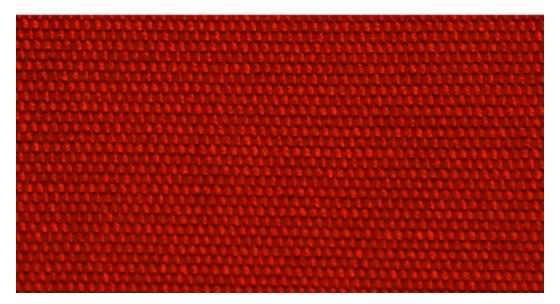ESSAYS ON SCHOOL BULLYING:
THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON A CONTEMPORARY PROBLEM

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Essays on school bullying: Theoretical perspectives on a contemporary problem

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Ethnicity and Society, Linköping University
Chris Kubiak, Faculty of Health and Social Care, Open
University
Thomas S. Popkewitz, Department of Curriculum and
Instruction, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Klas Roth, Department of Education, Stockholm University
Roberto Sancho Larrañaga, Department of Social
Communication, Autonomous University of Bucaramanga
Fredrik Sandberg, Division of Education and Adult learning,
Linköping University
Irina Schmitt, Center for Gender Studies, Lund University
Karim Wissa, Literature Program, Duke University
Rebecca Ye, Department of Sociology, Stockholm University

Essays on school bullying: Theoretical perspectives on a contemporary problem

Paul Horton and Camilla Forsberg

Reading the news, it is hard to ignore the issue of school bullying. School Bullying appears to be everywhere, as highlighted by the recent headlines *EXCLUSIVE: More than six in 10 people bullied at school according to Express.co.uk poll* [1] and *Annual Survey reveals surge in cyber-bullying inside our schools.* [2] While numerous research studies, surveys and polls have been conducted into the issue of school bullying in order to investigate prevalence rates, the individuals involved, the associated negative effects, and the (in) efficacy of anti-bullying programmes, there has been comparatively little theoretical discussion of the various factors that facilitate bullying beyond the individual level, the aggressive intentions of particular individuals, and the passive or active participation of other actors.

[1] Gutteridge, 2015.
[2] George, 2015.

This lack of theoretical discussion of the social, institutional, and societal factors involved in bullying is surprising when one considers that school bullying is not a particularly new phenomenon. Bullying was already a subject of debate in the mid-1800s following the publication of Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. [3] However, while some research was conducted into school bullying as early as 1885 in the United States, research into school bullying did not really get going until the late 1960s and early 1970s in the UK and Scandinavia. [4] This research was afforded increased importance in 1982 following the suicides of three youths in the Norwegian town of Bergen, all of whom were believed to have been subjected to bullying. [5] Despite important contributions to understandings of the social dynamics of school bullying in the UK and Sweden in the 1970s [6], the research that was subsequently conducted in the UK and Scandinavia largely focused on the individuals involved and understood bullying as a form of interpersonal aggression, influenced by personal characteristics and family backgrounds. [7]

Research was also being conducted into school bullying (*ijime*) in Japan in the 1980s, and this research was given added impetus by the suicides of 16 school pupils in 1984 and 1985. [8] While the focus of bullying work elsewhere was focused on the aggressive behaviour and characteristics of the particular individuals involved, the research being conducted in Japan was more focused on group dynamics and the institutional context

[3] Hughes, 1857/2007; Smith, 2014.
[4] Burk, 1897; Heinemann, 1972; Olweus, 1973; Laslett, 1977; Lowenstein, 1977.
[5] Roland, 1989; Olweus, 1993.
[6] Dale, 1971; Heinemann, 1972.
[7] Duncan, 1999; Walton, 2005; Rivers and Duncan, 2013; Horton, 2014.
[8] Yoneyama, 1999.

of the school.[9] Through their work, Japanese researchers thus highlighted important oversights in more individual-focused school bullying research. However, the research being conducted into *ijime* in Japan appeared to have little impact on discussions surrounding school bullying, and while research gradually began to be conducted in other countries, it drew largely on the studies that had been conducted in northern Europe.

School bullying research is now being conducted in many parts of the world.[10] Much of this research still tends to focus on the individuals involved in bullying at the expense of the social, institutional, and societal contexts within which it occurs. While these studies provide a great deal of information about the prevalence of school bullying, the individuals involved, and the harmful consequences of bullying, they have less to say about *why* it occurs.[11] Two Japanese researchers, Shoko Yoneyama and Asao Naito, in their article *Problems with the Paradigm: The school as a factor in understanding bullying (with special reference to Japan)*, pointed to these oversights more than a decade ago and called for more sociological perspectives and consideration of the importance of the "social structure of school itself".[12] Using the terminology later employed by Ian Rivers and Neil Duncan, Yoneyama and Naito were calling for a shift away from an "individual model" towards a more "collective model" that takes into consideration "systems, cultures and institutions".[13]

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[9] Yoneyama, 1999; Taki, 2001; Yoneyama and Naito, 2003.
[10] Ohsako, 1997; Jimerson and Huai, 2010; Sittichai and Smith, 2015.
[11] Walton, 2011; Rivers and Duncan, 2013.
[12] Yoneyama and Naito, 2003, p. 328.
[13] Rivers and Duncan, 2013, p. 4.

Recently there has been an increasingly noticeable shift away from the individual focus of "paradigm one" towards a more complex consideration of the social, institutional and societal aspects of bullying, or what is now being called "paradigm two".[14] The aim of this special issue is to further develop the theoretical underpinnings of this second paradigm by addressing the issue of school bullying from different theoretical perspectives in order to illuminate its social, institutional and societal aspects.

Towards this end, we invited researchers from a range of theoretical and geographical areas to engage in a more theoretically focused discussion about school bullying. In line with the overall aims of *Confero*[15], authors were not restricted in terms of word count or structure, and were encouraged not to write empirically focused articles but rather to instead pen *theoretical essays* about school bullying, outlining how they understand bullying and the implications such understandings have for how we approach this contemporary problem.

We have been fortunate enough to gather together researchers whose essays highlight a broad range of perspectives on bullying and reflect the increasing diversity in thinking about this important contemporary problem.

In the first essay, *Bullying and the philosophy of shooting freaks*, Gerald Walton questions the effectiveness of anti-bullying initiatives and argues that attempts to reduce the prevalence of school bullying have failed, precisely because they have focused on the problem as a behavioural one rather than a

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[14] Schott and Søndergaard, 2014, p. 2.
[15] Nylander, Aman, Hallqvist, Malmquist, and Sandberg, 2013.

broader social problem. Drawing parallels between popular culture and school bullying, Walton suggests that rather than continuing along the same path of conducting research into a problem that they think they largely understand, bullying researchers need to pull back and take some time to think about school bullying in relation to the broader context within which it occurs. Walton argues that rather than focusing on the behaviour of individuals, it is necessary to take the issue of social difference seriously, because at its core school bullying is about social difference. In doing so, he argues that it is necessary to consider the ways in which social power, privilege and disadvantage intersect and are allocated unequally. Walton's essay provides a good entry point for thinking about bullying beyond the individual level, and instead conducting more complex investigations of the social, institutional and societal levels wherein the individual interactions occur.

Dorte Marie Søndergaard also questions the effectiveness of anti-bullying initiatives, but from the perspective of victim positioning. In the second essay of the special issue, *The dilemmas of victim positioning*, she suggests that anti-bullying initiatives may even be counter-productive if they do not account for the social and cultural dynamics involved in bullying relations. Drawing on research conducted in Denmark, as well as the research of Ann-Carita Evaldsson in Sweden and Bronwyn Davies in Australia, Søndergaard analyses the quite different experiences of three girls – two of whom are involved in bullying relations, while the third has been subjected to rape. In doing so, Søndergaard discusses three different levels at which negotiations of social reality take place: the level at which the person to be included or excluded is nominated; the level at which the criteria for such positioning are selected; and the level

at which inclusion and exclusion practices are reproduced. Discussing the experiences of the three girls in relation to these levels, Søndergaard provides insight into how children may be more or less able to influence these different levels, and also why many 'victims' may resist or even reject the position of 'victim'.

In the third essay, *Posthuman performativity, gender and 'school bullying': Exploring the material-discursive intra-actions of skirts, hair, sluts, and poofs*, Jessica Ringrose and Victoria Rawlings re-visit examples from qualitative research conducted in the UK and Australia in order to rethink school bullying through a posthuman performativity lens. Drawing on the theories of Judith Butler and Karen Barad, Ringrose and Rawlings problematize the predominant focus on individual human agency and instead build upon socio-cultural approaches to school bullying by attributing agency to matter and the intra-actions of human and non-human agents, such as discourses, skirts, hair, makeup, looks, muscles, and sport. Ringrose and Rawlings question anti-bullying policies that have sought to address the use of injurious language through the banning of words, and instead illustrate the material forces that intra-act with such discourses. In doing so, Ringrose and Rawlings challenge researchers to consider the ways in which terms such as 'slut', 'gay', 'lesbian' and 'poof' are materialised in context, and suggest that anti-bullying initiatives need to shift their focus away from the agency of individuals to the school policies that regulate and restrict such agency.

In the fourth and penultimate essay, *Theorizing school bullying: Insights from Japan*, Shoko Yoneyama addresses the fact that the frame of reference for bullying research has largely been

restricted to the global West. Focusing on the work that has
been conducted in Japan, including that which has until now
only been available in Japanese, Yoneyama seeks to integrate
Japanese research with the 'second paradigm' of school bullying
research. Rather than explaining Japanese school bullying in
terms of cultural differences, Yoneyama considers mechanisms
that are common to school bullying in Japan and the West.
Yoneyama introduces a typology of school bullying that
distinguishes between two types of bullying (Type I and Type
II), which she argues correspond to the first and second
paradigms of school bullying research. Focusing on Type II,
Yoneyama considers the ways in which school bullying is
intertwined with institutional aspects of schools, including the
importance of hierarchy and group dynamics, and how bullying
may represent a state of anomie in school communities that
have become dysfunctional and may even provide students with
a means of counteracting the alienation and disconnectedness
that they experience at school. Focusing on the importance of
the school context, Yoneyama suggests that future research not
only needs to consider bullying in different socio-cultural
contexts, but also alternative education systems.

Robert Thornberg rounds off this special issue on school
bullying with a review-style essay entitled *The social dynamics
of school bullying: The necessary dialogue between the blind
men around the elephant and the possible meeting point at the
social-ecological square*. In his essay, Thornberg argues that
school bullying researchers need to engage in dialogue if they
are to better understand the problem of school bullying.
Focusing on researchers from the second paradigm, Thornberg
likens them to the blind men around the elephant of bullying,
whose perspectives of school bullying when taken alone only

allow for a partial understanding of the problem but when taken together, and together with researchers from the first paradigm, could enable a better understanding of the various individual and collective factors associated with school bullying. Thornberg firstly outlines a number of perspectives from the second paradigm, wherefrom researchers have understood bullying in terms of stigma and labelling processes, friendship and relationship building, social hierarchies, social dominance, likeability and popularity, power and power imbalance as situated and relational, disability gender and heterosexual hegemony, and moral order and intersectionality. In calling for a necessary dialogue between the blind men, Thornberg argues that the social-ecological framework provides the opportunity for the various theoretical perspectives to come together in addressing the *micro-*, *meso-*, *exo-*, and *macro*systems of school bullying and hence the complex interplay of individual and contextual factors.

Taken together, the five essays that make up this special issue reflect the increasing diversity in thinking about bullying and offer a number of suggestions for how to move forward in our attempts to counter the issue of bullying in schools. They suggest that we need to take seriously the social, institutional, and societal aspects of school bullying by addressing the importance of social difference, group dynamics and positioning, discursive-material intra-action, the purpose of education, theoretical reflection, and academic dialogue. We hope that these essays provide a dialogical opening that promotes further theoretical discussions about school bullying and invite you as readers to take part in these deliberations in coming issues of Confero.

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Bullying and the philosophy of shooting freaks

Gerald Walton

The audience sneered and sniggered. Susan Boyle strutted toward the microphone on the stage of *Britain's Got Talent*, a televised talent contest.[16] It was April 2009. Alone on a vast and empty auditorium stage, she faced hundreds of people in the studio and the gaze of millions of television viewers around the world. On display was a middle-aged woman lacking refinement and sophistication, wearing a plain, muted-yellow housedress, her grey hair curled in an apparent home-perm.

Awkwardly, Susan prepared to perform for an audience that dismissed her the minute she emerged from backstage. Scorn abounded. From the recorded reactions, a panel of three judges were as dubious about her capacity for talent as was the audience. Simon Cowell, one of the three judges, rolled his eyes when she reported her age to be forty-seven. The audience revelled in derision, aghast that such a simple, ordinary women would appear on a show that was ostensibly meant for younger, more attractive contestants.

For one 18-year old audience member, sneering at Susan had an unfortunate ricochet effect. Jennifer Byrne faced online and in-

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[16] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RxPZh4AnWyk

person backlash after her scoffing was caught on camera and was broadcast to the world[17] "It was a split-second reaction that changed my life," she said. "All I did was roll my eyes and I'm targeted by a hate campaign for months"[18]. After a few more moments of uncomfortable questioning by Simon Cowell, Susan began to sing. Instead of anticipated boos and quick disqualification from the panel of judges, eyes widened and jaws dropped in shock when she sang the first powerful notes of "I Dreamed a Dream" from *Les Misérables*. An outburst of cheering and applauding, accompanied by a standing ovation, replaced mass ridicule. Even Jennifer Byrne said, "The moment Susan started to sing I did what everyone else in the audience did. I jumped to my feet and started cheering because her voice was so unbelievable." Accompanied by billowing orchestral music, Susan's powerful voice built to a crescendo to rouse full emotional impact.

In his post-performance feedback, Piers Morgan, a second judge, said, "When you stood there with that cheeky grin and said, 'I want to be like [English musical theatre star] Elaine Paige,' everyone was laughing at you. No one is laughing now. That was stunning, an incredible performance! Amazing! I'm reeling from shock!" Amanda Holden added from the judges' panel, "I honestly think that we were all being very cynical . . . and I just want to say that it was a complete privilege listening to that!" Even the infamously acerbic Simon Cowell swooned. From that one performance, Susan became an international sensation. To date, she has released six studio albums and her concerts sell out around the world.

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[17] Smith, 2009
[18] Smith, 2009

The Boyle story is an example of a true-life fairy tale that delights those whose worldview centres upon contrived Disneyesque happy endings and the American Dream ideology. She faced mass public condemnation in the form of classism and ageism, but was ultimately vindicated. For many, she triumphed not just over a televised moment of adversity, but also over a lifetime of it in relation to her plain looks and material poverty. Susan Boyle is celebrated not just because of her vocal talent, but because she is the proverbial ugly duckling-turned-swan. Her story tugs at heartstrings, personifying much-beloved fairy tales and feel-good happy endings. It became a musical titled "I Dreamed a Dream" that was produced in 2012.[19]

Not begrudging Susan her sudden fame and fortune, I throw cold water in the face of the usual interpretation of the story, which is that adversity yielded to triumph. The story is bought and sold as a celebration of underdog dreams coming true against all odds. Regrettably, the packaging of the Susan Boyle story is a superficial interpretation and, for me, far from heart-warming. What happened to Susan was an event that played out in a drama of two acts. Thematically, the first act is about the rejection of those deemed inferior or unworthy based on surface appearances and the negative stereotypes that are associated with them. The second act, by contrast, is about celebrating and embracing her only when she proves herself worthy. Contrived though they were to incite heightened emotional responses, the dramatic moments captured before she began to sing are a harbinger of unbridled social prejudices. Simply put, Susan Boyle was bullied on a mass, international scale. She was judged instantly as ugly, awkward, and stupid, as

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[19] Tartaglione, 2012

different and thereby inferior to the rest of us. That is, until she started to sing.

But, what if her voice had met the initial grim expectations that were so evident as she advanced towards the microphone, namely, that she would sing as plainly as she looked? What would have happened then? As many other contestants have experienced on such televised contests, Susan would have been driven from the stage, shamed by the unpleasant *blaaaat* as the judges pounded their "X" buzzers, and scolded her for her mediocre talent, or lack of it, entirely. The sneers and sniggers of mass derision would have been valorised. Eager for the next contestant, the audience and judges alike would have delighted in seeing her walk off the stage into obscurity.

I do not use the word "bullied" lightly to describe what happened to Susan Boyle on *Britain's Got Talent*. I do not employ the word liberally to describe everyday emotional injuries, affronts, or abuses. Rather, I use it in a very specific sense and in a very different way than do most researchers and educators such as Olweus[20] who focuses on behaviour, Harris[21] who examines bullying in the context of interpersonal dynamics, and Hazler, Carney, and Granger[22] who promote theory on the neurological factors that influence bullying. While such accounts offer valuable multidimensional angles from which to consider factors that give rise to bullying, the issue of social difference is, broadly speaking, given short shrift. I know this in part because I was bullied as a child; I was deemed, and mistreated as, different. Many years later and through the eyes

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[20] Olweus, 1993
[21] Harris, 2009
[22] Hazler, Carney, and Granger, 2011

of a researcher, I have to wonder about the validity of scholarship on bullying that glosses over difference.

Initially, Susan Boyle was also bullied for her social difference from the younger, evidently more sophisticated audience. To put it in scholarly language, she was "Othered" and thus subjugated (for a more in-depth discussion about Othering, see Jensen[23]). For me, her experience mirrors what happens in schools, except without the happy ending that she enjoyed. Children and youth bully each other predominantly because of social difference on any number of grounds, including race, gender expression, real or perceived sexuality, class, physical ability, mental ability, physical attractiveness, body size and shape, social competence, and so on. These are aspects that have social status, meaning that they are, as McMullin[24] puts it, "differences that matter" [25]. Such differences matter because, beyond surface variation, they represent allocations and intersections of social power, privilege, and disadvantage.[26]

Attempts to grapple with bullying have, in general terms, failed.[27] As long as they stay the present course of modifying individual and interpersonal behaviour between and among students, they will continue to fail. Jeong and Lee[28] make the point even stronger in their argument that, from their research sample of 7001 students across 195 schools, anti-bullying programs may even *increase* bullying. They theorize that bullies may actively choose to disregard and adapt around what they

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[23] Jensen, 2011
[24] McMullin, 2004
[25] McMullin, 2004, p. 6
[26] Dhamoon, 2009
[27] Swidney, 2010; Merrell, Gueldner, Ross, and Isava, 2008
[28] Jeong and Lee, 2013

learn through anti-bullying programs. Anti-bullying work constitutes an overall failure, even when limited and temporary success of particular approaches are considered, because, despite all of the research and programs that are purported to reduce bullying, it remains a widely misunderstood phenomenon. The Susan Boyle video offers instruction to a better understanding, but only if we can move past the sensational and struggle with the difficult issues of prejudice, discrimination, and social difference that are integral, yet largely ignored, components of bullying. The question is: Why is there so little struggle in the first place?

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Stepping away from the glitz and glamour of televised talent shows, bullying in schools plays out for many children as a story devoid of triumph. Portrayals in news media are predictable: An incident garners attention from journalists, usually because a bullied child has committed suicide. Shock ensues, followed by the inevitable question, "What can we do to stop bullying?" So-called talking heads are called upon to give their opinion, as I have on numerous occasions. Typically, the issues that we are asked are about how to reduce aggression, what to do about cyberbullying, and how bystanders might be key players in both stopping and supporting bullies. After a flurry of coverage over a few days, each story fades and rarely sees the camera spotlight again. Later, another tragedy captures media attention and the cycle of bullying discourse begins anew.

As I have argued elsewhere[29], an additional problem is that teacher education and educational research are enamoured by

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[29] Walton, 2011

evidence-based solutions to any sort of problem that adversely affects students, teachers, and pedagogy. Bullying experts have told us that, based on their analytical "findings" that are achieved through methodological technologies, bullying happens between and among students and is harmful to them. But to offer such findings, bullying had to be operationalized in the first place so that it could be measured, analysed, and ultimately regulated. This meant identifying a particular realm or expression that constitutes "bullying" through social science methods. In short, bullying was discursively created. Bullying behaviours and their scarring effects – both of which are real – were allocated by social scientists to a discursive realm, and that realm was, and continues to be, "bullying." Dan Olweus is principally known as a pioneer of this research in Norway during the 1960s, even though Frederic Burk explored the particulars of bullying much earlier, in 1897. Burk suggested that bullying involves "some form of . . . inborn tendency of the strong to oppress the weak, etc."[30] Olweus later offered an idea that extends that of Burk. Translated to English in 1993, Olweus operationalized bullying as when a student "is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students."[31] Such conceptualizations are what Neil Duncan refers to as the "bullying orthodoxy, meaning adherence to the discursive norms, which are repeatedly reinforced, of how bullying is defined, explained, and addressed.[32]

Drawing lines around what bullying means – that is, building discursive terrain – was a highly successful project, if success is measured by influence. All over the world, bullying has been

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[30] Burke, 1897, p. 366
[31] Olweus, 1993, p. 54
[32] Duncan, 2012

added to the "thou shalt not" list of school conduct codes, while social science researchers continue to mine it for its capacities to make change in schools. The utility of findings is to design policies and programs, the purpose of which is to mould and modify student behaviour so that bullying is reduced to rare occurrences, if it happens at all. Yet, bullying persists as a prominent feature of schools and school life, despite efforts to contain it. How, then, do we make sense of the rupture between problem solving and problem-persistence? Have researchers, as holders of elite knowledge, failed to see what is directly in front of them? Are they wilfully ignorant, electing to not pursue a more difficult investigation into the grounds of bullying?

And, what counts as knowledge? If we take anti-bullying policy at face value and recognize that children and youth of today continue to bully each other viciously and unremittingly, not unlike the behaviours of many adults when grouped together, then we have to admit that the knowledge that anti-bullying policy hinges upon, and bullying discourse itself, is either faulty or partial, or both. Perhaps it is prudent to consider not only what counts as knowledge in the regime of evidence-based metrics for policy-making, but what forms of knowledge constitute that which we, to put it in Deborah Britzman's words, "cannot bear to know." [33] Taking a psychoanalytic approach to knowledge, Britzman asks how it is that "difficult knowledge" remains largely unclaimed in teacher education.[34] She asks, echoing German sociologist and philosopher Theodor Adorno, how teacher education managed to leave behind difficult knowledge that arose from Auschwitz and what ethical

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[33] Britzman, 2000, p. 201
[34] Britzman, 2000, p. 201

responsibilities might be held by education after the fact. She asks,

> How is it that so much of our past century remains unclaimed in education? How can teacher education come to make itself relevant to . . . ethical obligations? If teacher education could begin to reclaim difficult knowledge, what would be the work of teacher educators?[35]

If Adorno were alive today, he might be asking the same questions of education, post-Bosnia-Herzegovina, post-Rwanda, and post-Darfur. More generally but pointedly, Britzman asks how the world might come to matter in teacher education. It is not that educators do not teach about genocides and other horrors of human design, but, as Adorno noted after World War II, students come to know facts and figures in a technical and mechanical way, but lack the understanding of their profound philosophical and ethical implications. Britzman asserts that, in an age of professionalism and managerialism, education is gripped by an incapacity to reconcile its own vulnerabilities and failures.

> We have yet to grapple with what knowledge does to teachers, particularly the difficult knowledge of social catastrophe, evidence of *woeful disregard*, experiences of social violence, illness, and death, and most generally, with what it means to come to terms with various kinds of trauma, both individual and collective. What makes trauma traumatic is the incapacity to respond adequately, accompanied by feelings of profound helplessness and loss, and a sense that no other person or group will intervene.[36]

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[35] Britzman, 2000, p. 201
[36] Britzman, 2000, p. 202

Such helplessness is expressed poignantly by one of the school administrators in the 2011 U.S. documentary film *Bully*. [37] Patrolling the halls of her school, Assistant Principal Kim Lockwood says, "Tell me how to fix this." She repeats it for emphasis." Tell me how to fix this. I don't know. I don't have any magic." Later, upset parents complain to her about how their son is bullied ruthlessly and repeatedly on the school bus, events that are documented by the videographer over several days of shooting. Lockwood replies that many kids have a difficult time on the bus and that she can have their son take a different bus to school. She then follows up with the rather astonishing and contradictory claim that "I've ridden [that bus]. I've been on that route . . . They are just as good as gold." Through glib cliché, she invalidates the parents' claims and ignores the fact that most children are likely to behave better in the presence of authority figures.

Lockwood's first statement was more honest than her subsequent defence. Echoing the sentiments of many educators, to be sure, Lockwood really does not know how to protect kids from bullying. But the effect of her statement that kids on the bus are as "good as gold" negates their son's video-documented experiences. It constitutes administrative disregard in the guise of concern and promises of action. At least Lockwood admits that bullying is a problem when she says, "Tell me how to fix this." Such recognition is quite unlike Superintendent Vickie Reed who said,

> The perception that the school is a haven for bullies is just not true. Do we have some bullying problems? I'm sure we do. All

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[37] Lowen, Hirsch, Waitt, Warren, and Hirsch, 2011

> school systems do. But is it a major overarching concern in our
> high school? No, it is not.

Protecting the school, as she must in her administrative role, Reed denies the extent of bullying with certainty. Her *woeful disregard* aside, Lockwood's intentions were undoubtedly good. The problem with good intentions is that everyone seems to have them and they are easy to claim; they can also hinder seeing the problem for what it is, namely, a broader social problem at its core, and not a behavioural one. Claims of good intentions can protect us from having to face or grapple with difficult knowledge that defies comprehension. What is even more problematic is what amounts to administrative disregard in the guise of concern and promise of remediation that will never take place. "I'm sorry about this but we will take care of it," Lakewood assures the parents as they leave her office. The mother expresses doubt as they walk back to their car. "What did she say when we were leaving, that she'd take care of it? I'm pretty sure that's what she said [last] fall. She politicianed us. She's not going to do anything." Lockwood, like many of her counterparts, does indeed not know what to do, but she has to appear and act as though she does when she meets with upset parents.

