



## Affective economies of loneliness in school: bullying, violence, and undesirable social connections

Ben Lohmeyer & South Australian Youth Forum

To cite this article: Ben Lohmeyer & South Australian Youth Forum (18 Sep 2025): Affective economies of loneliness in school: bullying, violence, and undesirable social connections, Critical Studies in Education, DOI: [10.1080/17508487.2025.2555310](https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2025.2555310)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2025.2555310>



© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 18 Sep 2025.



[Submit your article to this journal](#)



Article views: 146



[View related articles](#)



[View Crossmark data](#)

# Affective economies of loneliness in school: bullying, violence, and undesirable social connections

Ben Lohmeyer <sup>a</sup> and South Australian Youth Forum<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Flinders Institute for Mental Health and Wellbeing, College of Education, Psychology and Social Work, Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia; <sup>b</sup>South Australian Youth Forum, Adelaide, Australia

## ABSTRACT

Loneliness has become a global health priority, and young people are widely considered the loneliest age group in Australia. Schools are a significant space where young people build social connections, and recent research shows a connection between bullying and loneliness in young people. While the connection between bullying and loneliness has an intuitive quality, the nature of the relationship and the impact of the emotional experience of school on loneliness in young people is underexplored. This project was co-designed with young people in South Australia to generate rich qualitative insights into the experience of loneliness in school. This paper draws on Bourdieu's habitus, field, and symbolic violence to examine the social dynamics within schools that impact young people's emotional (affective) experiences. The presence of undesirable social connections (i.e. bullies) in schools emerged as a significant theme in participants' experiences of loneliness in school. We argue that investigating loneliness as a kind of emotional harm produced through social systems (i.e. affective violence) reveals the importance of undesirable social connections and the circulation of emotions in schools. Schools, therefore, can be understood as lonely spaces produced by the emotional context and the presence of undesirable social connections.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 24 October 2024  
Accepted 28 August 2025

## KEYWORDS

Affective violence; co-design; Bourdieu; emotions; lonely

## Loneliness and young people in Australia

Loneliness has been on the rise among young Australians since 2008 (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2023). The level of loneliness among young people (18–24 years of age) nationally in Australia ranges from 22% who feel lonely often/always (Ending Loneliness Together, 2023) up to 91% of young South Australians feel lonely often/sometimes (Uniting Communities, 2024). Schnepf et al. (2023) argue that schools are 'likely to be the most significant socio-environmental context for adolescents' (p. 9) in terms of loneliness. They point to the 'confined composition' (p. 9) of schools, or the lack of choice students have regarding 'networking' (p. 9) with others (students and teachers) as what sets schools apart. Yet, there is a global absence of qualitative research exploring how schools have become lonely spaces for young people.

**CONTACT** Ben Lohmeyer  [ben.lohmeyer@flinders.edu.au](mailto:ben.lohmeyer@flinders.edu.au)  Flinders Institute for Mental Health and Wellbeing, College of Education, Psychology and Social Work, Flinders University, Adelaide, South Australia

© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

The relationship between school bullying and loneliness has an intuitive quality. If a young person is bullied, ostracised, or reduced to low social status (Sercombe & Donnelly, 2013; Søndergaard, 2012), they will likely desire more meaningful social connections. Using data from the Millennium Cohort Study (UK), Yang et al. (2022) argue for a fundamental shift in loneliness research with young people by understanding the phenomenon not simply as an *absence of desired* connections (World Health Organization 2021), but also as a product of the *presence of undesirable* social connections. Analysing the data from 14-year-olds, they found a statistically significant relationship between 'loneliness and being a victim of a series of ill-treatment by others (insulted, threatened, hit with a weapon, stolen, sexually assaulted, etc.)' (p. 6). The young people who were bullied – or 'picked on' (Yang et al., 2022) – were more likely to feel lonely. While Yang et al. (2022) demonstrated a connection between loneliness and bullying, the nature of the relationship between bullying and loneliness in young people in schools is underexplored.

Building on Weiss's (1973) seminal work, loneliness has been examined primarily as a 'quintessentially individual' (Bower et al., 2023, p. 1) experience and defined as a subjective negative feeling (Prohaska et al., 2020, p. 2) in the form of a desire for more meaningful social connections (Altschul et al., 2021; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2021; Kung et al., 2021; World Health Organization 2021). While scales exist for measuring loneliness among children, they have been critiqued for being adapted from scales for adults without sufficient input from young people (Cole et al., 2021). As such, this project was co-designed with the youth advocacy organisation the South Australian Youth Forum, to investigate young people's contemporary experiences of loneliness in school. This paper interrogates rich qualitative insights generated through focus groups and interviews with 25 young people to interrogate the impact of undesirable social connections on loneliness in schools.

In this paper, we use a sociological approach to conceptualise loneliness (see Bower et al., 2023; Malli et al., 2023) as a social emotion causing 'social pain' (Cacioppo et al., 2014; Perlman & Peplau, 1981; World Health Organization WHO, 2021). Drawing on Bourdieu's field, habitus, and symbolic violence, we explore how loneliness can be understood as 'affective violence' (Threadgold, 2020), that is, a kind of emotional harm experienced by young people but produced through the social dynamics in schools. We begin with an overview of the parallel pathologization of loneliness and bullying via dominant definitions of these social phenomena that narrow the respective paradigms to individualising analyses. Following this, we outline the co-design methodology and analytical framework. We present the data and discuss the implications simultaneously to support a rich engagement with the data. Drawing from these insights, we argue that viewing loneliness as affective violence reveals, in particular, the impact of undesirable social connections (i.e. bullies) in producing an affective economy that produces lonely spaces in schools.

## **Social pain and social violence**

Research and intervention until recently around loneliness have been concentrated primarily on older people (Bower et al., 2023; Franklin et al., 2019); see for example Prohaska et al. (2020) and the World Health Organization (2021). Yet, this approach has been critiqued for an assumed uniformity of the experience across the life course

(Malcom, 2021; Malli et al., 2023). Contemporary scholars are arguing for reimagining loneliness beyond assumptions around age and group identity to consider unique social contexts, such as schools.

Malli et al. (2023) argue that there are at least three different paradigms for thinking about loneliness that focus on (1) the social experience, (2) the cognitive elements, and (3) the philosophical human experience. Among these approaches, as suggested above, the bio-psychological model has achieved popular supremacy, particularly in consensus statements, standardised measurement scales, and justifications for loneliness research. This dominance obscures the important social and political factors underpinning loneliness (Yang et al., 2022).

