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Performativity, affectivity and pedagogic identities

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Abstract

Basil Bernstein (2000) wrote extensively about official educational knowledge, pedagogic recontextualisation and pedagogic identities. However, his theoretical oeuvre tended to focus on the textual rather than the affective aspects of policy recontextualisation. In addition, his work on the realisation of official pedagogic identity positions at the level of schooling institutions remained in an embryonic form, not fully developed. In this paper, I elaborate on the affective dimensions of policy recontextualisation by exploring institutional defences, namely teacher anxieties, produced by data-driven performativity. I draw on data from two research partnership projects undertaken with schools servicing vulnerable, high poverty communities in Australia to develop my ideas. Firstly, I explore how institutions develop defensive structures to deal with the anxieties of staff working with young children living in poverty. Secondly, I explore the affective dimensions of dealing with data-driven performativity policies by a school leadership team over the period of two research projects (2009-2016). I examine the professional anxieties induced by data performativity in the early days, and then explore how a research intervention re-circulated affects and enabled the staff to develop more ambivalent relations to data.

Keywords:

policy recontextualisation, pedagogic identities, affect, performativity, pedagogic schizoid position

Introduction

In this paper, I want to return to Bernstein's concepts of pedagogic identity, recontextualisation, and pedagogic discourse to explore the affective¹ politics of data driven performativity in schools servicing vulnerable, high poverty communities. In previous work, I argued that Bernstein's theoretical oeuvre explored 'the social basis and division of labour of power relations and pedagogic relations, and how these are constituted by, and in turn constitute (produce, relay, change and reform), discursive formations and practices' (Singh, 2005a: 4). In this paper, I return to Bernstein's work on pedagogic identities and his appropriation of psychosocial analytic concepts to explore the ways in which institutional anxieties are enacted when neoliberal education policies are recontextualised in schools situated in vulnerable, high poverty communities. In terms of Bernstein's notion of recontextualisation, psychosocial concepts enable me to focus on something other than policy as discourse realised in specific texts and practices. Bernstein's (2000: 65) work in this area offers only a 'sketch', an 'embryonic outline', and also remains focused on textual rather than affective dimensions. By contrast, I propose that developing psychosocial concepts, particularly Bernstein's (2000: 78) notion of a pedagogic schizoid position, allows me to think about the emotional, affective dimensions of policy recontextualisation, the excess of which cannot be captured in written texts. Such work offers potential for exploring, what Bernstein (2000: 77-78) refers to as 'the growing pathology in educational institutions' in the United Kingdom and Europe. Bernstein (2000: 66-67) is not simply talking about the rise of neo-liberal market-oriented policy discourses, but also the rise of retrospective (national religious, cultural, grand narratives of the past) and prospective (selective features of the past to defend or raise economic performance) discourses producing simultaneously state centring and decentring modes of educational governance. The ambiguities and uncertainties produced through these governing

practices, according to Bernstein (2000), generate educational pathologies, one example of which is the ‘pedagogic schizoid position’. Bernstein’s sketchy theoretical forays in this area allow me to think about ‘the relation between the psychical and the social’ (Britzman, 2003) and explore ‘the social shaping of consciousness’ (Ivinson, 2012: 172). While Bernstein (2000) drew on empirical data from the United Kingdom and Europe to develop his theoretical ideas, I explore the potential of these ideas for thinking about schooling practices in Australia.

In order to develop my argument, I draw on empirical data generated from two large scale research projects undertaken in Queensland, Australia. The first project (2009-2013), titled Smart Education Partnerships (SEP) involved 12 schools (nine primary and three secondary) working with university researchers in joint problem-solving dialogues around student literacy achievement data and instructional innovations. Teachers met individually and collectively with members of the research team to discuss data, examine patterns in student achievement within classes and across the school, and consider opportunities for developing innovations that might improve student literacy attainment. The research partnership also worked collaboratively on designing, implementing and evaluating the effectiveness of instructional innovations (see Singh et al., 2015). The second project (2016-2018) titled Learning for Teaching (L4T) involves some of the same schools that participated in the SEP project. However, the aim of L4T is to explore the enactment of collaborative inquiry research partnerships with schools.

Our design-based co-inquiry research approach to working with schools to address complex problems of educational disadvantage is similar to that advocated by researchers in the United States (Coburn and Penuel, 2016; Gutiérrez & Penuel, 2014), United Kingdom (Beckett, 2011) and New Zealand (Lai & McNaughton, 2016). Research in this tradition asks ‘how can research and practice inform each other’ by deliberating about ‘what can and should be addressed

through research and development projects’ and then collaboratively designing, enacting and ‘studying the social life of interventions’ (Gutiérrez & Penuel, 2014: 19-21).

Performative affects of neoliberal education policies

Both research partnership projects were designed in response to mounting concerns that data-driven accountability policy regimes, not only in Australia, but across the globe, are increasing rather than reducing educational inequalities by prescribing test-oriented school curricula and hindering teacher professionalism (see Singh et al., 2015). Performance targets, externally imposed and tied closely to the receipt of government funding, are a key pedagogic device² of the new education policy agenda. Most of the schools participating in the research partnership projects had received significant additional funding under the Australian federal government’s National Partnerships Agreement³ to meet performance targets such as student learning attainment as measured on nationally administered high stakes tests (see Singh and Glasswell, 2016).

As a pedagogic device, performance targets or principles of performativity⁴, regulate teachers’ professional conduct by introducing invisible means of social control through data generating monitoring systems. While teachers are positioned as autonomous professionals their work is increasingly measured against students’ performance on national and international tests. These tests, in turn, regulate what is taught (curriculum) and how it is taught (pedagogy).

As Bernstein (2000: 65) argued, official policy discourses ‘construct in teachers and students a particular moral disposition, motivation and aspiration, embedded in particular performances and practices. Increasingly, schools become inundated with data – student learning, retention and attendance data; teacher pedagogic, classroom, and performance appraisal data; leadership performance data; parental satisfaction data, and so forth (see also Finn, 2016; Ogza, 2016; Selwyn, 2016). Data processes that seem ‘to promote transparency, provide information and

assist in sorting things out, reveal themselves on closer scrutiny to be highly powerful social practices (e.g., processes of observing, measuring, describing, categorising, classifying, sorting, ordering and ranking)’ (Ogza, 2016: 78). Complex relationships within schools, and between schools and local communities, are often reduced to multiple choice responses or tick-boxes against smiley or sad faces on online forms. Data work, increasingly produced in digitalised forms, is ‘*hyper*-reductive in its nature and effects’ (Selwyn, 2016: 64).

