hour) at either end of the series.[1] The same group of young people participated in all the workshops to provide an opportunity for ongoing conversation and the development of ideas. This approach enabled individual and group settings for discussion of the ideas and continued reflection on discussions over time. The underpinning aim of the approach was to facilitate extended listening to young people in contrast to the reliance on large-scale quantitative methods that dominate the field (Eriksen, 2018) and that restrict responses to predetermined (by adults) conceptualisations of school bullying.

We acknowledge that school-based research is bound up in the same institutional dynamics that this paper focuses on. The hierarchical nature of schools means there are conforming pressures for young people to participate at the request of authority figures. Further discussion of these issues is 'absent' (Law, 2004) from this paper to facilitate the emphasis on the participants' experiences, but insights into these debates can be found in the works of Felzmann (2009), as well as Brooks et al. (2014).

The project was run with two groups in 2020, totalling 11 participants – eight males and three females. The first group were enrolled in a private (non-government) secondary school. The second was in an alternative education program run by a non-government organisation for young people who were disengaged from public (government-provided) secondary schooling. Despite interruptions by COVID-19 lockdowns, the first group completed all five workshops and interviews. Undoubtedly worthy of further analysis, the second group were more impacted by the COVID-19 lockdowns and could not complete the process. All participants in the second group completed only one interview, and only one young person on one occasion attended a scheduled focus group; this became an interview. Participants (17–20 years of age) provided informed written consent to participate and have been given pseudonyms to preserve their anonymity. Interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed.

In analysing the three narratives, we pay particular attention to the following features of their stories. We unpack the institutional and social context in which the story takes place. We are interested in the situational power of key players (student, teacher, groups) in the narrative and the implicit social systems that imbue them with power. We also unpack the moral and social hierarchies enacted *in situ*. Finally, we consider the emotional disposition of the young people who are primarily telling the story: what is said, what is implied and what is unsaid about the experience of being bullied.

Moral judgement and broken bones

Alice, who identifies as a Caucasian female and 20 years of age, was part of the alternative education program. Alice had attended multiple metropolitan and regional schools, both private and public. She did not specify in which school the following stories took place.

> I've seen teachers do some messed-up shit like. I think teachers just think that they are on a whole other level where they can just do whatever they want and put whatever they want into young people's minds.

Alice sets out the power hierarchy within the school between teachers and students. Teachers can 'do whatever they want' and are 'on a whole other level'. Teachers' monopoly of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2008) within the school institution is experienced by a student as giving them free rein to do 'messed up shit' and put things 'into young people's minds'. Alice then speaks about her experience of witnessing bullying by a teacher:

> There was this one teacher and she used to just single out like my friends and me so badly. Like, one of the girls got her nose pierced. And, you know, teachers do that thing where they're just, like, in the whole class, sit down in front of us, and everyone sits with their legs crossed in front of them and they talk . . . she didn't say anything about the girl getting her nose pierced. She just started talking about how disgraceful piercings were and how when she was younger, her mom taught her that only pigs and cows get their nose pierced before they're about to get killed. This girl got up and started crying, and then like she left the classroom.

In Alice's story, the teacher expertly employs relative moral codes and affective experiences to belittle and generally impose their beliefs on the class. To avoid singling out the student the teacher speaks in general, but it is obvious to everyone in the room who is being addressed. Fielding (2000) describes the relativity of moral codes in his ethnography of children's geographies in schools. He labels schools as '"hotbed[s]" of moral geographies – of moral codes about how and where children ought to learn and behave'. Fielding recalled being scolded by the headteacher for walking on the wrong side of a corridor in a group (rather than in pairs) with other teachers. While there were relatively minor consequences for Fielding, this experience illustrates the relative hierarchies in educational settings.

Alice recalls the students seated before the teacher with their legs crossed. Sitting and seating arrangements are a practice employed by teachers to control students and manage social dynamics in the classroom (Dytham, 2018). The moral hierarchy between teacher and student is reinforced through the bodily hexis of students sitting on the floor while the moral authority towers over them at the front of the room. The resulting affective

experience is so violating for Alice's friend that she leaves the room. Sercombe and Donnelly (2013) describe the harm distinguishing bullying from other forms of violence as the experience of 'abjection', or 'engendering a kind of helplessness' (p. 497) in the victim. Søndergaard (2012) likewise employs this term and points to Butler's (1999) description of abjection as subject boundary creation and the rendering of something or someone as the Other. While Alice's friend leaves the room, the Othering will likely linger as the moral judgement of 'disgraceful piercings' has been established in the class.