In addition to the recent challenges to the age-based bias in the popular definition, and assumed uniformity of loneliness across the life course, recent attention has returned to the social experience of loneliness. Historically, social and cultural forces have been attributed with some cause for loneliness, including ‘competition, rugged individualism and personal success’ (Perlman & Peplau, 1981, pp. 44–45) and increasing mobility of populations (Bowman, 1975, cited in Perlman & Peplau, 1981). Furthermore, attention has been given to the social spaces and built environments – ‘human-made space(s) in which people live, work, and recreate on a day-to-day basis’ (Roof & Oleru, 2008, p. 24) – which afford opportunities for social connection (Bower et al., 2023). Yet, the impact of the social and physical environment of school on loneliness has been largely overlooked.

There is a small body of literature investigating how the ‘characteristics of the built environment and the household matter for the mental health’ of young people (Groot et al., 2022). Marquez et al. (2023) found that neighbourhoods ‘account for a small but significant proportion of the variation in adolescent loneliness’ (p. 637), particularly for those who experienced the neighbourhood as unsafe, lacking support and low trust. Using photovoice to explore young people’s experiences of urban landscapes, Gerdimos’ (2018) participants described a ‘sense of civic (and subsequently urban) loneliness’ (p. 96) in town centres dominated by global conglomerates and lacking any unique local identity. Goodall (2018) investigated the experiences of young people with autism, finding that loneliness was common due to being separated from their peers, resulting in the school feeling like ‘a place of control’ or a ‘jail’ (p. 12). These recent studies demonstrate the impact of space on young people’s experiences of loneliness, but also highlight the lack of qualitative research on loneliness in schools.

### **Parallel pathologisation**

Bullying, like loneliness, has a long history of psychological and behavioural approaches dominating the popular research and practice paradigm (Schott & Søndergaard, 2014; Yoneyama, 2015). Since Olweus (1993) defined bullying in terms of (1) intent to cause harm, (2) a power imbalance between victim and perpetrator, and (3) repeated occurrences, the behaviour of individuals and groups has dominated research, policy, and practice (Rawlings, 2019). As a result, bullying has been researched and defined in policies in ways that pathologize student behaviour (Rawlings, 2019) by identifying the location for action and change within individual children (Bansel et al., 2009; Davies, 2011).

Unsurprisingly, tackling a complex social issue like bullying predominantly through a single disciplinary lens has resulted in minimal sustainable progress on the issue (Ellwood & Davies, 2014; UNESCO, 2019; Walton, 2011). Despite this, decades of bullying research in disciplines including sociology, education and philosophy have developed alternative frameworks (Horton, 2020; Schott, 2014) that have recently been codified in a new definition of bullying developed by UNESCO in collaboration with the World Anti-Bullying Forum (O’Higging Norman, et al., 2021). This new definition expands the scope recognising that bullying is ‘enabled or inhibited by the social and institutional norms and context of schools and the education system’ (p. 2). Furthermore, ‘social violence’ is being used in school bullying literature as an ‘umbrella term’ (Joelsson & Bruno, 2020, p. 3) that aims to avoid drawing arbitrary distinctions between connected experiences such as violence, bullying, and coercive control (Joelsson & Bruno, 2020; Lohmeyer, 2022b; Milnes et al., 2021). This reformulation re-focuses attention on the social context of schools.

A popular image of the bully is the social outcast who bullies because of a lack of social skills. Yoneyama and Naito (2003) argue that bullies can also be popular students who effectively wield social power to bully in unnoticed ways that can be endorsed by teachers as an effective strategy for social control of the classroom. Rather than conceptualising bullies as social deviants, Horton (2020) argues that bullying can include actions that police and reinforce institutional norms. Furthermore, bullying scholars have explored the impact of space on bullying including ‘tyrannical spaces’ (Percy-Smith & Matthews, 2001) that become known for bullying, and how bullying lingers in a space resulting in experiences of repetition even if the event only occurred once (Lohmeyer, 2022a; Ringrose & Rawlings, 2015). While there are parallels in the history of bullying and loneliness research that pathologize and individualise these social phenomena, there are equally alternative sociological conceptualisations that focus on social systems and space. This research approaches loneliness and bullying by interrogating socio-emotional experiences and the relationship between individual actions and the social context.

## **Codesigning methods for investigating loneliness**

This project is underpinned by the ‘family of approaches’ (Loveridge et al., 2023, p. 8) that includes youth participatory action research and co-design. In addition to aiming to achieve a research outcome from the project, these approaches prioritise ‘how people relate to each other during the research process’ (Abma et al., 2019, p. 7). Holding the tension between research ethics and epistemologies alongside youth work skills in interpersonal engagement can create a ‘dynamic nexus’ (Lohmeyer et al., 2024) that progresses the youth participation aspirations of both.

### **Phase 1 – Co-design**

This project was co-designed with the youth advocacy organisation the South Australian Youth Forum (SAYF)<sup>1</sup>. Founded in 2021 by Amber Brock-Fabel, the SAYF provides young people 14–18 years of age a community and platform to promote their concerns to decision-makers in government and non-government organisations. In 2022, the forum identified that loneliness was a priority (Brock-

Fabel, 2022) and agreed to co-design a method for investigating loneliness in schools. Through a series of three focus groups with the SAYF members, we developed and tested a method for creating visual maps of lonely spaces and times in young people's lives. These maps serve as a visual representation of young people's experiences and as an object to elicit insights into the difficult emotions around loneliness.

Object elicitation is known to encourage rapport-building, reflexivity, and participation in research (Bagnoli, 2009) supporting the communication of difficult emotions and providing deep insights into people's social experiences. The maps provided a tangible focus to address the known practical issues in loneliness research, such as asking participants to recall an ephemeral experience of absence from the past (Franklin et al., 2019). The focus on physical and social space addresses the issue of asking participants to disclose personal negative emotions and facilitates a safer space for conversation by externalising the emotional experience.

To participate in the co-design process, participants had to be a member of the SAYF and 15–19 years of age. Participation was strictly voluntary. Participants were invited to join three focus groups in person or via web-conferencing outside their usual meeting schedule. These took place in the second half of 2023. Focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed. A total of eleven young people participated across three focus groups.

## **Phase 2 – Co-research**

Once the methodology was developed, a new cohort of young people were recruited to participate in the subsequent phase of the project. Participants in the second phase were recruited through the Specialised Assistance School for Youth (SASY). SASY is an independent secondary school in South Australia for young people marginalised and disengaged from mainstream education. Participants were invited by staff from SASY to participate in the project. Participation was voluntary and did not impact their school grades or attendance. Participants were remunerated with a \$25 (AUD) voucher for retail stores to recognise their time and the value of their contributions.<sup>2</sup>

Two members of the SAYF were employed as peer researchers to support the facilitation of the focus groups. An honours student also supported the focus groups and interviews. Employing members of the SAYF for the data collection promoted their continued sense of agency and ownership over the project. There are many challenges to maintaining ethically open spaces (Bacon & Lohmeyer, 2025) in co-design and participatory research including the micro-interpersonal dynamics of the continuous negotiation of consent (Loveridge et al., 2023) as well as consideration for the discursive and institutional context (Andersson, 2017) such as the conforming environment of schools (Brooks et al., 2014; Felzmann, 2009). Employing and paying young people as peer-researchers address some of the power imbalances in research with young people (Boeck & Collin, 2012). We supported the peer-researchers throughout the research process to navigate ethical principles of confidentiality, duty of care, and self-care. A feminist ethic of care (Loveridge et al., 2023) underpinned this project's co-design, and as such the engagement with participants from SASY was designed around extended listening (Lohmeyer, 2022a) rather than 'one-off snatch and grab research' (Loveridge et al., 2023, p. 5). Young people 15–25 years from SASY were invited to participate in a series of four focus groups and an interview. By engaging with participants across multiple

methods, the peer researchers were able to build trust and rapport with participants. Under the guidance of an experienced ‘pracademic’ (Gormally et al., 2024) and the support of SASY staff (youth workers and teachers), they navigated the challenges of observing and respecting the boundaries and vulnerability of similar-aged young people.