These new ‘datafication’⁵ (van Dijck, 2014) mechanisms firstly construct the ‘teacher-as-problem’ or barrier to quality learning, and then embed accountability/responsibility instruments into schools to fix the ‘teacher problem’ (Singh, 2015b, see also Robertson 2013). The shaping up and management of performance to meet the demands of external requirements, according to Ball (2003: 222) may produce a ‘spectacle, or game-playing, or cynical compliance...which is there simply to be seen and judged — a fabrication’. But such game playing comes at a price. Teachers have to set ‘aside personal beliefs and commitments to live an existence of calculation’ (Ball, 2003: 215). They are often left to struggle alone against the ‘terrors of performativity’ (Ball, 2003: 2016) as control of the pedagogic device is increasingly centralised, while responsibility and accountability for meeting performance targets is devolved to the level of the school and classroom.

Teachers, school leaders and education researchers increasingly ‘become ontologically insecure: unsure whether we are doing enough, doing the right thing, doing as much as others, or as well as others, constantly looking to improve’ (Ball, 2003: 220). Moreover, struggles against ontological insecurity and towards the re-development of coherent professional identities are ‘often highly personal’, ‘often internalized’ as ‘self-doubt and personal anxiety’, and ‘expressed

in the lexicons of belief and commitment, service and even love, and of mental health and emotional well-being’⁶ (Ball, 2003: 216; see also Sellar, 2015).

A number of scholars have built on Ball’s (2003) seminal work on the affective aspects of data-driven performativity on teachers’ work. Selwyn et al. (2016) described the ways in which digital data-driven technologies are transforming the labour of teaching, that is, teachers’ work and affecting and re-framing teachers’ professional identities. Online school management systems make teachers’ work highly visible and extend work hours into the evenings and weekends (Selwyn et al., 2016: 6). Focussing on the governance of children, Williamson (2016: 402) argues that schools have become increasingly imbued with new data technologies which collect data on children (body and mind, cognitive and emotional) and provide feedback to them, ‘with consequences for their bodily component, emotional experience and cognitive functioning’ (Williamson, 2016: 413). The gamification of educational software programs, that is, programs designed in a game format with avatars, visual leaderboard and points systems, make them particularly attractive and addictive to young children. Ogza (2016) examined the interaction between school inspectors in Europe and digital data in the forming of judgements about school improvement. She argued that what ‘counts as knowledge work – and especially knowledge work for policy – is now highly dependent on data patterning and its interpretation’ and takes on a more ‘problem-based form, involving new actors in its production, working in new ways and often driven by data’ (Ogza, 2016: 70). These new modes of governing, and the knowledges that support them, demand new kinds of educational work from school inspectors, educational consultants, educational researchers, school principals, and classroom teachers (see also Bradbury & Roberts-Holmes, 2016). Testing instruments, surveys, case reports, software programs increasingly generate statistical data on schooling practices.

These data are asked to perform two functions which can be understood as being in tension: improvement-evaluation and accountability – monitoring, with teachers much more supportive of the former function as enabling them to reflect on their practice as teachers and more critical of the latter as surveillance with the intent to punish or shame. These two functions are reproduced at many nested scales of interaction. For example, this proliferation of data enables the ‘fabrication of quality’ and the construction of national and international ‘policy spaces’ and the making of education ‘machine readable’ (Finn, 2016: 31)

The preceding research studies describe the datafication practices, increasingly driven by non-human actors (digital technologies, software programs), regulating the knowledge work of inspectors, teachers and students, and reframing professional identities and relationships. Educational governance is increasingly bypassing human actors and is conducted via algorithms which encode, transcode, recode and decode data (see Williamson, 2016). Much of this literature draws on concepts of coding, classification (categorisation) and framing, without reference to the sociology of Basil Bernstein (2000), who devoted much of his research career to this work.

In addition, the preceding literature alludes to the affects of data technologies and techniques, but does not engage in affect theory or the psychoanalytic literature informing affect theories. It is important to note that the affective aspects of policy recontextualisation are hard to capture in *texts* such as policy documents, school reports, classroom artefacts, and research interviews (see Ivinson and Renold, 2013). Elsewhere I have argued that policy enactment involves the ‘delocation and relocation of discourses through selective “meaning making” processes (decoding and recoding) across multiple institutional hierarchies’⁷ (Singh et al., 2013: 467). However, in previous work, I did not manage to grasp the complexity of the affective dimensions of policy recontextualisation. While there is now an extensive body of literature on datafication and schooling (see Fenwick & Edwards, 2016; Ozga, 2016; Selwyn, 2016) there is little work on the psychodynamic institutional responses to datafication, particularly engaging with how school

leaders and teachers deal with issues of heightened anxiety, uncertainty and ambivalence. Moreover, Finn (2016: 31) argues that research with an empirical basis has ‘tended to focus on the macro-scale with less sense of how the life of data and data-based living are negotiated in detail, in place and in practice.’ This paper explores these aspects specifically in relation to everyday struggles over the pedagogic device of performativity in schools, and within the research partnership project.

Policy recontextualisation and pedagogic identities

Much has already been written about the performativity agenda of the de-centred market (DCM) pedagogic identities⁸ constructed by the state (national, supranational, international), and the affect/effect of these policy discourses on teacher and student identities and pedagogic practices (see Ball, 2012; Power & Frandji, 2010). Bernstein’s (2000) unique contribution to this scholarship is his concept of the pedagogic schizoid position, a pedagogic identity position ‘forced to project [itself] into the values of the market’ (Lapping, 2011: 168). This is a decentred, de-stablisng pedagogic identity position, which constantly needs to be re-centred and re-established through the ‘revival of forms of the sacred external’ to the market, namely retrospective and prospective identity positions (Bernstein, 2000: 78). In other words, the de-centring tendency of the DCM position is in tension with re-centring policies projecting retrospective (imagined nostalgic pasts) or prospective (fictional futures) identities or again further de-centred by well-being policies around therapeutic identities. These pedagogic identity positions exemplify what Foucault (1979: 6) described as the ‘peculiar intensity’ of the ‘two tendencies’ of modern governments: state centralisation, and de-centralised power and control, de-regulation and re-regulation (Ball, 2003).