Alice told a second narrative, something that she feels is so serious that she began by saying, 'this is a true story. I'm not lying. Like, I probably should have gone to the police about this'. At a touch football carnival, Alice fell over and someone fell on her leg. She sat on the field evaluating her injury, 'Like, it's not right. It hurts. I don't want to play anymore'. She then says, 'you know how PE teachers are', implying that it is well known that they treat students poorly regarding physical and emotional matters.

> He made me get up, told me to have a spoonful of cement [to 'harden up'] and get up and stop being a sooky girl. He made me play like five more games of touch football. Then I went to the hospital after because I was in agony, and I'd broken my growth plate and fractured my ankle.

Alice finishes her narratives by making general comments:

> I just remember, like the principal was just horrible, like, just horrible. Primary school was horrible for me. I blocked it out mostly because I just used to cry all the time because the teachers there were like so bad, like they were mean, like they were bullies.

Alice's feelings are palpable. She describes school being 'horrible for me'. Alice experienced a pattern of bullying, and she 'used to cry all the time'. Alice's experiences include physical pain (a fractured ankle) but are also affectively violating, and while we are focused on the social dynamics, the teacher's actions also need to be marked as imposing physical cruelty, as well as being professional negligence. Furthermore, Alice's story highlights the slipperiness of violence and the ease with which the affective violation can spill over into physical harm.

Language such as 'sooky girl' and 'disgraceful piercings' inflict emotional harm backed by relative moral justifications. Typical middle-class reinforcements of fashion and aesthetics (Lawler, 2005) and speciesism (Taylor, 2013) are employed in the treatment of a nose ring. The gendered nature of the PE teacher pejoratively telling Alice she is 'playing like a girl' reinforces the hegemonic masculinity that dominates sports, especially football codes (Wellard, 2016). These experiences mark Alice to the point where she tried to 'block it out'.

In Alice's retelling of these experiences, there are doxic moral hierarchies. Teachers can do what they want and can be horrible. She described feeling powerless and unable to resist. Walton (2005) points out that behaviours that are punished as bullying among young people in school are rewarded in 'sports, politics, business, and academics' as they are considered 'part of the game' (p.100). The sporting context provides a useful prism to consider the students' complicity in doxic norms within a (social) field of play. Participation in sport implies consent or complicity to these 'rules of the game' when stepping inside the field, however, the meaningfulness of the choice to not participate in a school context is questionable. Physical activity is prescribed in school curriculum.

Furthermore, an individual's awareness of the distinction between sport, unstructured play and ordinary life might be theoretically clear but less clear in subjective experience. While affective violence provides essential insights into Alice's experiences of harm, the persistence of these social forces is such that individual complicity seems inadequate to describe their lack of meaningful choice. Alice's friend physically left the room, and Alice was shamed and coerced to continue playing. The field of play has been established in the classroom and at the sporting carnival. Students under compulsion must eventually return to the classroom or school or risk further punishment.

Class control and public delegitimisation

The following story was told by Brandon (20, male and self-identified as 'white'). Brandon was part of the second participant group, telling multiple stories about his experience as a bully and bullying others. He spoke of moving to a new school and being confronted on his first day by many anti-bullying messages and posters around the school. He recounted immediately being concerned by the sheer number of signs and soon witnessed 'someone straight up like bashing someone on the ground'.

> [The signs] didn't make me think, this school doesn't have bullies. This school doesn't like bullies. It made me think this school has a lot of bullies because they have a lot of signs, like this is an excessive amount of signs.

Brandon interprets the symbolic meaning of the anti-bullying messages as the opposite of the explicit message. Ellwood and Davies (2014) argue that the problem of school bullying might exist not in the deviant student behaviour but rather in 'the "contemporary ethos" or "moral order" of schools' (p. 87). Rather than assuring Brandon of the absence of bullying in his new school, the 'excessive amount of signs' suggests to him that bullying is part of the school's culture. Brandon went on to tell a story of an interaction, where his teacher showed a skilful understanding of the doxic rules of engagement by publicly mocking him in front of the class, then drawing upon a technical discursive manoeuvre to denigrate his disability further.

> . . . I saw a lot of teachers being dicks, but none of it was ever just like, you know, bullying. It was just like the teacher was just a dick. The most bullying I could describe to a teacher would be one time we were lining up to go on an excursion. And I've already mentioned I have Tourette's, one of my twitches is this. I go like this a lot and I just 'fuck with my eyes'.

Brandon demonstrated a movement where he crossed and rolled his eyes.