Focus groups were designed to facilitate participants constructing visual maps of their school where loneliness happened. One focus group included peer researchers walking with small groups of students through the school to discuss their experience in the space. Interviews were semi-structured and invited participants to reflect on what they had discussed in the focus groups. Participants chose to engage in some, but not all of these elements. Interviews provided an opportunity for participants who felt uncomfortable discussing loneliness in a group setting, however, some young people chose to be interviewed together. A total of fourteen young people participated in a focus group and/or an interview. In the analysis below, participants from both the SAYF and SASY have been given pseudonyms to preserve their anonymity. Twenty participants identified as being female, four as male, and one as non-binary. However, the pseudonyms are gender non-identifying and instead excerpts have been identified according to which cohort (SAYF or SASY) they were from.

### Co-analysis and affective experiences

Interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed. Transcripts were coded through a ‘recursive process’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 86) process of inductive or ‘open coding’ (Silverman, 2006, p. 180; Taylor et al., 2015, p. 180) after each phase of the data collection. A subsequent round of ‘focused coding’ (Silverman, 2006, p. 180; Taylor et al., 2015, p. 180) sought to create a ‘thematic network’ (Attride Stirling, 2001) across the two phases of significant themes. Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019) was employed to analyse themes with particular attention to the inherent power imbalance within the data collection between participants, co-researchers, and Lohmeyer as a white, adult, cis male. Significance in reflexive thematic analysis is not a result of the number of occurrences of a code or a theme but rather reflects the degree to which an insight ‘captures something important in relation to the overall research question’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). Major themes were discussed with the SA Youth Forum in a workshop to facilitate their input into the analysis process and support the reflexive process.

During the analysis process, attention was paid to the description of undesired social connections and their association with loneliness. Particular attention was paid to mentions of bullies or bullying, as well as other instances where the young person had little choice of the people with whom they interacted. In addition, attention was given to the description of the affective experiences surrounding the presence of unwanted social connections and loneliness. St. Pierre and Jackson (2014) critique coding methods, arguing codes and themes do not ‘naturally and miraculously “emerge”’ (p. 716) from the text, but rather, they are shaped by what researchers expect to see. Furthermore, analysis does not simply happen in a once-off event while reading transcripts, but instead ‘occurs *everywhere and all the time*’ (emphasis in the original) (p. 717). As such, the ‘codes’ and ‘themes’ identified in this paper were developed through conversation and reflection with the peer-researchers and shaped by Lohmeyer’s previous research on school bullying.

Following St. Pierre and Jackson's (2014), critique of the distinctions made between 'coding' and 'analysis', it is useful to suggest that Bourdieu's frameworks for thinking about the potential for harm through symbolic communication shaped the 'coding' process but were applied more directly during the latter 'analysis' stage. The sociology of affect provides a framework for conceptualising the social experience of emotions and the 'impact of the social on the emoting subject' (Holmes et al., 2019, p. 4). The sociology of affect considers how emotions within a social context 'work to align some subjects with some others and against other others' (Ahmed, 2004, p. 117) creating an 'affective economy' (Ahmed, 2004) or a social exchange of emotions. As such, this approach can shift the focus of loneliness research from an 'emotional response to an absence' (Franklin et al., 2019, p. 129) to consider how emotions are a 'practical engagement with the world' (Threadgold, 2020, p. 13); meaning what people do when they feel lonely. In other words, rather than focusing on the absence of desired relationships, loneliness in young people could be investigated in terms of what emotions people experience when they encounter undesirable relationships in a social context.

Bourdieu's work is popular within the sociology of education (Reay, 2019) and youth studies (Bessant et al., 2019), supporting the interrogation of the social and emotional context of education. In the following analysis, we utilise Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus, doxa, and symbolic violence to analyse participants' accounts of undesirable social connections in schools, followed by participants' experiences of how bullying produces loneliness. Bourdieu's 'thinking tools' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 160) have been described as both 'straightforward and slippery' (Maton, 2014, p. 49). His works being both voluminous and abstract can leave readers 'somewhat bewildered' (Maton, 2014, p. 52). Bourdieu employs a sports analogy to describe social context as a *field* of contest (over capital) and that players possess a *habitus* which is their "feel" for the game' (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 18). Symbolic violence is harm experienced by players but inflicted by hierarchies embedded in the field and recreated through habitus (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). His ideas will be introduced in more depth as they are used in this paper to draw a clear connection between their purpose and application. We analyse participants' descriptions of the affective (emotional) environment producing loneliness utilising affective violence to conceptualise the mechanisms through which violence is legitimised, and social control is maintained.

## Undesirable social connections at school

During interviews and focus groups, participants were asked to reflect on the places and times when they felt lonely in school, and to consider the social features of these spaces. These times included before and after school. The following excerpt demonstrates how these times and places were associated with the presence of unwanted social connections.

### SA Youth Forum

Elliot: . . . on the bus on the way here. I was going here, like, there's a hope of students. And I was sort of like, . . . worried that like people will judge you for just like standing normally.

Karter: Or just like just sitting on the bus. No one does that anymore.

Ellis: It's like if you're just sitting at lunch waiting for your friends or something, and no one's there, it's like you gotta look like you're doing something. Cos if you're just sitting, looking around.

Karter: You look like a loser.

Ellis: Well yeah, but you also feel lonely

In the first excerpt, Elliot describes riding a bus and hoping that their friends would be there. Karter's comment 'no one does that anymore' refers to sitting on the bus without something to do. If these students were caught without friends or something to do, they were 'worried that people will judge you', that is, that someone unwanted would be present resulting in a negative feeling (judgement). The impact of the presence of undesirable relationships becomes clearer in other excerpts.

### ***SASY focus group***

Researcher: ... [were there spaces] that you were like, I wouldn't just want to go there?

Taylor: When there is a lot of people, popular kids in those spaces, just avoid them, they're like your bullies and stuff.

Researcher: So even when people were around it feels lonely?

Taylor: Yeah.