The pedagogic schizoid position that Bernstein signaled, but provided little elaboration of, might be close to the Kleinian notion of the paranoid schizoid position (Lapping, 2011: 163).

However, Melanie Klein suggested that the paranoid schizoid position is always constituted in relation to the depressive position (see Cash, 2016; Collis, 2016). The paranoid schizoid position entails the splitting off and getting rid of unwanted parts of the self that cause anxiety and pain' (Lapping, 2011: 149). Splitting refers to the construction of an internal world of good and bad objects. The term introjection means that 'the internalized object is kept apart from a sense of self' (Lapping, 2011: 148). The term projection denotes the 'attribution of one's own feelings or aspects of one's character to an external object' (Lapping, 2011: 148). By contrast, the depressive position accepts complexity without resorting to splitting and projection, and is the 'fundamental psychic position upon which a capacity to dwell in ambivalence is based' and which supports the 'art of doubt' (Cash, 2016: 178).

Ambivalence refers to affective states in which contradictory or mutually exclusive desires or ideas are each invested with intense emotional energy. Although one cannot have both simultaneously one cannot abandon either of them. ... Such ambivalence is not necessarily a symptom of weakness or confusion ... It is often a strength to resist collapsing complex and contradictory material into an orderly whole (Flax, 1990: 50).

While Melanie Klein's work focussed on psychic processes within the individual, other researchers (for example, Cash, 2016; Collis, 2016; Hall, 1996; Hirst and Wooley, 1985; Jodelet, 1991; Lapping, 2011; Luttrell, 1997; 2003; Menzies Lyth, 1960, 1988) have focussed on institutional psychosocial processes. As Cash (2016: 178) has argued:

These same psychic processes whether paranoid-schizoid or depressive, are also embedded, indeed encoded, into cultural forms and social practices. They proliferate in the ideologies, discourses and routines of everyday life and thereby organize both subjectivity and inter-subjectivity ... In some social settings individual subjects, if they desire to be recognized as good and competent subjects, must perform their identities with very few degrees of freedom. The cultural repertoire deemed proper in such settings is severely restricted

One way of thinking about the pedagogic subject positions made available to teachers is through the notion of social and institutional defences against anxiety. Objects such as performance data may be constructed as dangerous terrifying part objects which have to be kept apart from the professional self/pedagogic identity of a good teacher. This is a position of violent defences, a sense of being persecuted by dangerous part objects, which have to be split along good and bad, and the bad rejected so that the good is retained (Likierman, 2001; Lapping, 2011). This is the pedagogic schizoid position that Bernstein (2000: 78) alluded to, but with little elaboration. This position differs from pedagogic subject positions where a more ambivalent relation is developed towards objects, such as performance data, acknowledging that all objects have good and bad parts, and it is possible to hold onto contradictory, ambivalent, intense feelings in relation to external objects. Both positions are institutional responses to ongoing education policy reforms. Enactment of education policies may entail continuous and ongoing institutional movement between the positions of pedagogic schizoid and depressive pedagogic identities.

When ontological security is threatened by the disruptions and mega-hazards of the risk society, the most immediate way to restore that sense of security, or shore it up, is to resort to linear doubt and, thereafter, to defend the authority of linear doubt by paranoid-schizoid processes of splitting and projection; by splitting ambivalence and polarizing its constitutive elements. Of course, as with the uncanny, this endeavour to banish doubt and install certainty does not fully succeed, as the elements that have been projected or repressed tend to return and to haunt the stabilized certainty and the identities it supports. This produces a vicious cycle of further splitting and projection and the deeper entrenchment of absolutisms of one kind or another. This is the dark side of reflexive modernization's psychic and cultural effects (Cash, 2016: 178).

Theorising the affective dimensions of teachers' work, dealing with anxiety, curiosity, fear, joy, hope, and ambivalence, may be useful when exploring their fluctuating, fragmenting, shifting pedagogic identity positions. Such theoretical work extends Bernstein's (2000) concept of pedagogic recontextualisation allowing an exploration of the deeply affective, intuitive, sensory

dimensions of teachers ‘making meaning’ during policy enactment. In what follows, I draw on these concepts to think about the data collected from two research partnership projects.

Introducing two Schools: Great and Excel Primary

Great and Excel primary schools participated in the SEP research project (Glasswell et al., 2016; Singh et al., 2016), and were situated within close geographical proximity. The principals of both schools had been appointed under the National Professional Partnerships agreement, were on five year performance-based contracts, and forged strong supportive collegial relationships (see Singh et al., 2014). At the time of the study, both schools were staffed by approximately 43 full-time equivalent staff, most of whom had completed an undergraduate teaching qualification. The schools were surrounded by urban public housing, housing estates and unit dwellings and most of the students lived in close vicinity to the school. Public transport and transport infrastructure in the area was poor, and the local area was reported in media stories as unsafe: a place of domestic and inter-ethnic violence. Unemployment levels were high in the local community, with some families experiencing three generations of unemployment. The area contained a large number of fast food outlets, most open 24 hours, and the area was described in health reports as characterised by high levels of obesity.

Both Excel and Great primary schools had a student population of approximately 300, although this figure fluctuated⁹ considerably since the schools were built in the 1970s. The average class size at the schools was 25 students. Approximately 30 students received specialist English as a Second Language instruction and Indigenous students comprised approximately one seventh of the total student population. A large number of students were categorised as having learning difficulties, with some diagnosed as being on the Autism Spectrum Disorder, and others experiencing Foetal Alcohol Syndrome. Both schools were publically represented on the My

School website (<https://www.myschool.edu.au/>) as in the ‘red’ at the commencement of the SEP research project. Red signals that students at the school were performing well below the national mean in terms of literacy and numeracy attainment on the national standardised test, National Assessment Program Numeracy and Literacy - NAPLAN (Singh et al., 2015).