For Britzman, Lockwood might be an example of how it is that between education and the world lays a rupture of conscience. She asks, "What inhibits our capacity to respond ethically to others, to learn something from people we will never meet and to be affected by histories that we may never live?".[38] If we can bear to learn from histories that are not ours, if we can grapple

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[38] Britzman, 2000, p. 202

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with difficult knowledge, if the world were to come to matter in pedagogical industries, then perhaps education might become less about administrative management of teachers and children, and more about truth that matters in and to the world. But as Britzman acknowledges, "there is nothing easy about encountering histories of woeful disregard."[39]

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I empathize with Assistant Principal Lockwood. I, too, do not have magic or formula that would eliminate bullying from schools. No one does. Bullying is a tenacious problem and its antidote for schools eludes researchers and educators, alike, despite claims to expertise and knowledge. Careers, including mine, have been built on investigating, analysing, and theorizing how bullying happens and what can be done about it. There are no policy approaches, intervention strategies, legislative regulations, criminal laws, or blueprints for administrative and pedagogical leadership that would incite such widespread change in schools that bullying would be reduced to being a minor problem, perhaps not even a problem at all. Preventative and interventionist tactics can resolve bullying incidents and bring about change in school cultures, but only in the short-term. A long-term solution remains as elusive as the proverbial pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, despite the sheer volume of programs, policies, and practices aimed at finding it.

I propose, then, that admitting our collective failure is the first step to addressing why and how bullying in schools persists. Perhaps this admission is a pre-requisite for entering the realm of difficult knowledge. By "our" failure, I mean researchers,

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[39] Britzman, 2000, p. 204

educators, parents, and others who, with commitment, sincerity, and good intentions, have invested much work for positive change for children and youth in schools. I fully expect resounding opposition to the contention that, despite efforts, we have failed to win the "war on bullying," to use common jargon found in mainstream journalism.[40] Investments of time and energy are at risk, and much-loved worldviews about triumph-over-adversity are threatened. Yet, the evidence is clear that bullying persists despite widespread and sustained efforts against it. A small cadre of researchers and theorists has said as much [41] including leading anti-bullying researcher Dorothy Espelage who said, "It's a mess. I want to bang my head against the wall".[42]

Step one, then, is to admit defeat. The next step is to look very closely and openly at why and how bullying persists. Most teachers, parents, and school administrators care about the safety and welfare of students and would like to see bullying become a social problem of the past, the social equivalent of polio or diphtheria, all but eliminated in so-called developed countries. However, neither lack of care nor lack of industry is the issue. On the contrary, the work being done to address bullying is both continuous and fervent. Nevertheless, the news is grim; revamped programs, new pedagogical approaches, updated policies, and innovative research methodologies have not changed the discouraging status quo, nor have cutting-edge metrics on how to measure bullying and its effects. The issue is not that the social science is flawed, though an overabundance of it is certainly tedious, derivative, and compounds the problem with oversaturation. The pivotal issue, one that

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[40] For instance, see Alcinii, 2013
[41] See elaboration in Walton and Niblett, 2012
[42] Quote in Swidney, 2010, p. 23

remains undertheorized, is that bullying as a phenomenon remains misunderstood. Elsewhere, I refer to this as the "problem trap"[43], meaning that we think we know what bullying is (behavioural, interpersonal) and, like centrifugal force, anti-bullying approaches gravitate around it. It is not the specific approaches that are necessarily faulty; rather, it is misguided collective knowledge about bullying that informs those approaches in the first place.

The paradoxical problem is that we do not know what we do not know. Given the prominence of the issue in public discourse and journalism, it would seem that most people think that they understand bullying perfectly well, that it functions as necessary character-building, or that it is harmful behaviour that should be stopped. In academic contexts, the widespread and prevailing notion seems to be that more research is needed and that more research is always better. The common refrain is that we need to keep finding gaps in the knowledge and fill them with better research-based approaches and strategies. In the case of bullying, more research is not better, contrary to research industry ideology. In fact, I would argue, based on my many years of adjudicating proposals on bullying for major international educational conferences, that instead of doing more research, we need to stop our industry, take a step back, look at the problem in broad contexts rather than micro-moments, and go back to the drawing board. A disavowal of the bullying orthodoxy is called for. In short, we need to stop before we continue to think.

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At Coney Island in New York City, an open-air paintball game stood on the boardwalk until its demolition in 2010. Called

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[43] Walton, 2010

Shoot the Freak (see Figure 1), contestants would shoot paintballs at unarmed "Live Human Targets" (see Figure 2) who were clad in hard plastic protective-wear.

Figure 1: Shoot the Freak paintball gallery, Coney Island, 2006.

Figure 2: Close-up of "Live Human Freaks."

I stared in fascination when my partner and I stumbled on it during a visit to New York in 2006. Though merely a game that is meant to be fun and amusing, it represents for me the primary way that bullying plays out and harkens the difficult knowledge that is unbearable to know. If we can get past the resistance that it exists as mere entertainment, we can draw parallels between "shooting freaks" and bullying in schools. Freaks are the outsiders, those who do not fit in with the norms of the majority, those who are different or perceived that way. Such Othering is represented in pop culture, such as FX Network's *American Horror Story: Freakshow* where "freaks" are targeted and persecuted.

Bullying reveals similar and obvious patterns of persecution. Losers. Retards. Geeks. Bitches. Fags. Fatties. Chinks. Ragheads. Such *live human targets* exist in every school. The patterns of persecution are neither new nor revelatory, just disregarded. In typical educational policy and research, lip service is paid to "diversity" but addressing social difference in any meaningful way gives rise to criticism and termination of discussions.[44] I have witnessed such resistance on numerous occasions at teacher conferences and on social media. "Too theoretical! What about practice?" is a tedious but common response. Still, my view remains that, if we were to engage with the messy realities of difference and grapple with the dynamics of privilege, stigma, prejudice, and hate – and how they shift in accordance with wider social and political contexts – we might come to see that anti-bullying discourse and its industry have missed the mark.

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[44] For elaboration, see Walton, 2011

We might also be able to move beyond the stultifying mountain of research that has largely been for naught. Then, we might begin to have a very different conversation about bullying. Documentary films such as *Bully* might be able to address social difference meaningfully, rather than function as a venue for hackneyed notions of "Let's stop bullying." Maybe then we might be closer to being able to say that the world matters in education and education matters in the world.

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**Gerald Walton, Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education
at Lakehead University, Ontario, Canada**.

The dilemmas of victim positioning

Dorte Marie Søndergaard

Why[45] is it that some people, when subjected to assault, bullying, violent domination or other forms of humiliating and marginalizing forms of relational actions, seem to hesitate to call themselves victims and to seek help from outside the oppressive relationship? Which alternative paths present themselves as more accessible or perhaps more attractive than that of a declared victim?

This article centres on some of the dilemmas contained within victim positioning. Such dilemmas are often overlooked by the authorities involved with people subjected to relational aggression.[46] For example, when teachers rule out cases of bullying because the victim has 'participated in' or 'laughed at' some of the bullies' initiatives, or when a rape victim's status as

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[45] This article is a revised version of an article published in Danish in the book 'På Kant med Historien", edited by Karin Lützen and Annette K. Nielsen (2008).

[46] See Evaldsson who in her definition of relational aggression quotes Crick, Casas and Ku, 1999: 'Relational aggression refers to 'behaviours that harm others through damage (or the threat of damage) or relationships or feelings of acceptance, friendship or group inclusion'' (Evaldsson 2007a: 321). See also Evaldsson, 2007b.

a victim is questioned because, in the lead up to the assault, she was supposedly friendly to the rapist. In these cases, it could be useful to explore the reason for the bullying victim's apparent collusion or to better understand the premises for the rape victim's positioning options in relation to the perpetrator. In other words, it could be fruitful to explore the dynamics and dilemmas of the victim position. In this article, I aim to reflect on the motivational conditions of the victim phenomenon. These reflections are based on an analysis of qualitative data produced through interviews with school children as well as on relevant secondary literature.

The reflections in this article are based on several empirical sources: The first source derives from a research project on bullying among children in school, *eXbus: Exploring Bullying in School*.[47] As part of the eXbus project, I interviewed and observed children aged between 10 and 14 in Danish schools (the first case study in this article forms part of this project). The second source derives from two other researchers: Ann-Carita Evaldsson's empirical research on relational violence[48] and Bronwyn Davies' analyses of positioning and the ethics of responsibility.[49] In both Evaldsson's and Davies' analyses, I find material for my reflections on the dilemmas of victim positioning.

The structure of the article follows a reflexive move from a first elaboration of the research questions in focus to a case of a school girl who during the five years she spent in her school class changed strategies in relation to the exclusion and bullying she was a victim of, in an attempt to enhance her possibilities of

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[47] Schott and Søndergaard eds. 2014.
[48] Evaldsson, 2007a, 2007b.
[49] Davies, 2008.

negotiating conditions for social belonging. This case is followed by the case of another school girl whose situation and social negotiations with the other girls in her class shows some of the mechanisms involved in the inertia that may be activated when social degradation takes direction. The following and last case to be included in the article opens reflections on the potentials and limitations for a girl to report assults to authorities outside of the group and thereby distance herself from the insider positioning as part of a particular 'we'. This case specifically focuses on the effects that followed from the girl being barred from experiencing the potential transformation of the discursive practices of the group, the 'we', which led to her abuse.

Elaboration of research questions

Not all 'victims' hesitate in declaring themselves to have been abused and in need of help. Many do not hesitate at all. They immediately identify the relationally aggressive act as unacceptable and position themselves and the others involved as victims and perpetrators respectively. As such, they are able to seek any legal rights associated with the form of violation in question. This lends legitimacy to their legal, moral and/or discursively condemnatory and rectifying reactions.

But some victims do hesitate. Some hesitate to the point where they never classify the act in question as abuse. And others do not just hesitate — they explicitly and actively refuse the definition or description of their position as one of victim, even when it is offered to them. For these people, being offered the victim position is seemingly more of a threat than a help.

One group of people to whom this applies is women who choose to stay in violent relationships. People around these

women often wonder: 'Why doesn't she report him? Why doesn't she leave?' If directly questioned, the victim of domestic abuse may fabricate spontaneous stories of colliding with doorframes or falling down stairs to explain her physical injuries. Not a word about being the victim of an abusive husband or partner, and no appeal for sympathy or help.

Rape victims may also hesitate to call themselves victims. Some rape victims immediately report the incident to the police, but many do not; there is a particularly high proportion of so-called dark figures within this category of aggression and crime. This is presumably due to the perceived difficulty of proving that a violation has taken place, given the specific legal practices that characterize this field. Victims may also refrain from reporting rape because of their thoughts or perceptions concerning the effect such a report would have on their social relations and on their identity. And it is perhaps in this way that we should attempt to understand Diane's hesitation. Diane was a 16, turning 17, years old school girl during the period of time, when she was part of a group of teenagers — and victim of rape by some of the boys in that group. The group belonged to the same high school environment in a town in Australia. Diane's case, which will be presented below, is part of the qualitative study used in an article by Bronwyn Davies.[50]

It can also appear difficult to admit to being a victim of bullying. Many of the adults who reported on bullying experiences to researchers in the eXbus team claimed the label 'victim of bullying'. They recounted experiences with social isolation or persecution by their fellow students for years, and

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[50] Davies, 2008. The age and school status is not made explicit in the article but communicated in a private conversation with Bronwyn Davies, who did the interview and analyses.

often claimed that such an experience of bullying had made its mark on their later adult life. However, there are also adults who have chosen to redefine or play down continuous relational aggression from their school days; who have avoided being categorized as (for example) a victim of bullying, and who hesitate, reject, deny, trivialize or remain silent about their own experiences with bullying. Some of them appear as adults in therapy, where, to their surprise, they identify a pattern in the ways they orient themselves. It is only with the therapist's intervention that this pattern is described as consistent with repeated humiliation during their school days. Others appear in interviews within completely different research projects, where past experiences of bullying reveal themselves as part of their current generation of meaning in relation to other issues. Others appear in the empirical data which eXbus collected in connection with its research into bullying.

This approach is similar to that of Katinka, whose story will be presented shortly. Katinka is a Danish school girl, whose case is part of the data generated in my research project, which, as already mentioned, is part of *eXbus: Exploring Bullying in School*. It also applies to Leena, a Swedish school girl, whose case forms part of Ann-Carita Evaldsson's research, which investigates relational aggression among Swedish school children. Leena refuses to call herself a victim. We shall return to her story later in this article.

Other researchers have also reflected upon why some victims reject the victim description. Among the possible explanations – in this case, from the field of psychology — are Anna Freud's

concepts of 'splitting'[51] and identification with the aggressor, both of which can be categorized as defense mechanisms of the ego.[52] These concepts were later employed in connection with the analyses of cases such as hostages' development of loyalty towards their captors.[53] Other conceptualizations can be found in the Marxist concept of false consciousness, which aims to explain the lack of rebellion against class oppression — a concept that has been rewritten and developed in different versions within Marxist psychology and feminism.[54]

My argument in this article does not aim to invalidate any of these approaches for understanding victim positioning. These approaches each grasp significant aspects of the phenomenon and, with careful re-tooling, could be integrated into a conceptualization of the kind this article rests upon.[55] The purpose of this article is to offer a socio-psychological angle on the dilemmas of the victim position, focusing on the options for positioning that the victim relates to and maneuvers through. This does not mean that the individual psychological or socio-political dynamics are rendered insignificant; it simply means that this article prioritizes an analytical focus on elements of the

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[51] In parts of the psychoanalytical tradition, the child is thought to experience a series of intra-psychic phases of development in which strict oppositions of good and bad constitute one of many factors that are slowly overcome so that the child is able to contain and meet others as less singular representatives of this polarity. Later in life one might find a regression to this splitting functioning as a kind of defence mechanism and, for example, switching good and bad may figure as one of many psychological survival strategies.

[52] Freud, 1971.

[53] The so-called Stockholm syndrome, see Namnyak, Tufton, Szekely, Toal, Worboys and Sampson, 2008 for a discussion of the term.

[54] See, e.g., Haug, 1988.

[55] For re-tooling as a theoretical strategy, see Søndergaard 2005a.

phenomenon that appear to be in much need of further research.[56]

This article will present analyses rooted in a basic theoretical assumption about human beings as existentially dependent on social integration into human communities. It therefore also views human beings as dependent on dignified positioning and belonging, which is based on the premises for producing and negotiating the social order immanent in this condition of existence. [57] In line with this, concepts of subjectivation, positioning, belonging and inclusion- and exclusion-dynamics will function as some of the main pillars in the analytical strategy.[58] Subjectivation refers to the double, even ambivalent, status of subject formation. Judith Butler writes:

> Power acts on the subject in at least two ways: first, as what makes the subject possible, the condition of its possibility and its formative occasion, and second, as what is taken up and reiterated in the subject's "own" acting. As a subject *of* power (where "of" connotes both "belonging to" and "wielding"), the subject eclipses the conditions of its own emergence; it eclipses power with power. The conditions not only make possible the subject but enter into the subject's formation. They are made present in the acts of that formation and in the act of the subject that follow.[59]

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[56] See also Bansel, Davies, Laws and Linnell 2009; Hepburn, 1997; Horton, 2011; Kofoed and Søndergaard eds. 2009, 2013; Schott and Søndergaard eds. 2014; Shariff, 2008; Søndergaard, 2011, 2013a, 2013b; Myong and Søndergaard, 2013.

[57] Bruner, 1993. Geertz, 1993. Guldbrandsen, 2003. Haavind, 2000. Kofoed and Staunæs, 2007. Søndergaard, 1996, 2002, 2005a, 2005b.

[58] Subjectivation, positioning, subject position, discursive practices etc. are all conceptualizations developed within poststructuralist and to some extent cultural psychological thinking (Butler, 1999, 2004; Davies, 2000; Staunæs, 2005; Søndergaard, 2002a, 2002b, 2005a, 2005b).

[59] Butler, 1997: 14.

The concept of positioning was originally defined by Rom Harré and Bronwyn Davies as a discursive process "whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced storylines".[60] In 2008 Davies critically dicussed the concept and suggested a further elaboration. The original definition, she argued, was not sufficiently sensitive to the differential power between on one hand those engaged in citational speech, which reproduces unreflected repetitions of the conventional normative order, and on the other hand those who rebel against that speech. By treating these as symmetrically positioned the analysis was rendered deceptive. Furthermore the original conceptualization failed to recognize the ethical dimension of responsibility for harm implied in such citational reiterations.[61] Today several researchers integrate such insights with conceptualizations from new materialism [62] emphasizing the material-discursive enactment of subject positioning and subject formation.[63]

Katinka in fifth grade

In this article analytical reflection is based on work with qualitative data, so we shall begin with Katinka, who forms part of eXbus' empirical data.[64] Katinka is in the fifth grade at a school in Denmark. This environment, which constitutes the

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[60] Davies, 2000: 91.
[61] Davies, 2008.
[62] Barad, 2007.
[63] Højgaard and Søndergaard, 2011; Davies, 2014.
[64] The empirical data includes interviews with school classes, essays on bullying authored by children, children's drawings of bullying situations and observations both in class and leisure time contexts. Katinka, Tobias and the children around them are found in the qualitative material from student projects under eXbus (Nina Andersen, Ditte Dalum Christoffersen and Peter Henningsen). Data has been anonymized.

space for Katinka's social and academic development, is full of tension and conflict. It is not easy to hold one's own in this school class. It is easy to do something wrong; use the wrong words, send the wrong signals or react in a wrong way to things you did not realize were sensitive. Wrong behavior is severely punished by the other children in the class through abusive language, rejection, slander, or physical attacks.

It is difficult for Katinka and many of the other children to decode the system of what is wrong, when it is wrong and for whom it is wrong. And this is exacerbated by the fact that the system appears to change continuously. Just when Katinka thinks that she has decoded the system and can react proactively in order to avoid negative positioning by others, these others read her endeavors negatively and punish her. Katinka used to cry a lot about being rejected and subjected to abusive language. Now she tries to do the same as the others — to reject and use degrading labels — but the effects are ambiguous. While the interviews indicate that some of the other girls understand this shift as a reaction over time, this understanding does not produce any reconciliatory moves towards evaluating Katinka as a potential friend.

In their interviews, the boys claim to actively avoid Katinka's company. The girls say that Katinka 'just isn't really like the rest of us' and that 'she is seen as a kind of nerd. She wants to be a snob but it doesn't really work because everybody sees her as a nerd… so she's excluded a lot of the time'. Ina remarks that all the boys bully Katinka because they think she is ugly. Ina also comments that her own mother has said that she does not understand why anyone would want to play with Katinka.
When Anna arrived as a new pupil in the class, she was quickly presented with these descriptions of Katinka and told that she

should avoid Katinka's company. Anna ignored this advice until, at some point, Katinka made a 'mistake'. Anna immediately took this as confirmation that the others had been right. Following this incident, Anna also avoided Katinka. Neither Anna nor Ina think that Katinka herself knows that she is being bullied. Ina further adds that she thinks it would be hurtful to tell Katinka about it.

What about Katinka herself? In the interview, Katinka does not describe herself as a victim of bullying, at least not initially. But she knows that there is a girl in the class who is being bullied. This girl is called ugly names (whore, bitch, etc.). However, during the interview, Katinka shifts between talking about 'the girl' and talking about 'me' being bullied. When Katinka speaks about what is happening to the girl, Katinka positions herself as a person who defends this other girl. A little later, however, bullying appears to be something that only happened in the past, again for the other girl. No one is bullied anymore, says Katinka. She claims to be friends with almost all the girls in the class; there are only two girls she 'doesn't like'.

How is it possible that the other girls position Katinka as a victim of bullying — and that the boys even speak of actively avoiding her — while Katinka herself thinks that she is friends with practically everybody and that bullying is something that happens to another girl in the class? Why does the story of her own subjection to bullying come out almost as a slip of the tongue? And why does she occasionally project the bullying into the past when her schoolmates speak of it as occurring in the present? Why is it that, during the interview, she only has a very vague memory of a fight with another girl, which the interviewer observed in the schoolyard a few days earlier? The

fight resulted in Katinka having to watch her movements carefully in order to avoid further physical confrontations. She remembers having to think strategically about her patterns of movement in the school landscape, and she can talk about this in detail. Why does she remember this part of the incident but not the fight itself?

Levels of negotiation of social reality

Katinka oscillates in her approach to whether any bullying is taking place at all — now, in fifth grade — and whether it is happening to herself or another girl. In addition, she admits her own relational aggression towards the two girls she just 'doesn't like'. Can this relational pattern be understood as a part of her tentative and unfinished efforts to reposition herself within the social space of the class?

The classmates describe how Katinka used to cry when she was subjected to abusive language and rejection. She no longer cries. Now she acts, both with a sense of purpose and a direction. Katinka approaches the other girls. She touches some of the other girls physically in order to invite friendship and she talks behind the backs of some of the others. Katinka is active in fights when she feels wronged. Importantly, by talking behind the others' backs, she actively signals her ideas about the future premises of belonging to the girl group. To this end, she acts upon and emphasizes her knowledge of the passage from child to adult: she knows what it takes to distance oneself from 'childishness' and to enter into 'youth'. [65] Katinka wants something that apparently requires a lot of work and resistance

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[65] Davies, 2000; Gulbrandsen, 2003. Haavind, 2003. Kofoed, 2008. Staunæs, 2005.

against certain parts of the current relational practices in her class. It is something that does not fit into the usual dynamics of the class. It is also something that, for Katinka, is not clearly directed towards certain members of the class. In Katinka's narratives — as well as in the narratives of her classmates — friendship and hostility change places, sometimes at daily intervals. The only relatively unambiguous feature in the picture of oppositions in the social landscape she relates to appears to be the concept of childishness and, as a result of this, the positioning of the two girls marked as ethnic others, who are nominated as special representatives of this phenomenon.

Thus, rather than settled positions, there seems to be a lot of turbulence around the conditions of being and relating in this fifth grade. It is perhaps this very turbulence that appears promising for Katinka in her attempt to renegotiate the premises for prestige and for an acceptable level of participation in school life. The concept of negotiation points to people's active participation in the constitution of social order and premises of subjectivation. This is not a consciously calculated negotiation but deals with the effect that human participation, subjectivation and becoming has on the ongoing formation of, for example, normativity, cultural codes and mutual practices of categorization[66]. In this sense the children in this school class seem to relentlessly renegotiate their conditions for social belonging.

What at first may look rather confusing might therefore be understood through distinguishing between at least three levels of negotiation of social reality as it occurs in this school class: a level that concerns the individual people who are in or out of

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[66]Søndergaard, 1996, 2002a, 2002b.

the various groups and hierarchies in the class; a level that concerns the criteria and premises for who is in or out of these groups and hierarchies; and a level that concerns whether the practices of inclusion and exclusion should play a prominent role in the class' current culture and relational patterns, which occasionally spill over into bullying. We can therefore distinguish between the three following levels:

1. The concrete level of person-nominating positioning
2. The level of positioning premises
3. The level of negotiating degrees of inclusion and exclusion practices — that is, the level of negotiating more general norms of how restrictively the premises for positioning should be managed: how violently and how rapidly one can/should activate accepting or condemning relational practices.

In a certain sense, all of the children in this fifth grade can be seen to participate in negotiations on all three levels. Through their strong engagement in mutual nominating and moving each other in and out of various positions, all the students contribute in a general way to the reproduction of the dominant role of inclusion and exclusion practices in their relational patterns — they reproduce the role of these practices as being pivotal to class life. Through the use of special pointers, such as 'snobbish', 'disloyal', 'ugly', and 'smelly', they contribute to the ongoing negotiations concerning the positioning premises. And through concrete instances of classifying Katinka as 'out' and Ina and Anna as 'in' (for example), they contribute to negotiations on the level of positioning individual schoolmates by practicing direct peer nomination.

However, what this distinction between levels can bring into focus is the directionality involved in these students' specific negotiations and the clashes and disagreements that arise — not just as an effect of the different directionalities on one level, but also as an effect of the efforts made on different levels that various participants bring into the social space. For instance, it appears that Katinka completely overlooks — or considers it unrealistic to have — the opportunity to challenge the central role that the inclusion and exclusion engagements play in this class. She does not direct her own behavior towards containing or challenging the class' preoccupation with circulating contempt and acceptance, although it is precisely this circulation that — at the most basic level — resulted in the long phase of exclusion and crying she experienced prior to adopting her active effort at positioning. Katinka's current positioning does not seem to allow for negotiation of this issue. As a marginalized person, it would always have been difficult to engage in such a negotiation, even if she had sensed the potential of its directionality.

Instead, she has adopted the class's engagement in inclusion and exclusion practices: she has accepted it and uses it as a platform for the negotiation she conducts on the other two levels. Of these two levels, her primary concern is with the level of positioning premises. Her engagement here is directed at introducing a reorientation. On the other hand, her efforts on the level of individual positioning appear to take on a more exemplifying character for her: the two girls she 'doesn't like' are not particularly interesting for her — except as points of departure for and as contrast to her new premises. Katinka is primarily engaged in redefining the positioning premises and criteria. However, in this endeavor, she stands fairly alone.

Most of the other girls accept the existing class culture as a given — for now — and concentrate instead on negotiating on the level of the specific, individual positionings.

So what change is Katinka trying to work into the existing social order at the level of positioning premises and criteria, and why does this negotiation require that she avoids the victim position? Katinka's efforts on the premises level seem intended to introduce a new set of premises that increase the likelihood of her gradually becoming able to take up a position as a more worthy and perhaps even notably attractive participant. Her strategy is to use the axis of development, which, in general, is a popular axis used for ranking children. Children are evaluated and placed along this axis by their significant adults and fellow students according to concepts such as maturity, age-appropriateness, being 'advanced for one's age' or 'too advanced for one's age' or 'too behind for one's age'.[67] This ranking is based on consensual considerations of not only normality and age but also gender, ethnicity, race and other specifications of social categories.

At an early age, children recognise the importance of this axis of development to their own legitimate participation and dignity in social and cultural communities. They also quickly learn the premises of evaluation related to positioning along the axis of development. Simultaneously, however, they themselves create parallel and specified premises for evaluation, and this is where Katinka strikes by accentuating the meanings tied to the passage from childhood to youth: you can no longer speak of 'playing together' but, rather, of 'being together'. You have to be more fashion conscious. You cannot act 'like a baby'. In support of

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[67] Haavind, 2014.

this negotiation effort, Katinka has a range of intra-acting discourses and materialities at her disposal, such as the body's relative biological development, age and artifacts (make-up, clothes, bags, technologies).[68] And these are closely connected to more general social discourses about, for example, fashion, youth, beauty, ethnicity and gender. Katinka also has the social, economic and youth-competent support from her mother as an external force in aid of developing discourses as well as practices and consumption that can signal being 'closer to 'womanhood' than childhood'. However, what Katinka does not have is the other children's recognition of these elements as a platform for the creation of worthy participation. For Katinka, however, there is hope in the power constituted by the 'taken for granted' nature of the axis of development with its promises of transfer from childhood to youth as something all children have to experience.