Taylor describes actively avoiding spaces where they knew there would be undesirable social connections, that is, 'popular kids' and 'bullies'. These are spaces that Percy-Smith and Matthews (2001) call 'tyrannical spaces'. Even when there are other people around, the presence of undesirable connections (Yang et al., 2022), rather than the absence of desirable connections appears to influence loneliness. Again, while Taylor avoids places they know will have undesirable relationships, this is not always possible.

### ***SASY focus group***

Researcher: What day of the week is probably the worst?

Casey: Sunday.

Rylan: Mondays.

Researcher: Sundays and Mondays?

Casey: Yep.

Researcher: Why's that?

Rylan: Monday we start school again.

Casey: And Sunday we're worried about starting school again.

Researcher: Why are you worried about starting school?

Rylan: Because then I have to socialise with arseholes.

Casey: Some of the kids here are not very [nice].

For Casey and Rylan, the presence of undesirable connections ('arseholes') at school causes sufficient worry that a school day, and the proceeding day, can feel lonely. In each of the above cases, the participants describe an association between loneliness and the presence of undesirable social connections (Yang et al., 2022). Popular kids, 'arseholes' and bullies, result in loneliness, rather than an 'emotional response to an absence' (Franklin et al., 2019, p. 129) or a desire for more social connection (World Health Organization, 2021). It appears that these participants have friends who are (usually) present. However, the presence of undesirable social connections can override positive connections, producing an experience of loneliness.

The confined composition (Schnepf et al., 2023) of schools appears to be important in these young people's experiences. Taylor's knowledge of the spaces where the popular kids and bullies are, and how to avoid them, might be described as a feel for the game (*habitus*). In a field, there are also 'habitual assumptions' (Crossley, 2003, p. 46) about the way the game is played. Some of these rules are unspoken or go 'without saying' (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 170). Described by Bourdieu as *doxa*, they are the beliefs about the world with which we unconsciously accept to navigate our everyday lives. It could be argued that Elliot's fear of judgement is an internalised anxiety. However, the discussion suggests that there is more happening in this 'field of play' and that there are expectations that go without saying about always having something to do ('no one does that anymore'). Similarly, the inevitability of having to 'socialise with arseholes' appears to be a habitual assumption for Rylan. In the following excerpt, the lack of choice regarding the presence of undesirable connections in schools is central to Morgan's and Ariel's experience.

### **SASY interview**

Morgan: I've noticed I just didn't really fit in . . . but everyone else was kind of basically just there, and I did have one friend, but unfortunately, they hung out with other people, and I honestly didn't really get those people. . . . And then people would make fun of me because I would start drawing at recess alone, not hanging out with people. And they would get, you know, treat me like a baby, like I'm the lonely kid.

Ariel: I think school was the hardest time because not many people liked me at all. They found me strange and weird and odd and kind of looked at me like I was a freak because I wasn't like them. And it was really hard because all my friends were always with each other but the teachers in the school never put me in the same classes as my friends. So, I was just always by myself, and no one wanted to be partners with me because it was really hard with autism . . .

Morgan had one friend, but this friend was part of a broader friendship group that Morgan 'didn't really get'. They were treated 'like a baby' and the 'lonely kid'. It could be argued that Morgan may have desired more positive connections, however, they also describe the presence of undesirable connections. Ariel had

friends, but they were placed in classes without them with people who found them ‘strange and weird and odd’. The controlling and hierarchical nature of schools (Lohmeyer & Threadgold, 2023; Yoneyama, 2015) can leave young people with little choice and agency over their ‘networks’ (Schnepf et al., 2023). Like the presence of ‘arseholes’, Morgan and Ariel were stuck around people – sometimes friends – who didn’t get them.

Bourdieu’s (2001) *symbolic violence* is harm produced through dehumanisation and subordination resulting from symbolic (mis)communication (Bourdieu, 2001; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992); like being called a baby, lonely or weird. Symbolic violence is the outcome of unspoken (doxic) hierarchies embedded in the social context (field) and reinforced by the learned disposition and orientations (habitus) of those occupying the social space (Bourdieu, 1993, 2008; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Morgan had friends, but she ‘didn’t really get’ the doxic norms, and was treated ‘like a baby’, that is, they were subordinated and infantilised. Ariel had friends but was placed away from them and left feeling ‘weird’ and a ‘freak’. Threadgold (2020) argues these kinds of experiences are emotional, leaving emotional ‘cuts and bruises’, and as such can be described as affective violence. Despite having friends and potential connections, these young people felt lonely because they were stuck with undesirable connections in friendship groups where they were treated as inferior or placed in classes away from their friends.

### **Social violence and affective violence**

In the excerpts above, bullies and other undesirable social connections were associated with feeling lonely. In the following excerpts, participants describe how bullies specifically contribute to feeling lonely. In this first excerpt, the SAYF members reflect on the potential for bullying and their concern for standing out.

#### **SA Youth Forum**

Elliot: . . . it’s a TV show and that stuff and it shows like kids sort of bashing, bullies bashing up other kids and that stuff. And you’re like, oh, that’s what it looks like. And then the reason that we feel like standing out or like not engaging the conversation is because you’re like, or you might say something weird. And then that will lead to being bullied, which will lead to you being lonely. So, you’re scared of being lonely, which is making you lonely?

Elliot describes a popularised image of bullying in entertainment media where someone is picked on for ‘standing out’ or saying ‘something weird’. As such, these young people police their behaviour in line with norms within the field, which recreates a habitus of fear and loneliness. The outcome of bullying (social violence) is social ostracization and loneliness (affective violence). Elliot ends by questioning if this fear of standing out and being weird ultimately results in ‘making you lonely’, or if the fear of undesirable social connections prevents them from making desirable social connections.

Chronic loneliness is reported to have a self-fulfilling quality, worsening the existing loneliness (Prohaska et al., 2020). This self-fulfilment could be attributed to the fear of rejection or the loss of skills in developing new relationships. However, this framing remains within the dominant logic of a desire for more social connections. Bourdieu's schema supports a different analysis of this self-fulfilling cycle. That is, it could be a doxic norm within the field that bullying leads to loneliness that is (re)created through habitus resulting in the players of the game feeling lonelier.

Symbolic violence contains a contentious ideal that through the reciprocal interaction between field, habitus and individual action the victim is 'complicit' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 167) – also described as 'collaboration' (von Holdt, 2013, p. 115) – in their victimisation. While symbolic violence has been rejected by some for this reason (Walby et al., 2014), reformulating symbolic violence as affective violence can emphasise the systemic and structural origins of harm (i.e. the school context) rather than the individuals' agency (Lohmeyer & Threadgold, 2023). Affective violence draws attention to the socio-emotional context that impacts the emoting subject with particular attention to the doxic hierarchies and social relations that align some subjects together and others apart, resulting in social pain.