In what follows, I firstly explore data collected from interviews with the leadership team at Great Primary, a school which participated in the SEP project. I then introduce and explore data collected from interviews with the leadership team at Excel Primary, a school participating in the SEP and L4T projects¹⁰.

Affect and relationality: building hope

Mrs Smith: *I was talking about the work of the learning support teachers, and... one of them [learning support teacher] had been particularly low-performing – still has an enormous number of days off, but at least she's making a difference now with the work she's actually doing – so, I was talking about that, and how valuable it is, and we used this particular child as an example and said, ‘she got 20 out of 20’. When I said it to the learning support teacher individually before the staff meeting, she said, ‘Yes, and then two minutes later she had a meltdown and blah, blah, blah’. I said, ‘Yes, sure she did, we didn't transplant the personality, we just managed to make some academic difference’. I said, ‘So that doesn't matter. Let's go back to our 20 out of 20, wasn't that fantastic?’ Then, when I mentioned it to the whole staff, her classroom teacher – not the learning support teacher – said, ‘Yes, and then 10 minutes later, she had a melt down, blah, blah, blah’. I said, ‘Don't do that’. I said, ‘**Don't rob yourself of those little victories**’. I said, ‘**you'll do your head in**’.*

R: *You don't want the child to have the victory?*

Mrs Smith: *Yes. ... you can't change things for the kids if you don't change things in here for the teachers. We've gotten rid of a lot of that, but these kids, but occasionally ...*

Mrs Jones: *Creeps back in.*

Mrs Smith: *I challenge it every time.*

Mrs Jones: *With that example, and **then they did roll the eyes** ... That's **almost very similar**, too, when Dr Kath was saying, ‘look how fantastic you've done’, and then they went, ‘**but it won't last**’.*

Mrs Smith: *See, you have to **build hope** in them, too, when **they are in very much a chaotic environment**.*

*You have to be **able to build [hope]**.* (Principal and Deputy Principal, Great Primary, Interview 1 – emphasis added).

I use this extract to draw attention to the school leaders' talk about building and sustaining hope amongst the teachers at the school in the policy context of high stakes testing and work in high poverty communities. Mrs Smith talked about the heavy emotional labour of sustaining hope in teachers so that they provide hopeful spaces for students. She talked about the high absentee rate of some teachers and the difficulties that some teachers have in returning to work in places that have been scarred by the exodus of industries, so that three generations of people have lost 'hope' in gaining meaningful employment. Absenteeism from work is one mode of institutional defence, a protective mechanism developed over years, to cope with the pain and anger of young people living in poverty.

It is important to think about the processes of teacher coping in schools, because 'this splitting process is ... a psychodynamic shield that enables an individual to cope with or manage opposing realities, to deal with contradictory feelings or tendencies within the self and/or toward others' (Luttrell, 1997: 117). The school leaders talk of the importance of being present for the teachers, being able to hold onto and contain teacher anxieties produced not only by the conditions of working in schools servicing vulnerable, high poverty communities, but also by neoliberal performance driven policies. They talk of the importance of the teachers being present for the children and being able to hold onto and contain the children's anxieties, including children's angry outbursts, rage, emotional distance and neediness (see Likierman, 2001; Taubman, 2012).

Mrs Smith spoke of the difficulties that teachers have of sustaining the 'good'. She talked about working with teachers to hold onto 'small victories', in the face of so much chaos, pain and difficulty. The small victories refer to student success in reading tests, for example, one student

getting 20 out of 20 in one test. The principal constructed such moments as ‘small victories’ or signs of progress towards continuous learning improvement. The teachers constructed such moments as temporary, fleeting, unsustainable¹¹. Throughout the interview, Mrs Smith came back again and again to talk of the importance of the good objects, the good aspects of working in these schools, of working with students who persevere in the face of adversity, the victories in the school that need to be held onto by the teachers, the deeply complex emotional work that the leadership team needs to do in order to contain teacher anxieties and project professional identities so that they don’t take up defensive, pedagogic schizoid positions. But there is considerable resistance from the teachers to the principal’s talk which places the burden of addressing the challenges of poverty on teachers’ hopes. The teachers’ knowledge of the children’s difficulties, and their own struggles to effect change, means that they cannot accept the principal’s insistence that hope can serve as a container against the anxieties generated by data-driven performativity measures. This knowledge is the excess that escapes the principal’s mantra of hope. It is the knowledge that has been built up by these teachers who have worked at the school for decades and witnessed endless education reforms, successive leadership teams, and numerous short-term research interventions, all promising to hold the anxieties of poverty in a container of hope¹².

At the same time, however, the principal’s constant refrain about not denying the small victories tries to get the teachers to reconnect with the students, provide hope for and not reject the students because of their emotional outbursts. As Mrs Smith notes: *you can't change things for the kids if you don't change things in here for the teachers*. And one aspect of the change process has to be around building hope against overwhelming fears and anxieties around the im/possibilities of making a difference (see also Berlant, 2010). As Menzies Lyth (1960: 445) noted in her study, staff in hospital institutions often ‘showed panic about emotional outbursts’, and the leadership

team's response to such panicked anxiety was 'brisk, reassuring behaviour and advice' (Menzies Lyth, 1960: 445). Similarly, my study of institutional responses to high poverty and high stakes testing indicated high levels of overt anxiety amongst the teachers. Various behaviour and classroom management strategies, such as removing children from the classroom with 'time out' programs and rotating children through specialist teachers were presented as possibilities for alleviating teacher anxiety. Teachers were encouraged not to talk about poverty, as such talk was seen as worsening anxieties, but rather focus on instructional innovations that could affect changes in literacy attainment. The school was expected to continually engage in reform processes, including participating in the reforms introduced through the SEP and L4T research projects. Such reforms and research projects initially exacerbated staff anxieties. As Menzies Lyth (1960: 451) argued:

Change is an excursion into the unknown. It implies a commitment to future events that are not entirely predictable and to their consequences, and inevitably provokes doubt and anxiety. Any significant change within a social system implies changes in existing social relationships and in social structure, which implies in turn a change in the operation of the social system as a defense system.