> So, we were lining up to go to the excursion and the teacher was talking and I did that. And then I can't remember exactly what it was, but more or less, she was just like "And stop doing that weird eye thing that you do". And then I said to her, "I have Tourette's". And she went, "Have you been diagnosed?" And my diagnosis was two days away. So, I said, "No, but I will be in two days". And then she said, "Well then don't say you have Tourette's". So, I feel like that would be the most bullying from a teacher I have seen, you know, like myself.

Brandon says he has seen 'a lot of teachers being dicks', but he names this instance as bullying. As in Alice's earlier story, the students are physically arranged (lined up) to reinforce a moral order and power imbalance. The teacher invokes a moral authority to

tell Brandon to stop 'that weird eye thing' as he does not have an official diagnosis, despite Brandon's clear assertion that a diagnosis is forthcoming.

The accuracy of Brandon's diagnosis, or if and when he is officially diagnosed, is not central to this exchange. Brandon already thinks of himself as someone with Tourette's. The invocation of 'official diagnosis' used as a form of discipline towards a vulnerable student, and the situational dynamics of who decides what is legitimate, leaves Brandon feeling humiliated. He still thinks about this interaction and was agitated in the interview when talking about it. Brandon is abjectified as an illegitimate outsider in this exchange, delivering an affective blow and rendering him unable to challenge this subordination. Brandon is self-aware about his 'fucking with my eyes'. He still does it 'every once in a while'. The affect is re-lived even though the experience is not repeated.

Teachers are caught up in 'a hierarchical, power-dominant management structure' (Yoneyama & Naito, 2003, p. 318), requiring them to manage contradictory and competing forces. Teachers are also the institutional agents of the legitimate use of force within the school, empowered to 'keep order' (Yoneyama & Naito, 2003, p. 323; Yoneyama, 2015, p. 143). Nevertheless, rather than focussing solely on the actions of individual teachers ('teacher blaming' see Bansel et al., 2009, p. 60), we are centring the institutional and affective dynamic within the encounter. The teacher abjects Brandon because he is 'weird'. In addition, by publicly ridiculing this already vulnerable student, the teacher in Brandon's story is creating an emotional hype (nori) within the group that draws on and reinforces the teacher-student hierarchy and their domination of the class.

The teacher publicly delegitimises Brandon in front of other students, which, deliberate or not, buttresses their position of authority and the school's moral landscape, including the requirement of 'lining up to go to the excursion'. There is a 'hotbed' (Fielding, 2000) of moral codes and any threat to the collective affective rewards promised by the forthcoming excursion – fun, adventure, not being in school – would be quickly deemed an 'immoral' (Yoneyama, 2015, p. 141) action by the other students. The teacher pits Brandon against his peers' desires. Any student whose actions threaten the general excitement and conviviality of the forthcoming excursion would be, in Yoneyama's terms, 'hated' (Yoneyama, 2015, p. 141) by the group. This positioning is also supported by the inaction of 'normal' (Yoneyama & Naito, 2003, p. 326) students who comply with the requirement for a queue. The denigration of Brandon's condition through sophisticated communication is enabled and justified by the doxic moral codes that work not just to discipline Brandon but work to discipline the whole group.

There isn't a straightforward or logical reason that Brandon's 'fucking with his eyes' should threaten the fun on offer for the wider group in the excursion. The institutional representative wields affective violence to reinforce control of the students by using him as a scapegoat to discipline the group as a whole. Brandon calls this bullying, and we are taking his experience at face value. Brandon has since been diagnosed with Tourette's. The teacher is doing this in front of the whole class, they are all watching, which is sufficient affective dynamics to pit Brandon against the affective group expectations, even if the wider student group is not fully aware of what is happening. The nori dynamic doesn't necessarily turn all the students against him, but he can feel the affective violence. Brandon is not passive in the exchange and fights back, but is outmanoeuvred by the institutional agent who is the situationally legitimate user of symbolic power. As such, while Brandon is not without agency, and the teacher is personally inflicting harm, the

institutional affective dynamics position these actors in a hierarchy, unbalancing the interaction such that claiming that Brandon is complicit in his harm is untenable. Affective violence reveals the layers of harm and moral justification beyond the individual's control and the affective consequences for non-compliance that far outweigh the victim's possible individual agentic possibilities.

Humour and hierarchy

Our final story is from Jane, a 17-year-old female who declined to provide her ethnicity, from the private secondary school group. This story was told during her one-to-one interview, not in the group setting. Jane was reflecting on whether bullying happens in her school. Like other students in this group, Jane initially said that bullying was not a problem in her school.

> Not to a harmful extent. It's like passive violence in a way. You know, joking around and calling someone names, as a joke, obviously. And even the teachers do it sometimes. Like, it's kind of made to be seen as ok, to sort of joke about someone's weaknesses.