Katinka's efforts thus include the use of age as a category ('the others are still childish, but the axis of development is working for me'), but also the use of ethnicity: the ethnically other do not participate in the right way within the premises that privilege youth. Aisha, whose attempts include knowing the fashionable names of cosmetics and accessories and claiming access to the consumption of both, is the object of ridicule in Katinka's narrative. An ethnic other insisting on her rights to the advanced premises that (the more mature) Katinka uses in order to claim social legitimacy for herself will only provoke Katinka. Katinka conflates age and ethnicity in Aisha's character: Aisha attempts to influence the creation of premises

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[68] For the concept of the material-discursive enactment, see, e.g. Barad, 2007; Højgaard and Søndergaard, 2011, Søndergaard, 2013a. See Barad, 2007 more specifically concerning the concept of intra-action.

in similar ways to Katinka, but being ethnically other and not 'perfect' in Katinka's eyes makes Katinka push her that further away from the powers of definition. If Aisha were to gain access to this power, Katinka would risk a dilution of the new premises and see a diminishment of their potency in the process of positioning, which is intended to bring about Katinka's own dignity and inclusion. The difference between Katinka and Aisha is therefore actively produced in Katinka's narratives and accentuated through sensual appeals that postulate the different smell of the ethnic others. 'They smell odd. They smell Pakistani- and African-like, and yuck!' she says.

Thus, Katinka's participation in the social negotiations is primarily directed towards the level of premises. On the other hand, the other children in the class have invested much of their engagement on the level of individual positioning — in the negotiation of which children should be included into which groups and where in the hierarchies. In this organization, the two other levels' current status and content are seen as more or less given. While some of the other children may be able to sense the future potential in Katinka's suggestions for new premises, to some extent, her efforts can be negated by using the label 'snob'.

Social mobility and negotiation tools

Markings, challenges or reproduction on all three levels take place through commentary, slander, distancing, grimacing, and physical violence; these tools are part of a repertoire that has seemingly been developed over a number of years in this school class. The different children and groups of children utilize this repertoire in their relational practices when they actively work to position and reposition themselves and each other. They

seem to spend a great deal of energy on these positioning efforts. In fact, the children's narratives indicate that positioning efforts constitute the primary element, while the school activities constitute the secondary element, in the collective engagement of the children's group.

The tools are employed in different quantities at different times. This is true not only for the girls' group. In the boys' group, the same tools are used, though with increased emphasis on physical violence. This is perhaps what has made Tobias, one of Katinka's classmates, choose a different strategy. For some time, Tobias has been the target of and loser in the violent interactions within the boys' group, and, contrary to Katinka, he has chosen to categorize himself as being in the victim position. Tobias' problem, however, is that his positioning is not working as 'intended' when it comes to receiving help from authorities outside the violent relations. In spite of his descriptions of his position as a victim and his appeal to teachers and parents for help, Tobias experiences only trivialization and suspicion from the adults.[69]

Perhaps Katinka has learned from Tobias' situation, though most likely not on a reflective level. But, from her time as someone who would cry and appeal for inclusion in the shared social arena, she is likely to have gathered some experiences concerning the lack of help, which, in some way, has directed her towards another strategy. She has moved from appealing for help (crying) to attempting neutral survival to finally making an

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[69] Here lies another subtlety that needs to be considered when dealing with the avoidance of victim positions: the victim position's implicit promise of realization of rights and help from outside the group is not always fulfilled. For some, this might be the most obvious reason for not explicitly declaring oneself a victim.

active effort to become a participant in the space in which she is obliged to live her childhood.

By taking as her point of departure her two ethnically different classmates, by declaring the rest of the girls to be her friends, by revising the narrative of bullying into a story about the past, and by adopting and actively participating in the fifth grade's practice of circulating contempt but renegotiating the content of its directionality, Katinka attempts to move towards a more secure social position. Katinka hopes that she is actively moving away from being marginalized and away from being 'smaller'. However, the negotiation is far from over. And it is here, at the point of inconclusiveness, insecurity and hope that we may begin to understand the inconsistencies in her narrative.

Is Katinka being bullied or not? Is there bullying in the present or only in the past? Perhaps there is still bullying, but, if so, the bullying is, at least according to Katinka, now happening to others. And, if someone is being bullied, Katinka will help, since bullying has the potential to come full circle ("what if it comes back to you?") and should therefore be avoided. Yet throughout most of the interview, Katinka states that she is not being bullied in her new position. With this statement, Katinka declares that a better present or future is already in existence. If she wishes to be successful in her (desired) repositioning, it is important that she holds on to and reproduces a narrative in which she is not being bullied. If she had presented herself as a former and current victim of bullying, she would thereby have contributed to (re)producing a picture of herself with the characteristics from which she most emphatically wishes to distance herself. So, no, she is not being bullied and the schoolyard fight was insignificant! In fact, she can hardly

remember it. In so far as it has any significance at all, she was certainly in control of the situation — at least afterwards, when she proved capable of surveying her options of movement in order to avoid further confrontation. This, she remembers: her mastering this situation, an important point in the revision of her narrative of self as related to the interviewer. The mastery! Not the fact that the fight took place.

In a certain way, the oppositions in the interview between bullying and not bullying, bullying of Katinka and bullying of others, and bullying in the past versus bullying in the present all function as areas of dry land in the marshy landscape of meanings and practices through which Katinka moves — shifting between success and failure. In some places, the ground beneath her gives way and, in other places, the ground holds temporarily before subsiding and requiring a new jump. She has to balance her act between, on the one hand, naming her fear and tendency to marginalization (risking the reproduction of this position), and, on the other hand, naming the new and hopefully future situation (friends with everyone, mastering most situations, not bullied, someone who sets the premises of inclusion and exclusion through markers of youth) in order to draw attention to the new as something that already exists in the present. However, neither of these points can really become sustainable claims to reality unless others recognize their enunciative power. As soon as the statements are disqualified by others, Katinka is forced to look for other areas of dry land in her attempt to stay proactive in setting premises of description.

Another look at splitting and aggression

Katinka is moving on. To call herself a marginalized victim of bullying would be to drag herself back. The interviewer who focuses on bullying must therefore be handled with caution in this kind of balancing act, because who is to know in which direction the interviewer will draw her self-narrative? If the interviewer calls for a victim narrative, she can expect silence. If the interviewer calls for a narrative of mastery, that is ok — but will she deliver recognition in return? Does the interviewer receive the narrative in a way that can be used for validation? Katinka hesitates and leaps around.

So is it 'identification with the aggressor' that we see in Katinka? Well, yes, to some extent we could use this conceptualization. But aggressor in this context is not present as an individual perpetrator of aggression. Perhaps it is more a question of a repertoire of premises and tools of interaction in the fifth grade culture that have been developed and further sophisticated over time. Seen through a socio-psychological lens, the aggression can be thought of as having the character of a social and cultural dynamic, gathered and employed by a group of children and either not challenged at all or only unsuccessfully so by the adults around them. One may also want to question the explanatory usefulness of a concept of identification that depends on a notion of fixed patterns in the personal psyche. Katinka does in fact show herself to be fairly flexible in her relational adaptation strategies. There is more mobility and flexible analysis, more adaptation and reorientation, and more attempts at exercising influence involved in her processing than the concepts of splitting and identification in a strictly individualizing focus would appear to be able to explain.

Upon further reflection, we might even consider that splitting may just as well be understood as something found in strategies and cultural guidelines as in a fixed pattern of orientation in her personality. Katinka shifts and adapts her strategies in a constant decoding of social possibilities of movement and in evaluation of the effects of her strategies. She appropriates strategies and practices of orientation. Both positionings and strategies are tied to certain people at certain times: to the friend who is bullied, to herself as a victim of bullying, to herself as the one who helps her friend and herself, or simply to the 'dry land in the marshes' used in her efforts at repositioning in a complex social space. 'Splitting' as division could also be re-conceptualized as the dry land Katinka moves between and therefore not as fixed inner psychic formations.

We will be able to produce other points of departure for intervention if we take up reconceptualizations of this kind and try to understand Katinka through her efforts to achieve inclusion and worthy participation rather than through concepts of psychological pathology.[70]

Leena and the inertia of the victim position

In Ann-Carita Evaldsson's research on relational aggression among 11-12 year-old girls in a Swedish school class, we are presented with Leena in verbal interaction with Nahrin, Elisa and Jacky who have gradually escalated their attempts to position Leena as problematic.[71] Leena faces moral degradation; she is described as someone who breaks with the social and moral norms of friendship and is labeled disloyal. She is marked

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[70] Søndergaard, 2014b.
[71] Evaldsson, 2007a, 2007b.

as 'mad' (a 'psycho' who has been admitted to the hospital and who, the girls joke, can 'stay there for a thousand years until you're dead so there won't be time for you to feel better'.[72] Leena is mocked for giving money to the boys, for talking behind the backs of the other girls, and for being a person without friends. This process escalates until, at the end of the research period, Elisa threatens Leena with physical violence.[73] Evaldsson's report presents Leena as moving from a marginalized position to total exclusion from the girls' group.

Leena's strategy is to defend herself. She claims that the other girls do not know anything about her that could justify their attacks. She tries to appeal to a more factual exchange by conceding that she had indeed been admitted to a psychiatric ward for a short while. She follows up this information with an appeal for understanding — an appeal that is quickly interrupted and ignored by the other girls. The exchange draws Leena ever deeper into degradation and accusations and, according to Evaldsson's analysis, Leena herself to some extent begins to participate in the escalation of accusations by acknowledging them as accusations that need to be met offensively. Leena and the three girls move into increasingly direct and unyielding confrontations revolving around Leena's moral character. Evaldsson's analysis draws attention to the relational aggression as an expression of gender 'policing' and social control[74] but generally places more emphasis on the point that relational aggression should not be understood as one-dimensional and static, but rather as a dynamic phenomenon that grows out of and adjusts to the verbal interactions of

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[72] Evaldsson, 2007b: 394-395.
[73] Evaldsson, 2007a: 327.
[74] Frosh et al. 2002.

everyday life.[75] It is the marginalizing effects of Leena's constant rejection of the negative descriptions delivered by the other girls which Evaldsson finds particularly interesting in her analysis of the girls' verbal interaction.[76]

Drawing out these analytical points is interesting when it comes to understanding relational aggression. However, I am more interested in an aspect that Evaldsson does not address directly; namely, that Leena is upset by Nahrin's statement that Leena used to be bullied. This is a statement that Leena cannot accept under any circumstances. She does not deny having been admitted to hospital, and she is able to answer accusations that she gave money to boys (by suggesting the others are jealous). But she cannot accept being called a victim of bullying — seemingly crosses the line. Only at this point do she and the others begin shouting at each other.[77] There is no way she has been bullied. She has been teased, once! But not bullied! For the other girls it is equally important to insist that she *has* in fact been bullied. They demand that she admit it.

What is at stake here? Why is the recounting of the events as bullying so central to the girls' argument? Why can that naming itself be used offensively by the excluding girls while the victim of bullying for her part is fighting to remove that description from herself? Could Leena not have taken that label and turned it into an offensive along the following lines: 'Yes, I've been bullied once already and therefore recognize it when I see it. You are bullying me, which isn't acceptable, so please stop right

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[75] Evaldsson, 2007a.
[76] Evaldsson, 2007b: 400.
[77] Ann-Carita Evaldsson uses print norms from conversation analysis where pausing, intonation, phrasing, etc., are noted and thus enables a reading of this kind of detail of the transcription.

away. Otherwise I'll call upon forces greater than us, on authorities whose explicit focus and politics are to counter bullying. I'll tell the teachers and the school board … .' Could Leena not, albeit in her own words, have taken up the victim position, joined the category of victims and used it to claim the rights of the victim? Would that not have set the girls straight and made them reconsider? Would they not have acknowledged their aggression and the illegitimacy of their actions? Would they not have turned a critical eye upon themselves and then turned to welcome Leena into their group?

The point is that they probably would not. It is highly unlikely that they would have acknowledged their actions as wrong and adopted a favorable stance towards Leena; otherwise, Leena would probably not have hesitated for a moment in claiming herself a victim of bullying. But she does not even consider this option. Leena reacts immediately with the strategy of denial: she has never been bullied! She has been teased! Once! At another school! And only for a short time!

Denial of victim status as a strategy of social survival

Leena, like Katinka, is very active in negotiating positioning practices, but Leena's situation differs from Katinka's in several ways. Firstly, she is more dependent on the aggressive girls because the class comprises twenty boys but only five girls. As Leena says, this ratio is the reason why the group has to stick together.[78] In Katinka's class, there were more girls amongst whom she could move relationally.

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[78] Evaldsson, 2007a: 322.

Secondly, Leena's case is not only a matter of marginalization within the girls' group but of actual exclusion from the group altogether. Leena attempts to negotiate on all three positioning levels: individual positioning (she should be included in the girls' group), premises for positioning (it must be alright to give money to a boy and to have been admitted to hospital), and, to a certain degree, also on the level concerning whether practices of inclusion and exclusion should have such a prominent role in the class (since there are only five girls, they will have to stick together and accept the group as a given). However, the other girls gradually lose interest in her efforts, regardless of which level Leena activates. The girls slowly move towards withdrawing her negotiation legitimacy altogether and on all levels. The development thus does not stop with Leena being marginalized within the group but moves towards excluding her from the group altogether. In the context of a school class environment divided by gender, this is a positioning in no man's land. In other words, it poses a social and existential threat to Leena.[79] And, apparently, it is the definition of her as "victim of bullying" that threatens to realize the final exclusion. Leena's example offers an additional possibility for reflection in relation to Katinka's case in the questions it raises concerning how victim positioning in certain situations can become a platform not only for marginalization but also for further escalation of the marginalization and victimization leading to total exclusion.

Firstly, we should again focus on the fact that designating the victim simultaneously amounts to pointing out the losing and weaker party in a relation. By invoking the meaning of this position, the images of Leena as a previously subordinated and weak person are made real for the other girls. These images of

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[79] Søndergaard, 2014a.

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Leena lend a certain generalizing effect to the other girls' marginalizing offensive: 'We're not the only ones who think that you are unworthy of social inclusion. The others did so too, earlier, in your previous school environment; it is actually an evaluation that more people, maybe even lots of people, agree upon'.

Another part of the explanation for the escalation of the process lies in the inertia that may be activated when degradation takes direction — that is, the degraded can be made the object of further degradation while no sense of respect, or responsibility or fear of punishment from the already socially weakened person herself or her allies intervenes to slow the developing dynamics. When the movement from marginalization to exclusion is in process, alliances may on the contrary be further weakened around the degraded person because the allies will fear that the degradation will infect them too. Others may therefore feel safer if they quickly cut or slacken ties (less empathy, understanding, defense of, company with) in order to decrease the risk of being associated with the degraded person and his or her positioning.

The forces with the potential to stall this kind of inertia could be found in the collision between more stably manifested ties and alliances — perhaps stabilized through a strong shared interest between the victim and one or several others, a shared responsibility towards something, a shared practice of understanding, a shared aversion, or some other shared feature that has somehow been strong enough to resist, drown out or compensate for the wave of degradation. Such forces appear to be absent in Leena's relations with others.

If there are no such elements of alliance or shared responsibility to stop the process, a special mechanism comes into play in the aforementioned inertia. It is a mechanism that grows out of the fact that from victim positioning as such, one cannot or only with great difficulty fight or negotiate within the boundary of the group. Resistance from the position of the (isolated) victim has to rely on forces outside the group. This has to do with the way that marginalization proportionately weakens the victim's legitimacy as negotiator within the group. The relatively more marginalized has relatively less access to powers of definition and negotiation of the group's social reality. [80] When the possibility to reposition and elevate oneself through relations to others, activities or the necessity to contribute to something shared is no longer acknowledged, the victim is left to pull him or herself up by his or her own hair. This is why the (isolated) victim is forced to ally him- or herself with forces outside the group for help when negotiating the definition of dignity and premises for positioning.

However, through this alliance with forces outside the group, the victim is also easily moved away from some central dimensions of the group. The person loses touch with the collective and the taken for granted 'we' that constitutes the group's coherence. This is why the fact that the other girls' labeling of Leena as a previous victim appears to be socially far more threatening than her being called immoral and disloyal in the present. Morality and loyalty can be discussed and made object for claims to powers of definition — even in an offensive by Leena — in relation to premises of participation. But the victim position does not give Leena any basis inside the group for claiming powers of definition. As a victim, she is not only

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[80] Søndergaard, 1996, 2011, 2014a.

unworthy; she has also left the position as someone with influence. She has resigned from the common understanding and practice in the group. She is no longer 'disagreeing from the inside'. Through her alliance with external forces, she 'disagrees from the outside'. Should she and her alliance approach the group from the outside, it would only contribute further to making the group members inside close ranks against her.

Having come this far, we might ask: If Leena cannot be accepted into this group, could she not otherwise benefit from receiving external help (requested by her) based on her position as a self-declared victim of bullying and aggression? Perhaps. First of all, however, we do not know, with Tobias in mind, to what extent such help is actually available. There is no information in Evaldsson's texts about the school culture in which Leena lives. We do not know whether it is a culture that acknowledges and attempts to solve her types of problems, or whether it is a culture that ignores and trivializes such issues or perhaps even considers them natural and unavoidable. Perhaps it is a culture that appeals to individualizing explanations and considers the victim position as per definition self-inflicted; or perhaps it is a culture that perceives contempt and degradation as processes that other children and surrounding adults should validate and strengthen. All these possibilities and more exist.

Secondly, a clumsy intervention may appear to be more destructive than no intervention at all. If Leena calls for help and it arrives in the form of a superficial demand that the group behave and let Leena participate in their activities, then Leena as — an uninvited participant — will have her legitimacy deposited in a power external to the group, which will function to constantly devalue her access to the group's collective 'we'. In

order to have influence as a member of a social group, it is necessary to have a legitimate access to the shared 'we': 'we' have this or that task, opinion, interest, communality, or, as in Evaldsson's analyses, morality and normativity, through which 'we' act and evaluate the world, ourselves and each other. This 'we' is only obtained through the group's acknowledgement. The group's acknowledgment of participant worthiness determines the legitimacy of enunciative and participatory positioning. This cannot simply be enforced on the group from the outside. Others may enforce a mask, a proper behavior, a set of rules based on threats of sanctions — but others cannot enforce the implicit, taken for granted and subtle rules of the 'we'. The constructive intervention which 'others' could engage in would have to consist of helping a 'we' along and creating the conditions to facilitate its establishment and its expansion of the premises of its constitution — but others would never be able to forcibly bring about and dictate a 'we'.

Leena could benefit from her school having the competence to support such a 'we' that would include her. However, an insensitively enforced group membership would be more likely to function as a further barrier. Perhaps Leena has already sensed that no external forces can help her, and that victim positioning therefore carries no potential for integration for her in the long run. In any case, she refuses to resign from the collective 'we'. Through her constant rejection of the accusations, her self-justifications and counter-accusations, she continues to insist on her participation in the 'we' and on her legitimacy in negotiating membership premises from inside the group, as well as in negotiating rules and standards for morality and normativity: it is ok to have been admitted to hospital, ok to have given a bit of money to Nicko, ok to be Leena — in the

group. But in the confrontation concerning her having been a previous victim of bullying, she meets an overwhelming power of exclusion. This is far from being a negotiation of participation premises. This is about marking her for exclusion and dissolving her inclusion in the 'we'.[81]

Diane and the hope for a dignifying transformation

The last point I want to make on the dilemmas of the victim positioning concerns the victim's experience of the possibilities for a transformation of the oppressive forces. This point draws together three of the previous points: first the point concerning the social imperative of inclusion in human community and, therefore, the processes of creating social order as a necessary medium for subjectivation, agency and development; second the point on levels of negotiation of the social order and, third, the point about accessibility to the process of negotiation and the power of definition based on the group's acknowledgement of an individual's membership of the collective 'we'. The conditions for victim positioning could be further elaborated on many levels, but, for the purposes of this article, these three points can serve as perspectives for reflecting on the potential for transformation, which a victim might be able to perceive and by which a victim may be influenced. Diane's story functions as the analytical catalyst for the following reflection.

As already mentioned, we find Diane in an Australian high school youth context.[82] She is part of a mixed-sex group of friends of which some are involved in heterosexual romantic

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[81] Søndergaard, 2005a, 2011, 2014a.
[82] Davies, 2008.

relationships. [83] The girls who are not in established relationships are called 'dogs' by the boys. This is meant to indicate that the girls are sexually available on a more arbitrary basis than those positioned in relationships. 'Dog' is not a name with which the girls are necessarily familiar, but the name creates meanings, practices and positionings in the group.

One evening, Jeff and one of the other boys from the group meet Diane. They take her to a park and subject her to a violent sexual assault. Diane returns home crying and tells her sister that 'the boys had been mean, they had hurt her'. The sister responds: 'No, this is not meanness, this is rape. It is gang rape'. As Davies writes, the sister removes the boys from their potential boyfriend positions and repositions them as criminals. The sister makes Jeff recognizable as a gang rapist. Diane is at first unsure about how to react to this offer of understanding and about whether to report the incident, but the sister insists, and Diane ends up reporting the incident to the police.

In the analysis, Davies emphasizes that, through the name 'dog', Diane not only figures as sexually available and simultaneously unworthy as a potential girlfriend (which is Jeff's definition of the term), but also that she is subjected to certain practices based on this label. Dog is not only a name but a position in the group. It is this label that opens a particular positioning and paves the way for the rape as an acceptable act for the boys. The positioning indicates and cites the norms for how 'good girls' should behave, and Diane is recognized and made recognizable through the naming, whether or not she is aware of its existence.

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[83] Bronwyn Davies' text builds on an interview with one of Diane's two rapists, Jeff, when he was 17 years old.

Davies' main point in the article deals with the responsibility for citation of oppressive naming and discourses. In Diane's case, the focus is therefore on Jeff's responsibility for citing the 'dog' discourse and the way that this citation is used and leads to the sexual assault. Davies is here interested in the opposition between citation and resistance; she is interested in Jeff as the one who continues to cite the dog discourse right up to the indictment, and in Diane who permits this discourse to shape her understanding of the positionings within the group. Diane does this in spite of the fact that she has experienced its consequences as evil in this particular incident, and in spite of the fact that she does not have direct access to the main term driving the boys' citation, namely 'dog'. Diane is orientated through this discourse until the sister intervenes. The sister's intervention, on the other hand, gets its power from the law: a strong, external apparatus of definition and intervention.

There is, however, one particular detail in this case that has aroused my curiosity. This concerns Diane's hesitation in relation to breaking out of the 'dog' discourse — including the version where the name dog is not used directly but nonetheless is productive in relation to her and the other girls' position and understanding of themselves and others. Within the 'dog' discourse and the 'we' that it permeates, it is not a straightforward matter to attach the words rape and crime to the incident in the park.

Davies' main interest is related to the freedom that the sister's insistence on an alternative discourse opens up for Diane. But I find it interesting to listen more carefully to the kind of hesitation that Diane exposes in order for us to understand the victim's dilemma. Diane cannot have been ignorant of the legal

discourse that criminalizes rape. It is unthinkable that she would not have had access to an understanding of the park incident within this discourse. Ignorance simply cannot explain her hesitation; there must be something else at stake. One way to continue this line of thought might be to consider the various potentials for transformation and for re-establishing dignity that can be found in the various victim strategies — in this case, simply the two strategies that Diane oscillates between.

Diane's report to the police establishes a clear barrier between her and the group. In all likelihood, it marks the final dissolution of Diane's access to the 'we' that used to centre the group.[84] The meanings, discourses and practices created in the group — with all their inconsistencies — have also shaped and subjectivated Diane. She has lived her identity, her personal narrative, meaning and agency through these discourses and practices. They have lived and worked in and through Diane and in and through the group to produce a meaningful 'we'. Marking the dissolution of Diane's access to this 'we' therefore also means that Diane cuts herself off from having influence from inside the 'we'. Her report to the police will certainly have consequences for the further constitution of the 'we', but, for her part, the 'we' will most likely be transformed as she leaves it and resigns her position as a legitimate member. She will not experience the transformation, which might have included her in a way that acknowledged her dignity.

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[84] This may not be the case in all cases of relational aggression. In some cases (of bullying, violence, hate crimes) the 'we' may possibly be restored after internal or externally facilitated transformation. But I guess a case like Diane's, containing that kind of intimate violation, involvement of police and legal punishment, will make healing of the 'we' particularly difficult. That is why the case is particularly helpful for reflections on further aspects of victim dilemmas.

But not only is she barred from this transformation from the inside, she is also cut off from experiencing the transformation of the discursive practices of the 'we' and the way they permeated her. The transformation in her must be undertaken without the support of a simultaneous transformation of the group and the collective processes that have lived through her and formed her. She must, figuratively speaking, pull out all the plugs of the collective processes in her old group and try to find new connections/discursive practices into which these plugs can fit — in the hope that this will enable more dignifying discursive currents to run through her.

To acknowledge that she has been raped (victim of a criminal act) and to report the rapists (in this case, to criminalize her friends) therefore carries a number of meanings for Diane. Firstly, of course, it means that generally accepted legal and moral concepts will be attached to the incident and that justice can run its course in accordance with these concepts. Secondly, it also means that Diane loses a social inclusion that has been important for her — irrespective of what we might think of it.

Thirdly, there is the consequence that the breaking of the 'we' that has formed Diane deprives her of the hope that, at some point, she can access the restoring, dignifying and healing process, that this 'we' — of all 'we's' — apologizes, adjusts its meanings, makes reparations and reinstates Diane in a dignified position. This would not, from the perspective of such a wish, take the form of a forced confession, but rather a movement and adjustment of the 'we' with Diane as a part of the group, whose 'inside' also constitutes a subjectivating force in and for Diane herself. Diane relinquishes the hope of experiencing such a transformation.