Affective violence facilitates the interrogation of a self-fulfilling cycle of loneliness as a product of the presence of undesirable social relations that are aligned against a subject (re)producing a negative emotional experience. These young people's insights suggest that rather than the self-fulfilling nature of chronic loneliness being based on an individual's lack of social skills or fear of rejection from potential connections, instead being 'scared of being lonely' is a result of the presence of undesirable and harmful connections aligned against a subject in a field. While symbolic violence would implicate the individual as complicit in the recreation of their victimisation, affective violence implicates the social and institutional system (the school) in the recreation of a lonely field. The following excerpt is a continuation of the SAYF's discussion.

### **SA Youth Forum**

Blake: . . . with the Forum, I was happy to share, and I wanted to share, and I was not judging anyone, and it was great to hear. But yeah, at school it would definitely be, you know, you would pay extra attention to what, like, maybe the weirder kids are saying, and it would just be kind of a free-for-all in terms of like, extra reasons to bully someone.

Blake contrasts the experience of sharing and discussing loneliness with the SAYF with how it might feel in school. During the process of designing and trialling the method, the group described enjoying the experience, but also identified potential issues when implementing the method in a school. They reflected that in a school environment, the necessary safety and trust might not exist and therefore were concerned about others 'judging' them. As such, they would 'pay extra attention' to what the 'weirder kids were saying'. In other words, the social-emotional space in which the conversation takes place is important. In a social and institutional space with undesirable connections, subjects are attuned to 'weird' things and people who 'stand out' as they are opportunities for bullying and affective violence.

In contrast to the positive experience and desire to share in a safe space (the SAYF), the potential for undesirable connections in schools recreates a lonely field reducing the possibility of creating desirable connections. Participants describe taking practical steps (Threadgold, 2020, p. 13) to limit their contribution and participation for fear of social and affective violence (bullying and loneliness). Yet, as the following discussion shows, potentially wanted and unwanted connections can exist in the same space.

### **SASY interview**

Drew: And I had a pretty shitty day yesterday because I got in trouble for almost fighting someone. I didn't actually fight him. . . . Sometimes I feel lonely . . . when people call me fat and try to get into fights. That made me feel pretty shitty.

Layne: If he does it again tell me, I'll shove my foot up his arse.

. . .

Drew: But if there's things I need to do, usually I'll talk to Sage.

Layne: We love Sage.

Drew: We love Sage so much.

Layne: She's my youth worker, we love her.

Researcher: What's so great about Sage?

Drew: She's just, she's-

Layne: She's gay.

Drew: Gay like us and she's just-

Layne: She understands us and she's got her own-

Drew: She's so friendly too.

Layne: She's also, she relates to you. When you say stuff she's yeah totally, I get that, I've done this, I've done that. And she's just a great overall human being.

Drew: She's great to talk to for literally anything.

Layne: And she's and she doesn't treat us like we're random . . . , just children or-

Drew: I know and sometimes when I'm in the hub some of the youth workers when they're making me do the work, literacy and numeracy stuff, some of them treat me like I'm stupid.

Layne: They treat you like a toddler, like a toddler.

Drew: But Sage doesn't.

Recounting an experience of bullying, Drew describes the presence of undesirable connections and threats of violence that leave them feeling lonely and the impact of an adult with whom they felt a connection. Sage does not treat them as 'random', 'stupid' or a 'toddler'. They feel they can 'talk to her for literally anything'. Sage's actions appear to

disrupt the unspoken hierarchies between staff and students. It is unclear to what extent this positive connection counters the impact of unwanted bullying connection and changes the potential for affective violence in the field. Bourdieu asserts symbolic violence is not just a 'spiritual' or a fuzzy feeling, but is 'real, actual' violence (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 34). Conversely, Sage's actions are not just a feel-good connection, but make a 'real, actual' impact on the emotional context.

### **The affective economy of loneliness**

The following story provides insights into the impact of the social on the emotional subject. Sky recounts their experience of bullying and violence at school, not just from other students, but from teachers and staff. They described how they became lonely, but also how their experience changed at their new school.

#### ***SASY interview***

Sky: I went to mainstream school for two years, and I was getting homophobic slurs; I was getting things thrown at me. When I told the teacher that I was getting things thrown at me they actually told me off for disturbing the class and put me in detention. I was getting groped in the changing rooms . . . and it got to a point where I felt very lonely and isolated in that school. And this school it's not mainstream at all, . . . They have a bit more less tolerance to things like violence, so things like bullying and discrimination, and when you come to an environment like this it's a little bit more easier to come across people who are a bit more likeminded and you know feel the same in a sense. You know you are on the same emotional wavelength as them if that makes sense . . . I'm not going to say that it makes the loneliness itself disappear as so or as much, but it more gives more opportunity to create a better kind of social environment to cope with that loneliness, whereas mainstream is just like, we want you to be lonely. We want you to feel isolated and bullied. I'm not joking, one of the staff members actually called me retarded. . . . And the principal didn't care, she was like that sounds like a you problem, straight up. Yeah mainstream schools are shit. But she was like that pretty much sounds like a you problem and you're just going to have to figure out a way to get tougher skin and cope with it.

Over two years, Sky was subjected to homophobic social, physical and affective violence. When they sought help, they were identified as the problem. The bullying appears to have reinforced classroom control (Horton, 2020). Bullying due to their sexuality is common for LGBTQA+ young people (Hill et al., 2021). For Sky, these experiences resulted in them becoming 'very lonely'. After being told it was a 'you problem' by the head of the school, they conclude it is 'almost like we want you to be lonely', suggesting that the maintenance of social control in schools is easier if (some) students are less socially connected.

Sky appears to be describing a school field in which the doxic norm is control and conformity. Any variation from these unspoken norms is justification for bullying from peers and staff. Communication within the field attempts to implicate Sky as complicit in their symbolic violation – it was a 'you problem'. If school staff are understood as the institutional representatives of the keepers of social control (Lohmeyer, 2022a), then the actions of the principal (while individually reprehensible) can be understood as part of the systemic nature of affective violence. The emotional (and physical) violence

reinforces doxic individual responsibility norms (Perlman & Peplau, 1981, pp. 44–45) positioning loneliness as an individual issue. Sky is told to ‘toughen up’ or to obtain the correct feel for the game. The doxic norms and individual actions appear to create an affective economy, or exchange of emotions, that align those who conform to the rules against the others who do not.

In contrast, Sky now attends a school that is designed for marginalised young people where they ‘feel the same’ and are on the ‘same emotional wavelength’ as other students; a starkly contrasting affective economy. While loneliness still happens, Sky can ‘cope’ with it better because there is a ‘better kind of social environment’. In this field, there is less tolerance of social, physical and affective violence. The affective economy creates more opportunities to ‘come across people who are a bit more likeminded’, rather than promoting division and opposition to achieve social control resulting from the presence of undesirable connections. The production of loneliness within an affective economy is further reflected in the SAYF’s discussion below.