Affect and relationality: overwhelming loss

What poverty is – people think it's about money. It's not about money, because lack of money causes it, but it's about lack of power, lack of hopes, lack of dreams. That's what poverty is. So, the sorts of things that we see here that happen so many times – I mean, a couple of times, it has got too much for the Deputy Principal. ... I mean, you would be able to build a little shell. A soft shell, it is, I might tell you, but it's a shell nonetheless, just to make sure that things are not – that he doesn't carry them home. Things that might happen to another family where they have the resilience to bounce back from, some families in this community don't have that resilience. It's not the resilience, sorry I take that back, it's the resources. (Mrs Smith, Principal)

Mrs Smith brought up the notion of lack throughout our interview. She was careful in her choice of words and purposively talked about lack of power, hopes, and dreams and attached this notion

of lack to everyday struggles and difficulties experienced by families. Mrs Smith talked about the positive relations that she had developed with parents, encouraging them to visit her at school without an appointment and her frequent visits to families in their homes. She was clearly affected by her interactions with students, parents, classroom teachers, Departmental officers. The demands on her time were relentless: distressed students sent to her office, an urgent call for information from the Department, a Ministerial report that needed to be completed, parents wanting time to talk about their child, local organisations wanting to use school resources, media calls for stories, universities wanting placements for students, requests for research projects, and so forth. Yet despite these demands, or because of them, Mrs Smith took the time to participate not only in the research intervention partnership, but also in the research interviews. And she gave freely of her time and her ideas/feelings about her work practices.

Is it possible to think about lack, not in deficit terms about what an individual lacks, but in terms of loss and lost opportunities, lost potential, and how these feelings of loss evoke overwhelming feelings of sadness and pain? Mrs Smith was deeply aware of the families' difficulties that affectively evoked pain (in her) about their loss. Sometimes it overwhelmed her and she found herself near to tears. Sometimes it moved her to act, and to act quickly, things had to be done to make a difference. Sometimes it made her pause, such as when she used a research interview as an opportunity to think out loud about her work. Mrs Smith spoke at length about the affective dimensions of her work, fluctuating between the possibilities and im/possibilities of change. She also spoke about her ambivalence towards the performative-driven logic of high stakes testing. On the one hand, it was important to ensure that students attained literacy skills and the increased financial incentives associated with federal national partnerships projects provided much needed resources, including resources for the research partnership project. On the other

hand, public reportage of school achievement on national standardised testing regimes was counterproductive, invoking anxiety amongst teachers that their pedagogic efforts were not given sufficient recognition.

The following interview extract started with Mrs Smith describing her experiences with one family (mum, dad and daughter) in her office. She spoke about the parents' feelings of helplessness and inadequacy, wanting to do more for their children, but not knowing how. Mrs Smith had developed an intimate knowledge of this family over several years, their struggles with the police, domestic violence, separation, getting back together, as well the types of caring practices with their children. Earlier in the interview, she had spoken about the high level of fast food consumption in the local community, and the judgemental attitude of some of the teachers to children's dietary habits. In this extract, Mrs Smith talked about the frequency of the father's visits to the school, often out of concern for his children, and often seeking advice on how to help create a better future for them. In what follows, Mrs Smith reflected on an incident which prompted her to think repeatedly about the effects/affects of poverty.

Mrs Smith: ...*But it was a really – you know, at times in your career, you have defining moments. I was sitting in here. Mum and Dad and child – the daughter, and the child has been involved in a lot of – [bad behaviour with other girls]. Dad is there going off at her. “I’m sick of this, this goes on all the time, you’re forever – you girls are doing blah, blah, blah”. Now, every second word was the F word, and then **finally he loses it completely** and he says to her, “When are you going to get this through your fat head?” Well, the silence in this room was deafening. Mum said to Dad, “How could you say that?” So, F--k is fine, as many times as you want to use it, but don’t say fat. Don’t use the fat word, that’s offensive.*

Mrs Smith: *See, I could have done with him a long time ago. I won’t put up with you talking like that in front of me. He knows not to say that to me, but this wasn’t being said to me. This is just a word he uses. You know, the way we throw around a whole lot of very common four-letter words... he uses it the same way, and it wasn’t intended to offend me. In fact, he would have been quite surprised, probably, if I said, “Look, stop, I’m*

offended.” He would have said, “About what”? But when he said fat head, my goodness, the world fell apart! Then there was silence, then there were tears, the daughter was crying - and there's a defining moment, isn't it? What is poverty? That's poverty!

Why does this encounter capture ‘poverty’? Earlier in the interview Mrs Smith suggested that poverty was about loss of hope and loss of dreams for a better future. She is not suggesting that the families are not aspirational, that they don’t care for their children, or that they don’t want a better future for themselves and their children. Rather, she recognizes the ways in which poverty is tearing this family apart. The father has urged his daughter to use schooling as a way out of poverty, but his daughter has continued to act out. Finally, he has turned to the school principal for assistance. But the space that he attempts to create, where his daughter might listen to his warnings, is filled with violence. He projects his own frustrations about living in poverty, and loss of opportunities, onto his daughter. In Bollas’s (2011) terms such violence deposits despair and emptiness into the ‘Other’, in this case the child. This is the knowledge of poverty and loss that Mrs Smith articulates throughout the interview. What is poverty? It is the tears of the daughter as she breaks down under the constant barrage of criticism from the father. It is a father trying desperately to disrupt the poverty cycle for his child. It is a mother trying to hold a family together with her plea ‘*How could you say that?*’ It is the emotional burden placed on a school trying to help vulnerable families and children with limited resources.

I was deeply affected by this part of the interview, as were other members of the research team. Mrs Smith was agitated when she talked about how she had come to think about poverty and schooling. She was angry at the deficit labels imposed by some university researchers on principals and classroom teachers working in high poverty communities. She felt that the school could benefit from external help and had opened it up to multiple research teams. But she wondered constantly

about the value of research activities to the school community, particularly given the assumptions held by some university researchers about poverty, schooling and teachers' work.