She therefore also cuts herself off from the possibility of ever actively and purposefully leaving the 'we' and choosing another, from a position of having been healed and having had her sense of dignity restored from inside the group. This scenario could also have allowed her to make the break with the knowledge that in the remaining 'we', there would no longer be positioning practices containing degrading forces of the kind that had permeated and subjectivated her.

Viewed from a position outside a group like Diane's, one might easily think that such a hope for intra-group transformation is naive and unrealistic,[85] but that does not prevent the person belonging to the group from retaining such a hope, irrespective of how degrading and oppressive the inclusion premises might have been. Diane may obviously have hoped that, at some point, there might be a dignified position for her, in whatever way dignity was constituted in this group through gendered meanings and positionings inside and outside heterosexual relationships.

Avoidance of the victim category's over-determination

Diane chose to report the gang rape. She simultaneously left her group of friends and entered the category 'victims of rape'. Diane had the law on her side, and her accusation was upheld

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[85] It is for example a typical reaction in cases of bullying where a child continues to approach a certain group that just as consistently continues to exclude, humiliate and bully — despite there being other children in the social space who could be approached instead. In order to understand the desperation demonstrated by such a child in his/her hope for inclusion, one might benefit from considering the kind of healing and transformation possibilities tied to gaining acknowledgement from precisely this group rather than others. The victim's perception here is that the group that took away his or her dignity can also give it back.

by the court. Davies' article provides no information about what happened to Diane after this process, but we might ponder her options. Who might Diane be after such an event and after the court case? Diane has many options when considering how to move on with her life. She no longer has to deal with a degrading group's oppressive positioning practices. She has an opportunity to seek out new social relations with new and more dignified offers of positioning. But there could also be challenges tied to moving into new spaces and relations with the name 'rape victim' attached more or less visibly.

Leena experienced the 'new' schoolmates' knowledge of her earlier experiences as a victim of bullying as very burdensome in her efforts to become an accepted and integrated part of the new environment. The 'victim label' stuck and was used in the new social space to marginalize her even further. Katinka, on the other hand, used to cry and be left out. The other girls conflated this information with a host of other markers to form an overall evaluation to the effect that Katinka 'just really was different' and that her exclusion was her own fault.

Diane may be able to turn her encounter with the group of friends and the positioning as a rape victim into successful positionings in new contexts — depending on the nature of the new contexts. But she may, on the other hand, also run into many other ways of trying to understand 'rape victim'. For instance, she may choose or be forced to play a walk-on part in the political efforts of others, or she may become an extra in relations where she, by being categorized as a victim (and thereby 'othered' in new ways), can contribute to the self-affirmation of others, who, in the light of her experiences, can breathe more easily and think: at least I am not the kind of person who has experienced something like that.

All categorizations have an impact. But the undesired victim categories tend to have very strong impacts and effects. Often, very clear and socially legitimized identity aspects are required to compensate for the impacts, effects and signification that a victim category entails: the child incest victim, the raped teenage girl, the child with bruises from a parent's daily abuse — who can look beyond and past these elements of categorization and see the human being with the needs, feelings, views, humor etc. that are also part of these people's being and agency?

The victim categories affect and shade how we interpret contributions and efforts of interaction. This is yet another reason why some people either try to avoid being categorized as victims or why they conceal an early experience when they change context. It becomes problematic when the children at a new school are told that the new girl in the class was a victim of bullying at her previous school, since this affects the evaluation of her both by the other children and by the adults. It is problematic if the young woman on her first date after an assault happens to reveal that she is a former rape victim; romance and eroticism will immediately take on a different hue and be overshadowed by all sorts of associations with that kind of event. It presents problems to a child if he overhears the others in the new sports club whispering about his violent parent and exchanging ideas about whether, with this in mind, he might be good at fighting or whether he is a cry-baby. In a new social situation, it is best to appear intact and with a current and hitherto unchallenged dignity.

Conclusion

It appears that there is no easy answer to the question of why 'victims' do not always take the victim position upon themselves, call for external help, and demand that their rights are respected. There are many dilemmas tied to positioning oneself as a victim: resigning group membership, potentially losing social inclusion, renouncing a shared understanding and concept of dignity that has constituted a collective 'we' and through which the 'victim' has been subjectivated, losing identity, and renouncing hope for a group internal compensation and healing — just to mention a few.

In this light, it is important to note that, despite their good intentions, standard recipes for concrete forms of intervention may be quite ineffective, if not counter-productive.[86] Ideas for intervention against bullying should obviously be considered in the context in which the bullying occurs. But socio-technical recipes may prove to be quite insufficient in the encounter with complex social, cultural and subjective dynamics of the kind considered in this article. In many cases, there will be a greater need for a qualified understanding that takes a sensitive approach to the complexities of the dynamics in the relational aggression, if the intervention is to have a positive effect for the victims themselves. In other words, it is important to be aware of the difference between socio-technical competence and competencies related to process and constitution interventions. Therefore, an ethics tied to processes that seek to help 'victims' of relational aggression also needs to include dignity-generating potentials in the intervention processes themselves. The processes need to incorporate how the 'victim' is categorized,

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[86] Søndergaard, 2014b.

referred to and addressed. They need to determine which categorizations and inclusion potentials can support the 'victim' through the processes activated by an intervention. And they need to discover which alternatives become available during the processes and how this affects the dignity of the victim during the process. Interventions also need to find ways to work with the perpetrators and the other participants in the social group where aggressive relating takes place.

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Dorte Marie *Søndergaard*, Professor in Social Psychology, at the department of Education at Aarhus University, Denmar

Posthuman performativity, gender and 'school bullying': Exploring the material-discursive intra-actions of skirts, hair, sluts, and poofs

Jessica Ringrose and Victoria Rawlings

I n this article we take off from critiques of psychological and school bullying typologies as creating problematic binary categories of bully and victim and neglecting socio-cultural aspects of gender and sexuality. We review bullying research informed by Judith Butler's theories of discursive performativity, which help us to understand how subjectification works through performative repetitions of heterosexual gender norms. We then build on these insights drawing on the feminist new materialist approach of Karen Barad's posthuman performativity, which we argue enlarges our scope of inquiry in profound ways. Barad's theories suggest we move from psychological models of the inter-personal, and from Butlerian notions of discursive subjectification, to ideas of discursive-material intra-action to consider the more-than-human relationalities of bullying. Throughout the article, we demonstrate the approach using examples from qualitative research with teens in the UK and Australia, exploring non-

human agentic matter such as space, objects and time as shaping the constitution of gender and sexual bullying events. Specifically we examine the discursive-material agential intra-actions of skirts and hair through which 'girl' and 'boy' and 'slut' and 'gay' materialise in school spacetimematterings. In our conclusion we briefly suggest how the new materialism helps to shift the frame of attention and responses informing gendered intra-actions in schools.

Keywords: Butler, Barad, New materialism, Bullying, Gender, Heterosexuality, intra-action, spacetimematterings, agential realism.

Introduction

The breadth of research on bullying in schools (including collections of works such as this special edition of Confero) is a testament to both the high stakes associated with school and youth bullying itself and its so far 'unsolved' status. Youth bullying has been the subject of increasing investment, public concern, political pressure and academic exploration, it remains one of the key educational issues of contemporary times, especially in light of its assumed 'changing nature' with the influx of digital-social technologies. At the crux of the issue, however, are the institutional and experiential realities of the young people at school where exclusion, violence and great distress can manifest in a variety of forms of "ill-health"[87], including what are referred to as academic attrition, depression, self-harm, substance misuse and suicide. At times, it seems as if the complexities of experience and context are lost, however,

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[87] Lenz-Taguchi and Palmer, 2013

within broader academic discussions of bullying, where the focus is often on its definitive nature and potential 'solutions'.

At present, the most influential academic and popular theories, methods and models of understanding bullying stem from psychological frameworks [88]. Much of this literature is concerned with articulating bullying typologies, constructing psychological dispositions of students and fixed personality traits and models of inter-personal relationships to interpret and predict bullying behaviour [89]. We have been a part of sociological critiques of psychological typologies, which are understood to create individual roles and definitional restrictions around victim, bully or bystander, for instance, which individualise, and separate out the relations of bullying into fixed categories that may refuse the messy complexities of social relations in school and beyond[90]. Ringrose and Renold[91] have noted that these categories and identities once solidified can work to pathologize or demonize all the players in bullying dramas, including educators who have not devised appropriate methods to ban bullying from their premises through zero tolerance policies. Indeed, despite the growth of policies and programs, deficit based anti-bullying policies (which locate the problem within the individual psychological subject rather than relate it to external power relations) have not seemed to work to change bullying 'behaviours', which remain common across a multitude of schooling environments[92].

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[88] Rawlings et al, 2012
[89] Olweus, 1978, 1993, 1997
[90] Duncan, 1999, Ellwood and Davies, 2010, Walton, 2005
[91] Ringrose and Renold, 2010
[92] Meyer, 2008, Walton, 2011

A range of contemporary studies have demonstrated that bullying practices should be investigated in relation to context, climate or other spatial and temporal factors[93]. In this article, we want to build on socio-cultural approaches that enable us to explore discursive and material systems of regulation, particularly around gender. First we explore bullying research inspired by the theoretical work of Judith Butler, which demonstrates how bullying is not merely individual or psychological, but made possible through a system of ordered *performances* and repetitions of normative gender and (hetero)sexual *discourses,* centred on enacting complex inclusions and exclusions[94]. We aim to show how theories of gender performativity that have informed bullying research could be enhanced through taking seriously the new materialist Baradian approach to *posthuman performativity,* which shows how discourses can only manifest through context specific material agents. We draw on data from our own studies as well as other's research to rethink bullying through a posthuman performativity lens. In selecting this data we have sought to choose moments that resonate with us, and that hold some kind of affective force,[95] for as MacLure says, "at their most lively, examples have a kind of affective agency – a power to reach out and connect forcefully with the reader, to open up questions, and to summon more than can be said in so many words."[96] Our feeling is that practical examples are what animate and make possible the theoretical discussion.

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[93] Galloway & Roland, 2004, Horton, 2011, Kofoed and Ringrose, 2012, Kosciw, Greytak and Diaz, 2009, Poteat, Espelage and Koenig, 2009
[94] Benjamin, Nind, Hall, Collins and Sheehy, 2003
[95] Here we use affect through a Spinozian and Deleuzian lens highlighting the capacities of bodies and things to affect one another, which can complement the Baradian notions of agency and the mapping of agential human and non-human relations in important ways (see Ringrose and Renold, forthcoming)
[96] MacLure ,2013, pp. 627-628

Butler's discursive performativity

Research informed by Judith Butler has been important in studies of gender, sexuality and education by foregrounding how gender and sex must be denaturalised in order to break through what she calls a heterosexual matrix of power relations[97]. Butler's approach has also helped us to understand discursive norms and regulation of norms through which bullying is said to take place through her theories of discursive performativity. Butler conceptualises gender as an individual 'stylised act' of the body that informs collective systems of meaning and ways of being. In this way gender becomes something that is 'done' (rather than simply is) through habitual repetition of corporeal styles and acts. This understanding asserts that gender is not a pre-existing element, nor is it biologically determined, rather it is enacted as socially and culturally informed expressions (stylised acts), continually produced and reproduced that constitute the fiction of a coherent stable identity and give the illusion of a fixed set of gender norms. In this version of performativity these norms are continually cited and repeated, resulting in both the concealment of norms and the enforcement of their rules. Sex and gender are the "effects rather than the causes of institutions, discourses and practices"[98].

The heterosexual matrix of power relations operates through performance of successful, normative 'subjects' as well as abject 'spectres'. Each has an integral role in maintaining the heterosexual matrix. Those that fall within its realm portray normative genders and police boundaries through discursive

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[97] Nayak and Kehily, 1996, Renold, 2006
[98] Salih, 2002, p. 10

and behavioural means. Those that exist outside of it work as a "threatening spectre"[99] "of failed gender, the existence of which must be continually repudiated through interactional processes"[100]. CJ Pascoe's research used Butler to demonstrate how boys continually and repetitively utilised homophobic language and joking rituals to performatively constitute masculinity and the heterosexual matrix, and repudiate the 'threatening spectre' of being gay, or in Pascoe's work, of "the fag"[101]. Rawlings'[102] work similarly showed the ways that high school boys who engaged in any 'girly' activities, such as straightening their hair or refusing to view pornography, faced the prospect of being labelled 'gay' in the wider institutional context of dominant gender and sexuality norms, where heterosexuality is a 'protected zone'[103].

Ringrose and Renold[104] drew on Butler to argue particular bullying practices become acceptable and normative for particular gendered subjects. Tough normative boy is constructed through discourses of 'play fighting' but these are also sanctioned by 'heroic masculinity', where boys are meant to develop a heterosexual stance towards girls to mark themselves out against girls as potential aggressors or protectors rather than equals. The heterosexual matrix has also been conceived as putting girls into binaries of sexual purity or excess to maintain normative dominant heterosexual desirability to boys. Ringrose has also explored how good girls navigate a tightrope of subject positons between 'good girl' and

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[99] Butler, 1993, p. 3
[100] Pascoe, 2007, p. 14
[101] Pascoe, 2007, p. 52
[102] Rawling, 2013
[103] Butler, 1993
[104] Ringrose and Renold, 2010

appropriate levels of sexual 'experience or knowingness'[105]. 'Slut' works as a discursive marker of sexual excess, where girls are shamed through implication of sexual activity which contravenes innocence and respectability. While slut demonstrates a transgression of being 'too' sexual, 'dyke' is often applied to the opposite; not sexual enough or overly-masculine, or failed feminine[106].

Barad's Posthuman Performativity: Intra-acting discursive-material agents

One way school policies have sought to address injurious name-calling and terms, has been to ban words like slut or gay in an attempt to stop sexist and homophobic harassment[107]. We wonder, however, whether a focus on words, something that could stem from a reductionist reading of discursive approaches, is adequate. Would simply changing the terms of reference make a difference that matters? To explore this question, we consider a new materialist approach informed by Karen Barad, which foregrounds "entanglements of discourses, places, materialities and embodied practices in or connected to the school environment"[108]. Barad's work is located in feminist science studies and has inspired a new wave of theoretically driven methodological perspectives in qualitative research in the social sciences, and to our field gender and education[109]. Her framework has breathed fresh life into social science research by offering new theories and methodologies for researching material reality, which suggest in very simple and

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[105] Ringrose, 2013
[106] Payne, 2010
[107] Payne and Smith, 2010
[108] Taguchi and Palmer, 2013, p. 672
[109] Ivinson and Taylor, 2013

straightforward ways that our concepts and research 'apparatuses', as she calls them, create the very phenomena and matter that we seek study. We create phenomena through our intra-action with them.[110]

Rather than simply focus on the performance of discourses like slut or gay that subjectify into discourse 'positions'[111], Barad develops an approach she calls a 'posthuman performativity' which we think complements and extends the thinking offered by Butler around how the performativity of discourses work in intra-action with material agents. Posthumanism has many iterations beyond the scope of the article, but pairing it with performativity as does Barad[112] encourages us to consider the force relations happening ('iteratively' being enacted) through a range of human-nonhuman agents. According to Barad's theory performativity is more than discursive and it is more than human.

The first key notion we want to begin with in introducing Barad is intra-action. In contrast to inter-action where modalities can be separated out, Barad explores intra-action, as profound relationality. Barad's posthuman performativity suggests "discourses and material phenomena do not stand in a relationship of externality to one another; rather the material and the discursive are mutually implicated in the dynamics of

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[110] Barad's research, as with decades of feminist research (see Haraway, 1991), points out the situated nature of knowledge production, troubling notions of objectivity and validity in research encounters. Barad (2008:141) also issues her own challenge to the validity of socio-cultural research which does not account for relational 'intra-actions': "The fact that material and discursive constraints and exclusions are intertwined points to the limited validity of analyses that attempt to determine individual effects of material or discursive factors."

[111] Davies, 2011

[112] Barad, 2008, p. 144

intra-activity". [113] So whilst Butler's notion of discursive subjectification is really useful we need to also see how discursive-material intra-actions and non-human agentic matter such as space, objects and even time shape the constitution of gender and sexual bullying events.[114] The Butlerian perspective helps us understand power through defining how subjectification works through binary heterosexual norms of gender, which designate for instance who is an intelligible boy or girl. But the Baradian perspective enlarges our scope of inquiry in profound ways, suggesting we need to revalue matter alongside discourse. Rather than inter-action or inter-personal, which are dominant frames in bullying research, Barad's concept of intra-action changes our thinking. She draws our attention to the performative 'intra-action' between objects, bodies, discourses and other non-human material things.

Rather than remain at the abstract level, we want to begin to explore how these concepts change our analysis of bullying through empirical examples. Take this extract where Ringrose and Renold[115] explored how a boy William was bullied for his long feminine hair at school:

> Lucy: William Brown, he's got long hair, like girl long hair, about that long, all blond. Gwyneth walked past him and as a joke she just like
> Gwyneth: I just like went like that to his hair like/ (makes flicking motion).
> Lucy: Because you touched his luxury flowing locks! (Laughing)
> Faiza: He … got up, grabbed her, my, her neck and smacked her against the wall and then she couldn't breathe, that's how boys

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[113] Barad 2007; 149
[114] For a similar analysis exploring bullying intra-actions in neo-liberal university contexts see Zabrodska et al, 2011.
[115] Ringrose & Renold, 2010, pp.580-581

> react. And then, and then I was there, I saw everything and I told
> a couple of boys in my year who are like the hard boys.
> Lucy: So I told this boy called Patrick Dunsmuir and they had the
> guts to go up to William Brown and teach him a lesson.
> JR: What did they do?
> Faiza Physically or mentally (laughing)?
> Lucy: They pulled him!
> Girls: (all laughing).
> (Cardiff School 1, Year 9 girls).

In previous analysis we explored how William's discursive heterosexual masculinity was challenged by a typical discursive strategy of being subjectified as 'a girl'. We did not, however, pay adequate to the material agent of the hair and the flicking motion and the way that 'luxurious flowing locks' flowed off of Lucy's tongue (something that stuck and 'glowed' in Jessica's memory)[116] to denote the wrong type of boy (hence a girl) in ways that challenge his heterosexual masculinity. By neglecting the hair, which marks William 'like girl' and focusing on the discourses solely, the analysis misses the material agents at work.

Barad introduces another term for getting to grips with posthuman performativity and matter, which helps us understand something we may call a bullying event (and indeed everyday life) as emplacing such phenomena in their "spacetimematterings" a concept attempting to explicate how:

> … time and space are produced through iterative intra-actions
> that materialise specific phenomena, where phenomena are not
> 'things' but relations. Mattering and materialising are dynamic
> processes through which temporality and spatiality are produced
> as something specific.[117]

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[116] see MacLure in Ringrose and Renold, 2014
[117] Juelskjaer, 2013. p. 755

To restate the shift we are signalling, William becomes non-heterosexual boy 'girl' through the intra-actions between the girls and his long luxurious hair, the discursive (masculinity) is constituted via the material (long luxurious hair), the spatial (the school playground) and the temporal flow of events. Very simply put, this phenomena *is more than discursive*: Intra-activity refers to how "discourse and matter are understood to be mutually constituted in the production of knowing"[118] Here we can see how intelligibility emerges from the practice of mattering; the agentic force of the hair, of the playground, of the sounds and feelings in that particular moment. To use 'spacetimematterings' a word which has been produced by the mashing together of three different words, is to acknowledge that these concepts are infinitely overlapping, interlaced, and co-constitutive.

Bullying through this lens can be seen as coming into existence as we materialise it- as particular discursive and material agents intra-act in particular space-time-matterings. We see a material connectivity- as an action is performed on one, changes are caused in another. What is also highly significant, however, is how intra-acting components have agency. Indeed, a further key idea from the posthuman performativity perspective is the notion of "agential realism". "Agential realism" helps us attribute agency to matter and to the relations between actors and matter. As Barad notes,[119]

> … agency is not aligned with human intentionality or subjectivity. Nor does it merely entail resignification or other

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[118] Barad, 2007. p. 149.
[119] Barad, 2008, p. 144

> specific kinds of moves… agency is a matter of intra-acting; it is
> an enactment, not something someone says or does.

The posthuman performativity approach helps us to rethink agency, by re-valuing the agency of non-material actors. This approach shifts attention away from the rational human intentional actor to a wider *posthuman* field of power relations. The approach grants agency to matter and nature in ways devalued through humanist logics. Thus is it posthuman (or more than human) in that it displaces attention away from the individual, psychologically driven human agent typical in psychological models of bullying (one individual bullies another) in order to explore a range of intra-acting agents, materialities and spacetime contexts through which events designated as bullying emerge. These events also emerge in research as differential matterings - where what is considered important is separated or 'cut' (in Baradian terms) from what is not.[120]

This is not to say bullying matters are non-human, or that human psychological motivations are irrelevant, rather we are shifting emphasis to show how the individual intentioned human agent is only one part of the performative intra-actions of what becomes known as bullying phenomena. Again, the shift is away from the conscious intentional and wilful human master and human bound agency towards a more complex view of a range of intra-acting material and discursive actants with varying levels of agency in particular configurations.

To continue to illustrate this new way of thinking about agency and non-human agents consider further examples from

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[120] Hughes and Lury, 2013

Ringrose and Renold's[121] bullying research on girls calling each other names like tart (and slut):

> Carrie (age 10): I'm not being horrible but have you seen Trudy's skirt, it's her five year old sister's' and it's like up here (draws an invisible line well above her knee) … when she bends down you can see her bum … some people say she's a tart (Cardiff School 2, Year 6).

> Faiza (age 14): At one stage Katie was dressing up in skirts the length of her knickers dressed like that, with like nothing there and she would be all really weird, in other words, she made herself small. It was like, O she walked past a boy and she goes, 'O he fancies me'.
> (Cardiff School 1, Year 9).

These examples were explored as "typical modes of heterosexualised regulation and intersubjectively negotiated power hierarchies among girls [that] tend to not be categorised as bullying" but are significant in how sexual competition and shaming emerges amongst girls.[122] However, our framework did not enable us to engage with a powerful non-human material agent through which the possibility of these dynamics emerged – the skirt!

If we turn to posthuman performativity, agency is not simply located in human, nor is it to be found in the performative space between the discourse (slut shaming) and the subject interpellated as a tart (e.g. Trudy). With Butler, agency is discursive and can be found in the possible failure to be fully subjectified by discourses in this case 'slut' as injurious term.[123] However, with Barad agency is not restricted to discourse and

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[121] Renold, 2010
[122] Renold, 2010, p.586
[123] see Youdell in Ringrose, 2013, p. 71

the possiblility of resignifying discourses (like slut or gay) through performative failures and ruptures.[124] Rather, material agents (hair and skirts!) are central to the intra-active process through which the bullying phenomena around gender and sexuality materialise. And therefore they are important in considering the meanings and possibilities of 'agency' and the potential for social (discursive-material) change.[125] In short, the agentic force of the skirt intra-acting with the body in spacetimematterings need to be taken into account in understanding many incidences of sexual shaming girls as sluts as we explore as we continue.

Of course an agentic skirt creating 'slut' only makes sense in relation to the larger extended 'apparatuses' of knowledge-making at work.[126] As Lenz-Taguchi & Palmer (2013) note Barad's idea of: '[A]apparatuses are macroscopic material arrangements through which particular concepts are given definition, to the exclusion of others, and through which particular phenomena with particular determinate physical properties are produced'. [127] So for instance if we think of the history of the skirt and the long held culturally, class and race specific notions of feminine sexual respectability[128] we can begin mapping the contextual specific meanings of this agent in what

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[124] see Youdell in Ringrose, 2013, p. 71

[125] See also Pomerantz and Raby's (forthcoming) analysis of girls' dynamic agency using Barad's notion of intra-action to consider the construction and performance of 'smart' girlhood.

[126] Barad, 2007

[127] See also Barad, 2007: 142, for the relationship between the concept of apparatus in Barad's work and assemblage in theories like actor-network and those influenced by Deleuze and Guattari (see Coleman and Ringrose, 2013) is important to reflect on. In our view apparatus is much like assemblage, a way of explaining configurations of power relations and arrangements. The point is to unpack the components of the apparatus or assemblage that 'matter' (Barad, 2007)

[128] Skeggs, 2005

might be called bullying events where girls are sexually shamed. Below we continue to explore how our analysis of bullying shifts through consideration of the material-discursive intra-actions and apparatuses of skirts and other material agents like hair.

Sluts and Lesbians: The discursive and material intra-actions of Skirts, Hair, and Makeup

In addition to bullying research, youth studies have explored the power of clothing and uniform to enforce school rules[129] and Girlhood Studies scholars have pointed to historical and cultural contexts of sartorial control over girls and women's bodies[130]. But we wish to put a Baradian, materialist spin on this, suggesting skirts exist as the ultimate material objects that can be stylised, read and embedded with meanings for girls in schools[131].

In the UK context of the uniform and the compulsory wearing of skirts, this wearing takes on new aspects of control enacted through the force of the skirt to indicate appropriate attire, and the possibility of attending and inhabiting school space. For many girls, the wearing of skirts as uniform is a school and social requirement; an object of academic-social and gendered legitimisation. Indeed, there is no choice for girls in many school settings but to operate within the relations of power that the skirt dictates, with the power to read sexual intentionality onto girls:

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[129] Raby, 2012
[130] Duits and Van Zoonen, 2006
[131] See also Renold and Ringrose, forthcoming and Jackson, forthcoming for more new materialist discussion of skirts.

> Ffion: People would maybe have a first impression of us (as slutty) because we dress like we do –
> Rhian: Then they just like assume that maybe if they are wearing a short skirt or whatever, or short shorts, they just assume, 'Oh yes she is probably a slut' sort of thing, if she has got her bum hanging out
> Ffion: People think we are sluts because/
> Ffion: We always mess around like go into town, like 'Put your slutty legs on, your slutty jeans' as a joke, just because we get called a slut for no matter what, so we talk about putting your slutty legs on.
> (Cardiff School 3, Year 10 girls).