### **SA Youth Forum**

Emery: I feel like there has been a big uproar of the term loner in our like generation or is it just like me? I don’t know. I feel like it’s just been, like thrown around a lot. Yeah, that it’s like, almost like, like, overused.

Azari: Used as a joke.

Emery: Yeah, it’s like used as a joke, it’s like, yeah, it’s like used as a joke, but actually there’s underlying program like, you know, it’s, you know?

...

Azari: A lot of people say anti-social a lot more. Like was so anti-social.

Sol: I feel like maybe my school is too woke to be calling people loners.

Azari: I feel like antisocial is like yeah, anti-social like it has, like, negative connotations.

Sol: It puts it on them that they don’t want to be social.

Azari: So it’s that’s the whole thing is that like, in my experience, the term anti-social is used more, because it’s like, oh, that person’s not making an effort to. Like we’re not, like it’s not our responsibility. Whereas being a loner. It feels a bit more like you’ve been rejected.

Elliot: Oh, you’re so anti-social. Yeah.

Azari: Whereas being anti-social, that’s kind of your fault for not just socializing.

Elliot: Yeah, you want to be a loner.

Azari: When you call someone a loner, it’s like kind of like you’re ostracizing them. Whereas like, anti-social is kind of like they’ve ostracised themselves.

In the Forum’s discussion, ‘loner’ is described as being ‘overused’ and a ‘joke’. However, joking or using humour as an excuse for bullying is known discursive manoeuvre employed to avoid blame (Rawlings, 2019), or, as Emery says, there is an ‘underlying program’ – an unspoken

norm – through which people know it is not simply a joke. ‘Anit-social’ is the ‘woke’ alternative to ‘calling people loners’, but this also has ‘negative connotations’. Calling someone anti-social implicates them as complicit in their loneliness reinforcing the individual responsibility within the field; i.e. if you are lonely it is your fault, these are the rules of the game.

The rejection by the group implied in being called a loner makes the affective economy aligned against them visible. Sol says the people in their school are ‘too woke’ to call someone a loner; it makes visible the rejection and undesirable social connection. Instead, calling someone anti-social implies they are satisfied with their current social connections, that is, they have rejected being part of the group. As such, if an individual chooses to isolate themselves, this aligns some people with the doxic norms that promote individual responsibility endorsing affective violence. The exact terms, loner or anti-social, might be replaceable, however, the conversation illustrates the mechanisms of affective communication through which the field is recreated, affective violence is legitimised, social control is maintained, and the presence of undesirable connections produces lonely spaces.

### **Conclusion: affective economies of social violence**

In this paper, we have heeded calls for more qualitative research into loneliness (Bower et al., 2023) that progresses beyond the assumed uniformity of loneliness across the life course (Malcom, 2021; Malli et al., 2023). Furthermore, we have drawn on Yang et al. (2022) finding that loneliness in young people might be a result of the presence of undesirable social connections to investigate Schnepf et al.’s (2023) argument that schools are the most important context for understanding loneliness in young people. This paper provides rich insights into the experience of loneliness in school for young people in South Australia and the relationship between loneliness and bullying in producing and affective economy and lonely spaces.

Research and practice on loneliness and bullying in schools both have an individualising history that pathologizes these social problems in terms of individual behaviour. While this is shifting, bullying in schools has been dominated by approaches that prioritise the actions of victims, perpetrators, and bystanders. Critiques of this approach emphasise how this problematises young people’s behaviour while overlooking how it reflects inequalities and violence in the school system and broader society. Similarly, loneliness has been investigated by multiple academic disciplines, but its dominant conceptualisation maintains a quintessentially individual focus on a subjective feeling of absence.

Research investigating the social and systemic origins of bullying have resulted in the UNESCO, and World Anti-Bullying Forum (2021) redefining bullying to emphasise the impact of these forces, and government policy, such as the South Australian Department of Education (2019), adopting a focus on individual, social and community drivers. Investment in research on the social drivers of loneliness in schools, such as in this paper, could produce similar shifts in state and international research, policy and practice agendas. Further research is needed to evidence the generalisability of the findings, including on the social features of schools and affective economies of lonely spaces, as well as investigating the relevance of these dynamics outside of the school context. However, this paper provides support for preventative and responsive practice to

loneliness in schools, such as providing students with safe spaces for retreat from social interaction as is the practice at SASY.

Reorganising bullying under the broader umbrella of social violence ensures that it is understood alongside similar experiences of harm within relationships, which could likewise include the affective violence of loneliness. Re-examining loneliness as affective violence in a space provides a framework for understanding the emotional economy of undesirable social connections in schools. Bourdieu's schema facilitates insights into the affective economy within schools that impacts emoting subjects aligning some people together and ostracising others. Understanding the affective economy of social and affective violence in schools reveals how schools can be a lonely space for young people.

## Notes

1. Ethics approval was secured through Flinders University Human Research Ethics Committee ref. no 6313.
2. Grant funding was secured through Flinders University, facilitating remuneration for participants, paid transcription, and payment for peer researchers.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Funding

This work was supported by the Flinders University.

## Notes on contributors

*Ben Lohmeyer* is a Senior Lecturer in Social Policy at Flinders University and a member of the Flinders University Institute for Mental Health and Wellbeing. His research and teaching are in the sociology of youth and social harm, with intersections into youth policy and youth work practice. Ben started his career in youth work in alternative education and accommodation before transitioning into academia.

*The South Australian Youth Forum* (SAYF) was founded in late 2021 by Amber Brock-Fabel at the age of 17, with a vision to create an authentic, youth-led platform for young people aged 13 to 18. SAYF provides a safe and empowering space for young people to connect, voice their perspectives, and influence key decisions that impact their lives. Dedicated to bridging the gap between youth and decision-makers, SAYF ensures that young voices are not only heard but actively shape policies and actions across South Australia.