Teachers' use of sarcasm, humour and ridicule has been examined as bullying (Yoneyama & Naito, 2003). Rawlings (2019) argues that describing a bullying incident as 'joking' is a discursive manoeuvre that enables 'the speaker to avoid the charge of violence, assault or abuse' (p. 710). When asked to talk more about the idea of 'passive' bullying and the role of teachers in making jokes, Jane told the following story:

> Hmm, let me think of a good example. Oh, yeah. The other day in [anonymised class] the boys are doing a presentation, but, you know, the class is being rather loud. So, the teacher was like, "let's give them the respect they deserve". Except she stopped, herself and said, "never mind. Let's give them the res, sorry, let's give them the respect". Implying that they didn't deserve respect (laughs). Like obviously it's meant to be a joke and all.

The teacher uses humour to subtly reinforce the teacher-student hierarchy and control over the classroom, where 'the boys' have lower-status in the group hierarchy. Humour can control, create relational and emotional hierarchies, or normalise harmful interactions (Yoneyama & Naito, 2003). Much situational humour does not challenge the status quo or established hierarchies but is used to reinforce it, especially by laughing at the social outsider (Critchley, 2004). If the boys were to reject the joke and challenge the teacher-student hierarchy, it would diminish the collective affect and be deemed immoral. The joke hinged on the removal of a reference to an explicit moral code regarding respect to reinforce class control. Paradoxically, the teacher is contravening the moral code they are attempting to enforce by suggesting the boys are not worthy of respect but should be given it regardless.

> Well, going back to the jokes. Seeing that the teachers do it sometimes, kids might think, "hey, it's okay to do this". Whereas other kids might think, "hey, I don't want to be the target of that joke".

Control of the class is achieved, and the targeted students have experienced an affective blow. As Jane later says, it is 'not nice' to be bullied, and she is concerned that this experience sets the terms for how people should interact. In Jane's words, some people think, 'hey, it's okay to do this'. As discussed above in Brandon's story, the singling out of

these students and reinforcing the hierarchy is achieved through the affinity between the teacher and their preferred conforming students. The affective violence wielded is justified through the relative morality of the school and the collective emotional high (nori) of the joke through the complicity of the '"normal" behaviour of "non-problem" students' (Yoneyama & Naito, 2003, p. 326). Socially capable students, or 'guardians of the moral order' (Schott & Søndergaard, 2014, p. 13), can employ normalised forms of violence that teachers co-opt to help control the student body (Ellwood & Davies, 2014). Yoneyama's (2015) points out that teachers often get along well with powerful and popular students, sharing and borrowing from their power to maintain hierarchies and order within the class. Yet, individual complicity seems to be the wrong word to describe the non-agency of 'the boys' or the by-standing students in the group. Emphasising the role of individual choice (i.e. refusal to laugh at the joke) does not account for the overpowering collective affective dynamics.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have developed symbolic violence to examine the affective harm caused through teacher-to-student bullying and the enabling institutional moral doxa. We have described this as *affective violence* and argued that affective violence can be detached from the controversial notions of individual complicity in Bourdieu's symbolic violence. Instead, harm is produced through the collective affective experiences and relative moral justifications within schools. Within this approach, school bullying is understood as being embedded in the immanent affective and moral hierarchies that imbue educational institutions. This perspective contributes to the existing understanding of bullying as an individual responsibility by offering additional insight into the production of harm by contemporary school systems without excusing the responsibility of teachers for bullying. This approach supports a research and practice trajectory that focuses less on developing individual student resilience and more on reorganising the structure of education systems. Bullying by teachers is both a reprehensible action by individuals, and also exists within the relative moral doxa and conforming power of affective orders in schools.

This approach contributes to the shift in the second paradigm of school bullying away from the dominant framework that attempts to judge an individual's intent, which is limited to a dyadic-triadic (victim-perpetrator-bystander) (Horton, 2020; Jacobson, 2007) understanding of power and emphasises a behavioural understanding of repetition. Instead, we argue that this approach recognises that when harm is experienced, it is not always individually intended, that power operates through complex social and moral hierarchies, and that affective violence leaves lasting scars that are re-lived emotionally if not always replayed (behaviourally). This approach emphasises a subject's agency while accepting the force of institutional and systemic moral and affective orders.

In this paper, we argue that Alice, Brandon and Jane's stories demonstrate the value of interrogating affective violence and the justifying relative moral orders of school bullying. School bullying is an inescapably emotional experience that leaves lasting affective consequences. While we borrow from Bourdieu's symbolic violence, we challenge the so-

called complicity of the victim, instead locating the origins of violence in the institutional moral norms and context.

Note

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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