The previous analysis of these passages concentrated on exploring how the girls negotiate *the discourse* of being called a slut, so that the orientation is towards the poststructural deconstruction of how discourses of class, race and sexually appropriate conduct operate to position or read girls as sluts (they are subjectified into slut position). What happens, however, if we pay more attention to the skirt, and use an intra-active analysis of the apparatus of the body-bum-in skirt walking around in town space, making an *impression*? Impression refers to the relational acts of being and looking, if we take a feminist materialist approach. Rebecca Coleman[132], using Barad and Deleuzian analytics, theorizes looking as a material process of becoming—so looking is not simply representational but an actual material and affective set of relations through which people and objects come into being – or become. And what about 'putting your slutty legs on'? How can the legs themselves become 'slutty' in skirts or jeans? And through which intra-actions in the wider apparatus does this occur?

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[132] Rebecca Coleman, 2014

The historical contingencies of the skirt through which looking is mediated must be foregrounded. The skirt on the girl body is a material agent through which the possibility of sexuality is made manifest through a wider 'apparatus' [material arrangements through which particular concepts are given definition][133]. Previous research has explored the fetishization of skirts (schoolgirl uniform skirt, cheerleader skirt etc) in relation to pornification or sexualisation[134] as well as peer dynamics where girls police each others' skirts[135]. In these UK specific research examples there is an apparatus of being ladylike in British schools[136]. For instance Allan[137] reported during her fieldwork in an elite girl's private school the numerous times:

> I was told that uniforms were regularly checked so that skirts could be adjusted to 'acceptable' and 'appropriate' lengths, that the girls were chaperoned during school discos to prevent any 'unsightly behaviour'.

She explained teachers reprimanding girls for how they wore their uniforms and net ball skirts if they did not adhere to the appropriate standards of appearance. One girl was told if she wore her netball skirt home she could provoke builders and other perverts. As Allan[138] explains:

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[133] Lenz-taguchi and Palmer, 2013.

[134] Whilst a history of the skirt is beyond the scope of the paper see for instance discussion of girlhood, skirts and sexualisation in Walkerdine, 1990; Duits and Van Zoonen, 2006; Pomerantz, 2008; Jackson, 2015

[135] For more discussion on girls' aggression to one another related to heterosexual comeptition, embodiment and clothing, see for instance Currie et al., 2007; Ringrose, 2008

[136] Allan, 2009

[137] Allan, 2009, p. 150

[138] Allan, 2009, p. 150

> … the teacher appeared to cite a number of discourses (the protosexual, erotic little girl, the perverted older man and the innocent child; see Walkerdine 1999; Jones 2004), and in doing so positioned the girl in very specific ways, all of which rested heavily on certain classed, gendered and sexualised expectations of respectability.

However, if we think more-than-discursively, about the wearing of a skirt as an intra-active material-discursive set of relations we re-evaluate the skirt as agential in these assembled power relations - the skirt as carrying the signifying (discursive) and real (material) force at the same moment these happenings emerge, as also seen in the next example:

> Irina: There is a lot of girls in the school that wear very short skirts. Like they wear the same skirt since Year Seven. They don't bother changing it. A lot of girls from this school have that reputation as well of being sluts and things like that. I think it is mostly girls from Year Eleven, I mean the ones that have just left and Year Nines, Tens than years below. I had a couple of friends who were actually doing that, like there was that Polish girl again, Gabriella in this school she was in Year Eleven, she just left, and there was a couple of accidents with her like teachers apparently found her in the toilets with boys, she was wearing short skirts, you know, she was kissing in the corridors and then people just have a bad reputation about her. They are saying she is a slut and she doesn't respect herself. I mean I kind of agree with some of those statements, because it is like, and I think those girls shouldn't get upset about it because I mean they have to do something to get this kind of reputation. I don't know, I know I wouldn't do it. I would think it was embarrassing, I mean I respect myself and I just think it is very weird for girls to do it.
> Int: How do you feel about it, like do you ever feel sorry for them? Do you ever feel what is it that they need that they are looking for?
> Irina: I don't know. I just think that they want it, it seems like they want it because they do it every day. They wear short skirts, you know, they hang around with boys. When they see them

> they kiss them on the cheek, they like give them little clues that
> they are interested in boys kind of thing.
> (Irina, Year 10, London School 1).

We have chosen (cut) this slice of data here where the interviewer (Jessica) tries to explore how Irina *feels* about the girls and *what she thinks girls want* from boys, focusing on the intentional human and psychological rendering of the phenomena. This side-steps the non-human agency of the skirts and the intra-actions with the uniform policy, the bullying policies and so on. Irina, however returns repeatedly to the skirt as something integral to the sets of desires and forces being evoked. Irina suggests that some girls don't 'bother' changing their skirt since year seven. The temporal presence of the skirt acts along with its changing spatial presence. Its coverage (covering less of their legs/bum) and location (in the toilets with boys) implicates its significant agentic force upon the wearer.

Without a material lens we miss the embodied and reduce dynamics to the purely psychological. Reviewing this and many other data on the skirt we want to argue through a feminist material and posthuman performativity lens that many objects (in this case skirts) are typically dismissed or reduced in importance as material force agents in contemporary feminist research. If these objects continue to be dismissed, their agential intra-action in spacetimematterings – in this case material practices that produce the phenomena of a slut are not recognized.

Many school strategies are implemented that seek to change human actors but may not trouble (or even recognise) the presence and power of these non-human agents. For instance, in another recent school-based account girls discussed being under

pressure to keep buying very expensive new school uniform skirts when their bodies grow, since the skirt can't reach to cover their legs. Another example involved a boyfriend insisting that his girlfriend wear tights despite the hot summer so her legs didn't show to be looked at by his male friends. In all these cases we need to unpack how the material agents intra-act in the situation; whether a skirt is shorter, longer, worn with tights, or without tights, and also what the skirt actually covers, each materialise subjects into appropriate girl – or not. A short skirt is an immediate constitutive force of girls with 'reputations'; unproblematically linked with a lack of respect for oneself, and for going into toilets with boys according to Irina. The short skirt's presence requires additional mediation— perhaps of tights, or shorts, but its location transforms a girl's body. As Lenz-Taguchi and Palmer[139] suggest, this reading shows that:

> … the primary ontological unit (e.g. the body of the girl) is no longer an object with inherent boundaries and fixed properties, as in classical physics and philosophy. Rather, the ontological unit is understood as a phenomenon; defined as 'the ontological inseparability/entanglement of intra-acting "agencies"'[140]

The potential of objects to 'act' is often minimised in favour of culture, discourse and language[141]. Conversely we are illustrating that skirts are not only signifiers of meaning, they are material agents of femininity that intra-act in specific school apparatuses of meaning and matter including other material agents:

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[139] Lenz Taguchi and Palmer, 2013
[140] Barad, 2007, p. 139
[141] Alaimo & Hekman, 2008

> Linda: It happens all the time. Every second person you've got, like, you wear your skirt too short and everyone will just turn around and call you a slut.
> Alice: Yeah everyone… slut's so common
> Linda: Yeah
> Jennifer: Like, we never do our hair for school or our makeup, we're just not those kind of people, and like, one day we'll do it and they'll go, 'oh who are you trying to impress?'
> Linda: Yeah
> Alice: Yeah, definitely, that happens to me as well
> Jennifer: And it's just like, well maybe I just wanted to do my hair for once? (laughs) You know, I washed it last night or something, and everyone automatically thinks that you're trying to impress someone or get a boyfriend or something
> Linda: Yeah that's true.
> Jennifer: Especially for us sporty people who couldn't care what we look like
> (Year 10 female students, Wilson High, Australia).

These slut moments hold important implications for bullying policy and understanding. As girls attempt to negotiate complex and high-stakes positions of sexual availability (enough, but not too much), desirability, and social popularity, the intra-actions with material agents: hair and makeup, are again discussed as key in trying to '*impress*'. Making too much of an impression can also mark them as slut, as the 'sporty' girls reflect on how they are policed when they do their hair or makeup for school. Typical school practices that attempt to combat gendered bullying have focused on the word slut (or gay); banning words to stop harassment. A posthuman performativity lens shifts attention to recognise the material forces that intra-act with the discourse. In this case the posthuman materialities of the skirt, hair and make-up work together to produce the dynamical force of what has been called slut-shaming[142]. What we are arguing is that we require more materially engaged research practices that

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[142] Ringrose and Renold, 2012

consider how more-than-human agents are made and unmade through these complex intra-actions of materiality and discursivity[143]. In considering a further example we note the absence of girly hair in producing heterosexually desirable femininity:

> Vic: So what would happen if a girl came to school and she had just cut all of her hair off?
> Jennifer: oh (gasps)
> Kathryn: Oh!
> Linda: Oh my god.
> Bec: It would be the biggest…
> Linda: Just like a girl in our science class, her hair is like, it's in a bob!
> Alice: It's beautiful, it's really cute
> Linda: And one guy said something about a dyke hair cut
> Alice: He said, 'why did you get a dyke hair cut?'
> Kathryn: Oh!
> Bec: Someone said that to you!
> Jennifer: Yesterday someone said that- cos my hair's up to here now, I cut it, it was up to here and now it's up to here or something, and he was like 'you look like a lesbian with your new hair' and I was like 'Yeah thanks, dickhead'.
> (Year 10 female students, Wilson High, Australia).

Hair is not simply representational but material, and we feel the force of its power through the gasp—the sucking in of air, when hair is imagined not to be there! The hair is a material object through which a lesbian (un-sexy-feminine) subjectivity is formed in absence. The girls' visceral reaction ('oh my god!'), its location "beneath the skin, in matter, in cells and in the gut"[144] gives a clue that particular sorts of hair are integral orientations and constitutive forces of normal gendered and sexual feminine subjectivity. Non normative sexuality is materialised here by the

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[143] Jackson and Mazzei, 2012
[144] MacLure, 2010, p. 2

intra-actions of material (hair), the discursive (lesbian) and the space (science lab) and recent time (yesterday), which perhaps affords it greater affective and immediate force. Rather than privileging either the discursive or the material which have traditionally been posited as dichotomous, we suggest that each of these material elements hold agency, and that matter could and should be taken seriously alongside discursive mechanisms[145], as we discuss in our conclusions.

Gays and Poofs: Intra-acting looks, hair, muscles and footy

As we can begin to see from the examples above, posthuman performative analyses displace the centrality of the human, and disrupt any hierarchies that position the human as the most definitive or powerful actor. Instead, they recognise that various 'things' have agency. Here, 'things' comes to mean anything—any object, body, space, time or matter. Indeed in most cases it is the power of material feminisms that they do not seek to delineate or demarcate between these categories. Such an intervention would again situate the human voice as a definitional authority, rather than simply another agent within an infinite landscape of human-nonhuman actors.

In this final section we seek to contribute to this shift, and cast our view towards the actors that have life, and force, and consequential affect away from us as strictly enlightened human actors. From looking at the particular actor of the skirt, and the constitutions that it contributes, we can move forward to look at the particular spacetimematterings in Australian schools that

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[145] Alaimo and Hekman, 2008

constituted the use of 'gay' and other pejoratives fixed within non-normative male sexualities.

Studies have in the past examined the utilisation of 'gay' and its pejorative variations (faggot, poof, etc.) as powerful and widespread discursive tools for policing masculinity [146]. Specifically, these terms have been examined through discourse as a form of gender policing around heteronormative masculinity. However, while research and institutional based reviews of these are concerned solely with the linguistic and discursive, they have again often neglected an acknowledgement of the non-human material agents and conditions. This is not to say that these moments are unimportant, indeed words or phrases can often be the "the only indicator for staff that homophobia is happening, not seeing the multitude of ways that homophobia permeates the school environment"[147]. What we seek to contribute here, however, is a re-conceptualisation of these environments as not purely or even mostly discursive/ linguistic, but a product of the myriad human-nonhuman agential intra-actions constituting particular spacetimematterings.

In the preceding extracts we illustrated that girls were forced to navigate complex and numerous 'rules' where corporeal agents (like hair and skirts) intra-acted with discourses to constitute them as 'slutty' – when the discursive material intra-actions (skirt-body) produced them as *too* sexy in the wrong ways. Gender, as illuminated by the posthuman performativity lens, is relational in striking ways, given boys in contrast were likely to be produced as 'gay' if they were too girly and not heterosexually desirable or manly enough Similarly to girls,

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[146] Chambers, Loon and Tincknell, 2004, Lahelma, 2002; Pascoe, 2007
[147] Witthaus, 2006, p. 24

hair, both on their head and on their bodies, was a critical material agent:

> Jennifer: … actually on the excursion the boys were straightening their hair and everything, and us girls were just chucking it up in a bun, not even doing anything about it, and the boys were actually straightening their hair and putting gel in it, and we were just like 'youse are boys!'
> (laughter)
> Jennifer: But like, yeah
> Alice: And like, how some boys shaved their legs
> (group gasps)
> Bec: What!
> Jennifer: Oh, I don't get that!
> Linda: Some people, guys will tease each other like, 'oh my god you're so gay you're shaving your legs' and stuff like that
> (Year 10 female students, Wilson High School,Australia).

In this spacetimemattering, we can see the corporeal materialities of hair (or absence of hair) on the boys' body intra-act with discourses of heteronormative femininity and masculinity. We see the boys in a particular place (the school excursion) where conventional 'rules' of the classroom are no longer in place, and as such new relationalities and apparatuses where objects and meanings can collide and make meaning. The girls call up their own hair-do as a specific actant in this environment, where "chucking it up in a bun" is OK, but when the boys' hair intra-acts with straighteners and gel in their hair these objects and their effects do not successfully align to create hetero-masculine embodiment. Binary gender expectations are invoked and applied to the presence or absence of these agents.

Like the example in the previous section with William, long, straightened hair is too styled and too hetero-feminine. Also like

Jennifer's short hair above, the no hair on boy produces laughter and gasps, affects that contribute to the materialisation of the hairless body as funny, or strange, or unknowable. The material act of shaving and having no hair are a set of material-discursive-corporeal relations that are unintelligible intra-acting relationalities of how to do hetero-teen boy bodies ("I don't get that").

Previous literature has shown the importance of sporting prowess in demonstrating normative masculinity [148]. This phenomena was also on show at both Wilson and Grove High Schools in Australia. Gayness, as the oppositional force of normative hetero-masculinity, could be materially produced in a range of ways that related to the look, personality, dress, walk and talk of the boy; and was often linked with the common denominator of sport as seen below:

> Vic: ... you were talking about students who might be excluded because they were perceived to be gay or because they actually were, is that because the other kids see them as behaving in a certain way or looking a different way, or doing different activities or anything like that?
> Kate: Their look, their personality, they might not be the norm of what fits in here, they might be a little bit different in how they dress, how they walk, how they speak. You know, just... all those
> Jeremy: With the girls all the time, not a footy player
> Kate: Yeah, not a footy player. Friends with all the girls, yeah. That stuff.
> (Teacher focus group, Grove High School, Australia)
>
> John: ... there's still that, you've gotta live up to that male role model. If boys show any weaknesses there's always these connotations under people's breath of 'gay' or you know, 'poof'

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[148] Kehler and Atkinson, 2013

> or anything like that. But it's not as bad as it used to be, it's not... I think at this school... but there's still that, any boy who sort of shows like a strength in the artistic area or some other field, they're still not fitting in with that typical Australian macho sporting hero like that, and the other kids do tend to look down on them
>
> (Teacher focus group, Wilson High School, Australia).

It is no surprise that sport, and particularly a highly physical, male-dominated and aggressive game (they are referring to rugby league and Australian football in these examples) intersects with socio-cultural meanings of gender and sexuality. Emma Renold's[149] work examined what it took for boys to perform a sanctioned heteronormative masculinity, including the role of football/ sport, being tough and participating in/ naturalising violence and the continual repudiation of femininity and academic performances.

We are now aiming to explicate more fully the material as well as discursive elements of these performances, the human and non-human dynamics of posthuman performativity. In these examples, 'poof' (Australian derogatory slang for gay man) represents the meanings and knowledge that are produced from and within the agential intra-actions. The word poof has a materiality itself as being empty and soft rather than hard and filled with matter—it is a gendered apparatus of meaning that goes even further to represent and re-constitute the emerging reality. A 'poof' is an embodied mattering and knowledge, someone (or even something) who has failed to become 'hard'.

As Barad reminds us "apparatuses are dynamic (re)configurings of the world specific agential practices/intra-

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[149] Emma Renold, 2005

actions/performances through which specific exclusionary boundaries are enacted" [150]. Poof-y comes to matter here through a long history of discursive-material intra-actions around the 'look', 'the walk', the practice of being 'artistic', and the (relative lack of) capacities involved in practicing 'footy' and friend relations (rather than heterosexual relations) with girls. There is no specific boundary or closure for these matterings, and although the participants above offer particular examples of looks, walks, practices, bodies etc., these are difficult for them to encapsulate in a strict or definitive way. What we can see, however, is that through the *absence* of the materialities like muscles, hair or capacity for footy *gayness* could be invoked:

> Bec: Um, someone who is not confident or a jock,
> Linda: Yeah
> Bec: Can just be thought of as being gay. Like it's very easy just to, just if they're not... if you're not full on, like sport,
> Jennifer: [speaks over] Muscley, yeah
> Bec: Muscley
> Linda: [speaks over] Yeah they're obsessed with how big their arms are these days
> Jennifer: [speaks over] Popular, good looking... you're gay.
> Linda: They're like, all about the gym
> (Year 10 female students, Wilson High, Australia).

These examples begin to show the connections between bodily acts, and the spaces that these acts and bodies exist within, the material objects that surround human agents, and the multitude of other factors that both embody and materialise gender and (hetero)sexuality. It is not, moreover, as one reviewer worried that we are saying the hair or muscles are not human! Rather that the posthuman performativity approach helps us think

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[150] Barad, 2007, p. 134

outside the psychological orientation of the human intention model where we target desire to harm boys by bullying them as 'gay'—to shift to explore the discursive and material intra-actions through which gay materialises in context. Here masculinity is performed and produced through the dynamic intra-acting material agents of bigness, arm muscles (and performative obsession with this), and something described as being 'full on sport' or being 'all about the gym', a spacetimemattering where the presence of the gym lingers upon the body—here perhaps it is clear to see how non-human aspects of a location and activities (at the gym) intra-act with the body to create masculinity. Particular sports were a powerful material force in their intra-actions *with the body*; its presence even disrupted the agential potential of shaved body hair:

> Linda: Some of the sporty guys will do it [shave their legs] because of taping
> Jennifer: Yeah
> Linda: And then they'll get teased
> Alice: But then some guys just do it, just cause,
> Linda: Yeah
> Alice: And then they're like well that's cool, like most people that do it 'oh he's cool', so it doesn't really matter.
> Jennifer: If you're jock, like you're sporty or you're muscley, like, whatever you do, you're gonna be a god
> Linda: Yeah
> Jennifer: But like, if someone that was smart, and like, not attractive to like, you know, the girls at school or whatever, and they shaved their legs, it'd be like this big deal like, 'oh what a poofter', you know?
> Linda: Yeah
> Jennifer: But if a jock did it, 'oh he's so cool let's all shave our legs'
> (Year 10 female students, Wilson High, Australia).

Here we see the oppositional discursive and embodied positions of jock and gay are established through the intra-actions of sport and the material agents of muscles. "Practices, doings and actions"[151] operate as constitutive material forces in producing what is cool (intelligible) and what is gay (unintelligible). Shaving of leg hair if connected to the right sporting activity can actually create the jock through these specific intra-actions and spacetimematterings. The agential parts of bodies—hair and muscles—themselves are corporeal presences that intra-act with other agents – so the taping of legs through a sporting activity is what enables the sporty male as 'god' to emerge. These complex choreographies matter—the gym, taping, shaving—the co-constitution of these material and discursive agents are part of a wider apparatus of masculinity that constructs the cuts and boundaries that 'matter'. Through this lens of material feminism and posthuman performativity, what we may see as resolutely mundane (the presence or absence of body hair or the way someone may walk) is instead illuminated as possessing perhaps surprising material force[152].

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[151] Barad, 2007 in Taylor, 2013, p. 688
[152] Taylor, 2013

Conclusion

In this paper we questioned the efficacy of traditional, psychological understandings of bullying. We reviewed the importance of a Butlerian discursive approach, which shows how heterosexualized discourses regulate gender through the variable performance of norms around girl and boy. We suggested that this discursive focus is limited theoretically and practically, considering problems with policies that try to target and ban 'bullying' words (like slut or gay) as the sum of what needs to change in school spaces. We discussed the importance of the posthuman performativity lens in moving us further to attend to the intra-actions of non-human agents, materialities and discourses to produce what comes to be known as bullying phenomena and events in schools across geographic and temporal contexts. We argued that thinking through the complexities of how slut, lesbian, gay and poof work in specific discursive-material intra-actions with skirts and hair and other material agents as part of a wider apparatus of relations can help us to understand force relations differently[153]. For instance, better grasping the intra-actions around the material skirt and the discourse of the slut, could lead to a review of uniform policies, and the gendered spaces and school rules that regulate girls' bodies. Greater attention to the material-discursive intra-actions of hair, muscles and football through which jock, gay and poof intra-actively come into being, could inform sporting policy practices that celebrate the fit, heroic masculine body in physical education to the detriment of other forms of being boy.

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[153] See also Davies, 2014 for an analysis of re-thinking early childhood and anger amongst boys differently and diffractively through Baradian and Deleuzian lenses.

Indeed, it is crucial to use these theoretical insights that help us rethink the phenomena of bullying in ways that reframe our research practices. For instance what does it take to shift research away from the deficit model of making better anti-bully policies to re-dress (!) problem behaviour, to supporting young people who are actively challenging gender and sexual inequalities (and other material injustices like racism) in their schools? We have been exploring the potentials afforded by feminist clubs and groups in UK secondary schools[154]. Some of these groups became active as a result of school rules around uniform and particularly non-uniform days where girls' body-clothes intra-actions were sanctioned: "2/3 of girls were sent home for inappropriate clothing… with no attention paid to the boys and we objected and the group was born"[155]. These groups worked to engage with (hetero)sexism at their school through a range of material-discursive intra-actions including producing feminist leaflets, recreating the Tumblr meme 'I need feminism because' and transmitting it through one of the school's television systems, and using social media like Twitter and Facebook to communicate their 'feminist' views about everything from body image to sexist school rules [156]. Particularly interesting is how these intra-actions worked to change cultures of heterosexist masculinity, when for instance through engaging with the feminist leaflet some boys openly declared themselves to be feminists. One group of boys created their own 'Who needs feminism' posters, material signs they were photographed holding up that said things like "I need feminism because being interested in fashion doesn't make me less of a man". "I need feminism because boys DO cry and that's OK."

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[154] see Ringrose and Renold, forthcoming
[155] London school 2, Year 10 girl
[156] London School 2

In closing, then, we wish to return to Barad's important statement that "each intra-action matters, since the possibilities for what the world may become call out in the pause that precedes each breath [or the gasp in our research interview!] before a moment comes into being and the world is remade again"[157]. In our view, Barad's approach helps us to rethink the entire conceptual field of bullying and how we bring meaning to life in our research processes by making clear that we as researchers create the phenomena we study through the theoretical concepts and methodological procedures we use. Thus there is no self-evident bullying reality or incidents out there waiting for us to discover, no objects that are already existing, rather we intra-actively create what we research as bullying incidents, behaviours and events through an entire apparatus of meanings we bring to bear in the process. For us, as we have begun demonstrating, this means there is plenty of scope for finding new ways of intra-acting with school spaces to remake the discursive-material context of gender and sexual matterings.

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Jessica Ringrose is Professor of Sociology of Gender and Education at the University College London Institute of Education.

Victoria Rawlings is a Senior Research Associate at the Division of Health Research, Lancaster University

Theorizing School Bullying: Insights from Japan

Shoko Yoneyama

This paper identifies a lacuna in the existing paradigms of bullying: a gap caused by the frame of reference being largely limited to the highly industrialized societies of the 'west': Europe, North America and Oceania. The paper attempts to address this gap by presenting research developed in Japan. In Japan, sociological discourse on school bullying, i.e. the analysis of institutional factors relevant to understanding bullying was established relatively early, as was the epistemology now referred to as the second paradigm of bullying. The paper attempts to integrate the research strengths of Japan with this new trend in bullying research, with the view of incorporating 'non-western' research traditions into mainstream discourse on bullying. It introduces a typology of school bullying: Types I&II, and discusses 1) hierarchical relationships in schools, focusing on corporal punishment and teacher-student bullying, and 2) group dynamics surrounding bullying. The paper illustrates how bullying among students is entwined with various aspects of schools as social institutions. It argues that school bullying may represent a state of anomie in both formal and informal power structures in schools, which have become

dysfunctional communities unable to deal with bullying, while at the same time it can be students' way of compensating their sense of alienation and disconnectedness from school.

Ever since bullying among school students was established as a research topic in the 1970s, the discourse on school bullying has been constructed primarily within the framework of the '*first paradigm*'[158], which sets its etiology in the personal attributes of the bully and the victim. One weakness of this paradigm is its limits in addressing the structural factors associated with school bullying. In his 1993 review of literature on bullying, Farrington remarks that 'further research should attempt to investigate school factors that are correlated with the prevalence of bullies and victims'[159] and that if 'important school features are discovered, they could have momentous implications for the prevention of bullying'[160]. The factors identified in his review were limited to school size, class size, whether the school is single or mixed-sex school, location of the school, and teachers' attitudes to bullying[161].

Ten years later, a survey of literature on school factors available in English found some additional aspects[162] from studies that might be considered to be based largely on the first paradigm today. Such factors include: the presence of a 'culture of bullying' at school[163], authoritarian teachers[164], presence of teachers who, because of their strictness or inability to keep

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[158] Schott & Søndergaard, 2014
[159] Farrington, 1993:402
[160] Farrington, 1993:403
[161] Farrington, 1993
[162] Yoneyama & Naito, 2003
[163] Rigby, 1997
[164] Rigby, 1996

order in class, cause pupils to dislike school[165], a teacher's negative attitude towards a student[166], use of sarcasm and subtle forms of ridicule by teachers [167], inadequate school intervention[168], as well as boredom and a sense of failure associated with academic competition [169]. These factors, however, were by no means part of a systematic enquiry as to how structures underlying schools as a social institution might contribute to bullying among students. Rather, they were presented in a peripheral manner in each study, almost as passing remarks[170].