I now turn to interview data collected from the leadership team at Excel Primary. This school participated in both the SEP and the L4T projects. When the leadership team first arrived at Excel primary all the teachers were in survival mode. They were not focussed on learning, or helping students to learn, or learning themselves; they were just trying to get through the day. When the leadership team started to focus on learning data, they did not conceptualise this data as the Principal stated as '*sales figures*', a market-driven performance. Rather the data, the Principal argued was constructed as '*learning figures*', saying something about children and their lives. The school started to focus on children, their learning and their well-being. Mr Taylor and Mrs Watson suggested that participation in the initial research project (SEP) had been a positive tipping point or catalyst in terms of changing the culture of the school. The school had learnt how to interrogate negative student learning attainment data and use these processes in ways that could lead to positive learning outcomes. The learning data, as Ogza (2016: 79) argues 'make people up' – 'not only by making them visible but through encouraging people to think of themselves in particular ways, that is, to classify themselves'. 'Dataveillance' constructs 'predictive profiling' – schools like Excel are categorised as red, and at the bottom of spread-sheets, as not performing well. The trajectories of students attending Excel are 'calculated and then acted on pre-emptively, using "actionable intelligence" to make decisions and set priorities' (Ogza, 2016: 79). What are the possibilities of acting against such predictive profiling, particularly given the imperatives to demonstrate school improvement?

The first data extract below is from an interview undertaken at the end of the SEP project. Here the leadership team talk about the affective aspects of data relating to students' poor literacy test attainments. The school staff had developed defence mechanisms to cope with low test results. One coping mechanism was to take the data reports sent by the Department of Education head office and store them out-of-sight in a cupboard. The data reports had contributed to staff anxieties. So putting the data out of sight became a coping strategy. The bad object, the object causing anxiety, had been projected into a cupboard. The SEP project team worked through these anxieties with the teachers by taking the data out of the cupboard and positioning it as a good object.

Affect and relationality: rebuilding hope

Mr Taylor: *Looking at our school in particular, but we're traditionally quite used to seeing ourselves at the bottom of various Excel spreadsheets or charts, so that was no shock. But just to see each child, where they were on that data wall, I found that very confronting, I think we all did. We thought my goodness, what can we do?*

Mrs Watson: *There was a period, it was grief and it was an overwhelming grief for the staff* (Principal and Deputy Principal, Excel Primary, Interview 1)

There are two points that I want to draw out from this data extract. The first point relates to the social defences in the school surrounding poor student learning achievement. As Mr Taylor argues 'we're traditionally quite used to see ourselves at the bottom of various Excel spreadsheets or charts, so that was no shock'. It is as if low student learning achievement was such a familiar pattern that it became the norm or expectation. School leaders and teachers became numbed, unable to be shocked by poor student learning achievement data.

The research partnership project challenged these institutional practices or social defences of dealing with data, that is, being numbed by poor student learning attainment results, and placing data reports out-of-sight in cupboards. As we have argued elsewhere, a data artefact was designed

collaboratively by the research partnership team to visualise student literacy attainment over the three years of the SEP research project (see Glasswell et al., 2016). The materiality of the artefact, in terms of its design and placement in a room where teachers met informally, such as a staff common room, was important to challenging institutional anxieties around dealing with data. ‘In most schools, the data [artefact] was a large black felt chart (2m x 3m). Each displayed a horizontal scale divided into 13 bands of reading scores, which became represented as columns. Each year level in a school had a row on which student identification tiles were placed’ (Singh & Glasswell, 2013: 173). The artefact was not static, but rather an ongoing performance, with teachers physically contributing/ moving felt tiles representing individual students on the artefact at least three times a year. Felt tiles were used to represent reading comprehension scores. The back of the tile recorded the student name, the front represented a numerical score (data). The teachers were asked to take responsibility for the learning performance of each student in their class collectively as part of a whole school team, and in partnership with the university researchers. The artefact was not designed to name and shame teachers, or indeed name and shame students. Rather it was designed to interrupt the coping habits adopted by the institution in response to the anxiety generated by neoliberal data performativity policies, and generate collective responsibility for student learning achievement (see also Ivinson, 2014; McLeod, 2015).

The processes of constructing, talking about, and reviewing the data artefact initially exacerbated rather than allayed teachers’ anxieties. The artefact made the failure data present and initially unleashed an intense period of mourning and grief around lost opportunities, lost potential, and the immense difficulties of making a learning difference in the school (see Heimans et al., 2015). But then there was a collective shift. Mr Taylor expressed it this way: ‘*We’re talking about real children with real issues in reading and all of us embracing that we wanted to do something*

about that'. Working with an artefact that collectively humanized the data helped the staff to stop the splitting process producing paranoid schizoid pedagogic identities. Collectively the team was able to hold onto both the good and bad aspects of data. The artefact enabled the school staff to develop more ambivalent data relations. The institution could gradually shift from a pedagogic schizoid pedagogic identity position to the depressive pedagogic identity position, a position that was able to cope with the debilitating aspects of poverty but also retain hope of making a difference in students' lives.

We interviewed Mr Taylor and Mrs Watson again, several years after the first research partnership project ended for a second research study, L4T. At the time of this second set of interviews, the school leadership team had worked at Excel Primary for seven years.

Initially, the leadership team focussed on improving student literacy attainment with small experiments around curriculum and pedagogic innovations, and testing the effectiveness of these innovations. These small experiments, based on models of co-inquiry, led to gains in student learning, which in turn changed students' attitudes to learning, parental engagement/trust in schooling, and teachers' sensibilities around the possibilities of effecting change. The whole school kept asking questions of the data: *What stories can we tell of this data? Why aren't kids progressing? Where should the kids be for their age against the norming sample? Where are they currently? How do we help them to accelerate their learning?* The experiments or interventions around making sense of the data, designing pedagogic innovations, and testing the efficacy of these innovations were initially focused on *getting students off the floor*. A large percentage of the students were not meeting national minimum literacy attainment scores and this is where pedagogic investments were urgently needed. Then, following a Departmental directive, the school also focused on improving literacy attainment for those students who were above the national

minimum standards. In addition, Mr Taylor suggested that the school '*learnt to accept the people in the community and be radically inclusive*'. This meant shifting from a tiered, ability grouping model, where students moved out of their main classroom for specialized instruction, to a model where all students remained in the one classroom and worked with the same teacher. Mr Taylor also suggested that the 'open plan' arrangement of classrooms was too noisy for the students and so walls were put up to reduce noise and help generate an atmosphere of calmness and order. Rather than closing off teacher-to-teacher interactions, this move encouraged teachers to talk about classroom practices. Teachers willingly video-taped some of their lessons and discussed these with peers and the leadership team. Ability grouping or streaming of students and the open plan classroom arrangement had generated a school culture characterized: *lack of ownership, lack of accountability, lots of noise, lost time in movement between classes and teachers, lack of ownership of space* (Mr Taylor).