## ORCID

Ben Lohmeyer  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3675-5539>

## References

- Abma, T., Banks, S., Cook, T., Dias, S., Madsen, W., Springett, J., & Wright, M. T. (2019). *Participatory research for health and social well-being*. Springer International Publishing.
- Ahmed, S. (2004). Affective economies. *Social Text*, 22(2), 117–139. [https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-22-2\\_79-117](https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-22-2_79-117)
- Altschul, D., Iveson, M., & Deary, I. J. (2021). Generational differences in loneliness and its psychological and sociodemographic predictors: An exploratory and confirmatory machine learning study. *Psychological Medicine*, 51(6), 991–1000. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0033291719003933>
- Andersson, E. (2017). The pedagogical political participation model (the 3P-M) for exploring, explaining and affecting young people's political participation. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 20(10), 1346–1361. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2017.1333583>
- Attride Stirling, J. (2001). Thematic networks: An analytic tool for qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 1(3), 385–405. <https://doi.org/10.1177/146879410100100307>
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2021). *Social isolation and loneliness*. Australian Government. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/social-isolation-and-loneliness-covid-pandemic>
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2023). *Social isolation and loneliness*. Australian Government. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/mental-health/topic-areas/social-isolation-and-loneliness>
- Bacon, K. B., & Lohmeyer, B. A. (2025). 'Hmm, they're not stranger danger': Facilitating ethically open spaces for children and young people. *Journal of Applied Youth Studies*, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43151-025-00162-5>
- Bagnoli, A. (2009). Beyond the standard interview: The use of graphic elicitation and arts-based methods. *Qualitative Research*, 9(5), 547–570. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794109343625>
- Bansel, P., Davies, B., Laws, C., & Linnell, S. (2009). Bullies, bullying and power in the contexts of schooling. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 30(1), 59–69. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01425690802514391>
- Bessant, J., Pickard, S., & Watts, R. (2019). Translating Bourdieu into youth studies. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 23(1), 76–92. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2019.1702633>
- Boeck, T., & Collin, P. (2012). Youth and adult researcher reflections on participatory research in Australia and the United Kingdom. In J. Fleming & T. Boeck (Eds.), *Involving children and young people in health and social care research* (1 ed. pp. 197–208). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203116319-24>
- Bourdieu, P. (1993). *Sociology in question*. Sage.
- Bourdieu, P. (1998). *Practical reason: On the theory of action*. Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (2001). *Masculine domination*. Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (2008). The forms of capital. In N. W. Biggart (Ed.), *Readings in economic sociology* (pp. 280–291). Blackwell Publishers.
- Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. (1992). *An invitation to reflexive sociology*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Bower, M., Kent, J., Patulny, R., Green, O., McGrath, L., Teesson, L., Jamalishahni, T., Sandison, H., & Rugel, E. (2023). The impact of the built environment on loneliness: A systematic review and narrative synthesis. *Health & Place*, 79, 102962. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2022.102962>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise & Health*, 11(4), 589–597. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806>
- Brock-Fabel, A. (2022). *South Australian youth forum annual report 2022*
- Brooks, R., Te Riele, K., & Maguire, M. (2014). *Ethics and education research*. Sage Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473909762>

- Cacioppo, J. T., Cacioppo, S., & Boomsma, D. I. (2014). Evolutionary mechanisms for loneliness. *Cognition & Emotion*, 28(1), 3–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02699931.2013.837379>
- Cole, A., Bond, C., Qualter, P., & Maes, M. (2021). A systematic Review of the development and psychometric properties of loneliness measures for children and adolescents. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(6), 3285. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18063285>
- Crossley, N. (2003). From reproduction to transformation: Social movement fields and the radical habitus. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 20(6), 43–68. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276403206003>
- Davies, B. (2011). Bullies as guardians of the moral order or an ethic of truths? *Children & Society*, 25(4), 278–286. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1099-0860.2011.00380.x>
- Department for Education. (2019). *Connected: A community approach to bullying prevention within the school gates and beyond*. Government of South Australia.
- Ellwood, C., & Davies, B. (2014). Violence and the moral order in contemporary schooling: A discursive analysis. In R. M. Schott & D. M. Søndergaard (Eds.), *School bullying: New theories in context* (pp. 81–96). Cambridge University Press.
- Ending Loneliness Together. (2023). *State of the nation report: Social connection in Australia 2023*. E. L. Together. [https://endingloneliness.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/ELT\\_LNA\\_Report\\_Digital.pdf](https://endingloneliness.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/ELT_LNA_Report_Digital.pdf)
- Felzmann, H. (2009). Ethical issues in school-based research. *Research Ethics*, 5(3), 104–109. <https://doi.org/10.1177/174701610900500304>
- Franklin, A., Barbosa Neves, B., Hookway, N., Patulny, R., Tranter, B., & Jaworski, K. (2019). Towards an understanding of loneliness among Australian men: Gender cultures, embodied expression and the social bases of belonging. *Journal of Sociology*, 55(1), 124–143. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783318777309>
- Gerodimos, R. (2018). Youth and the city: Reflective photography as a tool of urban voice. *The Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 10(1), 82–103. <https://doi.org/10.23860/JMLE-2018-10-1-5>
- Goodall, C. (2018). ‘I felt closed in and like I couldn’t breathe’: A qualitative study exploring the mainstream educational experiences of autistic young people. *Autism & Developmental Language Impairments*, 3, 2396941518804407. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2396941518804407>
- Gormally, S., Howard, F., & Seal, M. (2024). Special issue editorial: Youth work pracademia: Creativity, community and meaningful careers. *Journal of Applied Youth Studies*, 7(2), 117–121. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43151-024-00135-0>
- Groot, J., Keller, A., Joensen, A., Nguyen, T.-L., Nybo Andersen, A.-M., & Strandberg-Larsen, K. (2022). Impact of housing conditions on changes in youth’s mental health following the initial national COVID-19 lockdown: A cohort study. *Scientific Reports*, 12(1), 1939. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-022-04909-5>
- Hill, A., Lyons, A., Jones, J., McGowan, I., Carman, M., Parsons, M., Power, J., & Bourne, A. (2021). National Report. Writing Themselves In 4: The Health and Wellbeing of LGBTQA+ Young People in Australia. (Report No. 124). Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University. <https://www.latrobe.edu.au/arcshs/documents/arcshs-research-publications/Writing-Themselves-In-4-National-report.pdf>
- Holmes, M., Manning, N., & Wettergren, Å. (2019). Into the 21st century. *Emotions and Society*, 1(1), 3–8. <https://doi.org/10.1332/263168919x15580836411797>
- Horton, P. (2020). Reframing school bullying: The question of power and its analytical implications. *Power and Education*, 12(2), 213–220. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1757743819884955>
- Joelsson, T., & Bruno, L. (2020). Proximal or peripheral: Temporality and spatiality in young people’s discourses on gender violence in Sweden. *Gender and Education(Online First)*, 34(2), 167–182. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2020.1860199>
- Kung, C. S., Kunz, J. S., & Shields, M. A. (2021). Economic aspects of loneliness in Australia. *Australian Economic Review*, 54(1), 147–163. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8462.12414>
- Lohmeyer, B. A. (2022a). The institutionalised momentum of slow violence: Spatiotemporal contradictions in young people’s accounts of school bullying. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 44(2), 259–275. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2022.2145932>