Schott and Søndergaard[171] pointed out that in the past decade, while the first paradigm has remained dominant, social psychologists and sociologists have begun to focus on bullying as a social dynamic, shifting away from *paradigm one* and moving towards *paradigm two* [172]. This is a significant development as it enables researchers to envisage school bullying in a broader and more flexible manner, incorporating knowledge from other fields, such as philosophy, sociology, and education. Paradigm two opens up a new research space unconstrained from a strictly empiricist, quantitative approach. Although such research is no doubt important, it 'may be poorly suited to understanding social complexities and complicated interactions, which paradigm two researchers argue are central in bullying dynamics'[173].

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[165] Junger-Tas, 1999; Olweus, 1999
[166] Olweus, 1999
[167] Rigby, 1996
[168] Rigby, 1996
[169] Rigby 1996
[170] Yoneyama & Naito, 2003
[171] Schott & Søndergaard, 2014
[172] Schott & Søndergaard, 2014:2
[173] Schott & Søndergaard, 2014:7

This paper aims to further pursue the question of school factors in this new research milieu. It adopts the 'second paradigm' of bullying as its epistemological framework. It explores how institutional aspects of school may be pertinent to school bullying. This does not mean that other factors such as individual attributes, family backgrounds, and broader social factors such as racism, sexism, and the impact of media, are denied. Rather, the paper focuses on aspects of school that are under the direct jurisdiction of teachers and educators. The paper is also primarily concerned about 'why' and 'how' school bullying occurs (i.e. causality and association), rather than 'what to do' about it (i.e. intervention), because as Galloway and Roland assert 'the direct bullying-focused approach is not necessarily the most effective in the long term'[174] if underlying causes remain the same after the period of the intervention programs.

A particular strategy adopted in this paper is to incorporate references from Japan. Bullying research available in English is largely dominated by studies conducted in the 'west' about schools in the 'west'. This paper attempts to fill in the gap, by drawing on the literature on school bullying in Japan available in Japanese as well as English. As pointed out by Yoneyama and Naito[175] in 'Problems with the paradigm: the school as a factor in understanding bullying', the strength of research on school bullying in Japan lies in its sociological perspective, and in that sense, the perspectives from Japan augment the new theoretical orientation of bullying research: paradigm two. For instance, the conceptualization of bullying proposed by the advocates of paradigm two: bullying as the problem of 'oppressive or

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[174] Galloway & Roland, 2004:38
[175] Yoneyama & Naito, 2003

dysfunctional group dynamics'[176], 'social exclusion anxiety'[177], and bullying as 'longing to belong'[178] resonate well with the study of bullying in Japan as discussed below.

It is not the purpose of this present paper to present a cultural explanation of bullying in Japanese schools. As critically reviewed by Toivonen and Imoto, bullying in Japan is often discussed as a unique cultural phenomenon that stems from the '*supposedly* homogeneous, conformist group-oriented nature of Japanese society'[179]. As pointed out by Morita[180], such cultural explanations became less influential as researchers became aware of common mechanisms behind bullying across different societies and cultures. The aim of this paper is to present the case of Japan to illuminate school factors that may be relevant for its understanding elsewhere – to present it for theoretical considerations. To discern what actually constitutes common mechanisms requires a greater exchange of knowledge across various socio-cultural and linguistic zones, and this paper is an attempt to contribute to this general project.

A Typology of School Bullying: Type I and Type II Bullying

The sociological discourse on school bullying was established in Japan as early as the 1980s. It began with the pioneering work by Morita and Kiyonaga[181], *Bullying: Classroom Pathology*, to be followed by works by other sociologists such as Taki[182] who

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[176] Schott, 2014

[177] Søndergaard, 2014

[178] Hansen et al., 2014

[179] Toivonen & Imoto, 2012: p.9, emphasis added

[180] Morita, 2010

[181] Morita & Kiyonaga, 1986

[182] Taki, 1996

wrote: *Classroom characteristics that cultivate ijime* (the original titles were in Japanese). As these titles suggest, the epistemology referred to as the second paradigm of bullying research was established relatively early in Japan. Based on a similar perspective, Yoneyama argued in *The Japanese High School: Silence and Resistance* that bullying is an over-adjustment to the school's hidden curriculum[183].

One of the fundamental understandings of school bullying in Japan can be found in a key official document on bullying produced by the Ministry of Education (MEXT): 'School Bullying: Basic Understandings and Guiding Principles', which states that: 'bullying can happen to any children at any school'[184]. In other words, they recognize that bullying is not limited to a small number of 'bullies' or 'victims' with certain innate personality traits, or particular family situations, but that it can involve any 'ordinary' student at any school.

Taki[185] claims that this sociological understanding of school bullying was first established in Japan based on evidence-based research. The finding that 'ordinary' (as against 'problematic') students are involved in bullying is coupled with another finding that the status of bullying is not fixed, and that students tend to swap the roles of bully and victim at different times[186]. Taki also reports that these findings were subsequently confirmed in the international context in a study including Japan, Australia, Canada, and South Korea[187]. These studies point to the significance of school factors as a cause of bullying among

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[183] Yoneyama, 1999: pp. 157-185
[184] MEXT, 2014: Section 1 Introduction
[185] Taki, 2007:120
[186] Taki, 2007
[187] Taki, 2010

students. They provide empirical justification to frame school bullying as an issue of 'ordinary children'[188]: a fundamental position of the second paradigm of bullying research.[189] [190]

Based on an analysis of discourses on school bullying in Japan and elsewhere, Yoneyama proposed two types of bullying: Type I and Type II.[191]

	Type I	Type II
Bully	'Problem student'	'Ordinary/good' students
Mode of bullying (1)	Bullying by a single student	Collective/group bullying
Mode of bullying (2)	Mainly physical	Mainly relational and verbal, but can be physical
Status/role played	Fixed	Rotated
Victim	Outside the friendship loop	Within the friendship loop
Causal factors	Individual factors	Environmental/school factors
Solution	Individual solution	Structural solution

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[188] Horton, 2011a:269

[189] Schott, 2014:37

[190] This does not necessarily mean that a student's personality and family situation (e.g. domestic violence) are totally irrelevant in explaining cases of bullying, rather, it means that these factors are not *structural* causes of school bullying, which can be effectively dealt with within school walls. At the same time, it seems unnecessary to over-emphasize the difference between 'bullying' and '*ijime*' (the Japanese equivalent of bullying). Although *ijime* tends to be more collective than singular, more verbal and relational than physical, and thus more similar to the mode of bullying prevalent among girls in the 'west', there are few fundamental differences between the two that make it necessary to distinguish one from the other *theoretically*.

[191] In Yoneyama (2008), this was presented as Type A and Type B, which has been refined to Type I and Type II, to suggest that they correspond roughly to paradigm one and paradigm two of research on bullying.

Type I is the style of bullying carried out by an individual 'problem student' or a group of 'problem students' who bully others who are often outside their friendship loop, and it often involves physical bullying. The bully's 'role' as perpetrator is more or less fixed, although they could very well be victims in different settings (e.g. domestic violence). The cause of the bullying can be unrelated to school, such as personality and family situations, although it is possible that the student's school experience may aggravate the problem. Solutions to this type of bullying lie mainly outside the school.

Type II bullying, on the other hand, mainly involves 'ordinary' students who show few signs of 'problematic behaviour'. This model was derived using Japan as its reference. In this model, students tend to engage in collective bullying, and there is considerable swapping of the roles of bully, victim, or bully-victim. Type II bullying usually occurs within a circle of friends, although it can also extend to the whole class. The prevalence of this type of bullying, which involves substantial numbers of 'good students' with rotating roles, suggests that there are *structural factors* at work, and thus, its solution can be found within institutional aspects of the school.

Type I and Type II are conceptual models that aim to map out different categories of school bullying. In reality, the distinction between the two may not be as clear-cut as indicated here, and it is also possible that there are some overlaps. In that sense, they should be taken as indicating two ends of a spectrum. In the current research environment, the two models can be used as a conceptual map to help distinguish different understandings of school bullying: *they correspond to the first and second paradigms.*

What then are the environmental/school factors associated with Type II bullying? This paper focuses on two sources of power at school: hierarchy and group dynamics, both of which are particularly pertinent in explaining school bullying in Japan. Although it is beyond the scope of the present study to link studies of bullying in Japan with those from other societies in Asia, emerging studies from Asia suggest the relevance of these sources of power in explaining school bullying. It is well known that teacher-student relationships tend to be more hierarchical and power-dominant in schools in Asia than in the 'West'[192]. With regard to power dynamics, a recent study of Chan and Wong found that in Chinese societies (e.g., mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau), 'school bullying is often regarded as a collective act' and 'social exclusion is frequently observed as a key school bullying issue'[193]. It is with this understanding that the paper pays particular attention to these two factors that are likely to be strongly associated with school bullying.

School Factors

Hierarchical Relationships

Bullying can be defined as 'the systematic abuse of power in interpersonal relationships'[194] by 'more powerful persons or by a group of persons against individuals who cannot adequately defend themselves'[195]. A teacher-student relationship, which is inherently hierarchical and allows a lot of room for power-abuse, has the potential to become a relationship where the

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[192] e.g. Horton, 2011b; Yoneyama, 1999
[193] Chan & Wong, 2015:1
[194] Rigby, 2008:22
[195] Rigby & Slee, 1999:324

boundary between legitimate use of power and abuse of power (or bullying) is blurred. Despite this risk, there has been a general paucity of research on the issue of teacher-student bullying [196]. This has been the case even in intervention programs that claim to use a 'whole-school' approach[197]. The paucity of research that clearly focuses on teacher's bullying of students reflects one of the shortcomings of the first paradigm of bullying research: it frames school bullying primarily as a student problem[198].

In contrast, researchers who work on the premise of the second paradigm of bullying research have opened the discursive space to talk about the legitimate and normative use of violence in schools and outlined how violence can be used as a means of maintaining the moral order and collective ethos of schools[199]. Corporal punishment, a form of institutionalized violence, is a case in point. While it might be less of an issue in the west, it still exists in many parts of Asia. Horton, for example, has demonstrated through extensive ethnographic work, how *ad-hoc* corporal punishment is an integral part of school management in Vietnam and how power-dominant teacher-student relationships impact on school bullying among students[200]. In Japan as well, teachers who use physical violence are often part of the school management group[201] and thus corporal punishment has a significant role in the school even if the actual number of teachers engaged in it is relatively small.

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[196] Weller, 2014:2
[197] James et al., 2008
[198] Schott & Søndergaard, 2014
[199] Ellwood & Davies, 2014; Horton, 2011a; Yoneyama 1999:91-118
[200] Horton, 2011b
[201] Yoneyama, 1999:91-118

1) Corporal punishment

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child[202] refers to the use of corporal punishment by teachers as one of its key concerns in its county report on Japan (section 47). The Japan Federation of Bar Association (JFBA) Committee on the Rights of the Child follows up on this by pointing out that, while the School Law prohibits corporal punishment, it is ineffective legally because the Civil Law (clause 822) and the Child Abuse Prevention Law (clause 14) both approve of the use of corporal punishment as a means of discipline[203].

A 2013 special national survey by the Ministry of Education illustrated the extent of corporal punishment. It found that in the previous year, corporal punishment was reported in approximately 1 in 20 primary, 1 in 6 junior high, and 1 in 4 senior high schools nationwide. The incidents happened mainly in class or during club activities. The most common method was hitting or beating a student by hand (around 60% at all school levels) followed by kicking (around 10%) and hitting with a stick. Such use of physical violence administered in the name of 'corporal punishment' caused injuries to over 1,100 students or 17% of the reported incidents. Injuries included broken bones, sprains, ruptured eardrums (caused by slapping), lesions, and bruising. Public schools accounted for over 80% of the reported cases, where about half of the reported teachers were 'disciplined' mostly only by verbal reprimand. Only 16% of teachers who caused injuries to students, or a bit over 2% of teachers involved in the reported cases of corporal punishment, were disciplined with harsher measures[204]. The results suggest

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[202] The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2010
[203] JFBA, 2011:9
[204] MEXT, 2013

that teacher violence in the form of 'corporal punishment' is not rare in Japanese schools, and that the majority of teachers who use violence against students do so with impunity. Corporal punishment operates as institutional violence against students.

Statistics on corporal punishment also give an indication of the political nature of discourse on school violence. The number of teachers who were reprimanded for the use of corporal punishment in the special survey mentioned above was almost 7 times as many as that reported in the official data collected annually by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry reported around 400 teachers per year from 2003 to 2011, in contrast to the 2,752 cited in the special survey[205]. Miller points out that official statistics, which have been used to record details of corporal punishment since 1990, ceased to exist in 2004[206]. Now, the statistics collected annually on corporal punishment are limited to the number of teachers disciplined, which is only a fraction of the actual incidence as seen above. Miller argues that the status of corporal punishment as a 'problem' has been marginalized in Japan[207].

What Miller[208] alludes to in relation to corporal punishment is the need to look at 'youth problems' from a social constructivist perspective which focuses on the process of how a particular issue comes to be problematized[209]. With regard to student-to-student bullying in Japan, Toivonen and Imoto demonstrated how its discourse 'has been linked to powerful actors in educational reform agendas as well as to a new 'industry' of

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[205] Hirai, 2013
[206] Miller, 2012
[207] Miller, 2012:89.
[208] Miller, 2012
[209] Goodman et al., 2012

experts and professionals, and how its measurement has undergone changes in the wake of new ideas about children's rights'[210]. As paradigm two of bullying research advances, this kind of study based on a framework of sociology of knowledge, more specifically a social constructivist approach, will be particularly useful in further deepening our understanding of school bullying.

The above discussion of corporal punishment illustrates the need to think critically about the established categories. Although corporal punishment itself may not be an issue in many schools, it is relevant in the second paradigm of school bullying which defines bullying in terms of social violence[211]. Also, the use of power by teachers is part of everyday life in schools, the distinction between clear-cut cases of abuse of power, such as corporal punishment, and 'legitimate' use of power by teachers which students may still find hurtful is not always clear.

2) Teacher-student bullying

Despite the phenomenal increase in research on school bullying in the past three decades, there has been a general paucity of research on bullying of students by teachers and vice-versa[212]. The first empirical study on this issue is probably the 1996 survey by Hata[213]. His data, collected from 767 teachers (423 primary, and 344 junior high) and 1,211 students (712 primary, and 449 junior high) in Japan indicated that: 12 % of students at both primary and junior secondary levels felt that they were

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[210] Toivonen & Imoto, 2012:9
[211] Schott, 2014:31
[212] James, 2008; Weller, 2014
[213] Hata, 2001

bullied by teachers either 'often' or 'sometimes' (as against 'rarely' and 'not at all')[214]; 14% of primary school teachers and 11% of junior high school teachers felt that they have bullied students either 'often' or 'sometimes'[61]; 37% of primary school teachers and 24% of junior high school teachers thought that what they do or say influences student-to-student bullying 'greatly'. Another study conducted relatively early in Norway by Olweus[215] also found that approximately 2% of 2,400 primary and lower middle school students were bullied by teachers, 10% of the teachers bullied students, and bullying by teachers occurred in about 50% of the classes investigated. Weller surveyed the literature on bullying of students by teachers and concluded that the range of teachers reported to have bullied students is 7.7 to 18.0% and the range of students reported to have been bullied by teachers is 25.0 to 86%[216]. Although there is considerable difference in the percentage of students who reported having been bullied by teachers, existing research suggests that teacher-student bullying is prevalent and is likely to be part of everyday life in many classrooms and schools.

What would be the implications of bullying of students by teachers? The negative impact of abrasive teachers outside Japan[217] as well as in Japan[218] on the students who were directly targeted has been discussed. As Peter Smith writes: 'What teachers do in the classroom is an important consideration in understanding bullying among students'[219]. The

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[214] Hata, 2001:139
[215] Olweus, 1999
[216] Weller, 2014:45
[217] Weller, 2014:38-39
[218] Yoneyama, 1999:174
[219] Smith, 2014:154

association between students' perceptions of classroom climate and peer bully/victim problems has been reported, and the measure of classroom climate included students' perceptions of their relationship with teachers[220]. While there has been a paucity of empirical studies that focus directly on the relationship between teacher-to-student aggression and peer victimization, the question of 'how (or whether) student-teacher relationships may affect bullying behaviour among students'[221] has been empirically explored in a recent study in Spain involving 1,864 students aged 8 to 13. Lucas-Molina et al. found that 'students' reports of direct and indirect teacher-to-student aggression are associated with students' reports of physical-property attacks and verbal-social exclusion victimization by their classmates'[222].

While such behaviour by teachers is no doubt problematic, the power relationship in school 'can flip over between power-dominant teachers and power-dominant students, depending on the actual profile of teachers and students'[223]. It is quite possible that abrasive teachers are responding to threat[224], and this could very well be threat from students. The power dynamics within a classroom are very complex and teacher-student relationships need to be understood in that context. In order to understand it, it is essential to understand how groups work in relation to bullying in the institutional setting of schools.

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[220] Yoneyama & Rigby, 2006:39
[221] Yoneyama & Naito, 2003:318
[222] Lucas-Molina et al., 2015:13
[223] Yoneyama & Naito, 2003:323
[224] Weller, 2014:32-35

Group Dynamics

It has been recognized that Japanese researchers have been 'particularly attentive to bullying as a group phenomenon'[225]. Behind this research strength lies the fact that student-student bullying in Japan is mainly group bullying[226]. To put it into perspective, based on the empirical data compiled by Morita et al.[227] and adjusting the parameters to make the comparison possible: single bullying comprises about 8% of bullying in Japanese schools[228], whereas it is 30-40% in Norway[229] and 61% (male) and 44% (female) in Australia[230]. Referring to the mode of bullying elaborated by Morita[231], that a victim is inside the group rather than outside (i.e. Type II bullying), Schott remarks:

> This approach is in alignment with recent research that considers bullying to be a process of social inclusion and exclusion. And it opens the door to understanding the ways in which social exclusion is a significant mechanism for defining processes of social inclusion[232].

What follows is an attempt to integrate this knowledge of the dynamics of group bullying, available only in Japanese, into an English discourse in order to augment the theoretical understanding of the second paradigm of school bullying.

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[225] Schott, 2014:35
[226] Akiba 2004; Morita & Kiyonaga 1996; Morita et al. 1999; Yoneyama 1999
[227] Morita et al., 1999
[228] Yoneyama & Naito, 2003:319
[229] Olweus, 1993
[230] Rigby, 1996
[231] Morita, 1996
[232] Schott, 2014:36

The Four-tiered structural theory

Reflecting the fact that bullying in Japan (*ijime*) is primarily group bullying, Morita defines bullying as:

> A type of aggressive behaviour by which someone who holds a dominant position in a group-interaction process, by intentional or collective acts, causes mental and/or physical suffering to others inside a group[233].

This definition fits with his 'four-tiered structural theory' developed on the basis of a study involving over 1,700 students in primary and junior high schools in Japan in the mid-1980s. In this theory, bullying is explained as a group interaction of students classified into four categories: victim, aggressor, spectator, and bystander. Their relationships are illustrated by four layers of circles. In the innermost circle is the victim, who is surrounded by aggressors, who in turn are surrounded by spectators, and then bystanders. According to Morita, spectators participate in bullying 'with interest and jeering' and thus give positive approval. Bystanders, who form the most outer circle, 'witness the event but pretend not to see it' and thus implicitly condone the bullying[234].

There are some key points in this *group model* of bullying.

- Bullying is a *relational problem* and not a problem arising from individual attributes[235] and thus happens among ordinary students, as discussed earlier.

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[233] Morita, 1996:1
[234] Morita, 1996
[235] Morita, 2010:75

- Bullying happens most within a *group of friends*[236].

- Bullying is *fluid*, and rotation and reshuffling of status among those involved in the bullying can occur (although it can be stabilized when power-relationships have been solidified). For example, spectators and bystanders can be the victim at one particular time and aggressor at another time; and an aggressor can be a victim one day, and spectator the next[237].

- *The vulnerability of the victim is a product of the group interaction*, rather than the other way around[238].

- The instability of the victimization fills the class with *anxiety*[239].

- *Human relationships are thin* within a group involved in bullying. Students tend to be indifferent to the problems of others, and when their friend is victimized, they either ignore it, or take part in the bullying[240].

Morita's theory of collective bullying has been elaborated by other researchers. In relation to the vulnerability produced in the group's interactions, Akiba describes in her ethnographic study how labelling someone to have non-conforming characteristics and/or to be 'hated by everyone' constituted a reason for exclusion, and how students blindly follow the group once the labelling is 'decided'[241]. This accentuates an additional point in the theory of collective bullying that *conformity*

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[236] Morita, 2010:90
[237] Morita, 2010:134
[238] Morita, 2010:76
[239] Morita, 2010:134
[240] Morita et al., 1999:322
[241] Akiba, 2004

provides the syntax of vulnerability, and the logic of inclusion and exclusion[242].

Bystanders play a pivotal role in the maintenance of conformity, and Morita[243] claims bystanders determine whether bullying will be stopped or not. If a class functions well as a community, Morita argues, bystanders can intervene to stop bullying. The incidence of peace making declines with age however[244], leaving the class as a *dysfunctional* community that has lost its mechanism to counter bullying[245].

Morita points out that bystanders tend to be good students who are doing well academically and plan to go to university, who have internalized the conformist values of school, who are least selfish and most cooperative in class activities, and who find meaning in the school and in school structures[246]. Instead of providing a norm to stop bullying, 'good' and 'ordinary' bystanders in a dysfunctional community/class endorse bullying tacitly and thus bullying becomes the norm in the classroom.

Morita's theory can be used to explain the situation of 'Alex's class' as described by Søndergaard[247], where 'the children who had contributed to the intensification of contempt leading up to the physical attacks … remained invisible actors in the bullying scenario, and … were not included in the adults' condemnation and punitive reactions'[248]. The applicability of the theory goes

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[242] Yoneyama, 1999:169-170
[243] Morita, 1999
[244] Morita, 1999:318
[245] Morita, 2010:130
[246] Morita, 2010:133
[247] Søndergaard, 2014
[248] Søndergaard, 2014:62

beyond the role of bystanders. Søndergaard continues with a description of the class:

> Alex's class is also an example of a school class that perpetually sets the stage for anxiety, which reverberates throughout the group and generates a continual hunt for something or someone to despise. The level of noise is high. The jokes that the group finds funniest are sharply personal and ridiculing. There is a constant stream of contemptuous appraisal via text messages and the available online social-networking websites. The children struggle against each other in their attempts to gain control through reciprocal definitions of and conditions for humiliation. And the positions change: there are variations in who is assigned the position of being excluded and who is chosen as the primary target of contempt and humiliation[249].

In addition to what is explained by Morita's theory of bullying: the role of bystanders, anxiety and change in social positions in victimization, there seems to be another element operating here: what Akiba calls the 'dominant flow'[250]. In a Japanese class which was equally dysfunctional as Søndergaard's in Denmark, Akiba found that all students 'appeared quite sensitive to the dominant flow of what others thought and how they acted [and that this] dominant flow decided everything, regardless of the morality or justice of the dynamics and circumstances'[251]. This dominant flow seems to be referring to two things. One is '*nori*', the unpredictable, collective mood of the group at a particular point in time[252], and the other is '*kuki*', originally meaning 'air' (as in 'sniffing the air') or 'mood' (as in 'reading

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[249] Søndergaard, 2014:62
[250] Akiba, 2004:228
[251] Akiba, 2004:228
[252] Yoneyama & Naito, 2003:323

the mood'), but best translated as 'vibes' as in 'reading the vibes'[253].

The 'Dominant flow' (nori) and 'Reading the vibes' (kukiyomi)

According to Naito[254], *nori* is the collective feeling of exaltation students enjoy while being engaged in the 'game' of bullying. This shared feeling of emotional uplift with others in the group is the most important part of their value judgment: it constitutes their norm and functions as the foundation of their social order. Students in such a group fear, fetishize, and revere the collective emotional high they gain from the bullying. As in a party, what is considered most important is to enliven the atmosphere, and they will do whatever is required to get this high. Naito explains that in this context, bullying is an important way to produce and maintain the collective sense of high; and that for those who engage in bullying, bullying is a 'moral' action which is followed in their effort to gain, reproduce and maximize the collective thrill[255].

Based on the *nori*-principle, Naito[256] argues that a dysfunctional class has its own social hierarchy. The power in the hierarchy is based on how well a particular student can enliven the group emotionally. Those who can take a leadership role in it become the leaders of the group. Conversely, those who say or do things that go counter to the dominant flow are despised and hated as being 'immoral': to stick out of the dominant flow is unquestionably 'bad'; to stick out and be confident is

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[253] Yoneyama, 2008
[254] Naito, 2007
[255] Naito, 2007:167-174
[256] Naito, 2007

'unforgivable'; for those who are at the bottom of the hierarchy to appear confident and smiling is 'extremely bad'. Those who bring up such things as human rights, humanism, and the dignity of individuals are definitely 'hated' as they deflate the *nori* energy[257].

Doi[258] explains that students in such a dysfunctional community shudder with fear at the thought of sticking out in the group. Students fear being seen as non-conforming. In order to reduce the anxiety, he continues, they *read the vibes* and *go with the dominant flow*, so as not to spoil the fun[259]. In the book titled: *The hell of friendship: Surviving the 'read-the-vibes' generation* (original in Japanese), Doi remarks that the spectators who formed the third layer in Morita's model have largely disappeared in recent school bullying in Japan, and have merged into a large number of silent bystanders[260] Following Miyadai, Doi also points out that classes these days often consist of small 'cosmic islands'[261], with each small group working as a closed independent world, with few interactions between them. A student describing the situation said: 'a different group is like a different prefecture, and a different class is like a different country'[262]. In this situation, students' biggest fear is not having a group to belong to, and they will thus do anything to avoid being excluded.

Bullying occurs *within* such small friendship groups, as illustrated by the words of Sachiko, a student in Akiba's

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[257] Naito, 2007:172-173
[258] Doi, 2008
[259] Doi, 2008:27
[260] Doi, 2008:23
[261] Miyadai, 1994
[262] Doi, 2008:24

ethnographic study[263], who also described the process of how the vulnerability was initially established within the group:

> We were a group of six students. When I arrived at school one morning, I found that one of the group members was totally isolated from the others. Then my friends told me that they had decided to ostracize her, so I joined too…. I am not sure [why she got ostracized] but they said a lot of bad things about her… like she was "selfish" and never listened to people, or talked bad about us behind our backs. So I thought she should be bullied[264].