Feelings of guilt, mourning and remorse, alongside joy, elation, and fatigue were often evoked during the interviews with the leadership team. In tension with these feelings were those of fear – fear of failure, fear that the learning data would not show evidence of work investments, fear of not doing enough to make a difference. But data was not simply something to be feared. When he was interviewed in 2013, Mr Taylor talked about how data reports were stored out-of-sight in a cupboard until the school became involved in the SEP project. Seven years later data was not something to be feared. Mr Taylor suggested: *Data was also beautiful*. Pedagogic innovations were described as experiments, interventions, creative risks. Data driven performativity did not necessarily shut down or stifle experimentation or risk taking. Nor did it simply lead to a narrowing of the curriculum and teaching to the test (see also Singh et al., 2015).

Discussion

In this paper I have extended Bernstein's (2000) theoretical work on official state discourses and pedagogic identities by exploring the affective aspects of policy recontextualisation. I have argued that Bernstein's theories of pedagogic recontextualisation focus on textual rather than affective processes even though he alludes to the importance of writing about affect (see Davis, 2005). In order to extend Bernstein's (2000: 65) project, I have turned to his work on official knowledge and pedagogic identities, work which he argues was 'no more than an embryonic outline'. I have elaborated on Bernstein's concept of the pedagogic schizoid position, a concept closely aligned to Melanie Klein's theory of the paranoid schizoid position (see Lapping, 2011). Firstly, I explained a few key psychoanalytic concepts formulated by Klein, namely, paranoid schizoid and depressive positions; anxiety, splitting, and ambivalence; and processes of introjection and projection. While Klein's work focussed on the development of the mind, other scholars have extended these concepts to explore institutional cultures (Menzies Lyth, 1960; 1988); curriculum practices (Lapping, 2011) student identities (Luttrell, 2003; 1997); teachers' work (Taubman, 2012), and learning/not learning (Britzman, 2011, 2006; 2003). Few studies have extended these concepts to explore teacher anxieties evoked by data-driven performativity regimes. Nor have studies explored the ways in which research partnership practices might contain teachers' anxieties by providing a space to relate differently to data artefacts.

In this paper, I have aimed to do such work by recounting research partnership practices with two schools, Excel and Great, servicing vulnerable high poverty communities in Australia. Firstly, I explored the emotionally intensive labour undertaken on a daily basis by a school leadership team at Great Primary to sustain hope that teachers' work could make a difference against the ravages of structural poverty. Then I explored the affective aspects of poverty by retelling one principal's account of what poverty meant for her. My aim was to show how

institutions develop defensive structures to deal with the anxieties of staff working with children living in poverty. I showed how the principal tried to manage teacher anxieties by emphasising ‘*small victories*’ so as not to confront the emotional pain of poverty, and the low student achievement data. However, sustaining teachers’ hopes in this way is not sustainable. Emotional outbursts from children, families tearing each other apart, poor well-being of teachers become the excess that cannot be contained in the myth of ‘*small victories*’. The teachers, and indeed the school principal, had extensive knowledge of families’ deep troubles and distress and they recognised the cost of achieving high test scores on vulnerable young children. If school leaders and teachers are not given the space to speak about their placed-based knowledge, are not given space to talk through their anxieties around data-performativity practices, institutional defences are most likely to be reinforced. Lastly, I described the affective dimensions of dealing with data by a school leadership team at Excel Primary. I was able to trace the anxiety inducing affects of data performativity on the leadership team in the early days when NAPLAN was first introduced. Not only was the data confronting, but it was difficult for the team to make sense of the data in relation to improving schooling practices. The research intervention project (SEP) re-circuited these affects and enabled the staff to move beyond their routine practices – to talk honestly about the achievement data and students’ emotional troubles and their responsibilities as teachers (rather than social workers containing children’s angst). A data artefact was collectively produced through the research partnership to re-engage the staff with student learning data, to humanise the data, to turn the data into a good rather than bad/fearful object. The data artefact opened up a space first for deep mourning and then later for real discussions that led to experiments and changes to the learning environment. The research partnership project helped staff to deal with their uncertainties

and anxieties around school data, so that by 2016 data was no longer something to be feared, but now described as beautiful by the school principal.

In this paper, I have shown how schooling institutions develop defensive structures to manage the requirements of responding to data-driven performativity policies. I have demonstrated how these institutional defences construct pedagogic positions amongst the staff which fluctuate between pedagogic schizoid and depressive. My unique contribution has been to elaborate on some Bernstein concepts which were barely sketched out in 2000, and explore the affective aspects of policy recontextualisation processes.

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¹ Stewart (2010: 1) suggests

‘affect is found in those intensities that pass body to body (human, nonhuman, part-body, and otherwise), in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds, and in the very passages or variations between these intensities and resonances themselves. Affect, at its most anthropomorphic, is the name we give to those forces—visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally other than conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion—that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension, that can likewise suspend us (as if in neutral) across a barely registering accretion of force-relations, or that can even leave us overwhelmed by the world's apparent intractability’.

² Bernstein (1990) introduces the concept pedagogic device after Foucault's notion of the device to refer to the ensemble of rules for the production, recontextualisation and evaluation of pedagogic discourses. Elsewhere, I have described the pedagogic device not as ‘not a singular or essential formation, although it is the device for the relay of dominant principles of governance’ (Singh, 2015b: 366). The pedagogic device is only essential in that it constitutes a strategic arena of struggle or contestation over the governing of education, and thus over modes of consciousness/conscience (Singh, 2015b).