- Lohmeyer, B. A. (2022b). Social violence and the trivialising effects of youth in school bullying: Extended listening to South Australian young people on bullying and violence. *British Educational Research Journal*, 49(1), 158–173. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3835>
- Lohmeyer, B. A., McGregor, J. R., & Wood, B. E. (2024). Youth work, youth studies, and co-design: Sustaining a dynamic nexus to progress youth participation. *Journal of Applied Youth Studies*, 7(2), 193–210. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43151-024-00123-4>
- Lohmeyer, B. A., & Threadgold, S. (2023). Bullying affects: The affective violence and moral orders of school bullying. *Critical Studies in Education*, 64(5), 479–496. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2023.2193421>
- Loveridge, J., Wood, B. E., Davis-Rae, E., & McRae, H. (2023). Ethical challenges in participatory research with children and youth. *Qualitative Research*, 14687941221149594. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14687941221149594>
- Malcom, D. R. (2021). Loneliness as a downstream concern in a pandemic (and post-pandemic) world. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 85(4), 8456. <https://doi.org/10.5688/ajpe8456>
- Malli, M. A., Ryan, S., Maddison, J., & Kharicha, K. (2023). Experiences and meaning of loneliness beyond age and group identity. *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 45(1), 70–89. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.13539>
- Marquez, J., Qualter, P., Petersen, K., Humphrey, N., & Black, L. (2023). Neighbourhood effects on loneliness among adolescents. *Journal of Public Health*, 45(3), 663–675. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdad053>
- Maton, K. (2014). Habitus. In M. Grenfell (Ed.), *Pierre Bourdieu: Key concepts* (1st ed.). Taylor & Francis Group. (pp. 56–95).
- Milnes, K., Turner-Moore, T., & Gough, B. (2021). Towards a culturally situated understanding of bullying: Viewing young people’s talk about peer relationships through the lens of consent. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 25(10), 1367–1385. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2021.1965106>
- O’Higgins Norman, James, Berger, Christian, Cornu, Christophe, Cross, Donna, Loftsson, Magnus, Sondergaard, Dorte Marie, Payne, Elizabeth, Yoneyama, Shoko. (2021). UNESCO, & World Anti-Bullying Forum. World Anti-Bullying Forum, Stockholm, Sweden. UNESCO, & World Anti-Bullying Forum. [https://delegia-virtual.s3.eu-north-1.amazonaws.com/projects/delegia-wabf/WABF\\_summary\\_of\\_new\\_definition.pdf](https://delegia-virtual.s3.eu-north-1.amazonaws.com/projects/delegia-wabf/WABF_summary_of_new_definition.pdf)
- Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying at school: What we know and what we can do*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Percy-Smith, B., & Matthews, H. (2001). Tyrannical spaces: Young people, bullying and urban neighbourhoods. *Local Environment*, 6(1), 49–63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13549830120024242>
- Perlman, D., & Peplau, L. A. (1981). Towards a social psychology of loneliness. In S. Duck & R. Gilmour (Eds.), *Personal relationships: Relationships in disorder* (Vol. 3, pp. 31–56). Academic Press.
- Prohaska, T., Burholt, V., Burns, A., Golden, J., Hawkey, L., Lawlor, B., Leavey, G., Lubben, J., O’Sullivan, R., & Perissinotto, C. (2020). Consensus statement: Loneliness in older adults, the 21st-century social determinant of health? *BMJ Open*, 10(8), e034967. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2019-034967>
- Rawlings, V. (2019). ‘It’s not bullying’, ‘it’s just a joke’: Teacher and student discursive manoeuvres around gendered violence. *British Educational Research Journal*, 45(4), 698–716. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3521>
- Reay, D. (2019). *Bourdieu and education*. Routledge New York.
- Ringrose, J., & Rawlings, V. (2015). Posthuman performativity, gender and ‘school bullying’: Exploring the material-discursive intra-actions of skirts, hair, sluts, and poofs. *Confero: Essays on Education, Philosophy and Politics*, 3(2), 80–119. <https://doi.org/10.3384/confero.2001-4562.150626>
- Roof, K., & Oleru, N. (2008). Public health: Seattle and King County’s push for the built environment. *Journal of Environmental Health*, 71(1), 24–27.
- Schnepf, S. V., Boldrini, M., & Blaskó, Z. (2023). Adolescents’ loneliness in European schools: A multilevel exploration of school environment and individual factors. *BMC Public Health*, 23(1), 1917. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-16797-z>

- Schott, R. M. (2014). The life and death of bullying. In R. M. Schott & D. M. Søndergaard (Eds.), *School bullying: New theories in context* (pp. 185–208). Cambridge University Press.
- Schott, R. M., & Søndergaard, D. M. (2014). *School bullying: New theories in context*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sercombe, H., & Donnelly, B. (2013). Bullying and agency: Definition, intervention and ethics. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 16(4), 491–502. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2012.725834>
- Silverman, D. (2006). *Interpreting qualitative data: Methods for analyzing talk, text and interaction*. Sage.
- Søndergaard, D. M. (2012). Bullying and social exclusion anxiety in schools. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 33(3), 355–372. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2012.662824>
- St. Pierre, E. A., & Jackson, A. Y. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis after coding* (Vol. 20, pp. 715–719). Sage Publications Sage CA.
- Taylor, S. J., Bogdan, R., & DeVault, M. (2015). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: A guidebook and resource*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Threadgold, S. (2020). *Bourdieu and affect: Towards a theory of affective affinities*. Bristol University Press.
- UNESCO. (2019). *Behind the numbers: Ending school violence and bullying*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000366483>
- Uniting Communities. (2024). *Loneliness by numbers: A South Australian snapshot*. [https://www.unitingcommunities.org/file/rlxmv4xw4/Loneliness%20by%20Numbers%20Uniting%20Communities%20Final%20copy%20%20\(2\).pdf](https://www.unitingcommunities.org/file/rlxmv4xw4/Loneliness%20by%20Numbers%20Uniting%20Communities%20Final%20copy%20%20(2).pdf)
- von Holdt, K. (2013). The violence of order, orders of violence: Between Fanon and Bourdieu. *Current Sociology*, 61(2), 112–131. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392112456492>
- Walby, S., Towers, J., & Francis, B. (2014). Mainstreaming domestic and gender-based violence into sociology and the criminology of violence. *Sociological Review*, 62(S2), 187–214. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-954X.12198>
- Walton, G. (2011). Spinning our wheels: Reconceptualizing bullying beyond behaviour-focused approaches. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 32(1), 131–144. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2011.537079>
- Weiss, R. S. (1973). *Loneliness: The experience of emotional and social isolation*. MIT Press.
- World Health Organization. (2021). *Social isolation and loneliness among older people: Advocacy brief* (9240030743).
- Yang, K., Petersen, K. J., & Qualter, P. (2022). Undesirable social relations as risk factors for loneliness among 14-year-olds in the UK: Findings from the Millennium Cohort Study. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 46(1), 3–9. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0165025420965737>
- Yoneyama, S. (2015). Theorizing school bullying: Insights from Japan. *Confero: Essays on Education, Philosophy and Politics*, 3(2), 120–160. <https://doi.org/10.3384/confero.2001-4562.150628>
- Yoneyama, S., & Naito, A. (2003). Problems with the paradigm: The school as a factor in understanding bullying (with special reference to Japan). *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 24(3), 315–330. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01425690301894>