Akiba points out that students who belong to a 'friendship' group do not always have trusting relationships and many students in her study 'expressed concerns that they could not feel comfortable with their peer group'[265] for various reasons. These include not sharing the same interests and the fear of being seen to be associated with students who are 'hated' by others in the class. Despite being unhappy with the group they belong to, students have little choice but to cling to it as other groups are already firmly established, and not belonging to any group means being placed at the very bottom of the social ladder, the most vulnerable position in the class[266].

According to Doi[267], the function of bullying is to release tension in a group which otherwise would become extremely intense and suffocating. In particular, the laughter associated with bullying, i.e. taunting, jeering and making fun of the victimized member, becomes important as it creates 'light-heartedness' in the group and helps divert attention from other

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[263] Akiba, 2004
[264] Akiba, 2004:227
[265] Akiba, 2004:231
[266] Suzuki, 2012:111
[267] Doi, 2008

potential causes of conflict within the group. The techniques of provoking laughter are often learnt by watching TV variety shows where the words and deeds of comedians provide textbook-like examples of bullying[268].

Fujiwara[269] asserts that some teachers adopt the same technique of using laughter as a strategy for class management:

> When a homeroom teacher cannot be the pivot of the class, the atmosphere of the class becomes permanently unstable. Such a class is in need of a clown. The model to follow can be found in variety-shows in television, which revolve around a clown – the bullied – who is constantly laughed at each time s/he screams at being poked and pushed. The class follows the same power dynamics. To 'read the vibes' means to grasp instantaneously the role to be played by each individual, to select a victim, and to direct the whole scene. The skill to operate 'vibes' can be regarded as a 'petit-fascism' in contemporary society. Some teachers have fallen into using this technique as it is an easy way to manage a class. Thus bullying has become a method[270].

In such a situation, Doi[271] explains, teachers are like 'big students' who 'read the vibes' at the same level as students. In such a class, Doi continues, the hierarchical relationship between the teacher and students collapses and the traditional teacher-student relationship diffuses into the student-to-student relationships, which in turn provides the social environment that cultivates bullying[272].

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[268] Doi, 2008:32
[269] Fujiwara, 2006
[270] translated and quoted in Yoneyama 2008
[271] Doi, 2008
[272] Doi, 2008:42

Suzuki[273] also points out this blurred boundary between the teacher and students. In his enormously popular book, *School Caste* (original in Japanese), Suzuki argues that there is often a 'school caste' system of hierarchically ranked small groups of students within each class at secondary schools in Japan. Different levels of social power are assigned to each group and this creates a classroom climate that is conducive to bullying. He also argues that teachers usually get along well with the students who belong to the high ranked group, and use this hierarchy to maintain order in the class. Other students see this as a situation where teachers 'share/borrow' power from the group of powerful students[274].

The phrase 'school caste' suggests degradation of the management system in the school where it happens. As explained earlier, tacit approval from bystanders adds legitimacy, and a feeling of normalcy, to the bullying. The meaning of bullying as a norm gets stronger when students who belong to the most powerful group use the dynamic flow, i.e. the collective feeling of exaltation (*nori*), to their advantage. Bullying as cultural norm is legitimized further when the teacher becomes part of it and uses the bullying as a method of classroom management by siding with this powerful group of students.

The accounts of group dynamics presented above do not mean that all classrooms in Japan are like this. The discussion is not about the prevalence but rather the morphology of group bullying and is highly relevant for understanding 'the extremely high level of social exclusion anxiety' in other parts of the

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[273] Suzuki, 2012
[274] Suzuki, 2012:208

world, as discussed by Søndergaard in the context of a Danish school[275] and by Bibou-Nakou *et al.*[276] concerning secondary schools in Greece.

What would be the implications of the above discussion in the broader context of a theoretical exploration of the second paradigm of school bullying?

Reflections for a Theory of School Bullying

This paper has focused on Type II bullying and attempted to use the knowledge on this aspect of bullying available in Japan, with the view to incorporate it into the theory building on school bullying in English. The paper has thus been framed as a discourse on school bullying that belongs to paradigm two. As such, it shares various ideas and points addressed by Schott[277] and Søndergaard et al.[278] who articulated the significance of the second paradigm in *School Bullying: New Theories in Context*. The following is an attempt to tie in this paper with some points raised in the book. It also raises a more fundamental question of frame of reference for further exploration on the theory of school bullying.

Binding power of school as social institution as precondition of bullying

The point raised by Schott in her definition of bullying that bullying occurs 'in relation to formal institutions, such as the

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[275] Søndergaard, 2014:50
[276] Bibou-Nakou *et al.*, 2012
[277] Schott, 2014
[278] Søndergaard et al., 2014

school, where individuals cannot easily leave the group'[279] is extremely relevant to the discussion in this paper. Without the binding power of schools as a social institution, it is hard to imagine how students and parents would put up with the obvious abuse of the human rights of children by corporal punishment and teacher-student bullying. In Japan and other East Asian societies, the pressure to attend school is extremely strong. This reality is best illustrated by the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey [280], which indicates that students in Japan, Korea and Hong Kong, show some of the highest school attendance rates. Underlying this reality is so-called 'school faith', the belief that in order to be successful and happy in life, it is mandatory to do well at school[281]. The PISA data shows that with this 'school ideology', students in East Asia, including Japan, are bound to their school to a greater extent than students in other parts of the world. In addition, the homeroom system in Japanese schools further confines students with the exactly same group of students, not only for the whole day but for the whole year, leaving them little room to escape from this mini-community. The binding power of classroom community is further exacerbated in Japanese schools by the fact that school activities are organised into small-groups for learning, eating lunch, cleaning, doing chores, school events, and holding responsibilities [282]. The discussion presented in this paper about corporal punishment, teacher-to-student bullying and the negative power of group dynamics needs to be understood in this context.

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[279] Schott, 2014:39
[280] OECD, 2004:121
[281] Yoneyama, 2000
[282] Naito, 2001:119-37

Anomie in the formal and informal power structure of schools

The discussion of corporal punishment and teacher-student bullying has shown how violence used by teachers can be legitimised and hence ignored. It thus supports the attempt to define school bullying in terms of school violence[283]. At the same time, the discussion on group dynamics presented above has indicated the complexity of school factors that goes beyond the institutional teacher-student relationships. As pointed out by Schott:

> The ongoing process of constituting informal groups through the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion provides a social context for bullying. Changes in position are dangerous to group order, becoming a source of fear and anxiety since all members of the group risk being excluded. Bullying occurs when groups respond to this anxiety by projecting the threat to group order onto particular individuals; these individuals become systematically excluded as the 'other'[284].

Morita's theory of the four-tiered structure of bullying has explained well how this informal social structure encompasses an incident of bullying, maintains it through the tacit approval of bystanders, and thus turns the class into a dysfunctional community that has lost its power to deal with the bullying. The discussion on group dynamics on the other hand has illuminated the workings of an anxiety-laden informal group: bullying is a way of using 'having fun' to reduce tension within groups, conformity functions to provide the justification and 'grammar' of bullying, students (and teachers) need to read the

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[283] Schott, 2014
[284] Schott, 2014:39

vibes as the ultimate sign of conformity in order to ride successfully on the flow of negative but intoxicating energy of informal groups, and bullying based on groups leads to an informal hierarchy on which even teachers may depend.

The discussion of corporal punishment, teacher-to-student bullying and the power dynamics of informal groups suggests the possibility that anomie, i.e. a collapse of social norms and ethical standards, has occurred in some classrooms and schools, not only among students but also among teachers, turning such classes and schools into dysfunctional communities that have lost the ability to deal with or stop bullying. Although examining the usefulness of the concept of anomie is beyond the scope of this paper, the relationship between some institutional aspects of school and characteristics of school bullying has been examined as will be discussed below.

Bullying as an undesirable school avatar

It has been pointed out that bullying in Japanese schools is often committed using social and institutional norms as a justification. Similarities between the institutional structure of schools and the morphology of group bullying have been pointed out [285] in relation to a school norms group-based management, pressure to conform, and the organizational arrangement of the school. For instance, 'bullying that is exercised on the grounds that someone is not following a group norm or implicit agreement of the group, is legitimatized by the power of justice, and has the characteristics of sanction within a

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[285] Morita 1996, 2010; Naito, 2001; Yoneyama, 1999; Yoneyama & Naito 2003

group'[286]. This explains why students are bullied after being labelled as 'selfish, egotistical, troublesome to others because of slowness in doing things, forgetful about bringing things to school, not following rules, unclean, having unusual habits, etc.'[287]. With detailed analysis of the school rules and the morphology of bullying, Yoneyama[288] argues that bullying is an over-adjustment to the institutional aspects of school, and thus has a complicit relationship with them. Although students themselves may not be aware of it, bullying 'serves as an illegitimate, "school-floor", peer-surveillance system, which helps to perfect the enforcement of school rules'[289]. Such conformity can be a 'by-product' of bullying, which takes place in a social environment where being different is seen as weakness[290]. In particular, in an environment where corporal punishment and/or teacher-student bullying prevails, bullying can become a learned behaviour or a school avatar which represents the negative and undesirable aspects of power relations in the school.

Bullying as a longing to belong

Quite paradoxically, the analysis of group dynamics presented above has suggested how bullying can be an expression of a longing to belong[291], based on the urge to exclude someone else in order to be included in the group. The PISA results mentioned above also indicate that students in Japan showed the lowest sense of belonging to school among the 44 countries

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[286] Morita, 2010:118
[287] Morita, 2010:118
[288] Yoneyama, 1999
[289] Yoneyama, 1999:169
[290] Yoneyama, 1999:170
[291] Hansen et al., 2014

surveyed, in clear contrast to their high attendance scores[292]. This sense of belonging was based on student responses to questions concerning how they feel about school: whether they 'feel like an outsider' at school, 'feel awkward and out of place', 'feel lonely', 'do not want to go to school', or 'often feel bored'. Importantly, Japan, Korea and Hong Kong formed a cluster in the chart, indicating a similarity of student experiences. They endure the contradictory relationship between pressure to attend school, and emotional disengagement from it[293]. This empirical reality constitutes another socio-institutional context of school bullying in Japan, and also potentially in other (East) Asian societies. It is possible that underlying bullying there is a deep sense of alienation among students, a sense of disconnectedness with the social institution of schools. If so, bullying can be a way of compensating for this void by colluding and connecting with others on the bullying side.

Various sociologists have argued that we have been living in an era called 'late modern'[294], 'second modern'[295], or 'liquid modern'[296] since around the 1980s, which is characterised by the weakening of social bonds that were previously provided by social institutions. The sense of connectedness and belonging that school as a modern institution can provide seems to have declined. In this broad picture, Japan can be seen as a case representing extreme modernity. As McCormack points out 'Japan, as the most successful capitalist country in history, represents in concentrated form problems facing contemporary

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[292] OECD, 2004:121
[293] see Williams & Yoneyama, 2011
[294] Giddens, 2000
[295] Beck, 1999
[296] Bauman, 2000

industrial civilization as a whole'[297]. Likewise, schools in Japan can be seen to represent institutional characteristics of schools in modern industrial societies in the most concentrated form[298]. If this were correct, in order to illuminate further the nature of school bullying, it would be useful to juxtapose the aspects of bullying discussed here with a mode of education that is very different from that of schooling as a modern institution.

Seeking a new frame of reference

In this context, Steiner education provides an intriguing frame of reference. Its highly established philosophy and practice of education illuminates the characteristics of schools that we take for granted in 'modern' and 'conventional' education systems. In one of a limited number of studies on bullying in alternative schools, Rivers and Soutter[299] examined the effect of school ethos upon bullying, the very same topic explored in this paper. They argue that school ethos grows from principles such as non-competition and non-hierarchy, encouragement of groups with diversity, and an underlying emphasis on moral education. They found that although there was some bullying in the Steiner school where they conducted their survey, it was a minor problem when compared with the results of other studies. In a study on the relationship between classroom climate and bullying by Yoneyama and Rigby[300], one of the schools ('School D') included in the study was a Steiner school. The study found that students' perceptions of the classroom climate were far more positive than in the other four schools in the study, which included elite private and government schools. This difference

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[297] McCormack, 1998:5
[298] Naito, 2001:32
[299] Rivers & Soutter, 1996
[300] Yoneyama & Rigby, 2006

between the Steiner school and the other schools has been confirmed to be statistically significant [301] , although, interestingly, no statistically significant difference in bullying was found between the Steiner and other schools in the study.

This leads us to a reflective question as to why students find it necessary to 'have fun' through bullying. Yoshida, who specializes in (w)holistic education, which includes Steiner education, asserts that bullying becomes a non-issue when students experience wholehearted enjoyment and happiness that connects their actions directly with their inner self, but that this is often suppressed by social expectations[302]. He writes that:

> If each person listens closely to the voice of her/his <self> and lives a life with the power it generates, that will be the best solution to bullying. When you bully someone or are being bullied by someone, take it as an indication that you do not have the kind of joy that livens up your life. If this is the case, you need to create a space where you can really enjoy your life. Wholehearted happiness is contagious. To be able to enjoy learning and teaching at school may seem a long way as a solution to bullying, but it actually is a short cut to it[303].

Yoshida raises an important point that a sense of connectedness might be a good antidote to bullying. This echoes the notion of bullying as a longing to belong in a school community that does not, or cannot, provide an adequate sense of belonging for students, and has turned into a dysfunctional community that has lost the power to deal with bullying.

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[301] Yoneyama, 2015
[302] Yoshida, 1999:49-63
[303] p.49, translated by and quoted in Yoneyama 2007:34

Now that we are moving beyond the first paradigm of bullying research into the second, and paying more attention to schools as a social environment, it is essential to broaden the reference point to include education systems that are different. In this sense, it seems important to include not only Japan/Asia but also Steiner/(w)holistic education in the mainstream discourse on bullying research. In relation to the discussion above, Steiner education suggests a need to examine the key concepts, such as group, authority and hierarchy, and conformity in a different light, as each is discussed in a different, more positive context[304].

From the viewpoint of the sociology of education, schools play two contradictory roles: social reproduction and social change. Research into school bullying based on the second paradigm illuminates the nature of education through an examination of what appears to be problematic behaviour among students. In that sense, it is ultimately an endeavour to improve the school environment and maximize student learning and well-being. Focusing only on the problematic aspect of schools, however, is limiting. For a more critical and fundamental examination of the relationship between school/classroom environment and bullying among students, inclusion of alternative education, such as Steiner education, as a comparative frame of reference is likely to deepen our understanding of bullying further and may lead us to envisage a third paradigm of research into school bullying.

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[304] see for instance, Beaven, 2011

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Dr Shoko Yoneyama is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Asian Studies in the School of Social Sciences, Faculty of Arts, at the University of Adelaide

The social dynamics of school bullying: The necessary dialogue between the blind men around the elephant and the possible meeting point at the social-ecological square

Robert Thornberg

Bullying has over the years been examined and explained in individual as well as in contextual terms, and from a wide range of different theories and methods. A growing number of bullying researchers approach bullying as a socially complex phenomenon and from social researchers approach bullying as a socially complex phenomenon and from social psychological and sociological perspectives. There is today a tension between theoretical perspectives on bullying, but also a need for investigating the social and contextual aspects of bullying further. In this article, I will argue for the necessity of dialogue between different theoretical perspectives and the inclusive potential of the social-ecological framework to create a meeting point of theories in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of school bullying.

The blind men around an elephant

Bullying has traditionally been defined as repeated inhumane actions directed at target individuals, who are disadvantaged or less powerful than those who repeatedly harass or attack them[305]. The international school bullying research field has its origin in developmental psychology and was initiated by the work of the Scandinavian psychologist Dan Olweus [306]. Developmental and educational psychology still dominates this field, even though the interest of school bullying has been growing among social psychologists, sociologists, social anthropologists, and philosophers[307]. Bullying is about power but there is an on-going debate among scholars about how to define and collect data on bullying[308]. Furthermore, even if we adopt the traditional definition, the term bullying still has multiple meanings and uses[309] because the definition and the meaning are due to the characteristics of languages, cultures, and contexts.

A growing number of bullying researchers approach bullying as a socially complex phenomenon and from social psychological and sociological perspectives. Some of them are challenging earlier and other contemporary perspectives. The situation is a bit like the metaphor of the six blind men around an elephant – a metaphor Thayer-Bacon[310] uses to approach the diversity

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[305] e.g., Espelage and Rue, 2012; Jimerson, Swearer and Espelage, 2010; Noels, 2012; Smith, 2014

[306] Olweus, 1973, 1978

[307] Schott and Søndergaard, 2014b; Thornberg, 2011

[308] e.g., Canty, Stubbe, Steers and Collings, in press; Carrera, DePalma and Lameiras, 2011; Duncan, 2013; Ellwood and Davies, 2010, 2014; Frånberg and Wrethander, 2011; Mitchell and Borg, 2013; Ringrose and Renold, 2010; Schott, 2014

[309] cf., Canty et al., in press

[310] Thayer-Bacon, 2001

within social and educational research. In this well-known poem, the six blind men examined an elephant from different positions and described it as either a rope, a tree, a fan, a snake, a wall, or a spear, depending upon which part of the elephant that each man touched. Thayer-Bacon[311] argues that knowers are fallible, that our knowledge and our criteria of its justification or plausibility are situated and socially constructed, and therefore corrigible and continually in need of critique and reconstruction. As Jackson[312] states, 'it is not a case of some having a clearer view than others, but rather that the social is many-faceted and what is seen from one angle may be obscured from another'. Hence, a crucial advice to the blind men is, Thayer-Bacon[313] states, to start talking to each other and share the information and conceptions they each had. 'Only by acting as a community of inquirers can they hope to gather a more complete understanding of elephants'[314].

Nevertheless, as Schott and Søndergaard state, 'this suggestion about the partiality of epistemological perspectives does *not* imply an add-on approach'[315] . I agree with this sentiment because a simple add-on approach would be similar to what Thayer-Bacon[316] conceptualised as vulgar relativism, which argues that it does not matter what one's perspective is, in relation to the elephant, for all perspectives are right ("true"). She contrasts this position with what she calls a *qualified relativism,* which (a) insists on the need for pluralism, i.e., a conversation between different perspectives in order to reach a

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[311] Thayer-Bacon, 2000, 2001, 2003a, 2003b
[312] Jackson, 2006, p. 106
[313] Thayer-Bacon, 2001
[314] Thayer-Bacon, 2001, p. 401
[315] Schott and Søndergaard, 2014a, p. 9
[316] Thayer-Bacon, 2001

more qualified understanding, (b) accepts fallibilism, i.e., that we can never attain knowledge that is certain because we are fallible, limited, and contextual beings, and (c) claims that knowledge is a cultural embedded social process of knowing that is continually in need of re/adjustment, correction, and re/construction.

> Qualified relativists insist that all inquiry (and the criteria and tools we use to help us inquire) are affected by philosophical assumptions which are culturally bound, and that all inquirers are situated knowers who are culturally bound as well. However, we can compensate for our cultural embed-dedness by opening our horizons and including others in our conversations. Pluralistically including others' perspectives in our inquirying process offers us the means for adjusting for our own limitations, correcting our standards and improving the warrants for our assertions, and recognizing the role of power and privilege in epistemological theories. Qualified relativists insist on the need for us to be pluralistic in our inquirying, both interms of considering the universe as open and unfinished, as well as in the sense of including others not like us necessarily in the inquirying process [317].

In accordance with qualified relativism, I do not reject individual explanations per se, but in this article I have chosen to review a selection of different approaches that view and analyse school bullying as social processes and dynamics (i.e., from the second paradigm or second-order perspective on bullying). I do so because scholars have recently drawn attention to the need of adopting more social psychological and sociological perspectives on bullying[318]. These are some of the "blind men" around the elephant of bullying that should be

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[317] Thayer-Bacon, 2003a, p. 418
[318] Migliaccio and Raskauskas, in press, Schott and Søndergaard, 2014b, Thornberg, 2011

engaged in a dialogue with each other as well as with other theoretical perspectives of bullying.

Stigma and labelling processes

Within *interactionist* and *social constructionist* frameworks, ethnographic and qualitative interview studies have demonstrated how target students in school bullying are socially defined, constituted or constructed as deviant, odd, or different in peer interactions and conversations [319]. For example, Thornberg[320] found that participants in bullying often used dehumanising and deviant-constituting labels like "moron", "ugly", "nerd", "retarded", "poor man's clothes", "disgusting", "stupid", "stinking", and "weird" to address the victims. In their discourse analysis, Teräsahjo and Salmivalli[321] identified "the odd student repertoire" performed by the students when they talked about the victims. Evaldsson and Svahn [322] revealed how girls who were reported as bullies justified their actions as ordinary and rational, and labelled the targeted peer as "a liar", "whore", and "fucking abnormal". Labels that constitute the target students as deviant are used in the peer group to normalise and justify bullying [323]. Such meaning-making and interaction patterns in bullying can be understood as *stigma* and *labelling* processes[324].

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[319] Adler and Adler, 1998, Evaldsson and Svahn, 2012, Merton, 1994, Kinney, 1993, Teräsahjo and Salmivalli, 2003, Thornberg, 2015; Thornberg, Halldin, Bolmsjö, and Petersson, 2013

[320] Thornberg, 2015

[321] Teräsahjo and Salmivalli, 2003

[322] Evaldsson and Svahn, 2012

[323] Evaldsson and Svahn, 2012, Lahelma, 2004, Teräsahjo and Salmivalli, 2003, Thornberg, 2015

[324] Merton, 1996, Thornberg, 2015, Thornberg et al., 2013

A label refers to a definition, and 'when applied to a person, it identifies or defines what type of a person he or she is'[325]. A label can be either "deviant" or "normal". When individuals are labelled as deviant, they are defined as people who violate important social taken-for-granted norms of the social group, culture or society. Phelan and Link[326] argued that stigma is the core concept for understanding the consequences of labelling. Thus, 'the peer discourse of bullying created social expectations that trapped the victims in a self-fulfilling prophecy. They became nothing more than their bullying-induced labels for the classmates'[327]. As a result of the stigma, other students who do not actively participate in bullying avoid the victims as a result of peer pressure and a fear of social contamination, whereas the victims become even more rejected and excluded from most of the school's social life[328]. The socially isolated students tend to be caught in a victim cycle from which they cannot easily escape, and their attempts to escape usually fail because of the social construction of their differentness produced and reproduced in everyday interaction[329].

Friendship and relationship building

Other researchers understand bullying as a result of children and adolescents' *friendship and relationship building[330]*. From a *sociocultural theoretical framework,* Wrethander[331] stated that

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[325] Phelan and Link, 1999, p. 140
[326] Phelan and Link, 1999
[327] Thornberg, 2015, p. 315
[328] Dixon, Smith and Jenks, 2004, Evans and Eder, 1993, Hamarus and Kaikkonen, 2008, Thornberg, 2015, Thornberg et al., 2013
[329] Adler and Adler, 1998, Evans and Eder, 1993, Kless, 1992, Merton, 1996, Thornberg, 2015
[330] e.g., Haavind, 2014, Svahn and Evaldsson, 2011, Wrethander, 2007
[331] Wrethander, 2007

inclusion and *exclusion* are core processes in students' on-going *relational work* in everyday school life. Their relational work is mainly about ordering the social life in school and creating and maintaining a peer culture. Their relationships can change, be disrupted, and come to an end. The relational work and membership in peer group are based on a *shared cultural knowledge* that includes social norms about "right" and "wrong" behaviours and expectations in different situations. If a student acts "wrongly", a conflict may arise and there is a risk that he or she will be negatively categorised and excluded from the group. A set of different harassments can be used in this excluding process.

With reference to her ethnographic study, Wrethander [332] claimed that excluding actions are always connected to including actions, i.e., to manifest or emphasise togetherness in a relationship or a peer group (e.g., a real best friend relationship). Students then exclude a particular student in order to communicate that he or she does not belong to the actual relationship or peer group. Excluding processes are used to manifest distance toward students when establishing or maintaining peer relationships.

Furthermore, Wrethander[333] argued that excluding actions can emerge in two different ways: (a) as a more or less temporary element in the relational work in order to establish or maintain friendships, or (b) as a permanent exclusion of particular students conducted by peer groups in order to strengthen their togetherness. In such systematic and harassing exclusion, the targeted students are constructed as deviant or odd. By being

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[332] Wrethander, 2007
[333] Wrethander, 2007

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excluded, they will not have the same opportunity to appropriate the shared cultural knowledge and the peer norms for everyday social interaction. Their poor social knowledge can then be used as a resource to make them seen as "wrong doers" and to have them make fools of themselves. This in turn reinforces the socially constructed portrayal of them as odd or deviant. Furthermore, indirect aggression or relational bullying (i.e., social exclusion and rumour-spreading) among girls as a means to establish, manifest, maintain, or challenge established friendship and peer group boundaries has attracted some researchers[334].

The idea of bullying as produced by friendship and relationship building can also be theoretically approached and analysed with symbolic interactionist and poststructuralist perspectives. For example, within a poststructural framework, Søndergaard[335] proposed the concept of *social exclusion anxiety* as a thinking technology to develop a deeper understanding of bullying. The concept is built on the assumption that human beings are existentially dependent on *social embeddedness*. Social exclusion anxiety arises when this need of social belonging becomes jeopardised or threatened. This anxiety is always present as a fear beneath the surface when people interact – the risk of being marginalised and excluded, which leads to a loss of dignity and in the worst case "social death". In school, children negotiate the conditions for inclusion but at the same time this process operates along with the possibility of exclusion[336]. Whereas inclusion is associated with *projects of dignity*, exclusion is associated with *contempt production*. In bullying

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[334] Goodwin, 2002, Owens, Shute and Slee, 2000, Svahn and Evaldsson, 2011, Swart and Bredekamp, 2009
[335] Søndergaard, 2012, 2014
[336] cf., Wrethander, 2007

practises, contempt production increases and becomes focused on the targeted child, who becomes dehumanised and under pressure to assume an abject position. "The child who is abjected performs this by being positioned as a target of contempt, hatred or other degrading assessments that work to confirm that, at any rate, 'we' are inside and accepted"[337]. Hence, the contempt production and the target of bullying can contribute to the cohesion of the peer group and provide temporary relief from their own social exclusion anxiety.