³ Singh et al., (2014: 829) propose

‘A federal government policy initiative, the National Partnerships Agreement, contributed significant additional funds ‘to improve educational outcomes for all students, under a joint state and federal partnership’ (DETE 2010). The National Partnerships Agreement not only provided significant additional funds to schools servicing low socio-economic communities, but also generated the context for the emergence of the SEP research project’.

⁴ Ball (2003: 216) suggests

‘Performativity is a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic). The performances (of individual subjects or organizations) serve as measures of productivity or output, or displays of ‘quality’, or ‘moments’ of promotion or inspection. As such they stand for, encapsulate or represent the worth, quality or value of an individual or organization within a field of judgement. The issue of who controls the field of judgement is crucial.’

⁵ ‘The concept of datafication - ... refers to the idea that many aspects of life can be rendered into digital data which can subsequently be analysed and used to understand, predict and guide interventions in society’ (Sumartojo, Pink, Lupton, & LaBond, 2016: 24)

⁶ Ball draws predominantly on Foucault’s work on the care of the self. This work, however, has been criticized as focussed on the politics of discursive articulation and interpellation, but not identification. Stuart Hall (1996: 25) suggests that Foucault seems to slip between ‘describing disciplinary power as a tendency within modern forms of social control, to positing disciplinary power as a fully installed monolithic force which saturates all social relations’ (see also Donald, 1985; Henriques et al., 1998). In his later work, Foucault does write about ‘the relation to self’, ‘aesthetics of existence’, and ‘specific modes of conduct’ recognized as ‘kinds of performativity’ which Hall (1996: 25-26) argues moves his work into ‘the problematic of “identity”’. However, this problematic remains unexamined in Foucault’s scholarship. Hall (1996) uses the term identity ‘to refer to the meeting point, the point of suture, between, on the one hand, the discourses and practices which attempt to ‘interpellate’, speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be ‘spoken’ (Hall, 1996: 7). The subject is not only ‘hailed’ to subject-positions, but invests in these positions, so that suturing involves not only processes of articulation but also identification.

⁷ Policy discourses travel in multiple directions from sites of policy production to sites of policy recontextualisation (e.g., production of textbooks, tests, teacher manuals, union guidelines, curriculum documents) to specific schooling and classroom practices. However, policy translation is not a linear, instrumental process of policy interpretation. Rather, policy translation is ‘a relation that ... induces two mediators into coexisting’ (Latour, 2005: 108). Mediators ‘transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning of the elements they are supposed to carry’ (Latour, 2005: 39). It is through these mediation processes that policies are re-configured and enacted in ways that policy makers may not foresee, thereby ensuring the uncertainty of policy enactment and related researching of such enactments.

⁸ Bernstein (2000: 69) describes the DCM institutional identity in the following way:

Imagine an educational institution which has considerable autonomy over the use of its budget, the organisation of its discourse, how it uses staff, the number and type of staff, the courses it constructs, provided: (1) it can attract students who have choice of institution; (2) it can meet external performance criteria and (3) it can optimise its position in relation to similar institutions. The basic unit of the institution, a department, or a group will also have autonomy over its own position in the market: that is to optimise its position with respect to the exchange value of its products, namely students. Thus the pedagogic practice will be contingent on the market in which the identity is to be enacted. The management system here is explicitly hierarchical, small, non-elected committees, few in number, which will distribute resources to local units, according to their efficiency and their procedures of accountability. ... The focus is on the short term rather than the long term, on the extrinsic rather than the intrinsic, upon the exploration of vocational applications rather than upon exploration of knowledge. The transmission here views knowledge as money. And like money it should flow easily to where demand calls.... The DCM constructs an outwardly responsive identity rather one driven by inner dedication. Contract replaces covenant.

⁹ For example, the student population at Excel increased to approximately 600 in the 1990s until a new school was built, and then plummeted to 200. The school is now in the process of rebuilding its student population

¹⁰ In this paper I focus on one set of data, namely interview data produced with two primary school principals from the larger SEP study which involved 12 schools (9 primary and 3 secondary). This data was collected from the second phase of the research partnership project at the end of three year design-based intervention component of the study. All participants were generous in providing interview data based on the trust established in the research partnership project. Interviews were approximately one hour in length, although many of the participants spoke for a longer period and then gave the researchers a guided tour of the school facilities. Interviews covered implications of and views about educational policy, particularly national testing and the National Partnership scheme, schooling for social justice, curriculum and pedagogic interventions, the specific context of the school and community-school relations. A second round of interviews focused more specifically on leadership with questions on: background to leadership, experiences of leadership, leadership challenges and successes, future leadership plans and advice for potential leadership aspirants. The leadership team at Excel Primary have remained consistent since 2009 and are now involved in the L4T project, contributing interview data for this study during a 2 hour discussion around the themes of: school improvement, pedagogical framework, curriculum and classroom practices, assessment practices and collaborative inquiry. The leadership team at Great Primary have dispersed and the Principal has moved to another primary school servicing a culturally and linguistically diverse student population, but situated in a slightly higher socio-economic community. This Principal has agreed to participate in the L4T project. In addition to interview data, focus group data were collected with classroom teachers across 12 schools. Moreover, fieldnotes, data artefacts were collected and data conversations were recorded. Further details about the research design can be found in other publications from the

project (Glasswell, Singh & McNaughton, 2016; Singh & Glasswell, 2016; Singh, Pini & Glasswell, 2016; Singh, Martsin & Glasswell, 2015; Singh, Martsin & Glasswell, 2013)

¹¹ Finn (2016: 32) writes of the ‘affective atmospheres (as-a-thing) constructed through encounters between human, discursive and non-human’. In this data extract, the principal works hard to evoke atmospheres of victory, hope, continual progress in the interactions between data (student test results) and teaching staff. But this victory (as-a-thing) is challenged and contested by the teaching staff.

¹² Finn (2016: 30) writes about ‘the use of data to create and maintain a sense of “progress” and the affective relations that are associated with these sensibilities. This is not progress solely as developmental fact, logic, ideology or discourse but as felt. That is, a positive feeling in relation to a sense of onward movement – as an increasing mastery of knowledge and skills. I use the term “atmospheres of progress” to describe the occurrence of spatially specific shared senses of progress-making (or the lack of it) that are collective and yet also individualising’