Social hierarchies

From sociological and social anthropological point of views and with reference to their ethnographic work, several scholars have argued that bullying and harassment can, at least in part, be understood and explained in relation to *school culture*[338]. MacDonald and Swart[339] stated that the school they investigated had a *conflicted culture* underlying bullying. The school culture was conflicted because an overriding *authoritarian culture* with conflicted power relations, hierarchical channels of communication, and autocratic structures and procedures undermined the school from implementing a more positive, collaborative, respectful, and democratic culture. A prevalent *culture of secrecy* ("do not tell") at the school also contributed to the prevalence of bullying, as well as having *intolerance for diversity* and a *culture of disrespect*. From a sociological perspective, Yoneyama and Naito[340], suggested that schools are a social

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[337] Søndergaard, 2014, p. 68
[338] Cadigan, 2002, Duncan, 1999, Horton, 2011, Kinney, 1993, MacDonald and Swart, 2004, Merton, 1994.
[339] 2004
[340] Yoneyama and Naito, 2003

institution based on hierarchical and authoritarian relationships. The authoritarian structures of schools include a 'blaming, punitive, and disciplinary approach based on the use of aggression, power, and control; as well as a hierarchical and competitive ethos (as against caring ethos) that has little room for vulnerability'[341].

Researchers that have conducted ethnographic fieldwork in schools and qualitative interviews with students have argued that *social hierarchies* among the students are generated or reinforced by *the strong emphasis on competition and hierarchies in the school culture*. Bullying is produced as a result of social processes of negotiations, competitions, and struggles within social hierarchies[342]. Whereas students who are at the bottom of the social hierarchy are the typical targets of bullying, those who are most active in bullying tend to have high social status. Those at the bottom of the social hierarchy, including the victims of bullying, are also socially defined or constructed as different, odd, deviant, or those who do not fit in and are given stigmatising labels[343].

The association between social hierarchy and bullying has also been found in quantitative studies. In these studies, "bullies" are usually those who are identified by their peers, as those who most often fit the description of the social role of the "bully" and victims are usually those who are identified by their peers as those who most often fit the description of the social role of

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[341] Yoneyama and Naito, 2003, p. 317
[342] Adler and Adler, 1998, Besag, 2006, Cadigan, 2002, Dixon et al., 2004, Duncan, 1999, Eder, Evans and Parker, 1995, Goodwin, 2002, Hamarus and Kaikkonen, 2008, Kinney, 1993, Kless, 1992, MacDonald and Swart, 2004, Merton, 1997, Phillips, 2003
[343] Adler and Adler, 1998, Cadigan, 2002, Dixon et al., 2004, Eder et al., 1995, Kinney, 1993, Kless, 1992

the "victim". Findings from these studies indicate that those who bully others have usually high social status[344] and several friends in school[345] . Moreover, high status students display a strong tendency of not being targets of bullying[346]. In contrast, victims are usually those with the fewest or no friends[347], those who spend most of their time at the playground in solitude[348], and those who have the lowest social status in their school classes[349]. In addition, whereas bullies tend to be popular, "bully/victims", i.e., students who are perceived as both bullies and victims at the same time, tend to be unpopular[350]. Bullying can be used as a strategy to increase students' popularity but not everyone who uses that strategy is successful[351].

Social dominance

According to the *social dominance theory[352]*, bullying is used as a strategy to establish and maintain social dominance, and groups are often organised in dominant hierarchies. Dominance is not an end in itself but a means to get prioritised access to resources that are valued for the group. Individuals use aggressive and agonistic strategies as well as prosocial and cooperative strategies in order to position themselves in the dominant hierarchy.

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[344] de Bruyn, Cillessen and Wissink, 2010, Reijntjes et al., 2013, Sentse, Kiuru, Veenstra and Salmivalli, 2014, Thunfors and Cornell, 2008
[345] Barboza et al., 2009
[346] Pellegrini, 2002, Pellegrini, Blatchford and Baines, 2002
[347] Pellegrini, Bartini and Brooks, 1999, Pellegrini and Long, 2002
[348] Boulton, 1999
[349] de Bruyn et al., 2010, Mouttapa et al., 2004
[350] Thunfors and Cornell, 2008
[351] cf., Dijkstra, Lindenberg and Veenstra, 2008
[352] Pellegrini, 2004, Pellegrini et al., 2010

According to this theory, bullying is not used because children are evil-minded or have a deficient social cognition, but to position themselves in school classes and peer groups. In order to be successful they need to be skilled socially rather than lack social competence. Aggressive children who lack social skills tend to be identified as bully/victims or provocative/aggressive victims at the lower end of the dominant hierarchy. Thus, the main intention of bullying is not to inflict harm in itself but rather instrumental and used in a calculated way.

In particular, individuals use aggression as well as cooperative means in new groups. Thus, bullying is used as an initial strategy to increase social dominance status, and then bullying decreases when the dominant hierarchy has been established. In support for this assumption, research has demonstrated how bullying increases during the transition from primary school to middle school when children's social groups are disrupted, and after a while it decreases again as social dominance is established in the school classes[353]. Bullying is a goal-directed behaviour, and reputation (social dominance) is the most commonly cited benefit of bullying, both to individuals and groups[354].

Likeability and popularity

Several researchers with an interest in social hierarchies or social statuses among children and adolescents make a conceptual distinction between *likeability* (other similar terms are *peer acceptance, peer preference* and *sociometric popularity*) and *popularity* (also known as *perceived popularity*). Whereas

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[353] Pellegrini, 2004, Pellegrini et al., 2002, Pellegrini et al., 2010
[354] Volk, Dane and Marini, 2014

likeability refers to the extent to which other peers like or appreciate a child, popularity refers to the extent to which other peers rate a child as socially dominant, powerful or in terms of social status[355]. De Bruyn et al. put it as 'being well liked by peers… measured by asking adolescents who they like or prefer as play partner or friend' versus 'visibility, prestige, or dominance… measured by asking adolescents who they see as popular in their peer group'[356].

This distinction seems to shed new light on the relationship between popularity and bullying. Studies indicate that bullies tend to have high popularity but low likeability[357]. In contrast, students who are used to taking the defender role in bullying tend to be rated high in both popularity and likeability by their classmates[358]. Victims in turn appear to score low on measures of both likeability and popularity[359].

In addition, Witvliet et al.[360] found that bullying was also positively associated with popularity and negatively associated with likeability between peer groups. In other words, peer groups that engage in frequent bullying tended to score high in popularity and low in likeability, which in turn might reflect social dominant hierarchies of peer groups, in which bullying is used by a peer group as a tactic to establish, enhance, manifest, or maintain its social dominant position.

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[355] e.g., Asher and McDonald, 2009, Cillessen and Mayeux, 2004, Hymel, Closson, Caravita and Vaillancourt, 2011

[356] De Bruyn et al, 2010, p. 544

[357] Caravita and Cillessen, 2012, Caravita, Blasio and Salmivalli, 2009, 2010, de Bruyn et al., 2010, Sentse et al., 2014

[358] Caravita et al., 2009, 2010, Pöyhönen, Juvonen and Salmivalli, 2010

[359] de Bruyn et al., 2010, Prinstein and Cillessen, 2003

[360] Witvliet et al, 2010

Power and power imbalance as situated and relational

In addition to findings which show that long-term bully victims are usually at the bottom of the social hierarchy, some ethnographic studies have found that more temporary or short-term bullying can emerge and are prone to victimise (a) certain middle status students when they try to reach acceptance and become members of high status groups but instead become subject to the border work and excluding mechanisms of the high status group, and (b) certain high status students as a result of power and status negotiations and struggles within high status groups [361]. Thus, bullying can be examined and understood in terms of *social positioning* within larger peer groups such as crowds and school classes, as well as between and within minor peer groups such as cliques and friendship groups. Thus, the terms "bullies" and "victims" might be adequate to describe stable roles in long-term bullying. At the same time, it is important to recognise that these very common terms risk portraying a rather static picture of the social dynamics of bullying and peer group processes, as well as labelling and stigmatizing those involved. Although researchers use them in research reports, it would be very inappropriate to use them in the everyday anti-bullying work in schools.

Power imbalance or asymmetry, which is one of the criteria in the traditional definition of bullying, could be understood as *situated* and *relational*. In other words, constituted and manifested in everyday social interactions in children's positioning and relational work, rather than personal and

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[361] Adler and Adler, 1998, Besag, 2006, Duncan, 1999, Eder et al., 1995, Merton, 1997

located in individuals. From a range of social theories, such as symbolic interactionism, social constructionism, and poststructuralism, power is understood as *fluent*. In the field of school bullying, this might be more obvious in temporary or short-term bullying, but also in so-called "bully/victim" cases in which certain students are both bullying others and being bullied by others at the same time, and when students assume different roles ("pure victim", "pure bully", "provocative-victim", and "bystander") in different contexts as well as when they change roles within or between episodes[362]. Although power is situated, relational and fluent, it could nevertheless appear as more stable over time as a result of an established pattern of social interactions, which is the case in long-term bullying[363]. An unwillingness to recognize long-term bullying would be devastating, particularly to those kids who are victimized. Theoretical frameworks like symbolic interactionism, social constructionism, and poststructuralism offer us theoretical lenses to examine and understand both power change and power stability in everyday interactions. Furthermore, a lot of studies emphasise the association between bullying and social categories, which highlights the macro aspects of bullying. Here I will focus on disability, gender, and heteronormativity, and by that, the need to include cultural norms and hegemonies in a theoretical understanding of school bullying.

Disability, gender and heterosexual hegemony

Several studies have found that members of certain social categories are overrepresented as victims of school bullying.

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[362] see Gumpel, Zioni-Koren and Bekerman, 2014
[363] cf., Thornberg, 2015

Children and adolescents with disabilities and special education needs are at a higher risk of being bullied[364].

For instance, students with stammers and other speech-language impairment [365], clumsiness or poor motor skills [366] hearing impairment [367], Tourette syndrome and other chronic tic disorders[368], and neuropsychiatric diagnoses such as autism spectrum disorders [369] and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorders (ADHD)[370] are more often bullied than their peers. Dixon et al.[371] examined a secondary school which included both mainstream students and students with hearing loss. They described how students who were hearing impaired tended to be categorised as different by their peers and they had a low social status. They became stigmatised and socially excluded in relation to the mainstream students. As a sub-group, the students with hearing loss were largely treated as members of a low status outgroup, and thus socially marginalised in school. As a result of their hearing disability, they were treated as

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[364] Annerbäck, Sahlqvist and Wingren, 2014, Christensen, Fraynt, Neece and Baker, 2012, Luciano and Savage, 2007, McGee, 2013, Nabuzoka, 2003, Norwich and Kelly, 2004, Sentenac et al., 2012, Swearer, Wang, Maag, Siebecker and Frerichs, 2012, Twyman et al., 2010, for reviews, see Sentenac et al., 2012, Rose, 2011, Rose, Monda-Amaysa and Espelage, 2011

[365] Blake, Lund, Zhou, Kwok and Benz, 2012, Davis, Howell and Cooke, 2002, Erickson and Block, 2013

[366] Bejerot and Humble, 2013, Bejerot, Plenty, Humble and Humble, 2013, Campbell, Missiuna and Vaillancourt, 2012

[367] Blake et al., 2012

[368] Zinner, Conelea, Glew, Woods and Budman, 2012

[369] Blake et al., 2012, Kloosterman, Kelley, Parker and Javier, 2013, Zablotsky, Bradshaw, Anderson and Law, 2014, for recent reviews, see Schroeder, Cappadocia, Bebko, Pepler and Weiss, 2014, Sreckovic, Brunsting and Able, 2014

[370] Fite, Evans, Cooley and Rubens, 2014, Holmberg and Hjern, 2008, McNamara et al., 2005, Taylor, Saylor, Twyman and Macias, 2010, Unnever and Cornell, 2003, Wiener and Mak, 2009

[371] Dixon et al, 2004

second class citizens, which in turn could lead to denigration and actual bullying.

Furthermore, several studies have shown how bullying and harassment as well as status, power and popularity among students can be produced and maintained by gender norms and patriarchal or gendered power structures or discourses[372], and by heterosexual hegemony or heteronormativity[373].

According to research, students who transgress established socio-cultural gender norms are at a higher risk of being victims of bullying and harassment[374]. Even though these studies give us important insights of the prevalence and correlations, they do not help us to understand the variation within and overlaps between different gender groups, and how gender norms might interact with other cultural norms and social categories.

Considering the issue of sexuality, several studies have found that students who identify themselves with another sexual orientation than hegemonic heterosexuality are more often bullied than peers who are heterosexual[375]. For example, Rivers and Cowie[376] found that lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) students' experiences of victimisation at school were both long-

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[372] Adler and Adler, 1998, Duncan, 1999, Duncan and Owens, 2011, Eder et al., 1995, Evans and Eder, 1993, Kless, 1992, Lahelma, 2004, Phoenix, Frosh and Pattman, 2003, Stoudth, 2006
[373] Cadigan, 2002, Duncan, 1999, Duncan and Owens, 2011, Eder et al., 1995, Evans and Eder, 1993, Lahelma, 2004, Phoenix et al., 2003, Ringrose, 2008
[374] Aspenlieder, Buchanan, McDougall and Sippola, 2009, Friedman, Koeske, Silvestre, Korr and Sites, 2006, Lee and Troop-Gordon, 2011, Young and Sweeting, 2004
[375] Berlan, Corliss, Field, Goodman and Austin, 2010, Birkett, Espelage and Koenig, 2009, McGee, 2013, Toomey, McGuire and Rusell, 2012, for reviews, see Hong and Garbarino, 2012, Poteat, Mereish, Digiovanni and Scheer, 2013
[376] Rivers and Cowie, 2006

term and systematic, and conducted by groups rather than by individuals. Moreover, although lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) students are peer victimised more often than heterosexual students, homosexual epithets are often used in bullying targeting heterosexual students, particularly among boys and when they are perceived as gender non-conformed[377].

In addition, the relationship between heteronormativity and gender norms has been theoretically and empirically examined[378], particularly from interactionist sociology and poststructural feminist perspectives. For example, with reference to Judith Butler, Renold[379] argued that gender is routinely produced in everyday interactions through a heterosexual matrix in which hegemonic prescriptions of masculinity and femininity are embedded within a taken-for-granted hegemonic heterosexuality. Empirically, D'Augelli et al.[380] found that LGB youths who reported childhood gender atypicality considering themselves also reported significantly more verbally and physically sexual-oriented victimisation during their lifetime than LGB youths who did not report childhood gender atypicality. All these studies draw attention to the importance of including the macro level with its normative orders and power structures in relation to the constructed social categories in the culture or society when theorizing about bullying

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[377] see Poteat et al., 2013
[378] e.g., D'Augelli, Grossman and Starks, 2006, Duncan and Owens, 2011, Eder et al., 1995, Jackson, 2006, Meyer, 2008, Renold, 2006
[379] Renold, 2006
[380] D'Augelli et al, 2006

Moral order and intersectionality

According to Ellwood and Davies[381], children are engaged in *category-maintenance work*, which often includes aggressive and punitive behaviour towards others who disrupt already established binary categories such as male and female[382]. Hence, bullying among children in school takes place to maintain the *moral order*, such as gender norms and heteronormativity.

> The classic bully is a powerful figure on the playground: someone who is admired and feared, and who functions to maintain social and moral order through aggressive behaviour towards those who fail to meet certain norms – either the moral ethos of the school or something else that is (randomly) being defined as correct 'in group' behaviour within the peer group… Far from being disliked, marginal and socially unskilled, the classic bully may be popular, due to his/her knowledge of how the dominant social order works, and powerful in his/her insistence that others conform to it[383].

Ellwood and Davies contrast the classic bully with the "sad bully" who lacks these social skills and characteristics, and stands outside the common social and moral order (cf., the distinction between the successful and unsuccessful bullies when considering popularity and social positions in the social dominance hierarchy as discussed earlier). The classic bullies here are viewed as guardians of the moral order[384]. When categorical differences and the relations of power between different categories become fixed, the moral order is clearly related to the power asymmetry in bullying situations, which

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[381] Ellwood and Davies, 2010, 2014
[382] also see Davies, 2011
[383] Ellwood and Davies, 2014, p. 92
[384] Davies, 2011

'give power to those who engage in the unreflected, unoriginal repetition of the conventional, normative moral order… [and] deprives the one who rebels, attempting to resist and disrupt it'[385]. Bullying helps constitute the moral order in the ordinary everyday world.

The power imbalance in bullying of this kind is therefore not limited to the interpersonal relations between the bullies and the victim. Rather it is an expression of one or more power structures within a culture or a society that produce both "deviant", subordinate and excluded social categories as well as "normal", superior and included social categories. In order to pay attention to multiple identities and oppressions, some researchers in the field of bullying take advantage of the concept *intersectionality* [386], which aims to explore these multiple oppressions and identities. They reveal how power, harassment and oppression are produced when they intersect different social categories such as gender, ethnicity, social class, disability/ability, sexuality, age, religion etc. Social categories such as women, children, Muslims, transsexual or Swedish are not homogenous categories because members of a certain social category are at the same time members of a variety of other social categories. The intersectional perspective emphasises that there is not just one power structure but many power structures that interact with each other. Therefore, certain students belonging to a certain "deviant" or subordinate social category might be bullied whereas other students in the same "deviant" or subordinate social category are not bullied due to their membership in other social categories.

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[385] Davies, 2011, p. 283
[386] e.g., Loutzenheiser, 2015; Pritchard, 2013

Social-ecological framework

Symbolic interactionism and poststructuralism are two prominent theoretical traditions within the second-order perspective on bullying. Whereas the first-order perspective refers to theories explaining bullying in individual terms, such as individual dysfunctions, traits and intentions, the second-order perspective refers to theories explaining bullying as part of social processes contextualised in the particular situation[387]. Despite the theoretical strengths and sensitivity considering everyday life, meaning-making, and social interactional patterns at the micro level, symbolic interactionism has sometimes been criticized for lacking adequate theoretical understanding of social structure or the macro level [388]. Although the poststructural framework has contributed with crucial theoretical tools in order to examine and understand bullying by drawing attention to discourses, discursive practices, hegemonies, ideologies, power relations, normative moral orders, and intersectionality, it might be criticised for downplaying, underestimating or ignoring individual factors such as genes, neurobiological structures and processes, psychological traits, and intra-psychological processes, because of a theoretical unwillingness to address these possible components.

On the other hand, all theories can be accused of reductionism such as biological reductionism, psychological reductionism, linguistic/discursive reductionism, and sociological reductionism, including micro reductionism and macro reductionism. This is not at all surprising since the business of

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[387] Kousholt and Fisker, in press, Schott and Søndergaard, 2014a
[388] e.g., Kuhn, 1964

theory is to simplify complexities in order to generate coherent accounts for understanding, explaining, predicting or changing things embedded in a messy world. Anyway, a promising theoretical perspective that is gaining ground within the bullying research is the *social-ecological framework*[389] with roots in Bronfenbenner's ecological model of human development[390]. In contrast to the poststructural framework, it does not reject or deny but includes individual factors such as neurobiological components, psychological traits and intra-psychological processes in addition to contextual factors to better understand social development, actions and processes. A dialogue between different "blind men" around the elephant is thus inbuilt in this theoretical framework: positions oriented toward individual explanations and positions oriented toward contextual explanations.

Social-ecological theory states that bullying has to be understood as a social phenomenon that is established and perpetuated over time as the result of the complex interplay between individual and contextual factors. It is a complex phenomenon, with multiple and interactive causal factors and multiple outcomes. The individual characteristics of children interact with environmental contexts to promote or prevent bullying and victimisation. The *microsystem* is a system that individuals have direct contact with. For children, this includes peers, family, schools, and community/neighbourhood. *Mesosystem* refers to the interaction or interrelation between components of different microsystems. This includes the interrelations between the family and school, or between the parent-child relationship and the child's peer group. *Exosystem*

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[389] Espelage, 2014, Espelage and Swearer, 2004, 2011, Hong and Espelage, 2012
[390] Bronfenbenner, 1979

refers to the environment beyond the immediate microsystem, which can still influence the processes within the microsystem. Examples would be teachers' and other peers' home situations, and the teachers' previous teacher training programme as well as present opportunities of further training and professional support. *Macrosystem* refers to culture, society, social categories, power structures across different social groups, ideologies, cultural norms, etc., which influence the social structures, processes and activities that occur in the immediate system levels. For example, the macrosystem is associated with inequality, alienation, discrimination, and oppression in relation to ethnicity, gender, socio-economical position, disability, religion, age, appearance, and sexual orientation.

Although the social-ecological framework is promising and theoretically powerful, it has attracted some criticism. Carrera et al. criticise the social-ecological framework and its application to bullying as continuously operating 'alongside the existing reductionist and dualistic model without displacing it'[391], and by largely focusing upon microsystems (school, family, neighbourhood) rather than macrosystems such as social and cultural norms and expectations involved in issues such as gender socialization. Nevertheless, from a theoretical point-of-view, the social-ecological model includes micro-, meso-, exo-, *and* macrosystems as well as changes over time[392]. In fact, recent bullying research and reviews within this framework have indeed included and shown a growing interest of the macrosystems by examining gender norms and

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[391] Carrera et al, 2011, p. 489
[392] Espelage, 2014, Espelage and Swearer, 2011, Hong and Espelage, 2012

heteronormativity [393] among other social categories, normativities, and power relations at macro level. This movement opens up for a possible dialogue between the social-ecological framework and poststructural perspectives on gender, heteronormativity, and intersectionality.

Moreover, in a recent theoretical development called the modified ecological model, the social-ecological theory has been integrated with symbolic interactionism [394] and sociology of childhood [395]. The modified ecological model has a clear sociological perspective and emphasises "negotiated order" that relies on each level of the system. This theoretical approach views children as active social agents in the development of their own culture as well as in the continuance, or even challenge of the larger culture. Power derives from multiple sources. It is not solely decided by cultural determinants. Although it is reflected by what is important in the larger culture, individuals do not have power unless acknowledged by others through social interactions. Power is produced and reproduced through social relations. The modified ecological model acknowledges and embraces both agency and structure.

> Bullying is larger than just the relationship between bully and victim. That relationship is embedded within layers of social forces that create the culture that generates the opportunity for bullying to occur. These social forces work together to produce, and reproduce a bullying culture by defining and maintaining paths to power among students. Therefore, it is important to consider these layers, both in comprehension of bullying and the

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[393] e.g., Birkett and Espelage, 2015, Birkett et al., 2009, Hong, Espelage and Kral, 2011, Hong and Garbarino, 2012, Poteat and Rivers, 2010, Robinson and Espelage, 2012, Varjas et al., 2008
[394] Migliaccio and Raskauskas, in press
[395] Migliaccio, 2015

development of prevention or intervention for bullying, and how power exists throughout the entirety of the system[396].

The work of Migliaccio and Raskauskas demonstrates the potential of a theoretical dialogue between social-ecological framework and symbolic interactionism, including the sociology of childhood. As all other theories, social-ecological theory is partial, fallible, provisional, and modifiable. In one way, it is just one possible position among others around the elephant. Nevertheless, because it comprises individual and contextual factors, and acknowledges the complex interplay between factors within and between micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems, and thus the intersectionality between social categories, cultural norms, and power relations, the social-ecological framework might have the theoretical power to create a meeting point of and a dialogue between a broad range of theoretical perspectives focusing upon different layers or factors in order to understand or explain bullying, including an urgent dialogue between the first- and second-order perspectives on bullying. I strongly agree with Kausholt and Fisker (in press) that bullying cannot adequately be understood from an individualistic (first-order) perspective. At the same time, bullying cannot adequately be understood from a discursive perspective, an interactionist perspective, an intersectionality perspective, or a social structural perspective. That would bring us back to the blind men around the elephant and a lack of dialogue.

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[396] Migliaccio and Raskauskas, in press

Conclusions

Thayer-Bacon argues that epistemological fallibilism, defined as the belief in the impossibility of attaining knowledge that is certain, entails "the need to embrace pluralism in the sense of including others, outsider views, in the inquiry process" [397]. She makes this argument both on moral grounds (it is morally wrong to exclude others) and on epistemological grounds.

> If we are relational social beings who are fallible and limited by our own embeddedness and embodiment, at a micro level as well as a macro level, then none of us can claim privileged agency. None of us has a God's eye view of Truth. Our only hope for overcoming our own individual limitations, as well as our social/political limitations (cultural and institutional) is by working together with others not like us who can help us recognize our own limitations /---/ Given our fallibilism, then we must embrace the value of inclusion on epistemic grounds in order to have any hopes of continually improving our understandings. Inclusion of others' perspectives in our debates and discussions allows us the means for correcting our standards, and improving the warrants for our assertions. [398]

In a curious, open-minded and honest discussion in which all parties actively listen to each other and make serious efforts to try to understand the perspectives of others, the second-order perspective can indeed challenge the first-order perspective, as suggested by Schott and Søndergaard[399] and demonstrated in the literature[400]. At the same time, the second-order perspective has to be open to challenges by the first-order perspective (as

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[397] Thayer-Bacon, 2000, p. 4
[398] Thayer-Bacon, 2000, p. 11, 12
[399] Schott and Søndergaard, 2014a
[400] e.g., Canty et al., in press, Ellwood and Davies, 2010, Frånberg and Wrethander, 2011, Kousholt and Fisker, in press, Mitchell and Borg, 2013, Ringrose and Renold, 2010, Schott and Søndergaard, 2014b

well as by a possible third-order perspective in the future). Although the social-ecological framework is provisional, partial, and fallible (in line with all other theories), it embraces both the first- and the second-order perspectives, and is therefore suggested here as a possible meeting space for a dialogue between them as well as within them. I do not view the social-ecological theory as the Truth or the unified theory of school bullying but as an invitation to theoretically and empirically embrace the complex interplay between individual and contextual factors. A serious theoretical dialogue like this would very likely challenge and revise the social-ecological framework, which for example the work of Migliaccio and Raskauskas[401] implies. The main concern of theoretical development and empirical investigations should be to examine bullying as an open, ambiguous, complex, and multifaceted concept and phenomenon in order to refine, challenge, and revise theoretical perspectives, to develop a more qualified yet provisional understanding of the complexity of school bullying, and to generate, challenge, revise, and improve tools to act upon school bullying in more qualified ways.

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[401] Migliaccio and Raskauskas, in press, Migliaccio, 2015

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Dr. Robert Thornberg is Professor of Educational Research at the Department of Behavioural Sciences, Linköping University.

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